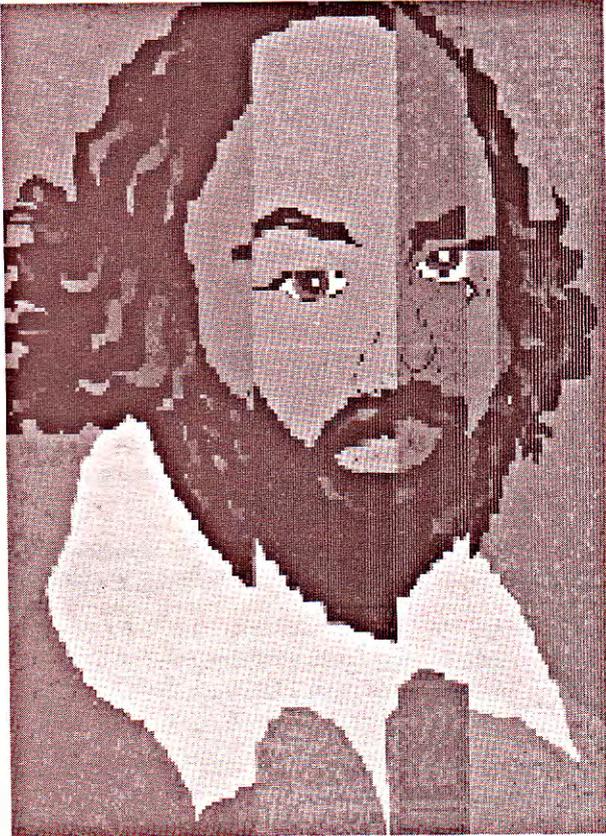


The  
**Upstart  
Crow**  
A Shakespeare Journal



Volume XXI

2001

*The Upstart Crow: A Shakespeare Journal*, Volume XXI, 2001 is published by  
Clemson University.

© 2002 Clemson University: ISSN: 0886-2168



## EDITORS

James Andreas, Editor Emeritus  
Juana Green

**CLEMSON UNIVERSITY**  
DIGITAL PRESS

## ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Ray Barfield, Wayne Chapman, Clifton Egan, Chantelle MacPhee, and Lee Morrissey

## ADVISORY BOARD

James Berg, Douglas Brooks, Pam Brown, Patricia Cahill, Ann C. Christensen,  
Michael Cohen, Katherine Conway, Herbert Coursen, Mary Agnes Edsall, Peter  
Erickson, John R. Ford, Charles Frey, Marjorie Garber, Walter Haden, Jonathan Gil  
Harris, Chris Hassel, Maurice Hunt, Natasha Korda, Richard Levin, John McDaniel,  
Bindu Mallekal, Ian Frederick Moulton, Peter Pauls, Jeanne Roberts, and Jyotsna  
Singh

## BUSINESS MANAGER

Rebecca Teixeira

## EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

Amanda Brock and Charis Chapman

## COVER DESIGN

Amanda Brock

## EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Editor, *The Upstart Crow*, Department of English, Clemson University, Strode Tower,  
Box 340523, Clemson, SC 29634-0523. Tel. (864) 656-3151. Fax (864) 656-1345.

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

1-year subscription for individuals (Vol. XXI): \$15  
1-year subscription for institutions (Vol. XXI): \$20  
2-year subscription for individuals (Vols. XXI-XXII): \$25  
2-year subscription for institutions (Vols. XXI-XXII): \$30  
3-year subscription for individuals (Vols. XXI-XXIII): \$35  
3-year subscription for institutions (Vols. XXI-XXIII): \$40  
Back issues are available at \$12 (or \$10 plus \$2 S&H).  
Complete sets are for sale at \$252.

*The Upstart Crow: A Shakespeare Journal* is produced by the Center for Electronic  
and Digital Publishing at Clemson University using Microsoft® Word, OmniPage™,  
Adobe® Photoshop 5.5, and Adobe® PageMaker 6.5. *The Upstart Crow* is set in Arial  
CE.

Printed by Clemson University Printing Services.



# THE • VPSTART • CROW

## Contents

### In Memoriam: Jim Andreas (1943-2002)

Peter Erikson .....	3
Herb Coursen .....	4

### Part One

Juana Green ♦ <i>From the Editor</i> .....	5
Maurice Hunt ♦ <i>Viola/Cesario, Caesarean Birth, and Shakespeare's Twelfth Night</i> .....	7
Jamin C. Rowan ♦ <i>Ideas About Nature: An Ecocentric Look at As You Like It</i> .....	15
Walter S. H. Lim ♦ <i>James I, the Royal Prerogative, and the Politics of Authority in Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale</i> .....	27
Peter Hyland ♦ <i>Praising the Vile for Recompense: Shakespeare and Patronage Poetry</i> .....	41
Julia Ritter ♦ <i>"Know'st Thou This Paper?": King Lear's Tragic Letters</i> .....	48
Lori Schroeder Haslem ♦ <i>Black Devils, White Witches, and the Chains of Magic in Titus Andronicus and Othello</i> .....	66
Rodney Sterling Edgecombe ♦ <i>Titania's Reference to Woodbine in A Midsummer Night's Dream, IV. i</i> .....	82
John R. Ford ♦ <i>Dreaming and Remembering: The Performances of Clemson Shakespeare Festival X</i> .....	85
Michael W. Shurgot ♦ <i>2001 Ashland Season</i> .....	93

### Part Two: Shakespeare and Postcolonial India

Bindu Malieckal ♦ <i>Introduction</i> .....	103
Parmita Kapadia ♦ <i>The Politics of Choice: English Language Shakespeare Productions in India</i> .....	105
Tamara M. Valentine ♦ <i>Nativizing Shakespeare: Shakespearean Speech and Indian Vernaculars</i> .....	117

## 2 The Upstart Crow

Ananya Kabir ♦ <i>Abuses of Authority: English Literature, Colonial Pedagogy, and Shakespeare in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters</i> .....	127
Jesse G. Swan ♦ <i>Perspectives on Addressing the White Gaze: Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things and Othello</i> .....	138
Bindu Malieckal ♦ <i>Shakespeare's Shylock, Rushdie's Abraham Zogoiby, and the Jewish Pepper Merchants of Precolonial India</i> .....	154
Mark Houlahan ♦ <i>Teaching Shakespeare's India, Then and Now, Here and There</i> .....	171
Jonathan Gil Harris ♦ <i>Book Review: Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: "Discoveries" of India in the Language of Colonialism by Jyotsna G. Singh</i> .....	179
Rachana Sachdev ♦ <i>Book Review: Shakespeare and Race: Praxis in the Early Modern Period by Imtiaz Habib</i> .....	182

### List of Illustrations

Jim Andreas, Clemson 1992 .....	3
Cover, <i>Upstart Crow</i> Vol. I .....	39
Cover, <i>Upstart Crow</i> Vol. XIII .....	40
Clemson Shakespeare Festival XI, with Dedication by Chip Egan .....	65
Thersites, <i>Troilus and Cressida</i> , Oregon Shakespeare Festival 2001 .....	81
Prospero and Ariel, <i>The Tempest</i> , Oregon Shakespeare Festival 2001 .....	84
Ajax with Thersites, <i>Troilus and Cressida</i> , Oregon Shakespeare Festival 2001 .....	92
Bassanio with Shylock and Tubal, <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> , Oregon Shakespeare Festival 2001 .....	101
The "Brown" Shakespeare .....	102
Portia (as Balthazar) with Antonio and Bassanio, <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> , Oregon Shakespeare Festival, 2001 .....	116
Detail from "Time's Fickle Glass" by R. L. Gifford, <i>The Upstart Crow</i> , Vol. IV, 1982 .....	153



Announcement for Clemson Shakespeare Festival XII, 2003 .....	170
Call for Papers for <i>The Upstart Crow</i> Vol. XXII .....	184

**Jim Andreas (1943 - 2002)**

Last August (2001) when I had lunch with Jim and Martha and Emily Bartels in northwest Vermont, Jim was fully active and energized in "retirement." He was not only engaged in teaching and program development at Bread Loaf, but also pursuing a range of interrelated plans: a Fulbright year to teach in Kenya; a Modern Language Association volume on *Approaches to Teaching Othello*; a collection on black male writers' responses to Shakespeare that he and I as co-editors hoped could complement Marianne Novy's volumes on women's revisions of Shakespeare; and, most important, his book "*Signifyin'*" on *Shakespeare: African American Appropriations of Othello and The Tempest*, with its extraordinarily rich twelve-chapter table of contents, for which University Press of Florida had just given him an advance contract. I choose not to regret the incompletion of these projects but rather gratefully to celebrate the personal and intellectual commitment that led Jim to this exciting prospect.

## 4 *The Upstart Crow*

I first met Jim in February 1998 when I participated in the Clemson Shakespeare Festival on "Shakespeare and the Black Experience," where I witnessed first-hand his special talent for creating larger forums for disseminating scholarly issues and debates to a wider audience. While Jim's organizational ability was his most immediately obvious characteristic, I also became aware during a panel discussion of the unshakeable strength expressed in his powerful conviction about the possibility of incremental progress and change in matters of race. Later I learned that this commitment went back to his multiracial public schooling in Chicago.

During the decade of the 1990s, one of the most significant developments in Shakespeare and early modern studies has been the emergence of a critical focus on race. Jim's lifework has been fulfilled in part through his role as a major contributor to the establishment of this specific focus. His model is still with us; we draw on its inspiration today.

**Peter Erickson**

**W**ord has just reached me that Jim Andreas has died. In writing a memorial to him, I want to emphasize his remarkable grasp of what was real and what was not.

When, for example, most members of the Shakespeare Association were in another ballroom, listening to words about "the new historicism," Jim was conducting a session on the censorship of Shakespeare's plays. That focussed on something that was actually occurring in the so-called real world. Jim gave those of us who were there an incisive look at a current political issue, as opposed to the self-fashioning that might have happened in early modern England and that was certainly going on in the other room. While this country continued on a "whites only" policy long after Martin Luther King, Jr., Jim Andreas recognized the shadow that such a bias cast. The real American experience, he told me once, is in Black America. The rest of America, he knew, was engaged in a superficial pursuit of status and career. If you ever heard Jim's piano, you knew that it was inspired not by Eddie Duchin or Carmen Cavallero but by Thelonious Monk and Earl Hines. You heard depth and creativity there, the left and right hand translating to white notes and black notes what soul was saying.

Jim conducted the Clemson Shakespeare Festival for a decade invariably able to come up with the funding the Festival needed, and also capable of enlisting the skills of those who could do some of the things that needed to be done—Charlotte Holt, Chip Egan, and Juana Green. This was the best of all conferences, primarily because it manifested Jim Andrea's unbounded energy and ranging imagination. It had music and drama—particularly from Ralph Cohen and Jim Warren's wonderful Shenandoah Shakespeare Express—"informances" before every production, workshops for high school students, films at the Conference and at the local cinema, exhibits in the Clemson Library, colloquia, poetry readings, book displays, and Albert Hamilton Holt Lectures from Alan Dessen, Peter Erickson, Kim Hall, Frank Hildy, Jean Howard, Charles Frey, Joyce MacDonald, Alan MacVey, Annabelle Patterson, Jeanne Addison Roberts, and others. I can say that one of the most significant and enjoyable aspects of my own career has been my being asked by Jim Andreas to come to Clemson and be a part of the superb Festival that he founded.

To Martha and the rest of Jim's family—sympathy for the loss of this irreplaceable man, and love. And love to Jim Andreas, too.

**Herb Coursen**



## From the Editor

by Juana Green

This volume begins a new decade of *The Upstart Crow*, now published by Clemson University Digital Press and managed by the Center for Electronic and Digital Publishing (CEDP). To inaugurate the new era, we have changed the look of the material book. The most apparent change, the journal's cover, heralds the start of *The Upstart Crow*'s third decade and alludes to the editorial changes you will find inside.

The "Multicultural Shakespeare" cover image—designed at Clemson in 1993 to publicize the second annual Clemson Shakespeare Festival with its theme "O Brave New World, / That has Such People in 'T"—was chosen to complement our first theme-based section, "Shakespeare and Postcolonial India," guest-edited by Bindu Maleieckal. For the next two issues, we intend to devote a section of each volume to a theme that, beginning with Volume XXII (2002), will correspond to that of the year's annual Clemson Shakespeare Festival. Thus, Volume XXII's theme-based section will address "Shakespeare and the Market" whereas "Greed, Power, Corruption: The Political Shakespeare" will govern the theme for Volume XXIII (2003). Linking a special section of *The Upstart Crow* to the Clemson Shakespeare Festival makes visible the bond that has historically existed at Clemson between these two methods of promoting Shakespeare and facilitating an exchange of ideas about his works. This partnership exists in large part due to the efforts of the late James Andreas, co-founder of the Clemson Shakespeare festival and Editor Emeritus of the *Crow*, whose passion for Shakespeare and commitment to his students are eloquently attested to by Herb Coursen, Peter Erickson, John Ford, Chip Egan, and Bindu Maleieckal in their tributes printed in this volume.

If Jim had shepherded this volume to press, no doubt the black background overlaid with the image of a crow would still adorn its cover. But the updated cover continues a tradition that Jim himself started when he took over the editorship from the journal's founding editor, William Bennett, when Jim brought the journal to Clemson. Moreover, as those who knew him will testify, Jim never hesitated to implement changes *he* felt were necessary. So we believe Jim would be proud, both that we care about the journal's reputation and that Clemson has made a commitment to this publication, one to which he contributed so much of his life and passion. It is particularly poignant, moreover, that this first volume to be published after his death contains the theme-based section, "Shakespeare and Postcolonial India," guest-edited at his request by his former student, Bindu Maleieckal, who received her M.A. at Clemson under his guidance. Jim was immensely proud of her. Sadly, he was unable to witness her superb editing job though we have the benefit of the excellent—as well as critically provocative—essays she has solicited.

Since the last volume, *The Upstart Crow*'s editorial advisory board has grown. This volume's list of scholars represents the transition in editorship, for it includes both new and long-time members. Some of the board members who advised Jim have decided to step down, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their years of service to Jim, and for helping with the unexpected transition in editorship. Also, let me welcome the new board members and thank those who are continuing to serve. Our newly constituted advisory board includes scholars in all phases of their careers, from assistant professors to emeriti. In keeping with the *Crow*'s commitment to encourage

## 6 *The Upstart Crow*

a broad exchange of ideas about Shakespeare, our board's research interests span the twelfth to eighteenth centuries and represent diverse theoretical practices.

When I invited scholars to join the advisory board, I stressed how the business and editorial practices have been restructured due to the journal's new management under CEDP. Our revised submissions policy reflects, therefore, one of the most significant policy changes: the "blind" readings of manuscripts. We have instituted this submissions policy as one way to make *The Upstart Crow* live up to the "upstart" aspect of its name, which, as you no doubt know, is derived from the (in)famous derogatory characterization of the country-boy William Shakespeare by Robert Greene. Furthermore, I stressed how we hoped to improve the profile of what we believe is a good journal, though one that is relatively unknown and certainly under-subscribed. We hope that the theme-based essays in each issue will increase the *Crow's* profile by calling attention—and bringing recognition—to it. Now I would like to ask for your help us achieve our goal to increase the profile of the journal though name recognition. If you already subscribe to *The Upstart Crow*, great; keep renewing that subscription. (Yes, the rates have increased, but in the restructuring of the business practices we discovered that we had been giving away the journal.) If you are not a subscriber, please consider a subscription. Whether you subscribe or not, please recommend us to your library.

When I arrived at Clemson in the 1999 fall semester, with my "newly-minted" Ph.D., I was excited about Clemson's commitment to Shakespeare in the form of the annual Clemson Shakespeare Festival (CSF). Secretly, I hoped to one-day play a major role in the festival; however, I had anticipated that "one day" would be about five or six years away. When, in Spring 2000, Jim Andreas stunned the CSF committee by unexpectedly announcing his early retirement and I subsequently told my department chair of my commitment to the festival, I certainly did not anticipate being named its "director." Now I find myself in a similar position, having been named managing editor and then editor of *The Upstart Crow*, but with one exception: quite frankly, editing had not yet made it onto my list of professional goals. In the last two semesters, I have learned much, and I confess to have more to learn. I would therefore like to acknowledge four people who have worked diligently to bring this issue to press. First, Becky Teixeira, our business manager, whose expert skills help keep us organized. Next, Amanda Brock and Charis Chapman, our production assistants for this volume, who carried out instructions by me and Wayne Chapman, editor of the *South Carolina Review*, associate editor of *The Upstart Crow* and CEDP director. Finally, Wayne Chapman, who must certainly qualify for the "most patient man on earth" award. He has certainly earned the title of "publisher" for this volume, as he has advised and guided me about editorial functions for the past year. Indeed, Dr. Chapman is the one who saw this volume to press while I left Clemson for the summer to do research in California and London.

In closing, I would like to add my words of respect about James Andreas to those of our other contributors. In truth, Jim remains the editor of this issue in the sense that the essays printed here were accepted by him. Additionally, Jim encouraged Bindu to guest-edit a volume of *The Upstart Crow*, and that fine effort is realized here. At Clemson, we miss Jim, yet he remains an absent presence: his vision of the Clemson Shakespeare Festival still helps us as we continue to shape and reshape each year's festival; his commitment to *The Upstart Crow* helped Clemson University in its founding of the CEDP. Jim warmly welcomed me to Clemson and gently mentored me for a very brief period. He was a kind man and a wonderful colleague who encouraged me to make the professional choices that were right for me. I will always admire him for his forthrightness, his integrity, and his energy. And, as I attempt to guide this journal in new directions, I will think fondly of him and miss him.

## Viola/Cesario, Caesarean Birth, and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*

by Maurice Hunt

Geoffrey Bullough lists nine possible sources in Italian, French, Spanish, Latin, and English for Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*; Robert Melzi catalogues eleven in the same five languages.<sup>1</sup> In all but one of these, Viola's counterpart in her disguising herself as a male character adopts an alias other than a variant of the name "Caesar." For example, Lelia becomes Fabio in the original *Gl'Ingannati* (1537), Silla Silvio in Barnaby Riche's *Riche his Farewell to Militarie Profession* (1581), and Violetta Adonius in Emanuel Forde's *The Famous History of Parismus* (1598). Only in Curzio Gonzaga's *Gl'Inganni* (1592) does the heroine call herself "Cesare." In Riche's version of the tale, Silvio is the name of Silla's brother. Since Shakespeare's Viola precisely imitates the "fashion, colour, [and] ornament" (III.iv.373) of her presumably lost twin brother Sebastian in her assumed disguise, one would think that the playwright would have her adopt his name, too.<sup>2</sup> But Shakespeare has Viola call herself "Cesario." Editors generally consider Gonzaga's *Gl'Inganni* a lesser (or less likely) source of *Twelfth Night*; Shakespeare could not have read this Venetian work in an English translation. Bullough judges that nothing in this Italian play proves decisively that Shakespeare knew it.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Roger Warren and Stanley Wells, in their recent Oxford Shakespeare edition of the play, claim that Gonzaga's play provides the likely inspiration for the name "Cesario" in *Twelfth Night*.<sup>4</sup> In this case, the similarity of names may be a coincidence. Assuming that it is not, however, we are faced with the question of why Shakespeare did not name the disguised page "Sebastian" or "Fabio" or "Silvio" (or any other decorous name from his more likely sources). Formulated more constructively, the question concerns the benefits gained from the choice of the pseudonym "Cesario."

Despite occasional claims to the contrary, Viola's alias has not gone untranslated. Murray Levith asserts that Viola's pseudonym comes "from the Latin *caesaries* for 'bushy hair,' an apt designation for a girl disguised as a boy."<sup>5</sup> "It is true that Viola wins people's hearts precipitously under the name of 'Caesario,' Winfried Schleiner argues, "an allusion perhaps to the Roman conqueror of whom any schoolboy used to know that he 'came, saw, and conquered.'"<sup>6</sup> Norman Nathan subscribes to the derivation of Viola's "Cesario" "from Julius or any of the other Caesars . . . . *Cesario* and *Sebastian* could be the Roman and the Greek names with identical meaning: 'Augustus [Caesar] . . . venerable' . . . and 'Sebastian . . . venerable.' . . . And both names could be and were applied to the same person. 'Sebastos is the Greek translation of Augustus.'"<sup>7</sup> Mary Lamb in 1980 first ventured this particular linkage and Augustan etymology of "Cesario."<sup>8</sup> Most recently, Stephen Orgel has claimed that in *Twelfth Night*

Cesario is the Italian form of the Latin *Caesarius*, "belonging to Caesar" (and hence untouchable—in Wyatt's words, "*Noli me tangere*, for Caesar's I am"), but we can also find in it what etymologists from Varro onward found in the name Caesar itself, the past participle of *caedo*, *caesus*, "cut," alluding in Caesar's case to his Caesarian birth. Cesario's aim of castration goes no further than this; we hear no more about it (though the play has some fun with the word "cut"), and Viola does not

8 *The Upstart Crow*

perform as a singer or musician anywhere in the action.<sup>9</sup>

J. Dennis Huston anticipated Orgel in his passing association of Cesario and Caesarean birth. "In her choice of name," Huston wrote in a 1972 article, "Viola emphasizes the tenuousness of her position, because 'Cesario' suggests, among other things, premature birth, delivery into a world before the attainment of full growth."<sup>10</sup> Huston offers this insight essentially in passing, as a relatively brief moment in his essay. In the following pages, I argue that this etymology has unexpectedly rich implications for *Twelfth Night* as a whole. In a comedy in which Time's maturing of character and ripening of purpose is all, Cesario's inability to deliver Viola's female identity in a timely way mars the comic closure of *Twelfth Night*.

I take my cue for my argument from a remark of Viola's in the play's second scene. When the Captain tells her that Olivia has forsworn the company of men, destitute Viola exclaims, "O that I served that lady,"

And might not be delivered to the world  
Till I had made mine own occasion mellow,  
What my estate is. (I.ii.38-41)

Editors agree that Viola's word "delivered" means "revealed" in the sense of a child delivered at birth. The remainder of her utterance is ambiguous. She could mean that she does not wish to be delivered again to the world until she has brought about the proper occasion for her delivery, so that it is ripe for her rebirth. (In this case, her final ejaculation—"What my estate is"—is a lament concerning her desperate position in life). On the other hand, some editors—such as G. Blakemore Evans and Anne Barton—prefer no punctuation after the word "mellow." In this instance, Viola says that she does not wish to be delivered to the world until she makes her own "occasion" (her own time) ripen her present, sad rank in life into a better estate. This reading more strongly construes the word "mellow" as an active verb. In either case, Viola implies that she needs an interlude in her life during which she can prepare for the timely moment (the *kairos*) of her rebirth as a woman of rank.

This interlude she finds in serving Duke Orsino disguised as a male page named Cesario. Having resolved upon this course of action, she tells the Captain, "What else may hap, to time I will commit, / Only shape thou thy silence to my wit" (I.ii.57-58). And when she discovers that she loves Orsino as much as or—most likely—more than he loves Olivia and that Olivia apparently has become infatuated with Cesario, she exclaims, "O time, thou must untangle this, not I. / It is too hard a knot for me t'untie" (II.ii.40-41). Commentators on *Twelfth Night* such as Barbara Everett, Verna Foster, and Yu Jin Ko have remarked that, until a clock strikes in the middle of the play and Olivia tells Cesario, "The clock upbraids me with the waste of time" (III.i.128), Illyria seems a time-stopped realm of leisurely mourning, nostalgia, aristocratic irresponsibility, and the open-ended pleasures of song, drink, and dancing.<sup>11</sup> Thus Viola's trusting time in the first half of the play to ripen toward the occasion of her happy rebirth is somewhat problematical. In keeping with the impression of delayed or stopped time in Illyria, Viola/Cesario faces notable immaturities not only in Olivia and especially Orsino but also in the consequences of an assumed identity.

In matters of the heart, the Orsino we hear in the play's opening scene is a callow youth. By all accounts, he seems more in love with the idea of being in love, than with Olivia. Volatile, his senses confused, he remains locked into the experience of enjoying his own conceited feelings of romantic love rather than imagining the reality and reciprocity of love with a woman. "Away before me to sweet beds of flowers: / Love-thoughts lie rich when canopied with bowers" (I.i.39-40), he concludes. During his next

significant appearance in *Twelfth Night*, we do not hear evidence of Time's maturing his idea of or capacity for meaningful romantic love. In act II, scene iv, he reiterates his silly notion that "all true lovers" are "Unstaid and skittish in all motions else / Save in the constant image of the creature / That is beloved" (II.iv.16-19). Moreover, he voices a patronizing, chauvinistic prejudice that men should marry women considerably younger than themselves so that their affection for the women remains constant as both parties age (II.iv.26-38). Orsino implies that a woman's outward, physical beauty matters most to him, an immature attitude confirmed when he reveals to Cesario what he values most in Olivia:

Tell her my love, more noble than the world,  
Prizes not quantity of dirty lands.  
The parts that fortune hath bestowed upon her  
Tell her I hold as giddily as fortune;  
But 'tis that miracle and queen of gems  
That nature pranks her in attracts my soul. (II.iv.80-85)

Orsino confesses that his soul is not attracted to Olivia's soul or to her moral or beautiful inner character, but instead to her natural, physical beauty only. What Nature "pranks" Olivia in, Nature will progressively divest her of. What then will Orsino love?

Similarly, Viola as Cesario appears an immature youth. "For they shall yet belie thy happy years," Orsino tells his page, "That say thou art a man: Diana's lip / Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe / Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound. . ." (I.iv.30-33). Malvolio says Cesario is "[n]ot yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy: as a squash is before 'tis a peascod, or a codling when 'tis almost an apple. 'Tis with him in standing water between boy and man" (I.v.150-53). Olivia confirms this portrait of a ripening but unripe youth when she tells Cesario,

Be not afraid, good youth, I will not have you;  
And yet when wit and youth is come to harvest  
Your wife is like to reap a proper man. (III.i.129-31)

"There lies your way, due west" (III.i.132), Olivia exclaims—figuratively towards, that is to say, the zenith, dusk, and the setting of a life in time. Metaphoric due west at this moment in the play is theoretically toward more rapid growth in time, for playgoers have just heard the striking clock and Olivia's rejoinder, "The clock upbraids me with the waste of time."

One assumes that Viola's mellowing in the second half of the play toward a timely delivery will be relatively easy, for all along a riper Viola has existed within unripe Cesario. To stress his belief that men should marry women much younger than themselves, Orsino says that "women are as roses, whose fair flower / Being once displayed, doth fall that very hour" (II.iv.37-38). "And so they are. Alas that they are so," Viola laments; "To die even when they to perfection grow" (II.iv.39-40). These haunting four verses are richly ambiguous. Viola implies that the unfolding of a woman's flower, the flourishing of her petals, makes her vulnerable to death, presumably in the form of a favorite Shakespeare metaphor, the canker. Growing to perfection, opening into perfect beauty, paradoxically entails the threat and likelihood of death. In the words of Warren and Wells, "[t]hese four lines are a poignant statement of the price of perfection."<sup>12</sup> But this meaning competes with another, equally provocative one. Viola can be understood to be saying that the fall of a woman's physical beauty, her "flower," is a death of a kind, a demise occurring early in her growth toward perfection, a perfection unconnected with physical

10 *The Upstart Crow*

beauty, occurring in later life. Not only does this remarkable opinion reveal Viola to be more intellectually, more existentially, mature than Orsino. It also reflects her desire to ripen far beyond the flourishing and fall of her physical beauty into a moral or spiritual perfection of her later age. At the moment of utterance in act II, however, her sentiment discovers her desire to re-educate Orsino concerning the time in later age when women (as well as men) are truly mellow, inwardly ripe. In act II, scene iv, Viola's poignant, concluding dialogue with Orsino begs the question of whether Time will ever "deliver" her so that she can marry a worthy (ripened) Orsino. Cesario's fiction of a "sister" who patiently, purely, loved a man as much as Cesario might Orsino—were the page a woman—mainly functions in Viola's program of Orsino's romantic re-education. But in her suggestion that this woman never was able to reveal her love, wasting away of "a green and yellow melancholy" (II.iv.113), perhaps dying of it, Viola implies that, though she may ripen both outwardly and inwardly, her female identity may never be delivered naturally to her advantage to the world.

Nevertheless, events occurring in act III, scene iv begin pressuring a delivery. Sir Toby and Fabian concoct a duel between Viola/Cesario and Sir Andrew, simply for their own amusement. Viola trembles because she does not know how to handle a weapon, especially before a reputedly ferocious adversary. This ruse threatens an untimely delivery of her female identity, mainly in the expectation of saving her life. While her revelation supposedly would have this ultimate benefit, it would also most likely leave her romantically unfulfilled. Still in love with Olivia, Orsino at this juncture is not prepared to love Viola maturely. The sudden appearance and intervention of Antonio on Viola/Cesario's behalf forestalls Viola's untimely delivery. Time in the play accelerates with the epiphany of Antonio; his mistaking Viola/Cesario for Sebastian quickly leads to the epiphany of Sebastian and the play's final scenes.

At the beginning of act V, the question posed concerns whether Orsino has grown into a lover worthy of Viola and thus whether she can at the opportune moment—in a timely way—deliver to the world her female identity. Initially, Orsino's rage against Olivia augurs a negative answer. Intuiting that Olivia has fallen in love with his page, Orsino, his "thoughts . . . ripe in mischief" (V.i.125), threatens to "sacrifice the lamb that I do love / To spite a raven's heart within a dove" (V.i.126-27). Orsino soon extends this anger to Viola/Cesario, when the Priest, mistaking Cesario for Sebastian, testifies to the page's marriage to Olivia. Orsino's affection for Viola/Cesario appears irretrievably lost:

O thou dissembling cub, what wilt thou be  
 When time hath sowed a grizzle on thy case?  
 Or will not else thy craft so quickly grow  
 That thine own trip shall be thine overthrow?  
 Farewell, and take her, but direct thy feet  
 Where thou and I henceforth may never meet. (V.i.160-65)

G. Wilson Knight and Mary Lamb, among others, have argued that in these savage emotions Orsino fulfills the etymology of his name—"bear" (or "little bear").<sup>13</sup>

The epiphany of Sebastian and his and Viola's heart-felt recitation of the details of their common lineage convince Orsino that Cesario is Viola and converts his anger against her to his former affection. Hearing her swear her womanly love for him, Orsino says, "Give me thy hand, / And let me see thee in thy woman's weeds" (V.i.266-67). Viola has told Sebastian, about to enfold her in his arms,

If nothing lets to make us happy both  
 But this my masculine usurped attire,

Do not embrace me till each circumstance  
 Of place, time, fortune do cohere and jump  
 That I am Viola, which to confirm  
 I'll bring you to a captain of this town  
 Where lie my maiden weeds, by whose gentle help  
 I was preserved to serve this noble court. (V.i.243-50)

Viola delays staging Sebastian's and her own hour of ultimate happiness because she wants first of all at the opportune moment to deliver herself to the world. Feste's song "O mistress mine" transports the leitmotif of *carpe diem* into *Twelfth Night* (II.iii.37-42, 45-50). Both Verna Foster and Yu Jin Ko, among others, argue that introduction of this motif into the seemingly clock-stopped segment of the play reminds auditors of the importance of seizing the moment in several senses of the phrase throughout *Twelfth Night*.<sup>14</sup> Feste's play-ending, melancholy song—"When that I was and a little tiny boy"—basically concerns a depressing progress of time through a life span in a fallen world, where "the rain it raineth every day." In this sense, the song provides a last, memorable argument that seizing the moment becomes necessary in order to find positive meaning within a depressingly predictable, ultimately atrophying medium—Time.

In her wish to have Orsino see her in her "maiden weeds," Viola defers seizing the moment of her delivery of her identity, apparently because she wants the delivery to have a maximum benign effect. In her desire, there is a dim evocation of the Nativity, of the blessed event celebrated on the day after *Twelfth Night*'s misrule, the Feast of Epiphany. When Viola asks Sebastian if he is a spirit come to frighten them, her brother replies, "A spirit I am indeed,"

But am in that dimension grossly clad  
 Which from the womb I did participate. (V.i.230-32)

God determined the opportune moment, the timely instant, in which to clothe his Son in the garb of mortality and deliver him to a spiritually bankrupt world.<sup>15</sup> Viola, too, wishes to clad herself in a garb that will reveal her miraculously delivered in time to Orsino. His wish to see her in her "woman's weeds," however, may derive from a less idealistic impulse. Olivia's outer, natural female beauty inspired his love for her. He may be waiting for a similar catalyst to spark a fire for Viola.

But the Captain who has Viola's clothes has been arrested as the result of an unexplained lawsuit of Malvolio's. Moreover, the supposedly mad Malvolio is himself now in durance. "See him delivered" (V.i.306), Olivia tells Fabian concerning Olivia's cross-gartered steward. From the dark womb of his room, Malvolio must be unbound and delivered, so that he may deliver the Captain, who can then make possible reclad Viola's delivery of herself to marriage. Suddenly, her delivery does not seem to matter to Orsino. He embraces Olivia's offer of a double marriage. "Your master quits you," he warmly tells Viola, "and for your service done him"

So much against the mettle of your sex,  
 So far beneath your soft and tender breeding,  
 And since you called me master for so long,  
 Here is my hand, you shall from this time be  
 Your master's mistress. (V.i.312-17)

The warmth of this unconceited speech of Orsino's promises a capacity for mutual

12 *The Upstart Crow*

married love for the first time in *Twelfth Night*. Clearly acknowledging her female identity, he—notably in his phrase “Your master’s mistress”—relinquishes patriarchal control of Viola in keeping with the egalitarian spirit of Paul’s characterization in the *Epistle to the Ephesians* of the corporate body of man and wife (5:20-30, esp. 28-30).<sup>16</sup> This verbal behavior of Orsino’s strongly suggests that he has developed a more mature capacity for married love.

Nevertheless, at the end of the play, Orsino reasserts his previous desire to delay the expression of his love for Viola until he can see her in her maiden’s clothing. Since Malvolio has sworn bitter revenge against “the whole pack” onstage (and since his good will is necessary to enfranchise the Captain possessing Viola’s clothes), that time may be far off: “Pursue him, and entreat him to a peace,” Orsino says with regard to Malvolio:

He hath not told us of the captain yet.  
 When that is known, and golden time converts,  
 A solemn combination shall be made  
 Of our dear souls. Meantime, sweet sister,  
 We will not part from hence. Cesario, come—  
 For so you shall be while you are a man;  
 But when in other habits you are seen,  
 Orsino’s mistress, and his fancy’s queen. (V.i.370-78)

Orsino’s reversion to his previous fixation on Viola’s clothes as essential to her female identity may signal a lapse of his new maturity in loving. More certainly, his equivocation concerning Viola/Cesario’s identity at the end of the play suggests that Viola has and has not been delivered to the world. On the one hand, she has not been (and may not be for a long time) delivered timely, ripely, in her own identity, as she would will herself to be (to invoke the play’s subtitle). On the other, one could say that she has been delivered in Orsino’s warm recognition of her femininity and in his pledge to marry her. But as in the case of pregnancy, a person either is or is not birth delivered. In the last analysis, playgoers realize that, while Viola is redelivered to the world, her rebirth is not timely. The untimeliness has to do with Orsino. He may show signs of growing into a more mature love (he speaks to his credit at play’s end of a “solemn combination” of his and Viola’s “dear souls”), but, disturbingly, he still depends upon the accidents of a woman’s dressed-out appearance—beautiful cloth, skin, and physical form subject to mutability—to make this love substantial. He has not, in other words, become the man capable of loving Viola in the profoundly selfless way that she loves him. For Viola’s love for Orsino does not rely for its beginning and sustenance upon the physical accidents of his appearance or the compassion and wisdom of his behavior. Unlike his love, hers resembles a kind of romantic agape. In this sense, the matrimonial union of their souls cannot be “comminate,” equal in value. Viola’s rebirth at this moment is thus premature—Caesarean in short, the epitome of her adopted name.

The phenomenon of Caesarean delivery memorably surfaces in Shakespeare’s plays in *Macbeth*, in the fulfillment of the prophecy that Macbeth will not yield to a man born of woman. “Untimely ripp’d” from his mother’s womb (V.iii.15-16), removed, that is to say, by Caesarean section, Macduff proves to be Macbeth’s providential nemesis. Furthermore, according to Richard Wilson, “Shakespeare earlier exploited Sir Thomas More’s testimony that Richard III was hurried into the world ‘feet first’ by Caesarian section (*Richard III*, I, i, 20-21), and he would have known that Henry VIII commanded the same Neronian operation on Jane Seymour, ‘having the womb cut before she was dead, so the child ready to be born might be taken out.’ This was the fatal delivery that led Edward VI to be styled ‘He that was never born,’ and the dynasty to adopt its icon of

the self-creating Phoenix."<sup>17</sup> "In the minds of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Englishmen," Richard DeMolen asserts, "children who were born by Caesarean section were unnatural beings and represented ill omens. They had only to recall the name of Nero who had been born of Caesarean section and who eventually murdered his mother."<sup>18</sup>

Equally popular, however, was the view, first advanced by Pliny the Elder (23/4-79 AD), that "those children, whose birth has cost the mother her life, are evidently born under more favorable auspices [than those who are born "feet first"]."<sup>19</sup> As the character of Shakespeare's Macduff testifies, Elizabethans believed that "children born of Caesarean section grow up to be 'great enterprisers'."<sup>20</sup> This folklore almost certainly derived from the association of Caesarean section with the name of a man of great accomplishments, Julius Caesar. In the "Cesario" of *Twelfth Night*, we can see a merger of both traditions. While not born by Caesarean section, Viola is subject to figurative Caesarean delivery. Her stars are lucky, and she is a "great enterpriser" in the world of Illyria. And yet under the Caesarean name, she—while neither unnatural (like Richard III) nor homicidal (like Nero)—does not get to enjoy within the frame of the play the figurative timely birth of a fulfilled self. Richard Wilson concludes that "Caesarian section recurs in [Shakespeare's] tragedies and histories . . . as a final solution to the female puzzle and fulfilment of the *Lex Caesare*, the Roman inheritance law that decreed the womb to be a place where the infant was merely 'imprisoned,' and from which, and by whatever means, an heir was justly 'enfranchised' into 'light' (*Titus Andronicus*, IV, ii, 124-5)."<sup>21</sup> Shakespeare's evocation of Caesarean birth in *Twelfth Night* is lighter than these tragic, historical implications; nevertheless, its shading is muted. It reminds us that, in this fallen world, the delivery of our purpose, or our better self, is often untimely, not at the moment we would have chosen—not (to use the play's subtitle) at the instant or in the circumstances that we willed. It is never or rarely, in other words, a pregnant moment of delivery like the temporal prototype celebrated in the Feast of the Epiphany, the aftermath of *Twelfth Night*.

Baylor University

## Notes

1. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare: Volume II, The Comedies, 1597-1603*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 270; Robert C. Melzi, "From Lelia to Viola," *Renaissance Drama*, 9 (1966), 67-81, esp. p. 70.
2. All citations of and references to *Twelfth Night* are taken from the *Oxford Shakespeare* text, ed. Roger Warren and Stanley Wells (1994; Rpt. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998). The later reference to *Macbeth* is taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). As the confusing italicized names in the following quoted passage indicate, no less a commentator on *Twelfth Night* than Leo Salingar can easily start believing that Viola's pseudonym ought to be "Sebastian": "[Olivia] is soon completely sure of herself, and in the later scenes she handles Sir Toby, Orsino and *Cesario-Sebastian* with brusque decision. . . . The main action of *Twelfth Night*, then, is planned with a suggestive likeness to a revel, in which Olivia is masked, Orsino's part is giddy and 'fantastical,' *Viola-Sebastian* is the mysterious strange. . . ." (L. G. Salingar, "The Design of *Twelfth Night*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 9 [1958], 117-39, esp. p. 127).
3. Bullough, p. 274.
4. Warren and Wells, pp. 16, 100.
5. Murray J. Levith, *What's in Shakespeare's Names* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1978), p. 92.
6. Winfried Schleiner, "Orsino and Viola: Are the Names of Serious Characters in *Twelfth Night* Meaningful?" *Shakespeare Studies*, 16 (1983), 135-41, esp. p. 139.

14 *The Upstart Crow*

7. Norman Nathan, "Cesario, Sebastian, Olivia, Viola, and Illyria in *Twelfth Night*," *Names*, 37 (1989), 281-84, esp. p. 282. In the passages cited, Nathan is quoting in the first and second instances from Ernest Witherby, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 37, 264, and in the third from Kenneth Holum et al., *King Herod's Dream* (New York: Norton, 1988), p. 22.
8. M. E. Lamb, *Ovid's Metamorphoses and Shakespeare's Twelfth Night*, *Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. Maurice Charney (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1980), 63-77, esp. pp. 70-71.
9. Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), pp. 53-54. Citing Orgel's association of "caesus" ("cut") and "Cesario," Yu Jin Ko, in "The Comic Close of *Twelfth Night* and Viola's *Noli Me Tangere*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48 (1997), 391-405, admits that "[i]t is impossible to know whether Shakespeare knew Wyatt's 'Whoso list to hunt,' but the name Cesario does recall, if not the poem itself about a stubbornly enduring desire for an unattainable 'hind,' then at least the well-known motto graven on the hind's collar which makes up the poem's punchline: '*Noli me tangere* for Caesar's I am.' Paralleling the irony in the poem, however, the *noli me tangere* of Viola's disguise works only to animate desire" (pp. 398-99).
10. J. Dennis Huston, "When I Came to Man's Estate": *Twelfth Night* and Problems of Identity," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 33 (1972), 274-88, esp. p. 285.
11. See Barbara Everett, "Or What You Will," *Essays in Criticism*, 35 (1985), 294-314, esp. pp. 295, 300; Verna A. Foster, "The Dramaturgy of Mood in *Twelfth Night* and *The Cherry Orchard*," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 48 (1987), 162-85, esp. pp. 167-69; and Ko, pp. 395-97. Both Everett and Foster point out that, after the clock is heard striking in act III, scene I, time seems to move swiftly in the play.
12. Warren and Wells, p. 136.
13. G. Wilson Knight, *The Sovereign Flower: On Shakespeare as the Poet of Royalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 185; Lamb, pp. 66-68.
14. Foster, p. 168; Ko, p. 397.
15. For the importance of the religious significance of the Feast of Epiphany for *Twelfth Night*, see Barbara K. Lewalski, "Thematic Patterns in *Twelfth Night*," *Shakespeare Studies*, 1 (1965), 168-81.
16. For the egalitarian spirit of this Pauline passage, see Maurice Hunt, "Slavery, English Servitude, and *The Comedy of Errors*," *English Literary Renaissance*, 27 (1997), 31-56, esp. pp. 51-53.
17. Richard Wilson, "Observations on English Bodies: Licensing Maternity in Shakespeare's Late Plays," *Will Power: Essays on Shakespearean Authority* (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1993), 158-83, esp. p. 169.
18. Richard L. DeMolen, "The Birth of Edward VI and the Death of Queen Jane: The Arguments for and against Caesarean Section," *Renaissance Studies*, 4 (1991), 359-91, esp. p. 390. DeMolen's essay includes an excellent brief history of Caesarean section, from Pliny the Elder's listing of famous persons born by the method (Scipio Africanus, Julius Caesar) to Ambrose Pare's account of Caesarean surgery performed on live women throughout the first half of the sixteenth century (pp. 385-88). For an extended history of the subject, see John H. Young, *Caesarean Section: The History and Development of the Operation from Earliest Times* (London: Lewis Publ., 1944) and Barbara Katz Rothman, *In Labor: Women and Power in the Birthplace* (New York: Norton, 1982) *passim*.
19. Quoted by DeMolen, pp. 385-86.
20. DeMolen, p. 378.
21. Wilson, p. 169.

## Ideas About Nature: An Ecocentric Look at *As You Like It*

by Jamin C. Rowan

**B**ecause *As You Like It* is, according to many scholars, Shakespeare's most pastoral play, much of its criticism has focussed on how the play fits and/or contributes to the pastoral tradition. In their critiques, these pastoral-minded critics inevitably discuss the role of "nature." Madeleine Doran, for instance, sees the forest of Arden as "a temporary place of escape where the characters from outside it take a look at their own permanent world."<sup>1</sup> William Slights, noting a similar pattern on a more general scale, suggests that the "most characteristic action in [Shakespeare's] pastoral plays involves characters retrieving or reinventing their origins in a *natural setting*."<sup>2</sup> Ironically, most pastoral literature and its criticism—*As You Like It* being no exception—place nature on the critical periphery and seem to side with Doran, who claims that "the object of criticism is not the 'removed' country, but the court and the city."<sup>3</sup> Because it always seems to serve such "temporary" or secondary purposes, nature, in its most physical sense, finds itself being relegated to what David Young calls "the theoretical world of the pastoral, forest of the heart and mind."<sup>4</sup> Though perhaps unaware of doing so, early pastoral-oriented critics like Doran and Slights deal primarily with *ideas* about nature, geographies of the imagination, rather than tangible landscapes<sup>5</sup>—and understandably so. Emanating from this pastoral discourse, Shakespeare's forest of Arden lends itself to a discussion in abstract and imaginative terms, in fact begs not to be discussed as a natural environment per se. Louis Montrose calls our attention to such tensions and ruptures between, say, the material and textual forests of Arden, claiming that the "suppression or marginalization of material pastoralism constitutes an essential feature of Elizabethan literary pastoralism," and is, therefore, "a feature that demands interpretation."<sup>6</sup>

While more recent critics like Louis Montrose and Richard Wilson have shifted their interpretation of pastoral literature beyond asking "what pastorals 'are' or what they 'mean' . . . [to asking] what pastorals *do*, and by what operations they perform their cultural work,"<sup>7</sup> their focus is still remarkably anthropocentric. Montrose, for instance, is most interested in seeking to understand how "pastoral forms may have worked to mediate differential relationships of power, prestige, and wealth in a variety of social situations."<sup>8</sup> Wilson, like Montrose, is concerned with seeing how pastoral literature played a specific social role at a specific historical moment. According to Wilson, "*As You Like It* engages in the revaluation of woodland that coincided with the sale and disafforestation (the legal alienation of royal forests) of the crown estates."<sup>9</sup> While both Montrose and Wilson see the need to look more carefully at what pastorals *do*, neither one really looks at what pastorals do to nature. I propose an interpretation that takes a more ecocentric look at nature, or, to be more specific, the implications of the ideas about nature forwarded in *As You Like It*.

Richard White, in an essay included in William Cronon's seminal ecocritical work *Uncommon Ground*, proposes that "nature is . . . purely cultural. Different cultures produce different versions of nature."<sup>10</sup> If this is the case, several questions emerge concerning *As You Like It* in its specifically pastoral context: What general versions of nature are produced within the pastoral discourse? And, drawn from this larger pool of pastoral thought, what specific shapes do these versions of nature take as they find concrete expressions in *As You Like It* and, consequently, criticism of the play? In posing

16 *The Upstart Crow*

these questions, I am not trying to rediscover Shakespeare as an ecocritic ahead of his time nor as an environmentally insensitive writer. Rather, I want to show how Shakespeare and his critics create and perpetuate a certain ideological stance toward nature,<sup>11</sup> analyze that stance, and then think about how these *ideas* about nature might still influence the way we (mis)treat our own landscapes; I hope to trace and, in the words of Gramsci, “compile . . . an inventory”<sup>12</sup> of the ideas about nature expressed in *As You Like It*.

Shakespeare begins presenting his pastoral version of nature in *As You Like It* the moment the curtain lifts. Orlando's opening complaint to Adam about his current condition contains the foundational ideas about nature that the rest of the play builds upon:

My brother Jaques he keeps at school, and report speaks goldenly of his profit. For my part, he keeps me rustically at home, or (to speak more properly) stays me here at home unkept; for call you that keeping for a gentleman of my birth, that differs not from the stalling of an ox? His horses are bred better . . . but I (his brother) gain nothing under him but growth for the which his animals on his dunghills are as much bound to him as I. . . . He lets me feed with his hinds, bars me the place of a brother, and as much as in him lies, mines my gentility with my education. (l.i.5-21)<sup>13</sup>

In this initial rant, Shakespeare digs several ideological footings that deserve careful attention. Most obviously, this opening speech establishes the ubiquitous nature/culture binary. In this particular instance, Orlando portrays anything beyond the implied gilded court as “unkept,” uncivilized, idle and slothful. By so otherizing the realm of the natural, Orlando gives voice to a theoretical structure which makes a rejection of the natural an imminent, if not already realized, possibility. Orlando recognizes that to be associated with the natural is to be rejected, or vice-versa—that to be rejected is to be associated with the natural. Either way, Orlando asserts his true identity—what he terms “the spirit of my father” (l.i.22)—as one that has nothing to do with horses, oxen and dunghills, and claims that herein—being associated with these animals—lies the problem of his existence. In other words, Orlando feels that Oliver's attempts to weld his lineage of ‘natural’ gentility to the purely natural environment are somehow undermining the essence of his given identity. In order to preserve his naturally noble identity, Orlando insists that the line separating crude nature from refined culture be preserved. Feeling that Oliver is threatening the clarity of this division, Orlando exclaims: “I will no longer endure it, though yet I know no wise remedy how to avoid it” (l.i.24-25). Orlando's opening lines attempt to re-assert the dividing line and leave no doubt as to which side he belongs.

Shakespeare layers this foundational version of nature during Orlando's speech in other, perhaps more subtle ways. In addition to detesting treatment that seems to be on par with the animals, Orlando complains of being kept “rustically at home”—kept, in other words, “like a peasant; cut off from civilized society.”<sup>14</sup> He rages about eating with the “hinds” (farm laborers). In a dialogue with Oliver shortly following his initial speech, Orlando protests, “My father charg'd you in his will to give me good education. You have train'd me like a peasant, obscuring and hiding from me all gentleman-like qualities” (l.i.67-70). Orlando, though probably totally unaware of doing so, conflates the peasant with the ox, the hind with the horse. In equating the peasant and farm laborer with the animals and dunghills, Orlando ensures that any assertion of a courtly and civilized identity, an identity he claims as his by birthright, means rejecting the peasant's and farm laborer's identities as equally valid. Thus, the natural expands to include

anything “uncivilized” or “uncourtly” whether it be human, animal or landscape. The peasants are just as much a part of an othered nature as the trees.

Though he seems to be rejecting the realm of the natural, it is extremely interesting to note that these opening lines are primarily contextualized by Orlando’s *need* to assert an identity. The natural<sup>15</sup> in this particular instance, then, is presented as being inextricably bound up with Orlando’s identity. Shakespeare’s particular version of nature as radically other plays, paradoxically, a crucial role in the formation/assertion of his characters’ identities. These concepts of identity and nature mix in ways that deserve (eco)critical attention. If, according to Chantal Mouffe, “every identity is relational and . . . the affirmation of a difference is a precondition for the existence of any identity (i.e. the perception of something ‘other’ than it which will constitute its ‘exterior’),”<sup>16</sup> then Orlando’s affirmation of the natural as difference serves a “necessary” step in his desire to form and establish an identity. Orlando would not be able to claim gentility without assigning, and consequently dismissing, something as an absence of gentility. The natural, for Orlando, embodies that absence and is, therefore, foreclosed to a certain extent.

The very nature of this othering process by which one gains an identity lends itself far too easily to destructive tendencies. In other words, the moment one designates the other as different solely for the sake of asserting an identity, that other loses its reality. By usurping nature for the purposes of claiming an identity, the natural ceases to be a nature that belongs to the land but a nature that belongs to the imagination. Edward Said elaborates upon the imaginative element in this othering process:

This universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar space which is ‘ours’ and an unfamiliar space beyond ‘ours’ which is ‘theirs’ is a way of making geographical distinctions that *can be* entirely arbitrary. I use the word ‘arbitrary’ here because imaginative geography of the ‘our land-barbarian land’ variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. It is enough for ‘us’ to set up these boundaries in our own minds; ‘they’ become ‘they’ accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from ‘ours.’<sup>17</sup>

Though the context of Said’s comment focuses upon the way Europe orientalizes the Orient, the same concepts aid in analyzing how Shakespeare naturalizes the natural. All of the characters in *As You Like It* follow Orlando’s lead in naturalizing nature by establishing a mental us-them geography, and do so in a number of different ways. Despite the variations, however, these different and sometimes contradictory versions of nature emanate from the original differentiating move: nature vs. culture.

The most readily apparent version of nature emerging from this “imaginative geography” is that of nature as an escape from civilization—perhaps the most standard motif of pastoral literature. The first depiction of the forest of Arden portrays an exotic-escapist landscape. In response to Oliver’s question about the current living condition and location of the exiled Duke Senior, Charles “the wrestler” informs that the Duke “is already in the forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England. They say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world” (I.i.114-19). The version of nature presented in Charles’ response embodies several common notions. First, his answer expresses the idea, articulated by William Cronon, that “by fleeing to the outer margins of settled land and society . . . an individual could escape the confining strictures of civilized life”<sup>18</sup>—a very literal interpretation of the nature-culture binary set forth by Orlando. Additionally, this particular picture paints the forest of Arden as a site of origins;

18 *The Upstart Crow*

in comparing the forest to the "golden world," Charles implies that by fleeing to Arden one returns to an edenic type of existence, humanity before corruption. Cronon terms this particular depiction the "powerful romantic attraction of primitivism" which centers in the belief that "the best antidote to the ills of an overly refined and civilized modern world [is] a return to simpler, more primitive living."<sup>19</sup> Either way one sees it, the forest, according to Charles, provides an arena where Duke Senior and his men may find their identities in an unrestricted atmosphere and return to their "roots." The forest is seen as a kind of contemporary fossil, a forest in a museum so to speak. The Duke and crew appropriate its present tense reality for the sake of "carelessly" discovering their origins.

While the forest similarly serves as an escape-hatch for Celia and Rosalind, they present a very different version of an otherized Arden. Celia, after Rosalind has been banished by her father, begs her cousin to "devise with me how we may flay, / Whither to go, and what to bear with us" (I.iii.100-01). Their journey into the forest is also a flight from the court. While their motives for escaping into the forest mirror those of Duke Senior and his posse, the nature of their journey is radically different. Rosalind and Celia do not depict Arden as a sanctuary comparable to that of the "golden world," but as a place full of danger:

*Rosalind.* Why, whither shall we go?

*Celia.* To seek my uncle in the forest of Arden.

*Rosalind.* Alas, what danger will it be to us,

Maids as we are, to travel forth so far!

Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold.

*Celia.* I'll put myself in poor and mean attire,

And with a kind of umber smirch my face;

The like do you. So shall we pass along

And never stir assailants.

*Rosalind.* Were it not better,

Because that I am more than common tall,

That I did suit me all points like a man?

A gallant curtle-axe upon my thigh,

A boar-spear in my hand, and—in my heart

Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will—

We'll have a swashing and a martial outside,

As many other mannish cowards have

That do outface it with their semblances. (I.iii.106-122)

Because their imaginative geography presents nature as a dangerous other, the us/them relationship becomes, in Chantal Mouffe's terms, "one of 'friend and enemy', i.e. one of antagonism."<sup>20</sup> Rosalind and Celia portray the natural as something to be conquered. The forest, therefore, must be encountered with a curtle-axe and boar-spear. While such depictions are not necessarily grounded in reality, they are real enough to cause Rosalind and Celia to alter their identities—at least on the level of "semblances." To a degree, they reinvent themselves. Though for entirely different reasons, this movement parallels that of the Duke and his men; both parties, by reducing the forest of Arden to an imaginative plane of existence, view it as a place where identities may be retrieved or reinvented in a devil-may-care fashion. Their actions contain no sense of integrity to either themselves or the landscape.

Orlando's flight to the forest is couched in similar preconceptions of danger. For him, Arden is an "uncouth forest" that can only yield things "savag" (II.vi.6, 7). With such an entrenched view of nature as enemy, it is no wonder he is shocked when he encounters the much friendlier version of nature presented by the Duke. When the Duke

responds graciously to Orlando's harsh demands for food—harsh because the “uncouth” forest demands it of him, or so he thinks—Orlando expresses his disbelief: “Speak you so gently? Pardon me, I pray you. / I thought that all things had been savage here, / And therefore put I on the countenance / Of stern commandment” (II.vii.106-09). Like Rosalind and Celia, Orlando's ideas about nature cause him to “put on” a certain countenance. But when, to his surprise, he discovers that the forest and its occupants are not wild and harsh like he had expected, the discovery sends him reeling. This moment holds the potential for helping Orlando see the arbitrariness and, therefore, falsity of the culture/nature binary—but no such luck. Orlando simply switches his allegiance from seeing nature as the enemy to seeing it as the golden world.

This strange intersection of two versions of Arden—one dangerous, the other golden—reveals precisely the ambivalence so characteristic of imagined geographies. Within a single play, the forest of Arden, like Europe's version of the Orient as described by Edward Said, alternates in the “mind's geography between being an Old World to which one returned, as to Eden or Paradise, there to set up a new version of the old, and being a wholly new place to which one came as Columbus came to America,”<sup>21</sup> where the fear of the unknown other was to be conquered. Because these versions of nature live within an imagined construct, they lose their apparent contradictions and instead exist in a fluid state. Rather than seeing these apparently contradictory versions of nature in *As You Like It* as unintelligible expressions of a schizophrenic playwright, it is important to recognize them as manifestations of a single latent ideology. Presenting the othered as both different and same is like seeing two sides of the same coin.

Regardless of which face nature is forced to wear—Old World or New World—depictions of an otherized landscape engender within the eye of the beholder the impulse to change it. The act of differenting something as totally other, ironically, creates the need to make it similar.<sup>22</sup> This proselytizing impulse is the site where the potential violence grounded in the us/them construct begins to emerge more clearly. The epistemological boundaries cease being merely inventions of the mind when they are imposed upon the realm of the physical. The characters in *As You Like It*, in exerting their different imagined versions of nature upon the real forest of Arden, commit, to varying degrees, acts of environmental violation.

The sequence of Touchstone's discussion with Corin captures perfectly this movement which originates in ambivalent ideas about the natural and then moves toward violating attempts to similarize the natural. The conversation begins thus:

*Corin.* And how like you this shepherd's life, Master Touchstone?  
*Touchstone.* Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught. In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is private, it is a very vild life. Now in respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious. (III.ii.11-19)

Touchstone's response is the epitome of the ambivalence previously discussed. He continues to oscillate, and then asks Corin to expound upon his natural philosophy. After doing so, Touchstone retorts, “Wast ever in court, shepherd?” (III.ii.33). When Corin responds in the negative, the seeds of violation which had, up to this point, grown primarily within Touchstone's mind, surface into reality. Touchstone rebukes:

*Touchstone.* Then thou art damn'd  
*Corin.* Nay, I hope.  
*Touchstone.* Truly, thou art damn'd, like an ill roasted egg, all on one

20 *The Upstart Crow*

side.

*Corin.* For not being at court? Your reason.

*Touchstone.* Why, if thou never wast at court, thou never saw'st good manners; if thou never saw'st good manners, then thy manners must be wicked, and wickedness is sin, and sin is damnation. Thou art in a parlous state, shepherd. (III.ii.35-44)

Although somewhat humorous, this banter between Corin and Touchstone lays bare the logical movement for wanting to exist in a wholly other landscape and, simultaneously, the need to convert that landscape and its occupants to the court. Though directed specifically at Corin, Touchstone's curse of damnation would, based upon the same theoretical grounds, seem to extend to anything not of the court. Touchstone wants all to be like himself.

Like Touchstone, most of the other characters move from within their ambivalent notions regarding the forest to a sometimes antagonistic desire to hear in Arden "echoes of themselves."<sup>23</sup> Duke Senior, for example, claims the cruel winds "feelingly persuade me what I am," and is able to find "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, / Sermons and good in every thing" (II.i.16-17). The quest for identity continues to be the foundation for every interaction with nature. The question, however, arises as to how much or what kind of self-discovery the Duke really experiences while in the forest of Arden: What does the wind teach Duke Senior about himself and what exactly does he read in the trees and brooks? According to Paul Willis, one gets "the impression that the Duke discovers good in the forest mainly because he seeks it; he seizes a positive frame of mind to soften his exile, and the forest gives it back to him on a platter."<sup>24</sup> The Duke's readings of nature are primarily self-reflexive. Because Arden exists in his own imagination, the Duke makes of it what he will: himself. Arden has no choice, really—and herein lies the fundamental violation of nature.

Like the Duke, Orlando, apparently recovered from his initial fear of nature, presents nature as text. His attempts to convert the natural, however, entail much more than a passive reading. Orlando sees nature as an uninscribed text waiting to be written. Pining away for Rosalind, he soliloquizes:

O Rosalind, these trees shall be my books,  
 And in their barks my thoughts I'll character,  
 That every eye which in this forest looks  
 Shall see thy virtue witness'd every where.  
 Run, run, Orlando, carve on every tree  
 The fair, the chaste, and unexpressive she. (III.ii.5-10)

Quite literally, the forest of Arden becomes a place where Orlando can impose images of himself by inscribing his beloved and desires for her into the trees. Upon reading these inscriptions, Rosalind, under the guise of Ganymede, tells Orlando that "there is a man haunts the forest, that abuses our young plants with carving 'Rosalind' on their barks; hangs odes upon hawthorns, and elegies on brambles; all, forsooth, [deifying] the name of Rosalind" (III.ii.359-363). Rosalind-Ganymede captures the essence of what the characters do to the forest: deify themselves and their companions by inscribing themselves, or others, upon the natural. The ecocritic's response to such literal acts of "deification" is not hard to perceive.

Seen as something to be converted, the forest of Arden, as David Young suggests, "can be likened to a special sort of mirror that reflects the subject under the guise of objects. It is not surprising that its viewers so seldom realize that they are seeing

themselves when they look at it."<sup>25</sup> Though critics like Young and Willis recognize that nature functions primarily as a mirror in *As You Like It*, they miss the implications of their observations entirely; neither notes the environmental implications of such a claim. Young, for example, persists in claiming that the nature presented so obviously as a mirror functions "as a means of examining and criticizing the life that has been abandoned."<sup>26</sup> And Willis asserts that the forest of Arden "provides a helpful aid to characterization."<sup>27</sup> How, though, does one examine and criticize life while staring at one's own reflection? Narcissus died unchanged and stagnant because he spent his entire life staring at the reflection of himself in the pond. Leaving civilization only to be mesmerized by one's own image hardly constitutes examining and criticizing an abandoned life. The myth of Narcissus, in this context, serves an entirely new ecocritical function. Captured by the projection of their own image in the mirror of the natural world, Narcissus, Duke Senior, Orlando or Touchstone could not possibly encounter any type of self-discovery—which is, according to Young, "an important theme in pastoral in general and *As You Like It* in particular."<sup>28</sup>

The desire to create, in William Cronon's terms, a "wilderness in their own image"<sup>29</sup> not only prevents any type of self-discovery, but opens the doors to fleshier forms of tyranny and exploitation. While *As You Like It* does not contain any extreme acts of environmental violation, there are a few instances where the beginnings of such may be detected. The play contains two particularly insightful examples of the exploitation of nature. The following discussion between Celia, Rosalind and Corin expresses the point:

*Rosalind.* I pray thee, if it stand with honesty,  
Buy thou the cottage, pasture, and the flock,  
And thou shalt have to pay for it of us.  
*Celia.* And we will mend thy wages. I like this place,  
And willingly could waste my time in it.  
*Corin.* Assuredly the thing is to be sold.  
Go with me; if you like upon report  
The soil, the profit, and this kind of life,  
I will your very faithful feeder be,  
And buy it with your gold right suddenly. (II.iv.91-100)

Rosalind and Celia reduce the natural to a commodity, something to be exchanged for gold, and do so quite flippantly. Rosalind and Celia's ability to buy the cottage and pasture so whimsically elicits a touch of suspicion. The suspicion grows when Corin, speaking about his previous master, complains of being "shepherd to another man, / . . . not shear[ing] the fleeces that I graze" (II.iv.78-79). The accusations of his master being a tyrant are easily transferred to Rosalind and Celia—though they are "legally" buying the property. Kept in place by their status as shepherds, among other things, Corin and Silvius will always be subject to the whims of tyrants, even if the tyrants are named Rosalind and Celia.

Though he might not be aware of doing so, Corin can be seen as one complaining not so much about his master specifically as about the general system that allows just anyone to exploit his existence as part of the natural realm. His status will not change after new owners take over. What Corin and critics fail to realize, however, is that the specific versions of nature held by Rosalind, Celia and others demand this kind of exploitation. Rosalind and Celia, in buying the cottage, are not buying nature as much as they are buying their *ideas* about nature, and neither is Corin selling nature as much as he is selling to the court's pastoral *ideas* about nature.<sup>30</sup> It is hard to imagine that Rosalind and Celia are willing to assume the responsibilities that accompany a cottage,

22 *The Upstart Crow*

pasture and flock of sheep. In their minds they are buying "entertainment" (II.iv.72), a place where they can "waste" their time. While the play doesn't comment further upon Rosalind and Celia's newly acquired property in the woods, it is unlikely that they will take any type of personal responsibility for the pasture and its sheep. It is much easier to take care of ideas; unfortunately, Rosalind and Celia are buying more than ideas. But, relegated to the realm of the imagination, nature is unable to "speak" for itself, to remind Rosalind and Celia in any way of what they are really doing. Their transaction, gold for land, demands and depends upon people like Corin and Silvius who interact with nature on their behalf, who fill in the gaps between their ideas and reality.

With flippancy similar to that of Rosalind and Celia, Oliver, at play's end, proposes a life with his soon-to-be wife Celia in the country. Telling Orlando of his plans, he says: "for my father's house and all the revenue that was old Sir Rowland's will I estate upon you [Orlando], and here live and die a shepherd" (V.ii.11-12). Although we do not receive further information as to *how* Oliver plans to "live and die a shepherd," the ecocritical implications of such plans are clear: he will exploit, like Rosalind and Celia, hired help. Certainly, Oliver doesn't understand what it takes to raise sheep, that to be a shepherd will require much more than he anticipates. Oliver, it seems, makes his decision based on aristocratic notions of the pastoral that, as Montrose observes, "conventionalize the relative ease of the shepherd's labors," notions which claim that, "compared to other agrarian tasks, sheep-farming requires very little investment of human resources."<sup>31</sup> Oliver, then, plans not so much to live and die a shepherd as he plans to live and die his *idea* of a shepherd. And while the play doesn't allow us to see the actualization of Oliver's stated plans, one can only assume that his *ideas* of the shepherd's life are quite incongruous with the harsher realities of shepherd-life and will, therefore, require exploitation to fill in the gaps.

While I do not wish, as stated at the beginning of the essay, to forward Shakespeare as an ecocritic before his time, *As You Like It* does contain a few moments that may be interpreted as potentially ecocentric despite being entrenched in a pastoral discourse. Jaques serves as this subversive voice on a few occasions. He, apparently, finds his compatriots in the woods guilty of the kind of tyranny and exploitation similar to that discussed above. While hunting with some of the other Lords who had retreated with Duke Senior to the forest, Jaques is touched by the cries of a wounded stag. Lamenting the way the deer has been (mis)treated, Jaques stands alone and curses his fellows. Mocking Jaques' quickness to "moralize" the wounded stag (II.i.44), the Lords report the scene to Duke Senior: "Thus most invectively he pierceth through / The body of [the] country, city, court, / Yea, and of this our life, swearing that we / Are mere usurpers, tyrants, and what's worse, / To fright the animals and to kill them up / In their assign'd and native dwelling-place" (II.i.58-63); in fact, Jaques swears that the Duke does "more usurp / Than doth [his] brother that hath banish'd" him (II.i.27-28). As Judy Kronenfeld observes, the "Duke enters into an exploitative relation with the forest . . . by engaging in the specifically noble leisure-time sport of hunting, which is traditionally opposed to the peaceful activities of shepherds who live in harmony with nature."<sup>32</sup> Jaques' is the voice that brings a possibility of a more ecocentered awareness to the Duke. The Duke and his men mock rather than heed, but the message is, nonetheless, delivered. Jaques is also the character that rebukes Orlando for physically defaming the trees with his love poetry: "I pray you mar no more trees with writing love songs in their barks" (III.ii.259-60). Jaques, more than any other courtly figure, opens himself to the reality of the natural realm. The wounded stag and carved trees exist, for Jaques, in a very temporal sense; they are more than parts of an imaginative geography. Though others have argued to the contrary,<sup>33</sup> I feel nature is not a mirror for Jaques but an autonomous entity that has the capability of displacing him.

Corin, like Jaques, offers another potentially subversive voice. Upon being "damn'd"

by Touchstone for never having been in court, Corin offers a convincing counter-argument. He reminds Touchstone that “those that are good manners at the court are as ridiculous in the country as the behavior of the country is most mockable at the court. You told me you salute not at the court but you kiss your hands; that courtesy would be uncleanly if courtiers were shepherds” (II.ii.45-51). Touchstone attempts to counter Corin’s logic but is less than persuasive. Corin’s rebuttal convinces us of the absurdity of imposing courtly lifestyles onto the forest, of transforming, as Young suggests, the “rural . . . to the urban.”<sup>34</sup> The natural, for Corin, is far more than a geography of the mind. As a shepherd who interacts with the natural on a daily basis, he sees nature in its most earthy and temporal sense. He knows, experientially, of the need for a behavior sensitive to one’s surroundings, actions that first consider the environment.

By opening themselves to the reality of nature, Jaques and Corin obfuscate the clarity of the culture-nature/court-forest binary line set forth by so many in the play. They don’t necessarily erase that line, but their attitudes as expressed in the moments cited above move toward a more ecocentric version of nature. Their mentality begins to challenge the ‘us’-and-‘them’ mentality that drives the rest of the characters to fear, convert, and/or exploit whatever lies on the other side of the line—nature in this case. They seem to embody at least the fundamental assumptions of Chantal Mouffe’s conclusion that

by resisting the ever-present temptation to construct identity in terms of exclusion, and recognizing that identities comprise a multiplicity of elements, and that they are dependent and interdependent, we can ‘convert an antagonism of identity into the agonism of difference’, . . . and thus stop the potential for violence that exists in every construction of an ‘us and them’.<sup>35</sup>

Nature, as one of these identity-constituting elements, should not be a narcissistic pond, a place in which one can admire him/herself, but a force with the potential to decenter, displace, and destabilize identity. Nature needs to be a site where the agonism of difference occurs, as it does on at least some level for Jaques and Corin. For them, the forest of Arden holds what Ed Abbey, one of America’s foremost nature writers, calls the “shock of the real.”<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately, the moments where this shock reaches the characters and its audience are few. The ending of the play serves only to perpetuate unhealthy ideas about nature. The forest of Arden is the site where the court’s problems are magically and ultimately solved. Marrying the four couples, Hymen, the god of marriage, states: “Peace ho! I bar confusion, / ‘Tis I must make conclusion / Of these most strange events” (V.iv.125-127). With similar magic and mystery, the woods solve the problem of Duke Frederick. Jaques De Boys, the second brother or Orlando and Oliver, tells of Duke Frederick’s experience in the forest,

Where, meeting with an old religious man,  
After some question with him, was converted  
Both from his enterprise and from the world,  
His crown bequeathing to his banish’d brother,  
And all their lands restor’d to [them] again  
That were with him exil’d. This to be true,  
I do engage my life. (V.iv.154-66)

The confusion and fears, then, of the entire play are suddenly eliminated by a magical

## 24 *The Upstart Crow*

marriage and mysterious conversion in the woods. Such events solidify already established feelings that nature lies beyond the reality of the court, is a place subject to entirely different laws, and that by simply by resorting to the forest all will be solved. These solutions, of course, are not accountable in any way to the forest as nature. Rather, they simply serve to preserve the separation between nature and culture, and, consequently, to prevent one's potential to feel the shock of the real.

I am not trying to suggest that only characters like Orlando, Oliver, Duke Senior, Rosalind and Celia have false ideas about nature being an otherized, escapist landscape while Corin and Jaques remain untainted by any ideas about nature. No, having ideas about nature is not inherently pernicious and does not always result in an environmentally unaware anthropomorphism; constructing our own version of nature is unavoidable. What I am trying to suggest, however, is that characters like Corin and Jaques are aware, at some fundamental level, that their ideas about nature are just that: ideas. With such an awareness, they do not insist on imposing *their* versions of nature upon the *real* nature. Rather, they open themselves to the possibilities of real self-knowledge—the kind that can't be gained by staring in the mirror. Because they don't hold too tightly to ideas about nature, their encounters with the natural always contain possibilities for displacement. For them, nature has, in Abbey's words, the "power of the odd and unexpected to startle the senses and surprise the mind out of their ruts of habit, to compel . . . a reawakened awareness of the wonderful—that which is full of wonder."<sup>37</sup>

Though there is no textual evidence that Corin and Jaques are at any time aware of their particular ideas about nature, I hope that looking at the versions of nature and their implications in *As You Like It* helps us understand some of the ways we see and, consequently, treat nature today. The realm of the natural, I think, continues to feel the repercussions of the versions of itself forwarded by such discourses as pastoralism. By relegating the natural to a geography of the imagination, the pastoral tradition, as seen specifically in this analysis of *As You Like It*, advocates environmental irresponsibility. If our geography of the mind has no ties to a geography of the land, we unknowingly deceive ourselves into feeling that we are only responsible for ourselves. The Duke, Orlando, Touchstone, Rosalind and Celia, by only concerning themselves with their versions of nature, all violate nature to different and varying degrees. Should they take an inventory of the implications of their own versions of nature, each would, I think, allow themselves the possibility of experiencing real self-knowledge and truer identities. They would be much more open to the decentering and displacing shock of the real that accompanies the natural. This agonism of difference, I hope to suggest, is always the starting point for environmental responsibility and, consequently, for a different, more helpful kind of self-discovery.

### Notes

1. Madeleine Doran, "Yet am I inland bred," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15 (1964), 99-114.
2. William W. Slights, "Nature's Originals: Value in Shakespearean Pastoral," *Shakespeare Survey*, 37 (1984), 69-74.
3. Madeleine Doran, p. 113.
4. David Young, *The Heart's Forest: A Study of Shakespeare's Pastoral Plays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 45.
5. J. C. Bulman, commenting upon the 1978 BBC production of *As You Like It*, notices that "for most who saw the production, the location that appealed to Messina [the producer] as 'wonderful' seemed far too earthbound, too specific for the elusive joys of the forest of Arden" ("*As You Like It* and the Perils of Pastoral," *Shakespeare on Television: An Anthology of Essays and Reviews*, ed. J. C. Bulman and H. R. Coursen [Hanover: University Press of New

- England, 1988], p. 174.)
6. Louis Adrian Montrose, "Of Gentlemen and Shepherds: The Politics of Elizabethan Pastoral Form," *ELH*, 50:3 (Fall 1983), 415-59.
  7. Montrose, p. 416.
  8. Montrose, p. 418.
  9. Richard Wilson, "Like the old Robin Hood: *As You Like It* and the Enclosure Riots," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 43:1 (Spring 1992), 1-19.
  10. Richard White, "Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?: Work and Nature," *Uncommon Ground*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 171-85.
  11. Montrose notes the role pastoral criticism plays in shaping ideas about nature in general: "Indeed, the rage for pastoral and pastoralization evident in Anglo-American literary studies during the past quarter century seems in itself to constitute a symptomatic pastoral impulse, an exemplary pastoral process: to write *about* pastoral may be a way of displacing and simplifying the discontents of the latter-day humanist in an increasingly technocratic academy and society; the study of pastoral may have become a metapastoral version of pastoral. The version of pastoral I shall propose here is predicated upon a recognition of the historical and social specificity of literary forms and formal categories—and, indeed, of the very concept of 'literature'—an acknowledgment that criticism is a cultural practice that ineluctably constructs the meanings it purports to transcribe" (Montrose, p. 415).
  12. Quoted in Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 25.
  13. William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, *Riverside Shakespeare*, eds. Herschel Baker, G. Blakemore Evans, and J.J.M. Tobin, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).
  14. Taken from the footnotes on page 403 of *Riverside Shakespeare*.
  15. The terms natural and nature will, for the rest of this discussion, refer to landscape, peasant, and/or animal, depending upon the context.
  16. Chantal Mouffe, "For a Politics of Nomadic Identity," *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*, eds. Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, Melinda Mash, Tim Putnam, George Robertson and Lisa Tickner (New York: Routledge, 1994), 105-13.
  17. Edward Said, p. 54.
  18. William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Uncommon Ground*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 69-90.
  19. William Cronon, p. 76.
  20. Chantal Mouffe, p. 108.
  21. Edward Said, p. 58.
  22. For example, when Christians classify a group of people as pagan, they not only establish that group as different, but simultaneously create the need to convert them.
  23. Paul J. Willis, "Tongues in Trees": The Book of Nature in *As You Like It*," *Modern Language Studies*, 18:3, (Summer 1988), 65-74.
  24. Paul Willis, p. 68.
  25. David Young, pp. 50-51.
  26. David Young, p. 66.
  27. Paul Willis, p. 71.
  28. David Young, p. 42.
  29. William Cronon, p. 79.
  30. Some of the ideas in this paragraph come from Jennifer Price's article "Looking for Nature at the Mall: A Field Guide to the Nature Company." Price begins her article posing poignant questions: "What is the Nature Company selling us, exactly? . . . But most of all, why have many of us been looking for nature at the mall?" (187). Price hypothesizes and argues that the Nature Company is ultimately selling to the ideas about nature held by the majority of middle class America: "The Nature Company bills itself as your direct connection to the natural world, but I'll argue it's more accurately a direct line to the meanings we've invested in nature" (189). She suggests that "to shop at the Nature Company is to experience familiar ideas tumbling from the shelves" (*Uncommon Ground*, ed. William Cronon [New York: W. W. Norton, 1996], 186-203). Interpreted in this way, then, to "shop" in the forest of Arden is to experience Shakespearean and other Renaissance versions of nature.
  31. Louis Montrose, p. 427. Montrose further reminds us that the "aristocratic and courtly culture of the Renaissance cleanse[d] the taint of agrarian labor from pastoral imagery, thus making possible a metaphorical identification between otiose shepherds and leisured gentlemen"

## 26 *The Upstart Crow*

(Montrose, p. 431).

32. Judy Z. Kronenfeld, "Social Rank and the Pastoral Ideals of *As You Like It*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 29 (1978), 333-48.
33. David Young, for example, claims that Jaques is essentially no different than the Duke in terms of seeing himself in nature. He writes: "Even as the Duke is declaring winds to be counselors and stones capable of sermons, we realize that he is finding in nature an image of his own tendency to moralize. Jaques is engaged in the same thing, and his forest differs as he himself differs from the Duke: he finds it a reflection of the world and an opportunity for invective" (Young, p. 51). Paul Willis reads Jaques in a similar way. Referring the similarity between Jaques' and the Duke's readings of nature, he says: "Thus side by side in the same scene are two different 'readings' of the Forest of Arden, one quite hopeful, another pessimistic. To begin with Jaques, it is easy to see that he reads himself into the landscape" (Willis, p. 68).
34. David Young, p. 44.
35. Chantal Mouffe, p. 111.
36. Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 37.
37. Abbey, pp. 36-37.

## James I, the Royal Prerogative, and the Politics of Authority in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*

by Walter S. H. Lim

The pulpit can be a powerful agency through which state authority extends its sway and control over the general life of the citizenry in early modern England. Through the preaching of homilies, policy can be enacted and conduct legislated in the dissemination of what constitutes right and wrong conduct. Week after week, modalities of proper behavior are repeatedly communicated for the benefit and edification of the churchgoer, the persistent admonitions and councils of wisdom emanating from the pulpit obtaining the effectiveness of a naturalized force and even mystified sanction. That is why it is especially significant and relevant that the issue of quietness is inextricable from the idea of good order in the proclamations and statutes of Tudor England. In 1554, for example, Parliament passed an act against seditious words and rumors, prescribing virtually Dantesque punishments for those who would dare speak out or write against the monarch, one among a sizeable number of proclamations and statutes linking order in the realm to the restraining of speech and discourse. In the Tudor period in general, but the Marian period in particular, words—especially "The Word"—were seen to have great power,

In Marian England, the line extolling the virtue of quietness emphasized by state authority is reinforced in a striking way in the writings of different men who had been imprisoned. It may be that those who wrote in exile—John Ponet, Christopher Goodman, and John Knox are some famous examples—were much more capable of speech and vocalization because of a certain "freedom" they enjoyed living outside of England.<sup>1</sup> In exile Ponet was able to present the startlingly radical argument that it is lawful to kill a tyrant in *A Shorte Treatise of Politike Power*. Unlike these men who wrote in exile, others like Thomas Cramner and John Bradford, both victims of Mary Tudor's despotism, accepted the importance of quietness when relating to the exercise of monarchical and state authority. For Cramner, who was burnt at the stake, private subjects are not meant to engage in reforming the political order; instead they are quietly to suffer what they cannot amend, a kind of Christian stoicism in a politically deterministic universe. Similarly, in a letter to his mother, John Bradford writes about the importance of giving obedience to the authorities governing civil society: neither the hand nor the tongue is to rebel; if the conscience does not permit obedience in a particular situation, then the only option left open is to lay your head on the block and quietly suffer the injustice visited on your body. While the mid-sixteenth century abounded in religious and political turnabouts and changes, one political virtue remained unchanged (at least from the monarchy's point of view): the praise of quietness.

When Elizabeth I became queen of England, she immediately recognized the importance of Thomas Cramner's twelve homilies, which had in fact fallen into swift disuse when Edward died and his Catholic sister Mary came to the throne. What Elizabeth did then was restore these homilies as official homilies of the Church of England in her 27<sup>th</sup> and 53<sup>rd</sup> injunctions to the clergy and laity.<sup>2</sup> One of these homilies (no. 12)—"An Homelie Agaynst Contencion and Braulynge"—specifically defines contention, strife, and debate as pernicious sins; it also ties reasoning and disputation to vainglory and absence of sobriety. The central exhortation here is to speak one thing, thus avoiding the dangers of dissension. Truth, being by definition unified, as Spenser's *Una* allegorically signifies, does not subject itself to open debate. By equating even

28 *The Upstart Crow*

reasoning and disputation with dissension, this homily applies a moral valence to all acts of speaking not officially sanctioned by the state. It places a high value on quietness, the paramount virtue for any authority anxious about its entrenched power. This anxiety about how speech and discourse can readily accommodate the impulse to disobedience against (legitimate) authority is fully fleshed out in the 21<sup>st</sup> homily against disobedience and willful rebellion, found in the second volume of homilies that appeared on August 1, 1563. There the unequivocal obedience the subject owes his/her monarch is presented as an intrinsic part of the divine ordering of creation. If disobedience is the primary cause of the theological fall, obedience is the very root and chief of all the virtues.

With its stress on the importance of obedience to the monarch, the 21<sup>st</sup> homily endorses the absolutist understanding that the power of the monarch is God given. Indeed the literate and textually prolific James I had himself written an extended defense of the sanctity of this particular idea of kingship in *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, published in England in 1603. For James the fact of the divinely sanctioned authority of the monarch is sustained by the inescapable analogy between the attributes of kingship and the attributes of God. What this means for the Stuart monarch is that the king is answerable to God alone for all his actions. The place of the subject is to accept the incontrovertible authority of the king without question or compromise. That unstinting allegiance applies even to a monarch who is a tyrant.

James's theory of the divine right of kings is understood in constitutional law in terms of the "royal prerogative," a concept defined by Sir William Blackstone in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* as "that special pre-eminence, which the king hath, over and above all other persons, and out of the ordinary course of the common law, in right of his regal dignity. It signifies, in it's [sic] etymology, (from *prae* and *rogo*) something that is required or demanded before, or in preference to, all others."<sup>3</sup> Blackstone also comments on the Stuart monarch's exercise of the prerogative:

ON the accession of King James I, no new degree of royal power was added to, or exercised by, him; but such a sceptre was too weighty to be wielded by such a hand. The unreasonable and imprudent exertion of what was then deemed to be prerogative, upon trivial and unworthy occasions, and the claim of a more absolute power inherent in the kingly office than had ever been carried into practice, soon awakened the sleeping lion. The people heard with astonishment doctrines preached from the throne and the pulpit, subversive of liberty and property, and all the natural rights of humanity. They examined into the divinity of this claim, and found it weakly and fallaciously supported: and common reason assured them, that, if it were of human origin, no constitution could establish it without power of revocation, no precedent could sanctify, no length of time could confirm it.<sup>4</sup>

In *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, James had made specific the following point on the monarch's relationship to the law: "kings were the authors and makers of the Lawes, and not the Lawes of the kings."<sup>5</sup> For James the ruler is *lex loquens*, the law speaking. *Rex est lex loquens* is a Roman maxim cited by James in his parliamentary speech of 1607, to which Sir Edward Coke responds: *Judex est lex loquens*. Richard Helgerson informs us that for Chief Justice Coke, the law should be spoken not by the king, but through "the very true resolutions, sentences, and judgments of the reverend judges and sages of the law themselves, who for their authority, wisdom, learning, and experience are to be honored, revered, and believed."<sup>6</sup> Helgerson qualifies further

Coke's particular understanding of the king's conception of himself as *lex loquens*: "Coke does not deny that English law is the king's. But it is the king's only as the kingdom is his, by due and lawful inheritance; it is not his to make or to alter."<sup>7</sup>

Implicit in the conception that the king is the source of law and basis of all judgment is the ideological understanding that the monarch sits in the throne of God: the foundational core of absolutist thought. Anointed by God and enjoying the divine sanction, the monarch is God's representative in time. As the source and voice of law, the monarch transcends the social institutions set in place for the legislation and interpretation of law, functions that belong respectively to Parliament and the courts. He is finally also the center holding together the entire social order: distributing lands, erecting states, and establishing the forms of government. The power of the absolutist monarch as defined by James appears to be total: there is no space (theoretically) left open for the oppressed subject to rise up and challenge the authority of the prince, even if God's anointed one should turn out to be a bloody tyrant.

If for Coke James's absolutist embodiment poses a dire threat to the common or judge-centered law that is the mark of the English nation, for Parliament the prerogative exercised by the monarch also appears often to respect no boundaries. The Stuart monarch's mystification of absolutist authority therefore found a critic in the institution of Parliament. In James's reign (1603-25) four Parliaments met in twenty-two years, one lasting for nearly seven years. It is well known that the king disliked and never understood Parliament as an institution; in fact he had been especially reluctant to summon Parliament at all.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, as Alvin Kernan has drawn to our attention, the first Stuart monarch became entangled in English law from the very start with the meeting of his first Parliament; on that occasion, the Crown had tried to exercise its prerogative by declaring void a Buckinghamshire election to the House of Commons.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately James's conflict with Parliament found its roots in his particular conception of, and belief in, divine-right kingship. It is interesting to note that Elizabeth I herself had experienced tensions with Parliament, especially when she came under pressure from the House of Commons to acknowledge their right to initiate legislation. When Parliament in Elizabeth's reign, pressured by the Puritan constituency, emerged with one proposal after another relating to the Church, the queen responded by insisting that matters relating to the Church came under her sole jurisdiction as its supreme governor. She also directly forbade Parliament to encroach upon the sacred prerogative of the Crown.

In 1610, one year before the first performance of *The Winter's Tale* took place at Whitehall, dispute arose between the Crown and Parliament over, among other things, proclamations.<sup>10</sup> The Parliament of that year had specifically complained about James's multiplication of proclamations, saying that there exists a general fear among the people that proclamations will grow by degrees and increase to the strength and nature of laws.<sup>11</sup> James I referred this matter to the judges, and their opinion was summarized by Coke who declared that "the King by his proclamation or other ways cannot change any part of the common law, or statute law, or the customs of the realm.... Also it was resolved, that the King hath no prerogative, but that which the law of the land allows him."<sup>12</sup> Earlier on in 1607, the king's claim to dispense justice in his own right, and without the judges, was dispelled in *Prohibitions Del Roy (Case of Prohibitions)*: in the Resolution of the Judges, Coke had declared that because the king was not educated in the law, and the law was an area that required long study and experience, he was in no position to adjudicate justice.<sup>13</sup> *Prohibitions Del Roy* (1607) left the administration of justice to the judges by deciding that the monarch could no longer personally dispense justice. Another landmark case in Jacobean England redefining the relationship between monarchical prerogative and the exercise of law is the so-called *Case of Proclamations* (1611), where it was held that the monarch could not alter the law of the land by proclamation, possessing only those prerogatives allowed him by the law of the

30 *The Upstart Crow*

land. It is no surprise that things should come to a head between James I and his Chief Justice in 1617 when, in opposition to the king's order that the Court of King's Bench adjourn proceedings, Coke declared the command was contrary to law and to the oath of the judges. Coke's insistence on the point that the king was subject to law got him dismissed from the Bench.<sup>14</sup> Francis Bacon, the lawyer who was Coke's junior by nine years and his great antagonist, played an instrumental role in bringing about the Chief Justice's dismissal.

## I

Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* makes use of language that, when looked at carefully, alludes not only to James's tension filled relationship with the courts, but also to his disastrous relationship with Parliament. When hearing the counsel and advice of different members of the court affirming Hermione's innocence, Leontes declares:

Why, what need we  
Commune with you of this, but rather follow  
Our forceful instigation? Our *prerogative*  
Calls not your counsels, but our natural goodness  
Imparts this; which if you-or stupefied  
Or seeming so in skill-cannot, or will not,  
Relish a truth like us, inform yourselves  
We need no more of your advice. The matter,  
The loss, the gain, the ord'ring on't, is all  
Property ours. (2.1.161-70; italics mine)<sup>15</sup>

Shakespeare portrays Leontes's conception of his authority with reference to the constitutional idea of the "prerogative." The exercise of the prerogative was, in James's understanding of monarchical absolutism, inseparable from the mystery of the king's power.<sup>16</sup> In his first appearance before the Star Chamber in 1616, James had said in strikingly unambiguous terms: "Incroach not upon the Prerogative of the Crowne: If there fall out a question that concernes my Prerogative or mystery of State, deale not with it."<sup>17</sup> With the evocation of obvious themes and motifs possessing immediate and material currency in the political world of Jacobean England, *The Winter's Tale* provocatively invites the recognition at some level of the conflict transpiring between the monarch, his Parliament, and the courts. Topical and political analogies suggestively link what goes on in the world of the play to identifiable events in James's court. In the same way that Leontes is, for example, challenged and made subject to scrutiny by members of his court, James's authority as the source of law is scrutinized by the judges who uphold the common law and by Parliament.

In Shakespeare's play, Leontes invokes the royal prerogative to legitimate his unmediated access to the "truth" of Hermione's infidelity. The king occupies a transcendent space capable of producing its own infallible judgment on affairs in the domestic and, by necessary implication and extension, civil and political realms. In act 3, scene 2, Leontes openly declares that Hermione has been untrue to the marriage bed and figures himself as the voice of law, ferreting out evil and bringing it to light. As the source of law itself, Leontes is also the one responsible for pronouncing judgment and meting out punishment: "so thou [referring to Hermione] / Shalt feel our justice; in whose easiest passage / Look for no less than death" (3.2.89-91). In her turn Hermione identifies her husband's tyranny in juridical terms: "'Tis rigor and not law" (3.2.114). Leontes's condemnation of Hermione takes place in court and in the form of a trial: he refers to

the proceedings as "a session" (2.3.202) and as "sessions" (3.2.1 and 3.2.141). Referring to the time and space set apart for a trial, the use of the word "sessions" in *The Winter's Tale* also alludes interestingly to the discourse of parliamentary proceedings, evoking the quarrels familiarly known to be transpiring between James I and his Parliament.

In believing that he is in possession of the truth, Leontes finds himself isolated from practically everyone else. No person in the court believes even for a moment that Hermione is guilty. (Antigonus is in fact the only character who entertains such a possibility.) There is also no single flatterer, no Guildenstern or Rosencrantz figure, in Leontes's court who can be easily prevailed upon to do his bidding. Leontes's remarkable isolation allows the play to amplify his willful blindness. What is distinctly clear to everyone else remains completely opaque to him. In this condition, Leontes finds himself challenged by strong and vocal women. Paulina, Antigonus's wife, shows her fearlessness when imposing on the jailer to gain her access to the imprisoned Hermione (act 2, scene 2). In act 2, scene 3, she barges into Leontes's presence with the newborn Perdita. Paulina describes what she is doing by referring to the substantiality of presence, one opposed to the cowardly lords and servants "That creep like shadows by him" (2.3.34). Specifically she figures herself as a "physician" (2.3.54) who "come[s] with words as medicinal as true, / Honest as either, to purge him of that humor / That presses him from sleep" (2.3.37-39). Where Helena in All's *Well that Ends Well* acts as a physician to heal the French king of his debilitating fistula, Paulina identifies herself as a physician who possesses the ability to perform a curative function. The king is not physically but spiritually and morally ill; his "diseased" body must be attended to if any recuperation is to be effectuated in the fractured state of the court. One thing Paulina effects in figuring herself as physician to the king is to reverse the familiar royal office of healing that belongs to the monarch. The service and ceremony of bringing the sick to be healed by the mystical touch of the monarch is turned inside out in this play because here it is the head of the body politic that is ill. Paulina's physic lies in the truth of her words. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, she tells the king that he has done wrong. In her defense of the truth, Paulina declares her refusal to be commanded by any man who insists on robbing her of her honor, challenging directly the prerogative ratified by a patriarchal culture and mystified by absolutist ideology.

Paulina's truth-telling function places her not only within the prophetic tradition, but also within the sphere of direct-speaking courtiers and counselors. In the world of the court, the courtier and counselor are privileged individuals, whose proximity to the center of power that is the monarch enables them to engage in truth telling and direct speaking. Part of the role of the courtier is to help the prince attain to virtue when he has gone astray. As Baldassare Castiglione highlights in *The Book of the Courtier*, the courtier's service to his master requires him to

breake his minde to him, and alwaies enforme him franckly of the truth of every matter meete for him to understand, without fear or perill to displease him. And when hee knoweth his [referring to the prince's] minde is bent to commit any thing unseemely for him, to be bold to [oppose] him in it, and to take courage after an honest sorte at the favor which he hath gotten him through his good qualities, to dissuade him from every ill purpose, and to set him in the way of vertue.<sup>18</sup>

Sometimes the line separating the dispensing of counsel from engagement of deeply personal criticism can get dangerously blurred, to the detriment of the courtier who is then compelled to bear the full brunt of the prince's wrath.

32 *The Upstart Crow*

In Shakespeare, the well-known example of a subject who finds himself compelled to vocalize against the king's arbitrary exercise of justice is the Earl of Kent in *King Lear*. Wanting to get the aged monarch to see things with greater clarity, Kent willingly steps in between "the dragon and his wrath" (1.1.122). He speaks the truth despite Lear's anger and his threats:

What wouldest thou do, old man?  
 Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak  
 When power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's bound  
 When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state,  
 And in thy best consideration check  
 This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgment,  
 Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,  
 Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds  
 Reverb no hollowness. (1.1.146-54)

Kent defines his position as truth-teller in relation to the context of service he owes his master. His idea of service is total, encompassing both social and theological definitions. It is his indelible inscription in a cultural conception of service, with its implicit and explicit understanding of a hierarchical ordering of society and the universe, that impels him to return from exile almost immediately and assume disguise to serve his old master. Shakespeare clearly intended his audience to celebrate the figure of Kent in this play, not least because the faithful earl embodies a conception of service crucial for society not to degenerate into the order of the beasts.

In *Resistant Structures*, Richard Strier has offered the provocative reading that Kent's paradoxical enactment of service through resistance finds its ideological resonance within the discourse of radical political thought, specifically that associated with George Buchanan.<sup>19</sup> Buchanan, James I's famous old tutor, was by far the most important theorist of popular sovereignty, supporting the right of a people to repudiate even a legitimate prince. According to the radical Buchanan, the fact that the ruler is created by the people as a body logically means that this same people can shake off whatever *Imperium* they have imposed on themselves. In Buchanan's *De iure regni*, produced to James's great consternation, whoever obeys a tyrannical and evil monarch is the king's greatest enemy. If indeed the Earl of Kent's practice of virtuous disobedience in *King Lear* gestures allusively in the direction of Buchanan's political discourse, so does Paulina's in *The Winter's Tale*. In Strier's formulation, there are structural (political) homologues linking Kent's and Paulina's roles. Shakespeare's Paulina specifically portrays herself as a loyal, resistant, and outspoken subject. Assuming the role of prophetic truth-teller, she pronounces that the subject who condones the monarch's "follies" (2.3.128) does him no good.

On the surface Leontes's "follies" are linked to his jealousy. But *The Winter's Tale* also forges deep links between this jealousy and the exercise of (political) tyranny. Leontes breaks trust and abuses the royal prerogative. His problem can be said to lie with and in his "thoughts," the category within which Francis Bacon situates "suspicion." Bacon has written that suspicions "dispose kings to tyranny, husbands to jealousy, wise men to irresolution and melancholy."<sup>20</sup> In his terms, tyranny is the political counterpart of the domestic demon that is jealousy. When Leontes finds that his suspicion leads to an all-consuming jealousy, he resorts to judging and punishing his wife in his capacity as king. Infidelity, the transgression of the sanctity of the marriage bed, becomes a political crime. Possessing a power that cannot be readily and easily contested, the monarch is able to write any act he finds offensive as a political transgression. Because of the Godlike power he enjoys, and which he often enacts in the literal and symbolic

rituals of marking his presence on the tortured body of the subject, not many (understandably) are keen to challenge the authority of the prince.

In *The Winter's Tale*, however, two remarkable women stand up to the tyranny of the monarch. Resistance to tyrannical authority comes not only from Paulina, but also from Hermione. Upon hearing her indictment, Hermione declares her innocence and confronts Leontes's wrongful accusation with toughness and striking eloquence: "Sir, / You speak a language that I understand not" (3.2.79-80); "Sir, spare your threats. / The bug which you would fright me with, I seek" (3.2.91-92); "if I shall be condemn'd / Upon surmises (all proofs sleeping else / But what your jealousies awake), I tell you / 'Tis rigor and not law" (3.2.111-14). Hermione is saying here that the use of legal instruments, even if by the monarch himself, cannot and should not be extricated from the requirements of *true* justice; there exists a serious perversion of justice when punishment is meted out irresponsibly by a monarch who lacks the capacity to judge right. Transposing onto a framework of radical political thought Hermione's critique of Leontes's handling of the law in his exercise of the royal prerogative, we obtain an effective interrogation of a central tenet defining absolutist ideology: that the king is the transcendent source of law and the fountain of justice itself. Paulina's and Hermione's presence infuses the play with a level of (potential) political meaning that cannot be ignored.

The king responds to the discourse of truth telling by simply asserting that he alone is in possession of a total knowledge of the truth, and also by attempting to contain the unruly articulations of the women by reaffirming the inviolability of patriarchal/monarchical authority. He reacts violently to Paulina's verbalization of the truth in act 2 by specifically emphasizing her inability to exercise restraint in speech. In so doing, Leontes ratifies the cultural view that a woman needs to be submissive—a motif reiterated as a commonplace refrain in the conduct books, domestic handbooks, marriage sermons, and homilies of early modern England—a virtue that manifests itself in the ideal of quietness. Because Paulina is anything but docile, she is conceived of as a shrew, a scold, and "A mankind witch!" (2.3.68). When Leontes furiously demands that Antigonus control his disruptive wife in act 2, scene 3, he invokes the cultural discourse that deems normative the managing of the body of the rebellious and transgressing woman by both state and community. But much to Leontes's surprise, the truth speaking Paulina is not about to be cowed by any male bully.

Hermione's and Paulina's critique of Leontes's tyranny directs itself at the central assumptions of both absolutist ideology and cultural patriarchalism.<sup>21</sup> Vocalizing the unshakeable ground of her innocence, Hermione relates to Leontes not only as her husband, but also as the source of law that constitutes James I's conception of his own divine-right kingship. Like Leontes, then, Hermione herself relocates the problems of a conjugal relation in a discursive domain that is identifiably political. In *Shakespeare's Monarchies*, Constance Jordan identifies how, in Shakespeare's romances, the condition of the familial economy embeds political significations and registers the relation between ruler and subject in Jacobean England. Referring to *The Winter's Tale*, Jordan perceives that Leontes's refusal to accept the ability of his subjects, indeed even his wife, to articulate themselves and have agency, points to an aspect of absolutist authority that poses serious danger to the health of the body politic.<sup>22</sup> Leontes may not desire his wife to have agency and to possess an autonomous subjectivity manifested in the individual capacity for vocalization, but Hermione stands firm and unflinching in her daring to declare the truth. Hermione's declaration of her innocence interrogates the king's implicit assumption that as the source of law itself, he can never err because he enjoys uninterrupted access to the truth. But in *The Winter's Tale*, the one man who insists he is in possession of perfect vision is also associated with madness—"you are mad," (2.3.72) pronounces Paulina. The meaning of Leontes's "madness" is not coded in the private space of the bedroom and the conjugal relation, but in the public space

34 *The Upstart Crow*

of a king's relation to his court. There is no private space in *The Winter's Tale*: frictions between the king and his queen are exposed to the full view of the world.

In early modern England the family signifies as a microcosmic unit of the larger macrocosmic society, so that the concept of a private space that we today associate with the domestic household does not quite apply. The ordered household augurs well for the health of the larger body politic. The point has often been made that what makes for order within the household is the proper inscription of the husband and the wife in a hierarchical economy, where the first assumes natural domination over the other. This hierarchical ordering is enforced by none other than Scripture itself. Saint Paul had specifically said that wives are to submit themselves to their husbands because that is what God's divine wisdom has ordered (Eph. 5:22). Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, we read: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." Any threat to the (natural) order of the family—as when a woman behaves in a way that reveals a rebellious spirit or disruptive temper—needs to be addressed and rectified, either through the discipline of taming carried out by the husband himself, or by certain regulatory processes enacted by the community. Karen Newman has drawn our attention to the participation of the community in such regulation and disciplining, as in the ceremonial enactment of the skimmington.<sup>23</sup> In a typical skimmington, an early village community aware of a shrewish or adulterous wife would, with the accompaniment of a loud improvised band, masquerade as one of the offending spouses—the husband of a shrew or adulterer not exempt—or carry effigies. Assembling outside the house of the offending parties, it would occasionally break in and beat the wife, or duck her in the village pond.<sup>24</sup> This management of the transgressing woman through public shaming is inseparable from the production of spectacle.

This ceremonial castigation of a household that shows evidence of domestic upheaval is possible within a cultural economy where the boundaries separating the (private) domestic space from a larger public one are more permeable and much less distinct. Familial codings of cultural and political significations are found not only in the village homestead, but also in the court of monarchs. To assuage anxieties relating to her unmarried status and to forge her own distinct symbolic identity, Elizabeth I had invoked the matrimonial context when she declared herself bound unto her husband that is the kingdom of England. In his first speech to Parliament, James I rewrote the symbolics of the matrimonial relationship employed by Elizabeth by figuring himself as the husband and the kingdom over which he rules as his wife: "I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife, I am the Head, and it is my Body."<sup>25</sup> In early modern England, the idea of the family is politically resonant. The family, as Jonathan Goldberg has argued, "functioned in the Renaissance to reproduce society."<sup>26</sup> Goldberg elaborates: "On the one hand, the family is a mirror, alike in structure to the larger structures of society. But its aim, procreation, is reproductive in a social sense as well. Biology is transformed, and the family serves society. The body is inscribed in a social system. . . . The family/state analogy is part of that Renaissance habit of mind to think analogically and to explain events by understanding their origins."<sup>27</sup> If not being married, then, is a political issue for Queen Elizabeth, being fractiously and unhappily married to his queen is James I's personal experience of domestic upheaval. And this domestic upheaval in the Stuart court likewise does not enjoy any protective shielding afforded by the conception of a private space. The Stuart monarch's problem-filled relationship with Queen Anne is general public knowledge.

Part of the reason for James and Anne's marital friction was the king's absorption by his Scottish favorites and obvious sexual attraction toward the young men of his court. A feisty character in her own way, the queen took the opportunity to show up her husband

in a less than favorable light by commissioning Ben Jonson to write *The Masque of Blackness*. This masque was performed on Twelfth Night in 1605 at Whitehall, indexing a symbolic readjustment of the balance of power existing between herself and her husband. The subject of the Jonsonian masque centers on the quest of Niger's daughters for a beauty that only England itself can bestow. Participating in this masque, Anne and her ladies painted themselves in black, rejecting the visors conventionally worn by courtiers when impersonating black characters. The effect of watching the queen in black "skin" proved to be disconcerting.<sup>28</sup> On one hand, *The Masque of Blackness* affirms Albion's cultural transcendence: it involves a group of African women journeying to England in order to be made white. On the other hand, Anne's choice of the subject of African females and an African queen carried powerful connotations of female autonomy linked to the disturbing motif of ethnic diversity. The masque also concludes with the queen and her retinue, still with a blackened face, setting off for the sea as to a ritual of purification undertaken by women. The sanctioning figure of the king and prerogative of patriarchalist authority is excluded from this gender-coded symbolism. Even in its sequel, *The Masque of Beauty*, the person who transforms the ladies' island into an earthly paradise is not the king but Ethiopia, their queen.

In *The Winter's Tale*, the king and queen's domestic problems are likewise transparent and open to scrutiny. I have said that these problems contain political significations. What is of deep interest in Shakespeare's play is its distinct meditation on issues relating to the subject of tyranny, one inscribed in the dramatization of Leontes's flagrant exercise of arbitrary power. As a tyrant, Leontes fits precisely into Aristotle's classic definition found in the *Politics*: there is a "kind of tyranny, which is the most typical form, and is the counterpart of the perfect monarchy. This tyranny is just that arbitrary power of an individual which is responsible to no one, and governs all alike, whether equals or betters, with a view to its own advantage; not to that of its subjects, and therefore against their will."<sup>29</sup> Leontes's insistence that he is right and everyone else is wrong amounts to the exercise of an arbitrary and tyrannical power. In Shakespeare's play this arbitrary exercise of tyrannical power does not go unchallenged: it is interrogated by two highly vocal and expressive women, as well as by the skepticism of a disbelieving court. Paulina's and Hermione's criticism of the king's tyranny appears to dramatize Aristotle's statement in the *Politics* that "No freeman willingly endures such a government."<sup>30</sup> The king in *The Winter's Tale* is far from being the infallible source and font of justice.

As Chief Justice Coke puts it, the monarch himself is subject to the common law and the laws of the land, a conception in constitutional law that in fact critiques the absolutist understanding that the monarch is an analogy of God in the context of the secular realm. We never forget that in *Measure For Measure*, a play that James I apparently loved because of Shakespeare's portrayal of the duke of dark corners accessing the "truth" indirectly, the duke working behind the scenes came uncomfortably close to losing control over the unfolding of events. This play on the relationship between law and mercy taps into the subject matter of an advice given by James I to his son Prince Henry in the *Basiliikon Doron*, in which indirectness is recognized as an indispensable tool of kingship. Specifically the monarch instructed the prince on the necessity always to spy on the court and be fully cognizant of the goings on of state and civil society. If in *Measure For Measure*, Duke Vincentio is a character who resembles in some ways the Stuart monarch, there is also the implicational subtext that the king who is the overseeing source of justice is not always in absolute control. Shakespeare's depiction of Leontes as a kind of madman engages and interrogates the idea that the monarch, by virtue of his possession of the royal prerogative, is above the law because he is its very source.

In act 5 of *The Winter's Tale*, the union that arguably subsumes the play's engagement with sensitive, even controversial, political topics within the affirmation of

36 *The Upstart Crow*

familial reconciliation does not finally obliterate the narrative that codes a radical political understanding of the relationship existing between subject and monarch.<sup>31</sup> Even as *The Winter's Tale* inscribes ideas traceable to radical political thought, such as those associated with the discourse of George Buchanan, it also appears to register an interest in the shifting power relations taking place between the monarch, the courts, and Parliament. The spirit of reconciliation with which the play ends can never obliterate the traces of a radical political understanding of the relationship between monarch and subject.

## II

Shakespeare's interest in the complex relationship between the different foci of authority in contemporary society—crown, Parliament, and the courts—registers his awareness of stresses perceivable in Jacobean England's constitutional framework. Parliament would, in the not too far future, assume momentous significance as an institution that would play a central role in challenging the absolutist authority of the monarch. Even as James I insisted on the transcendent authority of the monarch as the source of law, Parliament began flexing its muscles and insisted, in its turn, on the supremacy it possessed to make laws and enact statutes. Like James I who found himself running counter to Parliament and his Chief Justice by mystifying the royal prerogative, Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* finds himself alone in his court when he insists he is in possession of the truth. But unlike Leontes whose years of remorseful grieving lead to the harmonizing closure of reconciliation, James's continuing antagonism toward Parliament and the judges who make the common law contributed to the monarch's growing rift with powerful forces at work in society. In the Puritan Revolution that led to Charles Stuart's execution, this rift was understood in terms of a fracturing of the social contract between ruler and governed.

National University of Singapore

## Notes

1. For a cogent study of the political ideas of Ponet, Goodman, and Knox, see Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, especially 102-03 and 100-12. For a comparative reading of Ponet and Milton's radical politics, see Walter S. H. Lim, "Radical Politics in Ponet's *A Shorte Treatise of Politike Power* and Milton's *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*," *Prose Studies* (forthcoming).
2. These details on the history of the homilies are from Ian Lancashire's introduction to the editions of *The Elizabethan Homilies*, in the University of Toronto's *Renaissance Electronic Texts* (<http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/elizhomintro3.html>). The text I used for my reading of the homilies is "Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547)" AND "A Homily Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion (1570)", ed. Ronald B. Bond (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).
3. William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1766-69), 1:239.
4. Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4: 429.
5. Charles Howard McIlwain, ed., *The Political Works of James I*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1918), 62.
6. Cited in Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 84. For an imposing reading of how Sir Edward Coke's introduction of the law and his explanation of its special place in the life of England's commonwealth cannot be separated from the project of figuring both the legal community and the nation, see 65-104. For Coke judge-centered law was the very mark of

the English nation and an intrinsic part of its cultural formation.

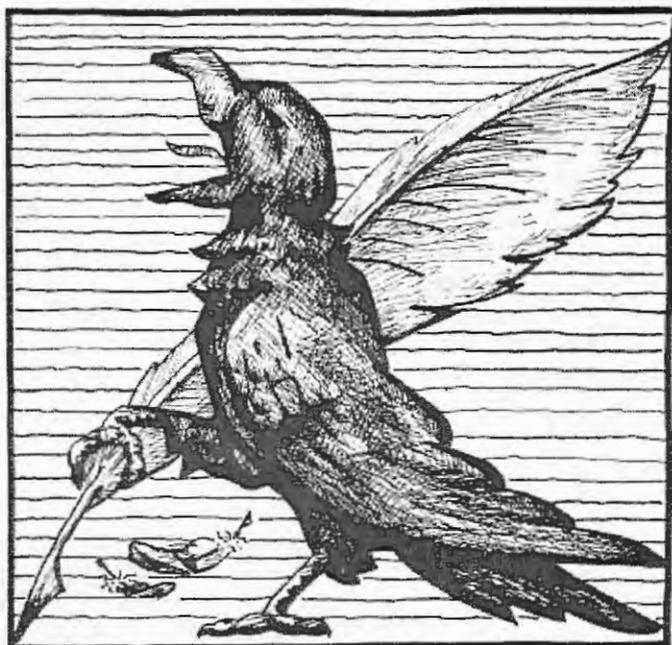
7. Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, 84.
8. Roger Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart Britain: 1471-1714* (1964; reprint, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), 232.
9. Alvin Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theater in the Stuart Court, 1603-1613* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 53.
10. Kernan offers a useful theatrical calendar of performances done by the King's Men at James I's court in *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright*, 203-08.
11. Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart Britain*, 233.
12. Hilaire Barnett, *Constitutional and Administrative Law* (1995; reprint London: Cavendish Publishing, 1996), cited on 153.
13. Barnett, *Constitutional and Administrative Law*, 154.
14. Helgerson qualifies: "Coke does not deny that English Law is the king's. But it is the king's only as the kingdom is his, by due and lawful inheritance; it is not his to make or alter." See *Forms of Nationhood*, 84.
15. All Shakespeare quotations are from G. Blakemore Evans, textual ed., *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).
16. For an important account of how the study of the Roman law exerted a palpable influence over the development of political and constitutional thought in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, see Brian P. Levack, "Law and Ideology: The Civil Law and Theories of Absolutism in Elizabethan and Jacobean England," in *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture*, ed. Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 220-41. Legal thinkers such as Alberico Gentili and Dr. John Cowell, the well-known Regius Professor of Civil Law at Cambridge, helped crystallize the conception of the monarch's prerogative as an extraordinary power free from the law. Heavily influenced by the *Corpus juris civilis*, the great code of Roman law produced in the reign of Justinian, Gentili produced the *Regales disputationes tres* in 1605, reputedly the most absolutist piece of writing in the early seventeenth century. Cowell himself promulgated the absolutist view that the king of England was above the law by his absolute power.
17. McIlwain, ed. *The Political Works of James I*, 332.
18. Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby (1928; reprint, London: J.M. Dent, 1975), 261.
19. See Richard Strier's treatment of *The Winter's Tale* in *Resistant Structures: Particularity, Radicalism, and Renaissance Texts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 200-02.
20. Francis Bacon, *The Essays*, ed. John Pitcher (London: Penguin Books, 1985): see "Of Suspicion," 158.
21. Here I am unable to align myself with Yachnin's reading of the significance of Shakespeare's portrayal of the women in *The Winter's Tale*. In the case of Shakespeare, Yachnin argues, the powerlessness of the commercial theater is coded in the links forged between theater and femininity. The feminization of artistic power tied to the production of plays specifically rewrites Shakespearean theater itself "as powerless with regard to the 'masculine' world of the state." See Paul Yachnin, *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 145. When reading Hermione's and Paulina's significance as vocalizing women in *The Winter's Tale*, Yachnin finds that the female power they represent in their capacity for articulation and in their directing of events never exists outside of the controlling space of a male interpretive economy; the position of these women is finally no different from that of the powerless theater in its relation to the masculine world of political power. For a reading of Shakespeare's "feminization of theatrical power," see especially *Stage Wrights*, 129-52.
22. For the purposes of our discussion on *The Winter's Tale*, see Constance Jordan, *Shakespeare's Monarchies: Ruler and Subject in the Romances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 1-33 and 107-46.
23. Karen Newman, *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 15-31.
24. Newman, *Fashioning Femininity*, 27.
25. McIlwain, ed. *The Political Works of James I*, 272.
26. Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne*,

38 *The Upstart Crow*

and their Contemporaries (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 87.

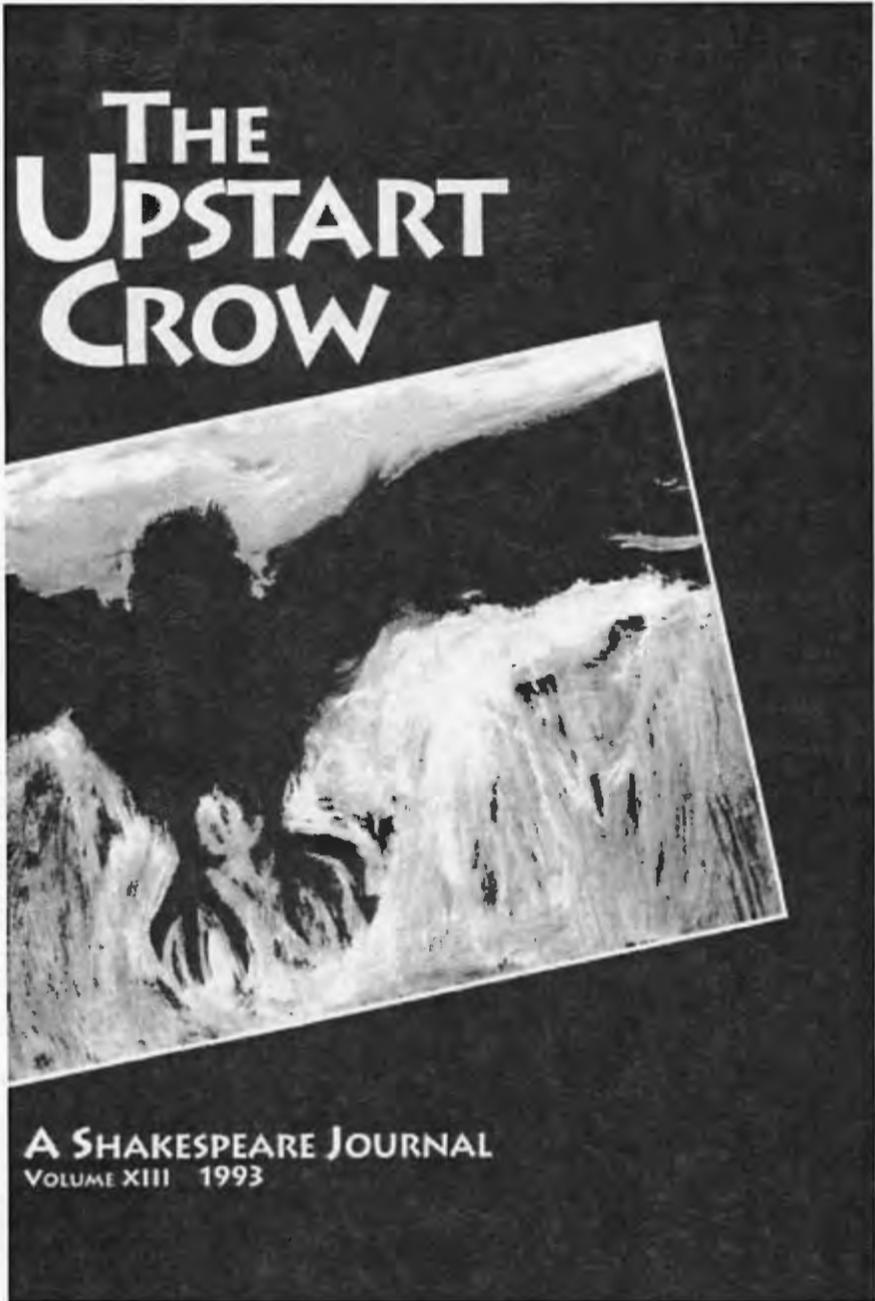
27. Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature*, 87.
28. David Riggs offers a reading of the gender politics embedded in *The Masque of Blackness* in *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 118-24 and 147-48. The gesture made in the direction of affirming a kind of symbolic female autonomy in *The Masque of Blackness* finds its place in the backdrop of Jacobean court life in which Anne bitterly resented the clique of Scottish favorites who had taken over her place in the king's affections: (123). Anne, Riggs tells us, will not hesitate to enjoy a laugh at her husband's expense: (124). Compared to *Blackness*, *The Masque of Beauty* is even more pronounced in its celebration of a Platonized female sexuality. For a reading of the political significations of *The Masque of Blackness* and its sequel, *The Masque of Beauty*, enacted three years later, see also Lynda Boose, "'The Getting of a Lawful Race': Racial Discourse in Early Modern England and the Unrepresentable Black Woman," in *Women, 'Race,' and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London: Routledge, 1994), 49-53, and Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 128-41.
29. Aristotle, *The Politics*, ed. Stephen Everson and trans. Benjamin Jowett, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 96. Rebecca W. Bushnell has argued that, despite Aristotle's classification of tyranny as the corruption of monarchy, he is not as fascinated by tyranny as is Plato. Aristotle's treatment of the tyrant never takes on Plato's loathing for such a subject. For a useful summary of the difference between Plato's and Aristotle's views of the tyrant, see *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), especially 26-29.
30. Aristotle, *The Politics*, 96.
31. A great deal of criticism on English Renaissance drama-especially that associated with new historicist, cultural materialist, and Marxist thought-has pretty much taken for granted the political and cultural power of the theater. For representative readings of the relationship of theater to power, see, for example, Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, eds., *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature*; Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) and *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), and Louis Adrian Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For a provocative argument that the commercial theater is effectively powerless, see Yachnin, *Stage-Wrights*. A sustained and elaborate response to Yachnin comes from Montrose who, in *The Purpose of Playing*, writes about "the more mediated and subtle ways in which the Elizabethan theater appropriated, shaped, questioned, and publicly disseminated socially significant meanings, values, and beliefs" (88): see especially Montrose's disagreement with Yachnin on 86-89. Yachnin responds in turn to Montrose in *Stage-Wrights*, 172: see endnote 9.

# • THE • VPSTART•CROW



Fall, 1978

Vol. 1, No. 1



## Praising the Vile for Recompense: Shakespeare and Patronage Poetry

by Peter Hyland

I think that it is of more than passing interest that the first reference to Shakespeare's presence in London, Robert Greene's sneering attack on him as a parvenu and perhaps a plagiarist in the theatrical profession, should have appeared in the year in which Shakespeare temporarily diverted his literary energies from plays to poems:

there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute *Johannes Factotum*, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country.<sup>1</sup>

Greene's words have been exhaustively analyzed, and they probably tell us more about Greene than about his victim. Nevertheless, it is worth considering what effect they might have had on the neophyte playwright, presumably still unsure about the wisdom of trying to make a living with his pen in a city where a university-educated man like Greene, a versatile and not inconsiderable writer of plays, poems, pamphlets and prose romances, could come to the embittered end that is shadowed in Greene's deathbed book. If the world of professional writing had so little to offer Greene, what could it offer Shakespeare?

Documentation of Shakespeare's theatrical career prior to Greene's reference to him remains a blank, but it is reasonable to assume that he had by that time written the three parts of *Henry VI* (as Greene's own words suggest), and perhaps *Richard III*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Titus Andronicus*. These had clearly brought him some celebrity, or there would have been no reason for Greene's resentment. The profession of playwright was not a lucrative one, however, and no matter what success he was beginning to experience, when in 1592 the theatres were closed because of a severe outbreak of the plague, Shakespeare did not have enough money to sit around waiting for them to re-open. The writing for publication of non-dramatic poetry was itself not a way of making much money, since the market for volumes of verse was necessarily small. The penurious writer had to find a patron, as Shakespeare did in the Earl of Southampton, to whom he dedicated *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). Despite the many romantic theories that have been built around this connection we do not know how Shakespeare came into contact with Southampton, nor do we know how intimate their relationship was. What we do know is that as soon as it became possible for Shakespeare to get back to the playhouse he did so, and he seems to have shown no further interest in writing for the more prestigious market represented by his patron.

This, on the face of it, is odd, because numerous editions of both poems were printed in Shakespeare's lifetime, which attest to their great popularity. While no kind of professional writing was respectable, there was a difference, measured in social legitimacy, between writing for the tiny sophisticated (or would-be sophisticated) minority who bought volumes of poetry, and writing for the rowdy masses who frequented the public playhouses. For the whole of his career Ben Jonson resented having to write for the "loathed stage"; he got away from it whenever he could find a patron, and when he was forced back into it by financial need he tried to elevate his plays into

42 *The Upstart Crow*

poems by giving their printing and publication the same detailed attention that he gave his poems and by blurring the distinction between the two by calling them "Works." Even so, as he told William Drummond, "Of all his plays he never gained two hundred pounds."<sup>2</sup> It is clear that Shakespeare was no less ambitious than Jonson, and in 1592 he had not yet had the chance to discover in himself the business acumen that would eventually allow him to make much more money out of the theatre than writing for it could have done. He could not have known, either, that he was going to become a universal genius and the "inventor of the human." Why, then, did he not pursue, as Jonson would certainly have done, the possibilities he had opened up for himself with the contact he had made with Southampton and the popular success of these two poems? Why did he return to the undeniably risky business of writing plays?

First, it is necessary to be clear about the widespread assumption that Elizabethans placed "poems" above "plays," because much has been made of Shakespeare's claim in his dedication to *Venus and Adonis* that it is the first heir of his invention, and to the fact that he apparently carefully supervised the printing of both narrative poems but showed no interest whatever in the publication of his plays. As David Kay puts it:

We have to remember the low status accorded to play texts in this period, and recognize that Shakespeare, as a man of his time, saw scripts as inescapably transient and collaborative efforts; they were to be distinguished from a work of art, an altogether loftier enterprise and something grounded upon the idea, the "foreconceit," the conceit, the "invention" of the poet.<sup>3</sup>

It seems to me that this statement conflates two different things. We cannot take Shakespeare's lack of involvement in the publication of his scripts as an indication that he did not think of them as "works of art." His relationship to his play-texts was limited by the realities of his profession: once a play was written it became the property of the acting company that staged it, and was usually released for publication only when it no longer had the power to bring an audience into the theatre or in circumstances when the acting company was in dire need, or when a pirated version had been printed. In any case this usually happened some years after the play's composition. The dramatist no longer had a financial stake in its publication, and was probably sufficiently distanced from it to have no aesthetic stake in it either. Not until Ben Jonson conceived the idea of recuperating his plays by reconstructing them as literary texts for his 1616 Folio did any dramatist find a way to reassert control over his work. Since Shakespeare died in that year he could hardly profit from the example, but there is no reason to believe that he would not have been delighted by the publication by Heminges and Condell of his happy imitations of *Nature* in his own First Folio, whether or not their primary motives were commercial.

Indeed, the hierarchization of poems over plays implied by Jonson's struggle to give his plays the dignity of poems is not as clear a matter as it appears. While it is certainly true that Jonson was far more aware of aesthetic issues than were most of his contemporaries, it is often difficult to separate his artistic theories from his social hunger. His main reason for loathing the stage was that it forced him to cater to the tastes of what he called the "vulgar" or the "world," the broad public audience. His printed works reached a different, smaller and more affluent market of readers (he called them "understanders"), a social and intellectual elite that he desperately wanted to join. But many of these wealthier understanders also attended theatres and probably would not have drawn the distinction between poems and plays as clearly as Jonson did, though they might have been flattered by Jonson's characterization of them. While I have no doubt that Jonson believed in his literary theories, I think also that they fitted with his

social ambition.

For most of Shakespeare's contemporaries the term "poetry" meant roughly what the term "literature" means today. A decade before Shakespeare made his brief shift to non-dramatic poetry Sir Philip Sidney had struggled with the problem of raising the reputation of poetry, by which he clearly means something broader than the term implies today. Indeed, he labors to distinguish poetry from history and philosophy, which do not depend on fancy or imagination, but when he surveys literary genres as reflected in the then-contemporary English canon he includes plays, which he condemns not because plays are not literature, but because these particular plays do not observe generic conventions; he makes an exception of *Gorboduc*, however, which "obtain[s] the very end of poesy."<sup>4</sup> In spite of this effort to make poetry more respectable, Sidney himself did not differ from other aristocratic poets in his attitude toward publication. In court circles more writing circulated in manuscripts than as printed books; some courtiers themselves wrote poetry that was intended for small coterie of their friends, and for them the idea of the widespread publication of their work would have been offensive. Indeed, such manuscript circulation kept elite culture exclusive, one of the means whereby aristocratic power was preserved.

What really was a contentious issue was the idea of publication itself, and it made little difference whether this was of poems or plays. "Literature" as a profession barely existed at all, and those who wished to make a profession of it were all, in effect, upstart crows, from Spenser through to Jonson. They were intelligent and ambitious men from the margins and the provinces for most of whom writing was a means rather than an end, an activity that could get them into service in the court through the patronage system, but the circles of the privileged did not make such breaches easy. Most writers depended upon patronage. In return for some degree (usually not large) of financial support writers provided their patrons with poems or dedicated writings to them. The obvious demand for flattery limited what we might think of as the writer's "artistic freedom," but it did provide him with an income. The writer who depended on patronage was trapped in a paradox, in that many in these court circles who were avid consumers of literature nevertheless had contempt for those who produced it.

Only a year before Shakespeare turned to writing the kind of poetry that needed a patron, Edmund Spenser had published "Mother Hubbard's Tale," with its bitter account of the realities of existence for those who needed to seek preferment at court:

Full little knowest thou that hast not tride,  
 What hell it is, in suing long to bide:  
 To loose good dayes, that might be better spent;  
 To wast long nights in pensive discontent;  
 To speed today, to be put back tomorrow;  
 To feed on hope, to pine with feare and sorrow;  
 To have thy Princes grace, yet want her Peeres;  
 To have thy asking, yet waite manie yeeres;  
 To fret thy soule with crosses and with cares;  
 To eate thy heart through comfortlesse dispaies;  
 To fawne, to crowche, to waite, to ride, to ronne,  
 To spend, to give, to want, to be undonne.  
 Unhappie Wight, borne to desastrous end,  
 That doth his life in so long tendance spend. (895-908)<sup>5</sup>

The usual assumption, arising from the myths built out of Shakespeare's relationship with Southampton, is that Shakespeare found a patron easily. I find this hard to credit, however. By 1592 he was developing a reputation as a playwright (though the absence

44 *The Upstart Crow*

of any reference to him prior to Greene's makes it reasonable to assume that it was not yet great). As far as is known he had no reputation at all as a poet. There is no reason to believe that Shakespeare did not suffer the frustration and humiliation described by Spenser, the suing and waiting, the fawning and running, particularly as Spenser's experience came in spite of his having far more powerful connections than Shakespeare could have had. If Shakespeare did suffer any of this, it would not be surprising if he got out of the patronage trap as quickly as he could.

Unlike Jonson, Shakespeare left no explicit statements about his attitude to the various aspects of his profession, but there are poet-figures in a number of his plays. We might reasonably ask what can be derived from his treatment of them, but this leads us into problematic territory, since any statement in a play must be identified primarily with the character who utters it rather than with the dramatist who wrote it. What we find, however, is what Ekbert Faas has characterized as a "consistently negative portrayal of poets in his work."<sup>8</sup> Now of course, our judgement of any such portrayal will depend on the context in which it is presented. Nevertheless, this insistent hostility has been apparent to others: Katherine Duncan-Jones in her recent edition of the Sonnets asks, "How do we reconcile Shakespeare's consistently scornful allusions to sonnets and sonneteering in his plays with the fact of his having composed one of the longest sonnet sequences of the period?"<sup>7</sup> There is, of course, more than one possible answer to this question, but one thing that should be noted is that Faas simplifies through generalization, for while it is (fairly) consistently negative, they are treated in different ways, and the greatest mockery is directed at fashionable, courtly poets.

With the possible exception of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Shakespeare's poets appear in plays written after his own experience as a poet. His best known statement about poets and poetry is the speech by Duke Theseus in the last act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the hostility is surely there. Having listened to the strange story told by the young lovers, Theseus weighs it with "cool reason," and dismisses it, on the grounds that love generates the same delusions, the same "shaping fantasies," as madness. He then goes on, perhaps rather arbitrarily, to lump the poet in with the lunatic and the lover, condemning him for indulging in the same excesses. Theseus tells us:

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.  
Such tricks hath strong imagination  
That if it would but apprehend some joy;  
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;  
Or in the night, imagining some fear,  
How easy is a bush supposed a bear! (5.1.12-22)

We might respond that Theseus is here confusing two different operations of the imagination, confounding illusion with delusion, since the poet actively uses his imagination to give shape to airy nothing, while the lunatic and the lover are passive victims of theirs. Furthermore, as audience, we have seen the things that he is denying in the name of his conception of "reality." Theseus has often been taken as the authoritative voice in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but the context of this speech seems to prevent us from uncritically accepting his view of things, and we might (using our own "cool reason") conclude that Shakespeare expects us to reject this dismissal of the poet

as a manifestation of aristocratic arrogance.

I think that this is indeed the response that Shakespeare expects of us, if for no other reason than that Theseus's words would condemn *A Midsummer Night's Dream* itself. Nevertheless, if we place his comments in the context of Shakespeare's treatment of poet characters in other plays, the distance of the dramatist's position from the Thesean attitude is not quite so evident as we might wish to suppose. Any praise of poetry is usually undercut through being located in an ironic context, and poets themselves are always mocked, sometimes harshly. For example, in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* poetry is described as "heaven-bred," its magical powers originating in the figure of Orpheus, "Whose golden touch could soften steel and stones, / Make tigers tame, and huge leviathans / Forsake unsounded deeps to dance on sands" (3.2.78-80). This, however, is an attempt to persuade the fool Thurio to write a sonnet with the hope of winning Sylvia, bringing "heaven-bred" poesy sharply down to earth. As a type of the gentleman amateur (albeit a sham one) Thurio stands as a sort of mock version of the courtly poet who by Shakespeare's time had made Petrarchan love poetry fashionable to the point where it had effectively been emptied of meaning. In *As You Like It* the young gentleman Orlando is also entrapped by Petrarchanism in an artificial view of love. He hangs poems on trees to express his love for Rosalind, and is only freed to win her after she has shown him how far divorced from reality his literary understanding of love is: "Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love" (4.1.91-92). This play appears to suggest, perhaps more gently, that poetry can be dangerous if it prevents us from seeing what is really there. Of course, we have to remember that the plays themselves are poetry, and presumably Shakespeare is not mounting a serious attack on the source of his own livelihood. Perhaps his laughter is really directed against the aristocratic concept of the amateur poet rather than against poetry itself.

Shakespeare's most extensive treatment of this kind of poet comes in *Love's Labour's Lost*, in which four young aristocrats try to use poetry as a means of wooing four young women. Their endeavor ends in failure, and they are mocked by the women whom they seek to impress. The main reason for this is the extreme affectation of their language, in which display has taken the place of substance. Biron, the lover whose scepticism puts him closest to "reality," is eventually led to renounce the linguistic ornamentation that the young men have believed to be the essence of poetry:

O, never will I trust to speeches penned,  
 Nor to the motion of a schoolboy's tongue,  
 Nor never come in visor to my friend,  
 Nor woo in rhyme, like a blind harper's song.  
 Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,  
 Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,  
 Figures pedantical—these summer flies  
 Have blown me full of maggot ostentation.  
 I do forswear them, and I here protest,  
 By this white glove—how white the hand, God knows—  
 Henceforth my wooing mind shall be expressed  
 In russet yeas, and honest kersey noes  
 And to begin, wench, so God help me, law!  
 My love to thee is sound, sans crack or flaw. (5.2.402-15)

There are many ironies here. Although these lines are part of a slightly longer speech, they constitute a sonnet: Biron expresses his renunciation of literary artifice in one of the most elaborately artificial of verse forms. There are other blatant rhetorical devices—the conscious patterning of the first four lines, the linguistic affectation, the Petrarchan

46 *The Upstart Crow*

cliche of the white hand. Biron claims to recognize them as a disease, yet he is unable to cure himself of them. At best, we can take from the treatment of the four young aristocrats the idea that an interest in poetry is a sign of an immature and incomplete approach to life.

In the same play, however, there are "poets" whose treatment cannot be quite so easily interpreted. Nathaniel and Holofernes present a play for their noble superiors which in its ineptitude rivals Peter Quince's most lamentable comedy. The aristocrats, like those in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, provide a mocking and disruptive commentary, but the purpose of the scene seems less to mock the two "dramatists" than to expose the callow attitudes of their supposedly well-bred audience, and when Holofernes chides them with "This is not generous, not gentle, not humble" (5.2.617) we are inclined to agree with him. *Love's Labour's Lost* can be seen not so much as presenting a negative portrayal of poets as mocking poetic amateurism and revealing the humiliations of those at the receiving end of the patronage system. It foreshadows the frustrations of Quince and Bottom and their friends as they try to reflect refined values back to their aristocratic audience.

There are two other plays in which poets make a significant appearance, *Julius Caesar* and *Timon of Athens*. In *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare gives us two poets. In the first case the poet Cinna, a supporter of Julius Caesar, is mistaken by the Roman mob for the conspirator Cinna. The mob threatens to tear him to pieces; when he tries to defend himself by insisting on his identity as Cinna the poet, they instead decide to "Tear him for his bad verses" (3.3.29). It might be that Shakespeare merely wished to show the indiscriminating ugliness of mob violence here, but the tone of the scene, dark as it is, is nevertheless comic: Cinna falls victim to an extreme act of literary criticism. Two scenes later a different poet, labeled "cynic" by Cassius, approaches Brutus and Cassius, who have just reconciled after a bitter quarrel. His marginal position seems to make him a "professional," even a Jonsonian poet, and he has come as healer, offering the wisdom of his years, to beg them to "Love and be friends" (4.2.183). The response of the two generals is to dismiss him with mockery and contempt. Shakespeare gives these two characters together hardly more than a dozen lines, and we might want to ask why he bothered to include them at all. In the case of the cynic-poet, Brutus and Cassius have already made up their quarrel, so his presence appears particularly redundant. Perhaps this is Shakespeare's point, however. The question asked by Brutus, "What should the wars do with these jiggling fools?" (4.2.189), indicates the political ineffectuality of poets, and in this play they are scorned at both ends of the social hierarchy, by the plebeian mob and by the aristocratic conspirators.

The one play that unquestionably presents a "professional" poet is *Timon of Athens*. Here, the Poet seeks patronage from Timon for his living, selling his dedications as the Jeweller and the Merchant sell their wares, while acknowledging the duplicity that betrays his art: "When we for recompense have praised the vile, / It stains the glory in that happy verse / Which aptly sings the good" (1.1.15-17). On the one hand, he presents himself as a satirist, a single honest voice predicting that Timon will fall and be abandoned by his suitors; on the other, he is revealed by Apemantus and finally dismissed by Timon as a mere flatterer, an alchemist whose art is directed only at the making of gold and therefore no different from the "infinite flatteries that follow youth and opulency" (5.1.33-34) that he purports to reveal. While Timon's rage is partially explained by a misanthropy that finally collapses into madness, the Poet's honesty is certainly compromised by his involvement in the general materialism.

If, however, we set this Poet and the second Poet in *Julius Caesar* (it is perhaps significant that neither is given an identity beyond his professional one) alongside the various aristocratic poets of the earlier plays, we might see that while it is true, as Faas and Duncan-Jones argue, that the treatment of all poets is negative or scornful, there

is an important difference here. Most of the poets who are mocked are courtly amateurs who play at being poets. These two Poets have a different relationship to their work; one hesitates to call it "serious", given the way in which they are treated, but underlying it is a sense of frustration at the position of the professional poet within the class-dominated social system that made it difficult for him to be heard, and impossible for him to earn a living and retain integrity at the same time. The play's mockery, that is, is directed at the whole situation in which poetry is dominated by the self-absorbed amateurism of the courtly poet; the obverse of this is the contempt in which the professional poet is held by those from whom he needs to seek patronage—a contempt that appears justified in that the dependent writer is forced into "infinite flatteries" if he is to avoid starvation. Perhaps Shakespeare's brief experience in the toils of the patronage system was, in spite of the success of the poems he produced, sufficient to repel him from continuing in it once he could escape it. The comparative freedom of the public stage also allowed for a comparative honesty of self-expression.

Such a reading allows us to question the view, far too frequently expressed, that Shakespeare is an apologist for aristocratic values. On the contrary, most of his plays offer us a position, like that of *Holofernes*, that resists elitist narrowness and contempt. It might, like *Thersites*, counter contempt with contempt, but it must be understood for what it is. In this light we can see that it is entirely appropriate that both Shakespeare's narrative poems expose the destructiveness of aristocratic arrogance and irresponsible self-love. His views on poetry, it appears, cannot be divorced from a skeptical ideological position, a position, we can hardly doubt, that was painfully earned.

Huron University College

#### Notes

1. *Greene's Croats-worth of Wit* (1592), reprinted in E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930) Vol. 2, p. 188.
2. George Parfitt (ed.), *Ben Jonson: The Complete Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books; 1975) p.476.
3. Dennis Kay, *Shakespeare: His Life, Work, and Era* (New York: Quill, 1992) p. 156.
4. Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry* in David Kalstone (ed.) *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Sidney* (New York: New American Library, 1970), p. 260.
5. Quotations from Spenser are from *Spenser: Poetical Works*, ed. J.C. Smith and E. DeSelincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1912).
6. Ekbert Faas. *Shakespeare's Poetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986. P. xii.
7. Katherine Duncan-Jones (ed). *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1997. P. 45.

## “Know’st Thou This Paper?”: *King Lear’s* Tragic Letters

by Julia Ritter

Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond crack’d ‘twixt son and father....We have seen the best of our time. Machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves.

—Gloucester, *King Lear*, I.ii.106-114<sup>1</sup>

**A**lthough Gloucester’s lament in this early scene of *Lear* emerges from a misguided assumption that his son Edgar is the author of a treasonous letter against him, his outcry nonetheless aptly describes the world of “machinations, hollowness, and treachery” in which the aged Earl, like Lear, finds himself deluded. At this point, Gloucester’s disastrous misreading of Edmund’s forged letter, falsely implicating Edgar in a conspiracy against his father, also marks the first instance, though hardly the last, in which letters become associated with sinister schemes of deception and treason in the course of the play. In fact, over a dozen letters circulate throughout *Lear*, functioning not merely as a conventional means to report events or expedite plot, but rather situating themselves at pivotal points in the play’s intrigue and profoundly influencing the fate of virtually every main character.<sup>2</sup>

Although rarely examined by scholars,<sup>3</sup> these otherwise “invisible” texts readily yield a shorthand account of the play’s design. For instance, Edmund secures his claim to his father’s lands and title, first by framing Edgar with the aforementioned forged letter,<sup>4</sup> and then by betraying his father into Cornwall’s hands with a letter implying Gloucester’s complicity with forces sympathetic to Lear.<sup>5</sup> However, Edgar’s interception of a letter from Goneril to Edmund in turn reverses the bastard’s fortune as the note reveals the treachery—and lechery—of the confederate pair.<sup>6</sup> When forwarded to Albany, the same letter seals the adulterous Goneril’s doom, though her earlier correspondence allying her with Regan had once made the two sisters seem invulnerable.<sup>7</sup> And in an attempt to counter her siblings’ schemes, Cordelia’s letter to the loyal Kent and Gloucester intends to “give [Lear’s] losses their remedies”,<sup>8</sup> but instead thwarts the princess’s hopes for the King’s rescue when it falls into the hands of Edmund, Cornwall and the wicked sisters.<sup>9</sup> And finally, a writ too late revoked by a repentant Edmund results directly in Cordelia’s hanging and indirectly in Lear’s grief-stricken death.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, as they are written, sent, read, intercepted and circulated throughout the play, letters in *Lear* prove critical not only to the play’s action, but more importantly, to its tragedy. In fact, a veritable network of letters emerges in *Lear*, resembling an intricate web of plots and counterplots which depends precariously upon the missives’ sometimes faulty and often unpredictable journeys between senders and recipients. In fact, the often wayward trajectory of letters in *Lear* intensifies the play’s tragedy because they allow for what Jacques Derrida has called the “forever interminable” blanks inherent in any sending system. In *The Post Card*, Derrida comments that the feeling of confusion resulting from these vacancies is “not only disagreeable, it places you in relation, without discretion, to tragedy. It forbids that you regulate distances, keeping them or losing them.”<sup>11</sup> In this sense, the unreliable and treacherous nature of letters in the play

becomes intimately associated with the tone of tenuousness and instability echoed in Gloucester's disillusioned resullament which pervades both the world of *Lear* and, as we shall see, Shakespeare's own troubled era. By situating these missives in their historical context and reconstructing their often elusive course throughout the play, we may hence gain a fuller understanding of the significance surrounding Shakespeare's use of letters in *Lear*.



Even before Lear's disastrous division of lands propels his kingdom into utter chaos, the sense of discord and uncertainty which characterizes the world of *Lear* becomes evident as early as the play's opening lines. For example, the confidences exchanged between Gloucester and Kent in I.i.<sup>12</sup> reveal Lear's wavering preferment of Albany over Cornwall and thereby prepares for the dissension between the two dukes, whose opposition manifests itself more openly in the acts that follow.<sup>13</sup> And the mildly disparaging banter with which Gloucester here speaks of Edmund's illegitimacy<sup>14</sup> plants the seeds for the play's most important sub-plot in which Edmund's concealed hostility towards his father and brother eventually becomes blatantly obvious. Moreover, the scene's building tension concerning the division of Lear's lands aptly prefaces the King's virtually complete divestiture of power in the next scene—a deed which Renaissance audiences would surely connect with the subsequent unraveling of the social fabric in *Lear*, apparently already coming apart at its seams. As Frank Kermode corroborates, "It is often said that a Jacobean audience would instantly observe that [Lear's] plan to divide the kingdom was liable to breed disaster; many plays had made that point, especially during the previous reign, when the succession was a perennial worry."<sup>15</sup> Of course, Kermode alludes here to the public turmoil created by Elizabeth I, whose reluctance to name an heir for the majority of her rein prompted legitimate fears of a bloody succession. In this context, Shakespeare's dramatization of the Lear saga effectively enacts many of his era's greatest anxieties concerning the instability of monarchical rule, as the complete breakdown of the social order in *Lear*—evinced by the devastating strife among siblings, kinsmen, parents and children, and the outbreak of a ravaging civil and international war—may be traced back to the King's singular, disastrous decision in this scene.

Shakespeare's contemporaries would also recognize and identify with not only the immediate sense of ruin induced by Lear's rashness but also more broadly with the notion of a decaying ideology and tradition embodied by the aged and languorous figure of Lear, who himself associates his "intent to shake all cares and business from our age" with a desire to "crawl toward death" (I.i.38-41). His abdication and eventual demise thus signify the passing away of a traditional, once stable world order, while the as yet untested "younger strengths" of Goneril, Regan and Edmund represent the emergence of a highly individualistic and self-seeking political order that tends to inspire our dread rather than confidence. It is within this frightening chasm of uncertainty that *Lear's* divided characters confront one another, sharing profoundly the concerns of an age that witnessed both the crumbling of feudal custom and the disconcerting rise of Machiavellian individualism,<sup>16</sup> here exhibited by the play's chief antagonists, who privilege personal gain over private morality, power over virtue. Edwin Muir has commented on this tumultuous shift, writing that at the time of *Lear's* production, "the medieval world with its communal tradition was slowly dying, and the modern individualist world was bringing itself to birth. Shakespeare lived in that violent period of transition."<sup>17</sup>

In this context, letters in the play become a means of preserving and creating bonds in a rapidly deteriorating universe. For instance, in the case of Lear's supporters, letters

50 *The Upstart Crow*

sent among Gloucester, Edgar, Kent, and Cordelia signify not only a means to succor the abused King; but more profoundly, they represent a desperate attempt on the part of the protagonists to maintain a sense of continuity with a fading but dignified past. And thus, despite Lear's bitter rejection of them, Cordelia and Kent strive to maintain their allegiance to the King—Cordelia by sending letters of assistance to Gloucester and Kent, and Kent by disguising himself to re-enter the King's service, notably, as his messenger. Likewise, the wronged Edgar takes on a number of personas to remain faithful to his father, whose honor he ultimately defends by issuing a summons that challenges Edmund to combat.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, the correspondence contriving plots against the King serves as a means for Lear's enemies to sever their ties with a worn-out and jaded world order which they find oppressive. Even after Lear divests himself of rule, Goneril and Regan write to one another, expressing their fear that the "infirmity of [Lear's] age" coupled with the "unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them" will continue to hinder the sisters' rise to power (I.i.293, 298-99). Likewise, Edmund's forged letter expresses his own resentment towards the old generation along similar lines:

This policy and reverence of age makes the world bitter to the best of our times; keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny, who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffer'd. (I.ii.46-51)

In addition to these grievances, all three characters feel slighted by the Establishment for excluding them from power for arbitrary reasons beyond their control. That is, the "plague of custom" deprives Edmund of his father's favor for being "some twelve or fourteen moonshines/Lag of a brother" (I.ii.3-6), while Lear's elder daughters suffer from the King's obvious favoritism towards Cordelia, whom he openly confesses to have "lov'd...most" (I.i.123). The characters' shared complaints thus form a basis for their mutual allegiance as the play develops. Their triangulated correspondence signifies their newly formed pact, which aims at subverting the "tyranny" of the old regime in order to better advance their private ambitions.

Obviously, two vastly divergent value systems emerge out of these two "camps" of correspondents. On the one-hand, Lear's followers privilege the time-honored bonds of civic, courtly, and filial duty, which they esteem as permanent and indissoluble by nature. On the other hand, self-interest, lust for power, and personal ambition replace these time-honored values and constitute the relationships among Goneril, Regan, Cornwall, and Edmund. Unlike the indissoluble and permanent nature of the loyalties among Lear's entourage, the bonds among this troupe prove ephemeral, superficial, and conditional in quality, and the characters quickly form and dissolve allegiances according to the immediate prospect of personal gain or loss. As Edwin Muir observes, this "gang of renaissance adventurers" bears strong resemblance to the Machiavellian politics of the era because the characters utterly renounce morality as a useful factor in conducting their private and political affairs:

If we read Burckhardt, if we reflect that Machiavellianism was a current preoccupation in Shakespeare's time, and consider further that the Renaissance gave to the individual a prominence he had not possessed since classical times, and that personal power, especially in princes, appeared sometimes to be boundless, we need not shrink from regarding Edmund and his confederates as political types.<sup>19</sup>

Along these lines, Muir aptly characterizes Edmund as "a consummate politician in the new style," and Goneril and Regan as equally adept politicians; that is, as sisters they are "harpies, but as rulers they act in the approved contemporary Machiavellian convention."

Within the political context of this inter-generational struggle, the profusion of letters in the play that contrive plots for and against Lear also would have occupied a position of particular relevance in the public consciousness of the times, especially given the increasing importance of letter reading, writing, and sending throughout the period. As literacy grew among the various ranks of British society due largely to the influence of printing in Europe, so too did the number of readers and writers of letters.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, letter writing manuals enjoyed widespread popular success and offered models for composing letters for a broad range of writers and purposes,<sup>21</sup> including, for example, models on writing a "familiar letter to a friend in the country," a "love letter," or a "letter to a proud mistress with the answer of a witty (but rayling) wench."<sup>22</sup> Accompanying these trends in letter reading and writing were significant changes in the efficacy and expediency of postal travel. Most notably, Elizabeth I's 1591 Proclamation abolishing private posts and establishing a government monopoly on all foreign British postal services marked an important event in postal history as well as one of the major cultural developments of the period.<sup>23</sup> And even though by 1600 the Post Office largely remained a service of the court with only limited use by private citizens,<sup>24</sup> the Post nonetheless exercised far-reaching significance in even the tiniest hamlets, where citizens generally regarded the post house as a source of news and information. As one postal historian, George Walker, explains: "All the thrilling news of adventure and fearful stories of anticipated invasion and of the great doings in London and overseas were told to eager listeners at the post-house door when the post rode in."<sup>25</sup>

As Walker's account indicates, the post served as one of the most important purveyors of the kingdom's happenings, transporting stories of scandal and intrigues from London and foreign courts into the minds and imaginations of citizens throughout the realm. However, the reliability of such information often proved dubious, promoting the proverbial perception that "Posts bear truth in their letters and lies in their mouths."<sup>26</sup> In this context, it is both intriguing and appropriate that Shakespeare creates Oswald as one of the most compelling and subtle characters in *Lear*—his duplicity as a conspirator-post readily identifying him with this popularly held notion. We witness this attitude in the vituperative epithets Kent hurls at Oswald, charging that he "comes with letters against the King" in II.ii (35-36). Recognizing Oswald's depravity, Kent condemns him as

A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred pound, filthy worsted-stocking knave; a lily-liver'd, action-taking, whoreson, glass-gazing, superserviceable, finical rogue; one-trunk inheriting slave; one that wouldst be a bawd in way of good service, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pandar, and the son and heir of a mungril bitch; one whom I will beat into clamorous whining, if thou deni'st the least syllable of thy addition. (II.ii.15-24)

Even the sisters who commission Oswald recognize their post's corruptibility. Wishing to peruse Goneril's missive to Edmund, Regan bribes Oswald saying, "I'll love thee much—/Let me unseal the letter" (IV.v.21-22).

In addition to the increasingly skeptical regard towards the post that manifests itself

52 *The Upstart Crow*

in the play, letter writing in general gradually was becoming associated in popular memory with various cases of treason and conspiracy, not altogether removed from those we encounter in *Lear*. Of course, most immediately present in the popular consciousness would have been the notorious Gunpowder Plot of 1605, the same year that Shakespeare wrote *Lear*.<sup>27</sup> Significantly, James I is credited for narrowly avoiding the destruction intended by a handful of radical English Catholics bent on blowing up Parliament when he reportedly deciphered a cryptic letter alluding to the conspirators' plot.<sup>28</sup> Even earlier, letters had become a focus of suspicion in the previous reign. For instance, Elizabeth's 1591 monopolization of the post initially stemmed from her desire to avert treason by limiting the activities and communication routes of "diverse disavowed persons" suspected of plotting against her. Former British Postal Secretary, Sir Evelyn Murray, corroborates this contention, stating that "The original object of the State monopoly was not so much to extinguish competition as to give the Government of the time access to the correspondence of suspected persons, and particularly to letters passing between England and foreign parts."<sup>29</sup> The Proclamation thus intended to "redress the disorders" afflicting Elizabeth's security and provided specific instructions for government officials of towns and shires to search freely "all males [mails], bougets and other carriages" found on "disavowed messengers coming in or going out of the realm with packets or letters."<sup>30</sup>

Searches of this type were conducted frequently during the period, both at home and abroad, and came to be recognized as standard diplomatic procedure. One Spanish postmaster, for example, allowed the English envoy to see all of the mail of two disaffected Englishmen and permitted the official to keep or copy any of those letters that he wished. Alas, many private citizens deeply resented the sometimes dubious liberties taken by the post in this capacity. Walker writes of one enraged Martin Corbet who filed an arrest warrant for Peter Tunstall, the post to France, for allegedly tampering with his letters. In response, "the post promptly appealed to the Secretary of State, Sir Francis Walsingham, who at once sent instructions to the Kent magistrates to release the post as he was the servant of the Crown and must not be hindered in his duties."<sup>31</sup>

Of course, this privileging of the post's authority also has implications for *Lear*, in which we witness characters with access to this authority able to permeate the bounds of "private" correspondence. For example, Edmund cleverly plays off of his father's parental authority by duping Gloucester into *demanding* the forged letter that he feigns to conceal. His strategy apparently works, because Gloucester finally asserts with ire, "Give me the letter, sir" (I.ii.40). And in another instance, Regan recognizes Oswald's authority as post when she states, "I know you are of [Goneril's] bosom," thereby implying Oswald's access to his mistress' private letters (IV.v.26). The limits of Regan's own access in this regard become evident as she ineffectually pressures Oswald to reveal "what might import my sister's letter to [Edmund]?" (IV.v.22). Even her cajoling demand—"I'll love thee much—/Let me unseal the letter"—apparently fails to move Oswald and once again suggests that his authority as post supersedes Regan's own rights as Goneril's sister. And when Oswald is killed, his power transfers to the slayer, Edgar, to whom Oswald commends his body and office of post in his dying moments:

Villain, take my purse:  
If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body,  
And give the letters which thou find'st about me  
To Edmund Earl of Gloucester. (IV.vi. 246-50)

Within this atmosphere of increasing postal authority and surveillance, we should recall that the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the execution of Mary Stuart preceded

Elizabeth's Proclamation by but a few years and that conspiracies against Elizabeth were not uncommon during the period. Of course, such historical circumstances and anxieties provided an apt backdrop for the conspiracies that Goneril, Regan, and Edmund launch against Lear and his supporters—conspiracies made all the more historically resonant considering that these characters orchestrate their treachery almost entirely through their written correspondence. It is therefore significant that Mary Stuart's execution was precipitated most immediately by the discovery of the deposed Scottish Queen's extensive correspondence with a number of high-ranking, anti-Elizabeth agents who plotted the assassination of Elizabeth, the invasion of England by sixty thousand soldiers, the release of Mary, and the restoration of Roman Catholicism to England. The detection and exposure of the notorious Babington Plot—so-called because of the crucial evidence supplied by the intercepted correspondence between Mary and her fiery Catholic supporter, Antony Babington—provided the critical information that Elizabeth and Secretary Walsingham needed to judiciously convict the ever-scheming Mary, as well as brought to light one of the oddest systems of correspondence embedded in the public imagination.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, this scheme deserves particular attention because its cunning and ingenuity resemble the lengths to which many of the play's characters are willing to go in order to sustain an unhindered correspondence.

Determined to ensnare Mary by engineering a sting-operation of sorts, Walsingham induced Gilbert Gifford, a former Marian supporter, to act as his agent in persuading Mary to reestablish a post between herself and her host of foreign supporters. Eager to regain her contacts, Mary agreed to receive her letters (collected from abroad by the French ambassador), which were "clandestinely" placed by Gifford into waterproof packets in the bung-hole of a beer keg and then delivered to Chartley<sup>33</sup> by the local brewer; likewise, Mary sent her replies by the same means through the empty kegs. Meanwhile, Walsingham intercepted, deciphered and re-sent the correspondence as it traveled between the brewery and Chartley, waiting for the damning evidence—in this case, Babington's letter supplying the names and plans of Mary's co-conspirators—to sufficiently implicate Mary and put to rest for good her relentless schemes against her cousin, the English sovereign. In fact, from the outset of her 20-year detention in England, Mary gained widespread notoriety for initiating over half a dozen similar "letter-plots" against Elizabeth, contributing to both the tenuous stability of her reign as well as to the growing political expediency of postal regulation.<sup>34</sup> And while Shakespeare may not have had any one of these particular instances directly in mind as models for the letter plots in *Lear*, the play nonetheless resonates with the residual effects produced by these scandals, which undoubtedly lingered in the collective consciousness.

Given the bizarre machinery of the "beer keg plot" and other highly publicized sending systems, we might expect that contemporary audiences of *Lear* would not have been wholly surprised by the otherwise astonishing means by which its principal characters manage to communicate throughout the play. For instance, the correspondence between the banished Kent and Cordelia beginning in II.ii. represents but one instance in which the characters "mysteriously" maintain their channels of communication, even under the most strained conditions. That Kent and Cordelia can correspond at all is in itself surprising considering the physical distance that separates the pair, as well as the threat of danger to those caught assisting the King.<sup>35</sup> Their communication becomes all the more unlikely given Cordelia's probable ignorance of the whereabouts or alias of the disguised Kent whom rumor purports to be with the banished Edgar in Germany.<sup>36</sup> Of course, Cordelia's and Kent's successful communication despite these obstacles persuasively reinforces the extent of their commitment to Lear as well as the extreme elasticity of their mutual bond, which remarkably stretches without snapping under such duress.

54 *The Upstart Crow*

Furthermore, Kent's mysterious reception of Cordelia's letter, which he reads in the moonlight while stocked at Gloucester's castle, also implies the presence of an "invisible" though ever-vigilant chain of Lear's supporters ready to assist their forlorn King, just as Gilbert Gifford and other Marian adherents once sought to aid their exiled Queen under equally treacherous circumstances. And while the machinery of this particular sending system never becomes explicitly manifest in the play, we might imagine that the allegiance of those supporting Lear in turn enables them to recognize that allegiance in others, and thereby safely convey the letter to the disguised Kent. In fact, we sense a bit of this network operating at a perceptible level when Kent entrusts an anonymous gentleman with a letter to give to Cordelia—a mission that Kent authorizes based on previous "knowledge and assurance" of the gentleman's character and loyalty to Lear (III.i.41). The same gentleman then reports back to Kent in the act that follows and details Cordelia's reaction to his letter (IV.iii.). The gentleman's anonymity throughout contributes to the notion that he is but one link in a chain of Lear's followers who act as liaisons between the principal characters and implies the presence of a larger network of supporters who early on helped inform Cordelia of Kent's "obscured course" and of Lear's suffering.

That Shakespeare only hints at the workings of this sending system effectively reinforces its implicit subtlety (perhaps rivaling that of Mary's "beer keg post") and stresses the vital necessity of discretion and good judgment needed to penetrate superficial exteriors—such as Kent's disguise—in order to salvage a crumbling kingdom. Shakespeare's suppression of the letter's explicit contents and circulation tests our own powers of judgment as we, like the characters, struggle to make meaning out of scattered bits of information. The fragmented nature of letters in the play lends them a texture akin to that of the rumors and whisperings that float throughout *Lear*, underscoring the transmissibility and transmutability of information as it travels through various channels.<sup>37</sup> In the case at hand, for instance, Kent reads only a fragment of the letter aloud, and the rest of its contents are only hinted at in the scenes that follow. As a result, we become immersed in the process of reconstructing the letter's details and tracing its journey from Kent to Gloucester to Edmund to Cornwall, through which its meaning becomes reappropriated, distorted and ultimately reversed. Through this process, Shakespeare places us here and elsewhere in direct relation to the characters' anxieties and frustrations as we too confront inexplicable gap after gap while following the letter's unpredictable and, finally, treacherous path.

From the stocks, Kent reads aloud the only explicit details of the letter disclosed in the play: "—and shall find time/From this enormous state—seeking to give/Losses their remedies" (II.ii.168-70). Though this fragment seems cryptic at first, we quickly recognize that the "enormous state" in question here is France, and the losses to be remedied are Lear's. And while Kent reads no more of the letter out loud, we may deduce something of its contents based on the highly sensitive information he discloses in confidence to the trusted gentleman in III.i. (17-42). In short, he reveals the division between the dukes of Albany and Cornwall ("Although as yet the face of it is cover'd/With mutual cunning"), and the landing of secret French forces prepared to assist Lear. Thus, while the actual contents of the letter itself are withheld, Kent's conversation with the gentleman may be read as a rendering of the letter's crucial details; as a "translation" or interpretation of this letter, this conversation also becomes useful in illustrating Kent's point of view.

By shifting the focus away from the letter itself and onto Kent's perspective, Shakespeare emphasizes the perspicacity of Kent's critical powers, which penetrate beyond the letter's literal contents and enable him to speculate on their possible import. For example, coming at the height of Lear's distress, the letter's information would certainly be appreciated as welcome news to Lear's supporters. However, Kent's

perception that circumstances are not what they appear to be casts a foreboding tone on this otherwise optimistic report. His awareness of the "mutual cunning" that conceals the dukes' animosity contributes to his skepticism, as does his realization that the dukes' own servants, "who seem no less," actually prove to be the "spies and speculations" dispensing intelligence to the French state (III.i. 21-25). Given these incongruities, Kent's suspicion justifiably becomes aroused as he conjectures whether the dukes' "hard reign...against the old kind King" is merely a pretext or "furnishing" for the French expedition, camouflaging some ulterior motive. The choleric disposition with which the French King departs in I.i. supports the validity of this apprehension,<sup>38</sup> as does Albany's later skepticism upon learning of the French invasion—a "business," he asserts, which "touches us as France invades our land,/Not bolds the King, with others whom, I fear,/Most just and heavy causes make oppose" (V.i.24-27). Kent's looming fears thus persist on reasonable grounds, despite Cordelia's private insistence that "No blown ambition doth our arms incite,/But love, dear love, and our ag'd father's right" (IV.iv.27-28).

Regardless of France's actual intentions, Kent astutely recognizes the volatility of Cordelia's letter, which appears simultaneously helpful *and* dangerous depending on how its information is used—a fact which indeed applies to the majority of letters in the play. Tracing the letter's path as it travels from Kent to Gloucester to Edmund to Cornwall therefore becomes essential in order to understand the letter's shifting role as it moves from character to character and to evaluate the discerning faculties of each of its recipients. Again, Shakespeare's withholding of the letter's details even as it travels from recipient to recipient once more focuses our attention on the malleability of the letter's information as it is perceived by each character, undermining any stable notion of the letter's inherent "authority." Thus, instead of positioning the audience as readers of letters, *per se*, Shakespeare makes us readers of characters, who weigh our own sense of good judgment against that evinced (or not evinced) by the actual letter readers in the play.

Arguably, the letter that Gloucester mysteriously receives on the night of the storm could indeed be a separate letter from Kent's, conveyed to him from France by the same means by which Kent received his letter from Cordelia previously.<sup>39</sup> However, the striking resemblance of this letter's apparent language and contents to Kent's suggests that the "two" letters are actually one and the same. In his conversation with Edmund, for instance, Gloucester speaks of the "dangerous" letter he received, containing information of "a division between the Dukes, and a worse matter than that"—a reference, no doubt, to the landing of the French army (III.iii.8-9). Cornwall's subsequent knowledge of this fact corroborates this supposition,<sup>40</sup> because his information comes from Gloucester's letter, betrayed into the duke's hands by Edmund. Cornwall's and Regan's concern that Gloucester has sent Lear to Dover further reiterates details from Kent's original letter as conveyed to the gentleman, indicating that Lear's sympathizers would find comfort there.<sup>41</sup>

Although the circumstances surrounding Gloucester's reception of the letter remain unclear (he himself confesses it was "guessingly set down"—III.vii.47), Kent's location at the Earl's castle provides for his relatively easy conveyance of the missive to Gloucester. In fact, Kent's disguise as Lear's messenger further facilitates this possibility and confirms once again that but one letter is in question here. Kent's motive for forwarding this letter to Gloucester can hardly be surprising, considering that the Earl is the only remaining character of rank in the play who has the power and desire to assist Lear.

Of course, Edmund's subsequent betrayal of the epistle into enemy hands effectively shatters any prospect for Lear's rescue. Rather, the letter's "failure" alludes once more to the notion of treachery and deceit invariably associated with letters

56 *The Upstart Crow*

throughout the play as well as to the failure of Gloucester's judgment when he confides the letter to Edmund. Again we recall Derrida's post card, reminding us of the unstable relationship between sending and destiny, as Cordelia's letter to aid Lear instead results in Gloucester's betrayal and Lear's defeat. Once more, letters contribute to the widening chasm that divides the world of *Lear*. Gloucester's blinding, the defeat of the French-Lear forces, and the capture of Lear and Cordelia are but palpable manifestations of this split, underscoring the larger rupture between a dying era of tradition and a new world order.

It is significant that once again Shakespeare does not reveal the full contents of the letter here, but rather emphasizes the multiple perspectives it produces when the letter is read and interpreted by Kent, Gloucester, Edmund, and the wicked cohort of Cornwall, Goneril, and Regan, respectively. Although both Kent and Gloucester recognize the danger of the letter, the missive takes a devastating turn when Gloucester errs in confiding it to the treacherous Edmund. In fact, Gloucester's reading of the letter and his entrusting it to Edmund in III.iii. merely duplicates his mis-reading of Edmund's character earlier in the play. In both cases, Gloucester flagrantly confuses the motives and affections of Edmund and Edgar, just as Lear misconstrues the sentiments of his own daughters in I.i. In this sense, Lear's and Gloucester's ineptitude as readers of letters in the play coincides with their deficiency as readers of character.

Given Lear's and Gloucester's apparent privileging of the bonds of civic, filial, and courtly duty, it is both ironic and tragic that the wrongs against them are precipitated by their own violation of these sacred ties in their respective rejection of Cordelia and Edgar. Arguably, the two are cunningly deceived into doing so—Gloucester by Edmund's trickery, and Lear by his elder daughters' duplicitous flattery. But the men's excessive attention to the exterior form of these bonds makes them accomplices of sorts to their enemies' deception. For instance, central to Gloucester's misreading of Edmund's letter is his mistaking the "character"—literally, the handwriting—in which it is written. Like Othello who disastrously places too much trust in "ocular proof," Gloucester too believes that "seeing is believing" as he accepts that the internal, moral "character" of the letter matches Edgar's heart because the superficial, written "character" of the letter seems to match his hand. On both counts, Gloucester errs—a fact made more ironic by his blinding later in the play, stripping him of the physical sight which once caused him to stumble. More subtly, this irony is heightened when we consider Mark Taylor's point that, phonetically sounded, the Earl's name mimics the pronunciation of the word "glossator," signifying "a writer of glosses; a commentator," or interpreter in common parlance. Taylor explains, "'Glossator' is a trisyllable, but its second syllable, a schwa, would be inevitably elided in speech so that the word would become virtually indistinguishable in sound from the name of Edgar and Edmund's father."<sup>42</sup> And thus, we might expect Gloucester to be more shrewd in the matter at hand. Under these circumstances, we are left to wonder which is more appalling: Edmund's treachery? Or Gloucester's aptness to be so easily deceived?

Lear's equally unimpressive ability to "read" his own daughters' hearts also demonstrates his emphasis on form over substance. And thus, he erroneously accepts Goneril's and Regan's flattering responses to his "love test" as genuine, whereas, he undervalues and misinterprets the authenticity underlying Cordelia's simplistic profession:

I love your Majesty

According to my bond, no more nor less. (I.i.92-93)

Although Lear misconstrues her words as an insult, they hold within them the fullest and plainest expression of Cordelia's dedication to the king, her father, untainted by

excess or insincerity. Cordelia's correspondence with Kent beginning in II.ii. further expresses their mutual devotion to Lear—a devotion which the King does not as yet recognize in his youngest daughter's unembellished words or in his faithful servant's bold cautioning.

In contrast to Lear's and Gloucester's apparent incompetence as readers of letters and character in the play, *Lear's* antagonists seem to display a tremendous degree of acuity in both regards. For instance, as savvy readers of character, Edmund is able to dupe his father by preying on Gloucester's propensity to believe that Edgar is the author of machinations against him, just as Goneril and Regan know how to manipulate Lear with elaborate speeches that flatter his vanity. Their shrewdness in "reading" these characters also serves as a basis for their own correspondence system, on which they depend to establish and gauge loyalties amongst themselves. For example, after Edmund uses Cordelia's letter to prove his father's "treason," Cornwall then pledges to replace Gloucester as a "dearer father" to Edmund (II.v.25)—a bond he seals by establishing a "swift and intelligent" post between them (III.vii.11). Likewise, Goneril and Regan "hit together" by establishing a frequent correspondence designed to preserve and enlarge their newly acquired power (I.i.303-4). And when Regan asserts that Oswald is "of [Goneril's] bosom," she implies that he is privy to his mistress's posts (IV.v.26).

While these letters thus serve as a sort of guide post for the characters *and* the audience to keep abreast of these rapidly shifting alliances, letters also reveal how the shallowness and instability of these ties ultimately bring about the characters' own devastation. The deaths of Goneril and Regan at each other's hands epitomize this resultant self-destruction when the sisters' alliance against Lear finally gives way to divisive jealousy over Edmund. That the two sisters are bound in the traditional sense by the permanence of filial ties seems merely incidental and not in itself a basis for the union they establish. Rather, their joint concern that Lear's "unruly waywardness [of] infirm and choleric years" (I.i.298-299) threatens their newly endowed prosperity, in turn motivates their desire to "hit together" and "do something...i' th' heat" (I.i.303-308). But even given this common purpose, the incipient seeds of doubt and distrust emerge in their relationship as early as Goneril's first letter to Regan.

The motivation for the letter apparently stems from Goneril's "particular fear" (I.iv.337) that Lear's maintenance of an entourage jeopardizes her own power; and thus she writes to Regan to enlist her sister's support in this matter of mutual importance. Regardless of the extent to which Lear's knights have actually grown "riotous," Goneril's contention to Albany that they enable Lear to "hold our lives in mercy" (I.iv.327) appears to be an exaggeration aimed at justifying her reduction of Lear's train by half. In fact, Goneril herself invites confrontation as she actively participates in creating a scene of disorder and riot at the castle, not only by disquantifying Lear's train, but also by ordering her own servants to "come slack of former services" and to "put on what weary negligence [they] please" (I.iii.9,12). Expert in the art of manufacturing appearances, she thus succeeds in her plan to "breed from hence occasions...that [she] may speak" (I.iii.24-25). That is, even before the volatile confrontation in I.iv. that leads to Lear's indignant departure, Goneril desires that Lear grow discontented and turn to her sister for succor.<sup>43</sup> Anticipating this move, she writes to Regan to "hold [her] very course" (I.iii.26) of further weakening Lear's already strained grasp of power.

Though Goneril writes this letter trusting that Regan's "mind and mine I know in that are one/Not to be overrul'd" (I.iii.15-16), a shade of doubt undermines this confidence. Immediately following Lear's irate departure and just prior to posting her letter, Goneril entertains but half a thought that perhaps Regan may not be like-minded in regards to Lear—a speculation made apparent in her unfinished musing to Albany: "I have writ my sister;/If she sustain him and his hundred knights,/When I have show'd

58 *The Upstart Crow*

th' unfitnesse—" (1.iv.331-333). At this point, Oswald enters carrying the letter, interrupting Goneril's present train of thought and turning her attention to the letter itself.

Although her thought remains unexpressed, if not fully formulated in her own mind, its hesitating "if" betrays the beginning of an as yet inchoate skepticism inherent in the sisters' relationship. Furthermore, the incomplete sentiment expresses the conditionality at the base of their relationship, in which Goneril expects Regan's complicity *because* she "[has] show'd the unfitnesse—." Ironically, this "unfitnesse" most likely refers to that of Lear's leadership, an incapacity which Goneril herself has helped to engineer. Thus we begin to realize in this unfinished statement the foundation of distrust and deception on which the sisters' alliance tenuously rests.

So, "if" Regan were to "sustain [Lear] and his hundred knights," then what? This question remains in abeyance as Regan's reception of Goneril's letter confirms the sisters to be of one mind in the matter at hand. In fact, Shakespeare dramatizes the significance of this confederacy by placing two messengers before Regan: one, Oswald, bearing letters from Goneril; the other, Kent (disguised as Caius), bearing letters from Lear. Regan's preference of her sister's messenger to Lear's—even though the latter arrives first and is no less than the servant of her father and King—underscores the audacity of her choice. In this instance, the letters perform a substitutive role, as Goneril's messenger and letters stand in place of Goneril, just as Lear's letters and messenger stand in place of Lear.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Regan's acceptance of Oswald and her rejection of Kent simultaneously signify her allegiance to Goneril and her utter contempt for Lear. More precisely, Goneril's rejection of Lear's letters signifies the rejection of Lear himself, metonymically represented by the royal signature, which Jonathan Goldberg reminds us had come to replace the signet, the royal seal, as the definitive mark of regal authority during this period.<sup>45</sup> Goneril's subsequent stocking of Kent further emphasizes her disdain because this act unambiguously asserts Regan's blatant disrespect for the King. Urging Regan and the Duke to reconsider their course of action, Gloucester justly fears that Lear will interpret this treatment of his servant as a personal affront:

Your purpos'd low correction  
Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches  
For pilf'rings and most common trespasses  
Are punish'd with. *The King must take it ill*  
That he, so slightly valued in his messenger,  
*Should have him thus restrained.* (II.ii.142-147, emphasis mine)

Two scenes later, Lear himself expresses his indignation and astonishment when he arrives at Gloucester's castle to find his messenger stocked:

They durst not do't;  
They could not, would not do't. 'Tis worse than murder  
To do upon respect such violent outrage. (ii.iv.22-23)

Clearly, Regan is perfectly aware of the "violent outrage" that she carries out against Lear's servant but aims directly at the King himself. Moreover, the flagrancy of her attack unequivocally announces where her loyalty lies in respect to Goneril and Lear. This scene parallels the prior one in which Regan receives the two messengers; Goneril and Lear now appear in person before Regan where their posts had once stood in their place symbolically. Just as Regan had once favored Goneril's servant, she now displays her preference of Goneril by embracing her sister—an act that Lear again witnesses with

astonishment: "O Regan, will you take her by the hand?" (II.iv.194). Evidently, while Lear had previously mis-read his daughters' vacuous praises as genuine in I.i., he seems to have no trouble discerning their true sentiments in this scene.

As Goneril's letter already has informed Regan of her sister's "very course," the rest of the scene proceeds like a highly scripted and choreographed performance, from the moment a trumpet announces Goneril's entrance, to the sisters' nonchalant whittling away of Lear's train down to a single knight. The two play off of each other to effectively emasculate and humiliate Lear, while Lear himself struggles to ascertain who is the lesser of two evils with whom he may find shelter. Finding them alike in their lack of charity, he finally storms off in a fit of rage and distress.

Although Shakespeare presents the sisters in this scene in the height of their solidarity, their subsequent lust for Edmund reveals the limitations of their pact, which lasts only as long as mutually convenient and satisfying. Thereafter, letters play a crucial role in dissolving their alliance, just as they once had bonded the sisters in thwarting Lear. Their correspondence continues, but this time in a war of letters advising each other to abandon any plans to marry Edmund. For instance, shortly following Gloucester's blinding and Cornwall's death, Goneril receives Regan's letter, which "craves speedy answer" and most likely bears news of Regan's intentions to wed Edmund. Even before reading the letter Goneril anticipates its tidings and fears, "[Regan] being widow, and my Gloucester with her,/May all the building in my fancy pluck/Upon my hateful life" (IV.ii.84-86). Although no reference is made to Goneril's response to the letter, Regan's growing distrust of her sister becomes apparent several scenes later, when Regan dictates a terse note to Oswald, advising Goneril as follows:

My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talk'd,  
And more convenient is he for my hand  
Than for your lady's. (IV.v.30-32)

In addition to their attempts to intimidate each other, the sisters simultaneously ply Edmund with letters expressing their amorous desires. Along with her dictated note, for example, Regan entrusts Oswald to deliver a letter to Edmund (IV.v.33), presumably regarding their marriage plans. In the same batch of letters, we learn that Oswald also carries a letter from Goneril to the newly dubbed Earl, confirming the pair's "reciprocal vows" and plotting Albany's murder.

Oswald's elusiveness invites further notice here. Even though Shakespeare conceals Edmund's duplicity from all but the audience for the greater part of the play, Oswald remains an impenetrable character whose exposure to the lure of rewards and profit destabilizes his status as a steadfast and devoted servant to Goneril. As Goneril's messenger, we can assume that he is privy to the bulk of her correspondence to Regan. In fact, Goneril validates her trust in her messenger by entreating him to write or transcribe letters for her.<sup>46</sup> Even Regan recognizes Oswald's omniscience in regards to her sister's post, and at one point she responds to Oswald's claims of ignorance, asserting, "I know you are of her bosom./...I speak in understanding: y'are; I know't" (IV.v.26-28).

Despite Goneril's implicit trust in Oswald, however, we find ourselves speculating about the extent of his commitment to her when the allegiance between the two sisters begins to unravel. For as the sisters' alliance dissipates, Oswald's potential power grows in respect to the amount of information he has accumulated—information which, conceivably, may now be used against the sisters. And thus, Oswald finds himself in an unprecedented position of power over the very women whom he purportedly serves. Oswald's loyalty to Goneril comes to a head in IV.v., when Regan asks the messenger

60 *The Upstart Crow*

to unseal Goneril's letter to Edmund, or at least disclose its contents. Although Oswald evades her proddings with claims of ignorance, he seems willing to accept her bribe to kill Gloucester, saying, "Would I could meet him madam! I should show/What party I do follow." Even though there is no clear evidence in this scene suggesting that Oswald betrays Goneril outright, his apparent willingness to accept pay out of two pockets indicates his duplicity in fully exploiting this situation. In fact, the subsequent scene confirms this assessment of Oswald as a "double agent" of sorts: Slain in his attempt to kill Gloucester in exchange for Regan's "preferment," Oswald begs Edgar in his dying words to "give the letter [from Goneril] which thou find'st about me/To Edmund Earl of Gloucester"—a gesture which implies his continued support of Goneril. In either event, like the other characters of his camp, Oswald proves just as vulnerable to the lures of opportunity and advancement put before him. Furthermore, his ambiguous loyalty becomes relevant in the future handling of the aforementioned letter (now in Edgar's possession), which takes a dramatic twist in its intended course as the play continues.<sup>47</sup>

The path of this letter provides an especially interesting parallel to the route of Cordelia's hapless letter because both epistles diverge wildly from their intended courses and produce unintended and disastrous ramifications. In this case, Goneril's letter never reaches Edmund as purposed. Rather, Edgar intercepts the letter when he slays Oswald in Gloucester's defense. Finding the letter in Oswald's purse, Edgar reads the treasonous letter aloud:

Let our reciprocal vows be remember'd. You have many opportunities to cut him [Albany] off; if your will want not, time and place will be fruitfully offer'd. There is nothing done, if he return the conqueror; then am I the prisoner, and his bed my jail; from the loath'd warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your labor.

Your (wife, so I would say) affectionate servant, Goneril.  
(IV.vi.262-70)

When produced by Albany in V.iii., the letter provides damning proof of Goneril's and Edmund's treacherous confederacy, just as Cordelia's ill-fated letter implicated Gloucester as a "traitor" for supporting Lear. How Albany comes in possession of the letter is another question and again raises the issue of letters' elusive and often enigmatic movement throughout the play. Most likely, the disguised Edgar conveys this letter to Albany at the same time that he entrusts the duke with another mysterious paper which promises to "produce a champion that will prove what is avouched there" (V.i.43-44). In respect to both letters, Shakespeare holds our curiosity in check until the culminating "moment of truth" in V.iii. At this point, the contents of the latter paper become clear when a herald arrives upon the stage with the following announcement:

'If any man of quality or degree within the lists of the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl of Gloucester, that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear by the third sound of the trumpet. He is bold in his defense.' (V.iii.110-114)

As the challenge is read, Edgar comes forth, much to Edmund's astonishment. The brothers' bloody dueling then ensues, leaving Edmund mortally wounded and openly confessing, "What you have charg'd me with, that have I done, / And more, much more, the time will bring about." In the midst of this revelation, Albany produces Goneril's letter to Edmund, demanding, "Know'st thou this paper?" Ever headstrong, but sensing her diminishing power, Goneril defiantly concedes, "Ask me not what I know."

At this moment critical to the antagonists' collapse, the circumstances surrounding Goneril's implied admission of guilt recall yet another striking historical parallel to the events surrounding Mary Stuart's deposition. In a plot not far removed from Goneril and Edmund's amorous conspiracy to kill Albany, Mary purportedly conspired with her lover, Lord Bothwell, to murder Mary's husband, Lord Darnley, in an explosion at Kirk O'Field where the invalid King was convalescing. Although she initially expressed horror and outrage at the event, Mary's subsequent marriage to Bothwell not three months after the murder suggests her complicity in the scandal. Moreover, as in Goneril's case, Mary's letters to her conspirator-lover served not only as a principle means of arranging her husband's murder, but also as a critical source of evidence against the conspiring lovers. In *Lear*, Albany's discovery of the aforementioned love-letter provides the damning proof of the couple's "reciprocal vows" and their plans to "cut [Albany] off." Similarly, Mary's and Bothwell's passionate "Casket Letters"—consisting of roughly 8 letters purportedly written in Mary's hand to Lord Bothwell and found in a small gilt coffer or casket in Mary's chambers—disclosed the incriminating evidence of the lovers' liaison and their plans to kill Darnley. Of course, the production of these incriminating letters in both instances may account for the ruin of both women, as evinced by Goneril's suicide and by Mary's life-long imprisonment and eventual execution.<sup>48</sup>

Although it is impossible to ascertain definitively whether Shakespeare had Mary Stewart's situation in mind when writing *Lear*, his use of letters here and elsewhere in the play nonetheless resonates with the anxieties surrounding letters so prominent in this period. Moreover, Shakespeare's treatment of letters in *Lear* exposes their ambiguous authority, which simultaneously excites suspicion and intrigue. The effects of the letters' ambiguous power register most fully in the play's tragic conclusion in which the final turns of two letters send both camps spiraling towards disaster: A teist of fate transforms Goneril's conspiratorial letter to Edmund, results directly in Cordelia's death and indirectly in Lear's grief-stricken demise. In this way, the instability of letters here and throughout the play becomes intimately tied to the ruinous uncertainty and devastation we confront at the play's end, signaling not only the destruction of a family, or even of a kingdom, but more broadly, the collapse of a once stable world order with no immediate hopes for recovery. And thus, we enter into the despair of the play's surviving characters who wonder, "Is this the promis'd end? Or image of that horror?" (V. iii. 264-5).

New York University

### Notes

1. Quotations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974).
2. Gerard-Denis Farcy, "La Circulation épistolaire dans le *Roi Lear*," in *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre* (Paris: July-September 1990), p. 262. In particular, Farcy's article explores Shakespeare's innovative and subtle use of letters in *Lear* in respect to the relative paucity of letters found in classical drama.
3. In addition to Farcy's article, two other studies deserve mention: Mark Taylor investigates how the complexity of letters in several of Shakespeare's plays far exceeds mere reportage or "a means of compressing large events into small space." See Taylor, "Letters and Readers in *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Twelfth Night*," in *Philological Quarterly*, 69:1 (1990), pp. 31-53. In a related study, David Bergeron focuses on the Gloucester-Edgar-Edmund plot and argues that the indirect discourse of letters epitomizes Gloucester's discourse in contrast to Lear's faith in the direct discourse of speech. See Bergeron, "Deadly Letters in *King Lear*," in *Philological Quarterly*, 72:2 (1993), pp.157-76.
4. Cf., I.ii. 46-54. For a more complete explanation and cross-referencing of letters in the

62 *The Upstart Crow*

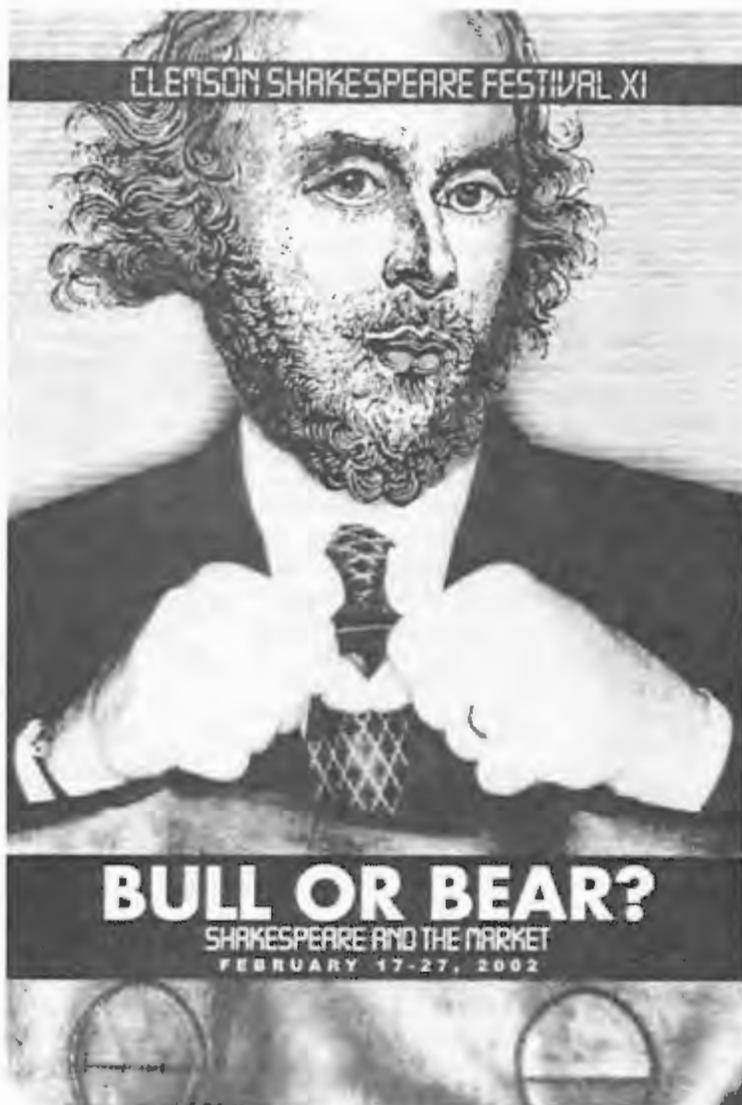
examples that follow, refer to the Appendix of this article.

5. Cf., III. v. 10-18 (letter #4 in Appendix).
6. Cf., IV. vi. 262-70 (letter #8).
7. Cfs., I. iii. 25-26 (letter #2); IV. ii. 82-87 (letter #6); IV. v. 29-32 (letter #9).
8. Cf., II. ii. 165-170 (letter #4).
9. Cfs., III. iii. 10-22 (from Gloucester to Edmund); III. v. 10-18 (from Edmund to Cornwall); III. vii. 1-3 (from Cornwall to Goneril and Regan).
10. Cf., V. iii. 245-8 (letter #13).
11. Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card*, translated with notes and introduction by Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 4-5.
12. Interestingly, Jonathan Miller's production of *Lea*r (BBC and Time-Life, 1983) emphasizes the sensitive nature of this discussion by portraying Kent and Gloucester speaking in hushed whispers before Edmund steps within earshot.
13. Cf., I. i. 1-2 ff.: Kent [to Gloucester]: "I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall."
14. Cf., I. i. 9-24.
15. Frank Kermode, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, p. 1251. For a more detailed account of this succession controversy, see Alison Plowden, *Elizabeth Tudor and Mary Stewart: Two Queens in One Isle* (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble Books, 1984), especially pp. 69-74.
16. Conyers Read, for instance, notes the prominence of Machiavellian politics and its "frankly materialistic philosophy and...utter indifference to moral considerations" throughout Europe during the period: ". . . Italy, particularly Venice, came to be recognized as the great school for statecraft in the sixteenth century....*The Prince* became the guidebook for statesmen in all the courts of Western Europe and the Relatione of Venetian ambassadors the pattern for all European diplomatists." See Read, *Mr. Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1925), vol. 1, pp. 22-25.
17. Edwin Muir, *The Politics of King Lear* (Glasgow: Jackson, Son and Company, 1947), p. 7.
18. Cf., letter #12 in Appendix A.
19. Edwin Muir, *The Politics of King Lear*, p. 18.
20. George Walker, *Haste, Post, Hastel: Postmen and Post-roads through the Ages* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company), p. 128. Walker goes on to state that "in the fifteenth century no person of any rank or position in society above that of mere labouring men was wholly illiterate; it is not therefore so surprising that in the next century there were few who could not write letters, while many could express themselves with ease and fluency." On a related note, J.W. Adamson cites a 1543 reform act of Henry VIII—prohibiting the reading of an English Bible by women and certain labouring classes—as evidence that "reading in the vernacular [was regarded] as an art widely disseminated among the humblest social ranks irrespective of sex." See Adamson, "The Extent of Literacy in England in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: Notes and Conjectures," in *The Library*, ed. A.W. Pollard (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1930), Fourth Series, vol. X, pp. 172-3.
21. Louis B. Wright, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1935), pp. 139-141. In particular, Wright notes many of the most popular manuals of the time, including: Angel Day's *The English Secretarie* (1586), which underwent eight editions by 1626; William Fulwood's *The Enimie of Idleness: Teaching the maner and stile how to endite, compose and write al sorts of Epistles and Letters* which was intended primarily for the merchant's everyday's needs and also enjoyed eight editions between 1568 and 1621; and Nicholas Breton's largely quotidian and informal manual, *A Poste with a madde Packet of Letters*, reproduced in at least eleven editions between 1602 and 1637.
22. Nicholas Breton, *A Poste with a Mad Packet of Letters*, printed in *The Works in Verse and Prose of Nicholas Breton*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (St. Georges's: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1879), vol. II.
23. Howard Robinson, *The British Post Office: A History* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1948), pp. 12-13. Robinson also notes that according to the Proclamation, "Orders to be observed" included the dispatch of mail within fifteen minutes of its arrival at the post house, and its delivery with "all speed and diligence"—that is, at a rate of seven miles per hour in the summer and five miles per hour in the winter.
24. Robinson, *The British Post Office*, pp. 20-21.
25. Walker, *Haste, Post, Hastel*, p. 135.

26. Walker, p. 135.
27. While the precise dating of *Lear* is somewhat problematic, G. Blakemore Evans and others generally agree on this approximate date. (See Evans, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, p. 1884; Cf. Kermode, pp. 1249-1250.)
28. As Caroline Bingham explains, the subsequent statute declaring Guy Fawkes' Day (so-named after one of the chief conspirators) proclaimed to the English people that the intended devastation would have occurred "had it not pleased Almighty God, by inspiring the King's most excellent Majesty with a divine spirit, to interpret some dark phrases of a letter showed his Majesty, above and beyond all ordinary construction" (Bingham, p. 59). For a more thorough description of the Gunpowder Treason, see Bingham, *James I of England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), pp. 54-65.
29. Murray also notes the perpetuation of this aim in postal tradition, as the preamble to Cromwell's Act of 1657 establishing a General Post Office declared it "the best means of discovering and preventing many dangerous and wicked designs which have been and are daily contrived against the peace and welfare of this Commonwealth, the intelligence whereof cannot well be communicated but by letter of escript." See Murray, *The Post Office* (London and New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons Ltd., 1927), p. 2.
30. *Proclamations during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, cited in Howard Robinson, *Carrying British Mails Overseas* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1964). Robinson notes that a "bouget" (later "budget") was the French name for a small leather bag.
31. Walker, *Haste, Post, Haste!*, pp. 59-60.
32. For a fairly concise but sufficiently detailed account of the Babington plot and its aftermath, see Plowden, pp. 203-221. For a more elaborate account that also examines speculations concerning Walsingham's possible deceit in forging the letter to frame Mary, see Read, *Mr. Secretary Walsingham*, vol. III, pp.1-70.
33. One of several sites where Mary was detained as an "involuntary houseguest" in England following her deposition from the Scottish throne.
34. For a concise summary of these plots, including the so-called Norfolk plot, Ridolfi plot, and Throckmorton plot, see Plowden, *Two Queens in One Isle*, and Gordon Donaldson, *The First Trial of Mary, Queen of Scots* (New York: Stein and Day, 1969). More recently, *The Trial of Nicholas Throckmorton* (ed. Annabel Patterson) illuminates this particular plot in detail (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1998).
35. Gloucester alludes to this danger when confiding in Edmund that he intends to seek out and succor Lear, despite his fear of Cornwall's retribution: "If I die for't (as no less is threat'ned me), the King my old master must be reliev'd" (III. iii. 17-19).
36. As the Gentleman reports to Kent: "They say Edgar, his banish'd son, is with the Earl of Kent in Germany" (IV. vii. 89-90).
37. While these whisperings and rumors are too extensive to enumerate here, the following examples illustrate how they serve as a valuable, if not tenuous, source of information concerning matters of war and intrigue throughout the play: In II.i., Curan asks Edmund, "You have heard of the news abroad, I mean the whisper'd ones, for they are yet but ear-bussing arguments?" (6-8); He goes on to ask, "...Have you heard of no likely wars toward, 'twixt the Dukes of Cornwall and Albany?" (10-11). Later, while disguised as Tom o' Bedlam, Edgar inquires of a gentleman, "Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward?"—to which the gentleman answers, "Most sure and vulgar; every one hears that, / Which can distinguish sound" (IV. vi. 210-211). Rumors are the means by which Gloucester "o'erhear[s] a plot of death upon [Lear]" (III. vi. 89); and the disguised Edgar determines to "Mark the high noises" (or rumors of great events), to decide the proper time to seek vindication (III. vi. 111). Finally, earsay and gossip: "So we'll live,...and hear poor rogues / Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too— / Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out— / And take upon's the mystery of things / As if we were God's spies..." (V. iii. 13-19).
38. Gloucester alludes to France's temperament in II. i. 23: "Kent banish'd thus? and France in choler parted?" Lear likewise refers to France's "hot-blooded" temper in II. iv. 212.
39. See Appendix letter #4 for a further discussion of this point.
40. Cf. III. vii. 1-3: Cornwall [to Goneril]: "Post speedily to my lord you husband, show him this letter. The army of France is landed."
41. Cf. III. i. 35-39: Kent [to Gentleman]: "If on my credit you dare build so far / To make your speed to Dover, you shall find / Some that will thank you, making just report / Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow / The King hath cause to plain."

64 *The Upstart Crow*

42. Mark Taylor, "Letters and Readers in *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Twelfth Night*," p. 41.
43. Cf. I. iii. 13-16: Goneril [to Oswald]: "I'd have it come to question. / If he distaste it, let him to my sister, / Whose mind and mine I know in that are one, / Not to be overrul'd."
44. Farcy, "La Circulation epistolaire dans le *Roi Lear*," p. 262.
45. Jonathan Goldberg, *Writing Matter: From the Hands of the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 260.
46. Cf. I. iv. 333-4: [Goneril to Oswald] "How now Oswald? / What, have you writ that letter to my sister?" Later, we likewise see Regan commanding Oswald to transcribe a letter for her, bidding him to "take [i.e., write down] this note" (IV. vi. 29).
47. Oddly, no further reference is made to Regan's letters, which Oswald also carries in his purse. Michael Elliott's production of *Lear* (Granada Television, 1984) resolves this inconsistency by showing Oswald tearing up Regan's letter as soon as he leaves her company in IV.v. This staging thus tends towards an interpretation of Oswald's continued support of Goneril.
48. While the controversy surrounding Mary's involvement in Damley's murder cannot be explored at length in this paper, Alison Plowden offers an interesting account of the key figures and circumstances in this scandal. (See Plowden, *Two Queen's In One Isle*, pp. 99-162.) For a more sympathetic reading of Mary's involvement, see George Malcolm Thomson, *The Crime of Mary Stuart* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1967). Also, see Andrew Lang, *The Mystery of Mary Stuart* for a reproduction of the Casket Letters as they appear in the official state papers of the period. I also suspect that a reading of George Buchanan's *Detectio*, detailing Mary's crime, may yield even more interesting parallels between Mary's and Goneril's situations that would be worthwhile to pursue in a future article. The fact that Buchanan once served as Mary's Court-Laureate and that his "account of Mary's tragic career...formulated [the unfavorable] opinion" of her for nearly two centuries, makes this study all the more intriguing. See Buchanan, *The Tyrannous Reign of Mary Stewart: George Buchanan's Account*, translated and edited by W.A. Gatherer (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1958).
49. Cf., V. iii. 245-247.



*"This year is our eleventh anniversary. Jim [Andreas] and his wife Martha's presence at the tenth anniversary allowed us to honor him for his contribution. It is with humble thanks for those ten years, and with the conviction that his vision will provide for the many years yet to come, that I dedicate this production of Much Ado About Nothing to Jim's memory."*  
 —Chip Egan

## Black Devils, White Witches, and the Chains of Magic in *Titus Andronicus* and *Othello*

by Lori Schroeder Haslem

As is customary with Shakespearean tragedy, *The Tragedy of Othello the Moor* presents a set of complexly interrelated images and metaphors. Whereas images and metaphors of play-acting and madness predominate in *Hamlet*, *Othello* makes much of weaving and spinning, bewitching and ensnaring. Early in the play, these metaphors surround the question of how Othello and Desdemona fell in love—Othello explaining to the Senate that he bewitched Desdemona with his own adventure tales rather than with the magic or charms he has been charged with using—while later in the play such metaphors pertain more to methods by which Iago manipulates Othello's thoughts. Iago describes his plan to "make [a] net / That shall enmesh them all" (II.iii.361)<sup>1</sup>, and indeed the handkerchief (later said by Othello to have "magic in the web of it" (III.iv.691) becomes a prop symbolic of the net that Iago does so successfully—and indeed almost magically—weave to capture all.

Much has been said about the importance of magic in the play, both as a general theme and in specific connection with the handkerchief. One well known and still often cited study claims that the play's metaphorical witchcraft is a benign force, that the "magic" in the web of the play is love, the love that is capable of transforming a personality for the better.<sup>2</sup> Witchcraft, faith, and love are all aligned with Desdemona, the argument goes, but—tragically—these beneficent qualities lose out when pitted against the wit, reason, and skepticism advanced by Iago.<sup>3</sup> Another argument is that Shakespeare's emphasis on how Iago suggestively conjures on Othello amounts to a denunciation of witchcraft (in the manner of Reginald Scot's 1554 *Discoverie of Witchcraft*) as mere delusion perpetrated by greedy and vengeful cozeners on the gullible, while others speculate on the possibility that the handkerchief does not merely carry metaphorical magical force but represents an actual magic token.<sup>4</sup> Still others view the tragedy as exposing the means by which narrative rather than literal magic spells can bewitch, ensnare, and bind.<sup>5</sup> And numerous critics puzzle over the meaning of Othello's two contradictory versions of the handkerchief's history and magical powers, one positing that his mother had received it from a "charmer" woman and another claiming that his father had made a gift of it to his mother.<sup>6</sup>

What I believe has not been considered fully is the degree to which the play's images of magic and witchcraft also become a site for a number of anxieties about miscegenation and how these anxieties (in *Othello* as well as in early modern England more generally) are inextricably tied to the woman's and to the black male's perceived affinity for diabolism, witchcraft, and magic. Such associations are apparently treated with more resistance in *Othello* than they are in the earlier Shakespearean tragedy *Titus Andronicus*, which likewise features a Moor (a term often used in Shakespeare's day for any non-Caucasian) who couples with a white woman? And yet, I propose, both plays do portray the seduction and the sexual encounter as belonging to a process of suspiciously blackmagical enchaining wherein each party is simultaneously enchaining and being enchained by the other. Likewise each play analogizes this reciprocal enchaining with an illicit coupling of witch and devil, who were oft imagined to copulate during midnight rendez-vous all over early modern Europe. Such an analogy cultivates the kind of audience titillation that comes with voyeuristically imagining a taboo act and at times even positions the audience as inquisitors at a witch trial, where historically

the main drive was often to force out a visually descriptive confession about perverse sex acts between the accused witch and the devils. Likewise, both plays promote a fluctuating fascination with and disgust at the biological product of such an encoded diabolical union—the black baby boy born to Aaron and Tamora in *Titus* and the less literal but no less central “monstrous birth” in the bed toward which *Othello* labors (I.iii.404).

In early modern England, the connotations of spinning and weaving were manifold, but a key association was with deceit, especially the devil's deceit, which a 1619 treatise on witchcraft says is like a woven “net of ... illusions.”<sup>9</sup> And mainly because of his dark skin and non-Christian upbringing, the Moor in this period was regularly associated with the devil, as attested to by Reginald Scot's description of children from an early age being frightened by their mothers' and nurse maids' accounts of the devil's claws, fangs, horns, claws, and “skin like a Niger.”<sup>10</sup> The writings of the early period offer a number of sometimes interrelated claims for the validity of this association between Moor and devil. One commonly finds equations made, for instance, between a black complexion and the reputedly blackened and bedeviled state of the soul or between the warmth of the regions inhabited by blacks and the hotness of hell.<sup>11</sup> There was also an ancient tradition linking a black face with the wickedness of the devil, an association stemming partly from the notion that people's complexions were literal reflections of how far they were (both physically and spiritually) from the Holy Land, from the seat of Christianity.<sup>12</sup>

A related theory was that blacks descended from Noah's son Ham, who, it was said, became an agent of the devil when he disobeyed Noah's command that his sons should forego sexual relations with their wives out of reverence for God.<sup>13</sup> The supposed curse that followed this disobedience was that all of Ham's descendants were made black so as to resemble the devil who had prompted the engendering of their race. Accordingly, reports Peter Heylyn in his 1661 *Cosmographie*, black inhabitants of parts of Africa are “much given to *sorcery* and *divinations* by the flight of birds; Skilful in medicinal herbs and poysons, and by familiarity with the Devil able to tell things to come.”<sup>14</sup> Or, as Cotton Mather would assert some years later, “Very many of them do with Devillish Rites actually worship Devils, or maintain a magical conversation with Devils.”<sup>15</sup>

This association between devil and black man is further reflected in (and no doubt fomented by) the witch trials of the period, for while accused witches often reportedly testified that various devils appeared as animals, they also frequently described Satan himself as a Negro or as “the black man.”<sup>16</sup> Reportedly, the testimony also frequently emphasized the trickiness and instability of this black man's physical appearance. While he was sometimes said to be impeccably dressed (usually in black, occasionally with a red hat), other accused witches in the period testified to the regularity with which the devil would appear to them first in the guise of a black cat or dog (or even a toad or a ferret) before shifting his appearance to that of a Negro (sometimes an “old Negro”) who identified himself, according to one accused witch, as “the son of art.”<sup>17</sup> Emerging late sixteenth century anxieties about mysterious tribal practices and licentious sexual practices as they were being reported by travelers to Africa also might well have aggravated (and been aggravated by) all such testimony about “the black man's” potential for shape-shifting and for seduction, for using black magic's charms and for casting his net of illusions.<sup>18</sup>

Co-existing with such characterizations of the black man were a number of myths dating from ancient times that linked women with the occult and that made regular use of weaving and spinning imagery in doing so.<sup>19</sup> The siren winds men in with her song's magical allure. The mysterious power to spin, to measure, and to cut the thread of life lies with the three female Fates. Indeed, as Sarah Pomeroy notes, while women in ancient times were typically literal weavers, in the literature their weaving often “acquires a magical quality, as though women were designing the fate of men.”<sup>20</sup> Thus Arete is able to recognize Odysseus by his clothing, Omphale and her distaff to feminize and

68 *The Upstart Crow*

enslave Hercules, and the raped and de-tongued Philomela to triumph over Tereus by weaving the tale of her rape into a tapestry. Such potency and skill also belong to Penelope, who stalls her suitors nearly four years by telling them that before remarrying she must first weave a burial garment for her father-in-law, a garment she then systematically unravels every night so as to start anew each morning. Penelope's weaving thus stands as a curiously mixed emblem of power, deceit, chastity, and cunning.

Recurrent in both ancient and early Christian writings, too, is the motif of the woman as a seductress, or even as a spider who spins, seduces, deceives, and ensnares. The Christian-based literature of medieval England abounds in catalogs of proverbially seductive women, among them Eve, Delilah, and Salome. As Chaucer's *Wife of Bath* says (ironically echoing a number of patristic writers), women are by nature spinners of lies and deceits.<sup>21</sup> And the misogynists of the 16th and 17th century pamphlet wars were likely to chime with Joseph Swetnam's pronouncement that "[t]he Devil himself hath not more illusions to get men into his net than women have devices and inventions to allure men to their love," in whose beds such a man is "like a bird snared in a lime bush, which the more she striveth, the faster she is."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, there was an early modern historical aligning of women's practices of spinning and weaving with the occult, for witchcraft itself was supposedly marked by linguistically diabolical incantations (e.g., blessings spoken backwards) and by the weaving and casting of spells.<sup>23</sup>

Both of these supposed affinities for the occult, the woman's and the black man's are basic to many Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic portrayals of blacks and women. Someone like Shakespeare's *Cleopatra*, it has been suggested, is associated with the occult on both counts, as a woman and as a non-Caucasian.<sup>24</sup> But *Titus* and *Othello* neither discretely invoke these stereotypes about race and gender nor collapse the two into a single stereotype so much as they reveal and explore twinned, inter-reflexive cultural anxieties about witchcraft and miscegenation, anxieties that are teased out by a partially visible onstage pairing of (and evocatively suggested off-stage sexual act between) white-woman-as-witch and black-man-as-devil.

In *Titus*, Aaron the Moor's association with the devil is made explicit. Aaron himself announces that he must "have his soul black like his face" (III.i.205). Others in the play call him an "incarnate devil," a "foul fiend," a "hellish dog," and describe him as having a "fiend-like face" (V.i.40,45; IV.ii.77, 79). Though Aaron does display some moments of human caring toward the baby boy that is born from his affair with Tamora, he is thoroughly dehumanized toward the end of the play when he describes with relish the list of cruel and violent acts he has done "[a]s willingly as one would kill a fly" (V.i.142). Just as Aaron is almost unfailingly depicted as devil, so Tamora (Queen of the Goths) is repeatedly depicted as witch, or as Leslie Fiedler has described her, "the second stranger from the classic world: a witch-mother from across the Alps."<sup>25</sup> Called a goddess, a nymph, and a "siren that will charm Rome's [emperor] / And see his shipwrack and his commonweal's" (II.i.24-25), Tamora infiltrates the imperial family of the Romans who have just defeated her and then proceeds to cuckold her new emperor-husband. It is clear by the end of the play's first scene that she will wield her power, depicted as deriving mainly from her sexuality, to highly violent ends. "I'll find a day to massacre them all," she vows, "And raze their faction and their family" (1.1.45-51).

Tamora is also in this early scene said to have a "cloudy countenance," phrasing that anticipates descriptions of Aaron, and later she is twice called a Semiramis. These and other such references suggest that Tamora too has a "blackened" soul – blackened both by lust and by treasonous depravity – and that this blackened state in fact explains her coupling with Aaron. The play is actually very straightforward in offering this shared blackness of the soul as the purported basis of the two lovers' alliance and, as such, offers an obvious legitimizing of cultural anxiety about interracial coupling.

Tamora is further presented as a witch-figure because of her reputed unwomanliness. Numerous scholars have noted that one of the most common denominators among those accused of witchcraft is that they tended to be women who somehow challenged roles supposedly attributed to them by nature.<sup>26</sup> In the scene where Tamora exercises her greatest potency as a witch figure—where she has two of her sons slay Bassianus and orders them to rape and mutilate Lavinia—Lavinia herself repeatedly describes Tamora as a beast, a tiger, an unnatural creature with a woman's face but with no other attributes of a woman. Even the milk Tamora's sons suckled from her, says Lavinia, must have turned to marble, a comment that refers to Tamora's general unworthiness as a woman but perhaps also invites visualization of a witch suckling her familiar.

It is especially telling that the shocking and cold-hearted violence of this scene is preceded by the teasingly imagined sexual coupling of the devil-figure Aaron and the witch-figure Tamora. As such, the violent acts that Tamora unleashes follow almost as a consequence of Lavinia and Bassianus's having stumbled upon this illicit encounter. Their abhorrence at what they have come across seems obviously designed to project the early modern audience's own culturally entrenched anxiety about interracial erotics. These anxieties are given voice mainly by Bassianus, who castigates especially Tamora: "Believe me, Queen, your swart Cimmerian I Doth make your honor of his body's hue, I Spotted, detested, and abominable" (II.iii.72-74). Such a comment also prepares for Tamora's eventual forfeiting of any possible racial privilege when, in the play's final scene, she and Aaron are—in Dorothea Kehler's words—"twinned as fierce subhumans, each a'ravenous tiger".<sup>27</sup> But for the time being, while the full visual evidence of the illicit coupling cannot actually be seen and while the truth of it cannot be spoken (either by the murdered Bassianus or by the tongueless Lavinia) Tamora retains a seeming "whiteness."

Also key to the portrayal of Aaron and Tamora's relationship is a marked ambivalence about which of the two figures in the alliance, the devil or the witch figure, has the more power. Scholars on the history of magic and witchcraft have noted that there was increasing debate among early modern scholastics about who had the upper hand when a magician made a pact with the devil, especially as the usually male magician-figure was overtime transformed into the usually female witch-figure.<sup>28</sup> While earlier representations often emphasized the magician's power over the demons, later representations of the witch emphasized her subservience to the devil. A similar ambivalence about the witch's control over and agency in her relations with the devil is reflected in the *Malleus Maleficarum* itself, which goes to great lengths to "prove" that while women in earlier times were drawn unwillingly into sexual enslavement with the devil and while some accused witches continued to protest such unwillingness, the current day witches engaged in such perverse activity very willingly and for the despicable purpose of engendering demonic progeny.<sup>29</sup>

Such debate and uncertainty about who controlled whom when a pact with the devil had been made, I suggest, are reflected in the dynamics between Aaron and Tamora, dynamics that also work to confirm the belief that interracial coupling itself is inherently unstable. Aaron's first soliloquy clearly develops the notion of sexual enslavement, making especially poignant the difficulty of determining whether Tamora is his love slave or vice versa:

Then, Aaron, arm thy heart, and fit thy thoughts,  
To mount aloft with thy imperial mistress,  
And mount her pitch, whom thou in triumph long  
Hast prisoner held, fett'rd in amorous chains,  
And faster bound to Aaron's charming eyes

70 *The Upstart Crow*

Than is Prometheus tied to Caucasus.  
 Away with slavish weeds and servile thoughts!  
 I will be bright, and shine in pearl and gold,  
 To wait upon this new-made emperess.  
 To wait, said I? to wanton with this queen.  
 This goddess, this Semiramis, this nymph,  
 This siren.... (II.i.12-24)

In the action of the play, too, it becomes difficult to say which of these two has more demonic potential and which holds erotic sway over the other. The force of Tamora's sexuality seems almost palpable in the play's opening scene, but in the forest scene, where she asks Aaron more or less frankly whether they might not have an erotic dalliance, he turns her down, saying that he's governed by Saturn rather than by Venus.<sup>30</sup>

A similar weighing and testing of the balance of power between these two emerges in the revenge plot. While Tamora seems to be the more treacherous in the first half of the play, Aaron takes over that role in the latter half. Importantly, Aaron's treachery begins to heighten with his first soliloquy in Act II, a speech that charges the idea of mutual enslavement—typical of romantic discourse too—with earthy references to the taboo interracial sex act. First saying that he will “mount aloft with” Tamora to Olympus' top, Aaron immediately afterwards says he will “mount her pitch,” a densely connotative phrase that suggests his sexual mounting of Tamora, his coming along with her to the pitch of orgasm, and a reminder that this act is not really a climbing aloft at all but rather a descent into pitch, into blackness—which itself ambiguously suggests both Tamora's moral descent into the “pitch” of interracial sex and Aaron's literal entering of Tamora's “pitch,” her vagina. Perhaps, too, the image connects the “pitch” of Tamora's vagina and womb with that “abhorred pit” and “subtile hole” into which Bassianus is about to be thrown and Quintus and Martins to fall.<sup>31</sup>

Further reminders of the taboo sex act that is always imaginatively at hand but never actually in view occur with the forest scene encounter, which offers the lurid suggestion that interracial coupling could happen right here and now before the audience's very eyes. At the same time, the language of the scene conjures up images of begetting, childbirth, and the nursery. Aaron enters the scene with a bag of gold from Tamora's “chest” that he says “must coin a stratagem” and “beget / A very excellent piece of villainy” (II.iii.5-7). Tamora's speech directly following asks Aaron to duck into the shadows, where after satisfying their passions they can fall asleep while the sounds of the forest act like “a nurse's song / Of lullaby to bring her babe asleep” (28-29), and she later refers to the forest as a place where “nothing breeds, / Unless the nightly owl or fatal raven” (96-97) just after Aaron has been disparagingly called her “raven-colored love” (83). Even later with Lavinia's remark about the improbability of Tamora's suckling her sons with something as nurturing as milk, the scene keeps emphasizing that the illicit encounter will result in the breeding of a baby, or baby-monster. Still, like the sex act itself, the spectacle of the baby is withheld from view and likewise becomes increasingly charged with associations of depravity, perversity, and monstrosity.

When the baby is delivered and brought forth to Aaron two acts later, the Nurse calls the newborn a devil for having been fathered by and for resembling the devil-figure Aaron and is said to be as “loathsome as a toad / Amongst the fair-fac'd breeders of our clime” (IV.ii.67-68). Demons were often said in the early period to take the shape of toads, and, in at least one early account, the offspring of devils and witches themselves reportedly mated and produced toads and serpents.<sup>32</sup> If not regarded as a demon, the baby boy might instead be considered a witch, in accordance with popular early modern thought that the witch gene was in effect hereditary.<sup>33</sup> At the very least, as the authors of the *Malleus* repeatedly point out, the boy's being a suggested product of a witch-devil union

would make him the best sort of human candidate for performing the devil's work.<sup>34</sup>

On one level, the play builds up and approves such anxieties about the taboo coupling of the devilish Aaron and the witchy Tamora only to purge them when Tamora is stabbed and Aaron is sent to a bizarre form of execution (he's to be buried upright to his waist and subsequently starved). But even after this there remains on stage the still anxiously inscribed emblem of the black baby boy.<sup>35</sup> As I have said, to the degree that the baby is viewed as a product of the illicit union of the devil and a witch, he himself may be seen as a devil, witch, even as some other sort of monster.<sup>36</sup> Still, even given the wholly negative attitudes toward Aaron, Tamora, and their baby that have been cultivated, the play also subtly raises psychological and cultural problems connected with condemning the baby as devil, witch, or both. On the one hand, an early modern audience who feels that the baby, like his parents, should be killed would necessarily be uncomfortably aligned with Tamora, who had herself earlier in the play ordered her baby son to be killed and thereby demonstrated her (by now) notoriously unnatural behavior as woman and mother, further compounded by her subsequent act of eating her own slain sons (albeit unwittingly) in a pie. And indeed much of the most emotionally fraught accusations against the witches in the early period involved their reputed addiction to infanticide and infanticidal cannibalism, murdering either their own children in sacrifice to the devil or other women's children in the womb or in the course of childbirth.<sup>37</sup> Thus it is difficult to imagine audience members easily sanctioning infanticide, perhaps especially at the close of a play that asks its audience to consider the limits of justified blood-spilling.

Conversely, for a race-anxious early modern audience to approve of the baby's being finally preserved and thus valued as a human being would mean being uncomfortably aligned with Aaron, who earlier in the play had argued similarly about his son's humanity. Given how the play has tapped negative cultural attitudes about this black baby boy, to value his life is to be in sympathy with the devil himself. Complicating matters even further, Aaron's earlier speech to Tamora's grown sons may well continue to resonate with audience members, reminding them—uncomfortably but undeniably—that the baby's "white" blood makes him, a brother to them all:

He is your brother, lords, sensibly fed  
Of that self blood that first gave life to you,  
And from your womb where you imprisoned were  
He is enfranchised and come to light.  
Nay, he is your brother, by the surer side,  
Although my seal be stamped in his face. (IV.ii.122-27)

Indeed, for an early modern audience the matter of what to "do" with the baby boy may be as difficult to resolve as its own culturally entrenched anxieties about miscegenation are truly to purge. The baby boy remains as if to demonstrate that such anxieties will not be entirely purged even when the black man and the white woman are as thoroughly denigrated and scapegoated as devil and witch as they have been in the play.

*The Tragedy of Othello the Moor*, performed in the same year (1604) as the new and stricter Witchcraft Statute was put into effect in England, likewise teases out both fascination with and disgust at witchcraft and miscegenation but does so in a much, more complex way. Of course, the first scene of the play hits hard with its racial slurs against Othello, whom Iago and Roderigo describe as a beast and as a devil who is at the very moment copulating with Desdemona. Iago warns Brabantio that "an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe" and that "the devil will make a grandsire of you" (I.i.88-89, 91). Brabantio himself then accuses Othello of using charms to entice Desdemona into his bed, charging Othello with the crime that many accused witches faced in Tudor and Stuart England, using witchcraft to "[p]rovoke a person'to unlawful love."<sup>38</sup>

72 *The Upstart Crow*

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,

...

Would ever have, t' incur a general mock  
 Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom  
 Of such a thing as thou-to fear, not to delight?  
 Judge me the world, if 'tis not gross in sense,  
 That thou hast practic'd on her with foul charms  
 Abus'd her delicate youth with drugs or minerals.  
 I therefore apprehend and do attach thee  
 For an abuser of the world, a practitioner  
 Of arts inhibited and out of warrant. (I.ii.63-79)

As Othello subsequently explains, the "chains of magic" with which he bound Desdemona were none other than his own enchanting stories about his exploits as a soldier. And there is an element of truth in saying that Desdemona seems to have been "chained" to Othello's words, for (at least as he tells it) she would always hasten back from performing necessary household chores to hear more of what he had to say, to "[d]evour up his discourse" with "a greedy ear" (I.iii.149-50).

Later in the play, there is a reversal of this dynamic when Desdemona persistently pleads Cassio's case with Othello. The scene may be and usually is played lightheartedly, but, importantly, one of the main thrusts of the scene is Othello's repeated acknowledgment that he is tied to Desdemona's desires, and to her words as well. Just prior to this exchange, Desdemona vows to be relentless: "My lord shall never rest, / I'll watch him tame, and talk him out of patience; / His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift, / I'll intermingle every thing he does / With Cassio's suit" (III.ii.22-26). She immediately begins doing just that, while Othello several times (entirely jokingly?) tries to get her to leave him alone. He ends up saying twice, "I will deny thee nothing" (75,83), words, again, that echo those supposedly spoken either by a witch in homage to a devil or by a devil as a pledge of his services to a witch.

Now I do not mean to suggest that this implied reciprocal enfeeblement between Othello and Desdemona is of the exact sort that Aaron describes with Tamora. As I have already noted, the language of bewitchment and enslavement runs throughout romantic discourse and, absent any other contexts of diabolism, need not amount to more than romantic cliché here. In fact, early on in *Othello*, the play most certainly resists demonizing the ways in which Othello and Desdemona have bewitched each other so that initially it is quite possible to agree with Heilman's assertion that the most positive forces of love are indeed being likened to magic and witchcraft. It would be incorrect, too, to say that Othello is the kind of stock devil-moor character that Aaron is. While Iago several times characterizes Othello as a devil, Iago himself is portrayed as devil more than Othello is. Likewise, it feels like a bit of a stretch to compare Desdemona and Tamora. While Tamora stands for everything that is beastly rather than womanly, Desdemona is many times presented as the paragon of womanhood.

And yet the play's initial resistance to negative connotations about Othello and Desdemona's mutual and magical chaining may amount to protesting too much, especially when this resistance is played to an early modern audience anxious about miscegenation and schooled in the traditions associating women and black men with the occult. In fact, this is all the more apparently the case if one considers the ways in which the play begins gradually to drop such resistance. As with *Titus*, *Othello* develops the notion that there is a troublesome instability of power between black man and white

woman and also analogizes that relationship, more subtly but perhaps therefore all the more powerfully, to the sexually based witch-devil alliance, but *Othello* complicates matters further by confusing at several turns not only who has the upper hand in the relationship but just who is the witch and who the devil.

In addition to the nuanced way in which Desdemona begins symbolically to enfeeble Othello with her suit on Cassio's behalf (a scene that also draws on traditional notions about the nagging wife), the handkerchief itself begins to raise anxieties about the nature of Othello and Desdemona's coupling. This "napkin," initially treated as a love token given by Othello to Desdemona in the play's prehistory, Othello describes to Desdemona (after he has grown all but entirely convinced of her infidelity) as having "magic in the web of it" because of being sewn by a sibyl in the midst of a prophetic fury. An Egyptian "charmer" woman, Othello says, in turn gave it to his mother and told her that "while she kept it / It would make her amiable, and subdue my father / Entirely to her love" (III.iv.55-74). If she lost it, though, or gave it away, she would likewise lose all ability to subdue him with her love. Such an explanation of the handkerchiefs purported origins and properties, not given in Shakespeare's source, is certainly puzzling. Is one now to see that Othello is more a believer in and even potentially a practitioner of magic than the early scenes of the plays had allowed? Or is he here lying to Desdemona for certain effect? Or is his turning to mythical explanations of the handkerchiefs origins an unconscious expression of fears about female "witchcraft" and erotic power more generally, fears represented by his descriptions not only of the furiously sewing sibyl but also of his spell-casting mother and of "the skillful" who practiced necromancy by dyeing the handkerchief in "mummy... I Conserv'd of maiden's hearts" (74-75)? Whichever the case, Othello's "actual" beliefs about the handkerchief seem less important here (and ultimately unknowable of course) than does his increasingly evident feeling that Desdemona has mysteriously subdued *him*, a turnabout of the accusation made in the play's opening scenes. Othello begins as accused witch but, at Iago's hands, comes to perceive himself as the bewitched victim, though it is difficult not to tangle up even this perceptual shift in Othello with his fear (expressed in the temptation scene) that Desdemona's suspiciously unnatural, bewitching, and/or devilish qualities are attested to by her "unnatural erring" in marrying him (III.iii.226, 263). That is, might she be suspiciously witch-like to him now in large part because she has given herself over body and soul to him, the "black man"?

The handkerchief (Othello's demanded "ocular proof") operates in the play rather as evidence would in a witchcraft trial, that is, as circumstantial evidence that could convict if it were strong enough, even though a confession was always desirable for conviction.<sup>39</sup> Handkerchiefs in the early period were a sign of social status but also carried other connotations, especially when spotted with strawberries. Critics have variously speculated on this strawberry-spotted handkerchief as representing duplicity (the snake hiding among strawberries), the "showing cloth" spotted with blood in the tribal custom of proving lost virginity, the spotted wedding-night sheets themselves, Desdemona's sexual parts, or as Othello's perception of her lust-stained honor. To all of these possibilities one might add a couple more points about the handkerchief's possible occultist connections. For instance, pious Catholics in Jacobean England were given to dipping handkerchiefs in the blood of martyred Jesuits (who were often accused of both treason and witchcraft) because they believed such cloths could perform miracles.<sup>41</sup> Also, at least one early modern woman (a black woman) accused of witchcraft in New England had, among other suspected magical properties, a knotted handkerchief and some rags of cloth.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps most telling, though, is Othello's reaction to Desdemona's offer to bind his aching head with the handkerchief ("Let me but bind it hard," says Desdemona (III.iii.28b), a scene that calls to mind not only Scot, who explains that such "binding" refers to a witch's use of a spell in order injure rather

74 *The Upstart Crow*

than to cure but also to the terms "binding" and "being bound" as they were regularly used to refer to the devil-witch alliance itself.<sup>43</sup> Such "binding" involved a ceremony for reversing the bonds of baptism and erasing the chris. Desdemona's emphasis on "binding" Othello thus calls up Iago's earlier suggestion that Othello's "soul is so enfeather'd to her love, / That she may make, unmake, do what she list" even to the point of getting him to "renounce his baptism, / All seals and symbols of redeemed sin" (II.iii.343-46). Accordingly, Othello's earlier and potentially merely romanticized claims that he could deny Desdemona nothing increasingly ring with quite a bit more anxiety, especially as he now refers to Desdemona as a "fair devil" who has evidence of a "young and sweating devil" in her palm (III.iii.42).

The subtle blurring of Othello and Desdemona as witch figure and devil figure, witch and victim, possessor and possessed is of course complicated even more by the various diabolic roles played by Iago, whose character is supremely chameleonlike and ultimately inscrutable. In one sense, he operates as a witch who conjures on Othello, seeming to throw him into an epileptic state, working on him with what he calls his "medicine," functioning as a diabolical witch-midwife who both engenders and brings forth a "monstrous birth," casting an implied spell on Othello and Desdemona with the "evil eye."<sup>44</sup> At one point in the temptation scene, Othello even speaks words of seeming enslavement to Iago: "I am bound to thee for ever" (212). Yet Iago not only works on Othello but also feigns being himself enslaved to a diabolical master, especially when he offers to do Othello's murderous bidding—"I am your own forever"—in the pact made at the end of the temptation scene (480). This pledge also suggests that Iago has successfully moved Othello from viewing himself as the bewitched victim of Desdemona—the earlier "I will deny thee nothing"—to viewing himself as the devil figure who commands obedience.

Furthermore, Iago's means of manipulating both Othello and Roderigo may suggest his affinity with a group of early modern English practitioners known as "cunning folk" or "cunning men" (sometimes also "wise men," "wise women," "witch-doctors," "witchfinders," or sometimes even "good witches"<sup>45</sup>). As the various connotations of these appellations suggest, the practices of and attitudes toward this group varied a great deal from case to case and from region to region. Consulted by people primarily about matters of lost property and illness, though also probably about more personal problems (all such occurrences presumably ascribable to witches whom the cunning folk could help their clients detect), such practitioners were themselves at times accused of witchcraft especially if they infringed on the turf of other professionals such as doctors or clergy.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of these practitioners primarily about matters of lost property and illness, though also probably about—and that which is most Iago-like about them—is their technique in dealing with their clients. First, one of their main attractions was that they "provided an outside, apparently objective and impartial, analysis of a person's relationships" (something like the unquestioned "honest Iago" status) and would frequently use a device involving "subtle questioning and sleight of hand" so that "[h]idden thoughts could be brought out into the open and made to appear as if they were dictated by a power outside the Consulter." Even when the client would come to suspect and then to be convinced of who the witch-culprit must be as revealed by such a device, the cunning wo/man would desist from confirming that suspicion, always leaving the final decision with the client.<sup>47</sup> Such are precisely the tactics of Iago. With the "monster in [his] thought / Too hideous to be shown," he never absolutely tells nor confirms for Othello exactly what he must "know" and yet all the while elicits such knowledge from his client (III.iii.107-08). In the case of Roderigo, Iago operates even further like an historical cunning man, managing to pad his pockets by means of such subtle questioning and sleight of hand.

Of course, in line with the play's broad metaphor of witchcraft, Iago is ultimately

revealed to be neither witch nor cunning man but the devil himself, who has seduced an unwitting Othello—and perhaps also Emilia (although she successfully resists him in the end as he attempts to “charm” her tongue (V.ii.184)—and who has wreaked in the more wild domain of Cyprus the havoc that would not be believed in the more civilized Venice.<sup>48</sup> Othello looks down at Iago’s feet for the signature cloven hooves and sees none. But as the audience has known all along, it is Iago’s very capacity as shape-shifter throughout the play that seals his position as the play’s devil, constantly proving himself to be not only bewitching in himself but also the cause of bewitching in others.

In the scene where he comes to murder Desdemona, Othello, though struggling still against personal attachments to Desdemona, seeks to behave impersonally by adopting the role first of Desdemona’s priest-confessor, then her inquisitor judge, and finally her executioner.<sup>49</sup> Strikingly, though, even while claiming to be carrying out the execution for the sake of the public good, Othello extracts the confession, pronounces the judgment, and carries out the execution in private, quite the opposite of how notorious criminals were treated in Elizabethan England (often with a publically celebrated hanging, drawing, and quartering). It is certainly legitimate to say that Othello’s behavior in this scene is like that of a priest urging a final confession from a dying parishioner (much of Othello’s language suggesting just this; e.g., “If you bethink yourself of any crime / Unreconcl’d as yet to heaven and grace, / Solicit for it straight” (V.i.26-281). But given the rich context of magic spells, tokens, witches, and devils already established by the play, the scene also warrants consideration as a type of witch trial. And indeed, just as Othello’s methods in trying and executing Desdemona here are out of keeping with those received by notorious criminals of the day, so the action is more specifically at odds with how witch trials were held in the England of this period.

Unlike Continental witch trials, where the procedure was one of a “secret judicial investigation to establish the truth” and where juries served a more ceremonial than actual function in the trial, in England lay jurors, not court officials, actually reached nearly all the crucial decisions in witch trials.<sup>50</sup> What Shakespeare’s Jacobean audience members would most likely have to consider as Othello condemns and subsequently smothers Desdemona, then, is the way in which they themselves are positioned as lay jurors sitting in judgment not only of Desdemona but also of the *means* by which Continental (perhaps especially Venetian) inquisitions of witches were conducted. Desdemona’s privately orchestrated trial with its secretly exhorted confession would stand as a glaring injustice to an audience that considered itself to be cautious of convicting on flimsy evidence.<sup>51</sup> Such an audience can take the moment to condemn Continental trial practices and feel superior in that condemnation. They can also recognize—before the tragically duped Othello can—that Iago in his several diabolical manifestations has successfully managed to shift Othello from being the falsely accused witch, to being the witch’s victim, to being the extraordinarily biased inquisitor with a preconceived conviction that he aggressively “proves.”

Still, the witch trial context of this scene is not so simple as this, nor is the audience’s easy condemnation of Othello as a type of the biased Continental inquisitor left unchallenged. For one thing, there is the quasi-confession of guilt that Desdemona herself makes. As the smothered Desdemona momentarily revives and asserts that she is guiltless, Emilia asks her who the truly guilty party is. Desdemona replies, “Nobody; I myself. Farewell,” a noble lie that sets up audience members for a much more complicated and highly uncomfortable act of judging than they may suppose they are engaged in (V.ii.123-24). In Tudor and Stuart witch trials, the accused could be convicted—lacking a confession—based on evidence of witchcraft and on testimony from others alone (though, as I have said, there was at least a purported attempt to disregard weak or obviously concocted evidence). But *confession* by the accused was “one of the few absolute proofs of guilt,” and so “there was considerable pressure to secure such

76 *The Upstart Crow*

evidence." Torture was disallowed in England, making it all the more difficult to elicit such confessions. Thus when an accused witch *did* confess it was almost always received not only as an admission of guilt but also as a revelation of absolute truth.<sup>52</sup>

So how might Jacobean audience members mindful of English witch trial procedures square their knowledge of Desdemona's innocence with her confession? They might simply chalk it up to Desdemona's impulse to martyr herself, to bequeath to Othello, her "kind lord," an untarnished reputation. But surely others might read into Desdemona's pronouncement her own admission of guilt at having "caused" her own murder by marrying with the stereotypically devilish "black man." In fact, I think it is worth speculating that a race-anxious audience, even one that believes wholly in Desdemona's innocence in the alleged affair with Cassio, might find a way of believing in – consciously or not – Desdemona's professed guilt, especially because this confession happens as the very scene of interracial sex (the bed itself) comes finally into actual view.

Certainly references to the interracial erotic scene and act have also functioned throughout the play to undermine early claims that Othello and Desdemona's coupling is wholly noble and pure. Increasingly the sex act between them becomes (as with Aaron and Tamora) a scene that is both voyeuristically eroticized and titillatingly withheld from view—as with the crass visual descriptions of copulation that open the play, Desdemona's expressed desire that she and Othello's joys should increase, the wedding couple's night in bed disrupted by the brouhaha over Cassio and Montano, and Iago's racially stereotypical suggestion to Roderigo that Desdemona's sexual appetites are so keen that even this black man won't be able to satisfy her for long. Shakespeare, mainly through Iago's descriptions, also urges his audience to imagine the erotic act being performed in Othello and Desdemona's bed as an adulterous act, adulterous because of its violation of so-called natural laws. These imagined acts cannot easily be "unthought," as Michael Neill has compellingly argued, and can implicate the audience's own prejudices and engage them in "a conspiracy to lay naked the scene of forbidden desire," a conspiracy which culminates in the final death scene on the bed. As with Bassianus and Lavinia's coming upon Aaron and Tamora in the forest, a race-anxious audience comes finally upon Othello and Desdemona in their bed, a discovery that also has great violence and death as its suggestively necessary consequence—almost as though the very *seeing* of the scene produces the violence and death.

Furthermore, the idea of Othello as "devil" (a notion circulated broadly by Iago, especially in the opening scene of the play) gains currency again in the final scene, where Emilia several times beshrews Othello for being a devil and refers to him as Desdemona's "most filthy bargain" (V.ii.157). And as Othello eventually learns the truth, stabs himself, kisses Desdemona, falls on the bed, and lies bleeding on the sheets next to her, one should consider the now fully visible scene's raw impact on a white audience taught to fear the "infection" of the black man's blood. Now in full sight, a black man and white woman effectively lie embracing on their blood-stained wedding sheets. In a sense, the "lay jurors" of the audience, not inclined to convict Desdemona of adultery on the flimsy evidence of the handkerchief, now come upon this more telling evidence—the very scene of interracial, connotatively diabolical and perverse sex—and are dared by Shakespeare into pronouncing a verdict based upon what they themselves see on the bed: a visual fixing of and ocular proof of the erotic act they have heard about and imagined seeing time and again throughout the play. The bloody sheets also now stand in for—in fact become an enlarged visual image of—the strawberry-spotted handkerchief, a replacement and enlargement that constitute more compelling evidence of encodedly perverse sexual behavior than the handkerchief could. Thus, to the degree that anxiety about interracial sex pervades this final visualization of Othello and Desdemona, Shakespeare draws the audience jury into upholding the guilty verdict earlier thought to be unjustly dealt by Othello. For those who take the dare, Desdemona,

innocent of one kind of adultery, is finally visually shown to be guilty of another, perhaps even more horrendous kind of adultery. Such is the "monstrous birth" on the bed that Iago has labored to deliver.

Still, if the audience is at all prompted to confirm entrenched cultural suspicions that Othello and Desdemona's coupling was unnaturally, even demonically driven, then this discovery is itself also at least partially a guilty one, the audience knowing as it must that to subscribe to such a final attitude is to have conspired with Iago to invent Othello and Desdemona as devil and witch rather than to discover them as such. Moreover, such reactions to the visual scene of the interracial couple on their bed also put the audience uncomfortably alongside the judge-inquisitor Othello it only moments ago condemned for having convicted too readily in accordance with unreliable "ocular proof." Indeed, as with *Titus*, the final emblem of *Othello*—here the bed rather than the black baby boy—suggests that attempting to purge cultural anxieties about miscegenation by invoking stereotypes and creating scapegoats ultimately demonstrates how uneasy and especially how self-implicating such an endeavor is. One may be inclined to stereotype, but to do so puts one in league with the devil; one may want to hand down convictions of perverse sexuality on the strength of the "evidence," but evidence can be untrustworthy, especially when it is manipulated (whether by inquisitors or by jurors) in order to justify one's own prejudices and *a priori* judgments.

Finally, given what I have thus far laid out about the inter-reflexive anxieties about witchcraft and miscegenation in *Titus* and *Othello*, I would like to turn to a fuller consideration of just why the actual sight of *Othello's* final scene would be particularly anxiety producing to a Jacobean audience. For, indeed, while miscegenation is a driving fear in both *Titus* and *Othello*, the final scene of *Othello* with its "tragic loading of the bed" seems to instill a more profound sense of the taboo than does the figure of the baby boy at the close of *Titus*. One might suspect that, for those particularly fearful of miscegenation, a child actually engendered from interracial union would be more troubling to view than the *scene* of such possible engendering would be. Yet with barely disguised revulsion, Lodovico cautions those who gaze upon Othello and Desdemona in their marital bed that "the object poisons sight, / Let it be hid" (V.ii.364-65), while at the closing of *Titus* the baby, without anyone particular commanding that he be taken out of sight, is simply brought inside by an attendant. I would like to suggest that one answer can be found, again, in the context of popular constructions of witch-devil copulation. While the final scene of *Othello* in and of itself need not evoke images of such an illicit union, it is unconvincing to say that such images and associations can be entirely erased at the play's end after having been repeatedly drawn out: "what you know you know."

Patricia Parker has argued convincingly that central to *Othello* is the Elizabethan and early Jacobean "atmosphere of espial and informing" on "crimes, like adultery and witchcraft, beyond the access of ocular proof," the impulse being at once to "see and not to see, to display to the eye and to discourage or refrain from looking."<sup>54</sup> Parker traces the same impulse to the vogue for anatomy in the early modern period, especially where simultaneous interest in and disgust at the "obscene parts" of the woman were concerned, and argues that this double impulse to see and not to see is what occurs in *Othello* as Desdemona's sexuality is suggestively displayed (dilated) and subsequently hidden (closed up) in the final scenes of the play.<sup>55</sup> One finds such twin desires to see and not to see also borne out by early modern reactions to reported witch-devil copulations. Reports of perverse sex acts—sometimes between and among the witches themselves, sometimes between witches and animals, but almost always and centrally between the witch and the devil or black man—became the highlights of the trials precisely because they were the highlights of the confessions. Inquisitors and juries alike seem to have been driven to hear such visually deceptive reports, reports

78 *The Upstart Crow*

which would quite often seal the witch's guilt. After hearing such reports, too, the courts would as a matter of due course "hide" the accused, often putting her (or him) away either in prison or permanently by sentencing the convicted to death.

Such a procedure, voyeuristically coaxing out visually descriptive testimony about the scene of perverse sex only to punish or kill the confessed participant, implies that the inquisitors and jurors themselves experienced a psychologically thrilling sense of danger upon hearing such accounts of perverse sex, or from imagining them too clearly. And indeed the *Malleus* makes very explicit the danger of literally seeing such an illicit copulation, explaining first just what is and is not visible to "bystanders" at such a scene and then just what the dangers to those observers are. The devil himself is not visible to such spectators, claims the *Malleus*, though the witch copulating with the devil does see him:

But with regard to any bystanders, the witches themselves have often been seen lying on their backs in the fields or the woods, naked up to the very navel, and it has been apparent from the disposition of those limbs and members which pertain to the venereal act and orgasm, as also from the agitation of their legs and thighs, that, all invisibly to the by-standers, they have been copulating with Incubus devils; yet sometimes, howbeit this is rare, at the end of the act a very black vapour, of about the stature of a man, rises up into the air from the witch. And the reason is that Schemer knows that he can in this way seduce or pervert the minds of girls or other men who are standing by.<sup>56</sup>

Though witnessing no agitating legs and thighs on the bed in the play's final scene, the audience of *Othello* audience may nevertheless find itself in a position related to that of such bystanders, dangerously fascinated with seeing a glimpse of the "perversity" it has been coaxed into imagining. With just such a glimpse, too, may come the audience's own jolting shift from being positioned as inquisitor judges to being witnesses of a suggested taboo act itself, an act and scene that must not be gazed on for too long. Lest the Schemer seduce, pervert, poison the sight of, or otherwise implicate the bystanders with the encodedly perverse erotic display before it, the audience must hastily and anxiously turn away, the scene be hidden, and the curtain be drawn.

### Notes

1. William Shakespeare, *Othello, The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al (Boston: Houghton, 1974). All references to this play and to *Titus Andronicus* are to this edition and will hereafter be noted parenthetically in the text.
2. Robert Heilman, *Magic in the Web: Action and Language in Othello* (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1956).
3. Heilman, p. 225.
4. On *Othello* as exposing the fraud of witchcraft practices, see especially David Kaula, "Othello Possessed: Notes on Shakespeare's Use of Magic and Witchcraft," *Shakespeare Studies*, 2 (1966), 112-32. For the notion of the handkerchief as actual magic token see Frances Teague, "Objects in *Othello*," "Othello": *New Perspectives*, ed. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Kent Cartwright (Cranbury, NJ: Associated Univ. Presses, 1991), p. 184, and Linda Woodbridge, *The Scythe of Saturn: Shakespeare and Magical Thinking* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1994), pp. 66-7.
5. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 232-54; Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1996), pp. 51-52, p. 249.
6. Kaula, pp. 126-27; Lynda Boose "Othello's Handkerchief. The Recognizance and Pledge of

- Love," *English Literary Renaissance*, 5 (1975), 366-67; Carol Thomas Neely, "Women and Men in *Othello*: 'What should such a fool I Do with so good a woman?'" *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lena, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1980), pp. 228-31; Karen Newman, "And wash the Ethiop white: Femininity and the Monstrous in *Othello*," *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's "Othello"*, ed. Anthony Gerard Barthelemy (New York: G. K. Hall, 1994), pp. 136-38; Harry Berger, Jr., "Impertinent Trifling: Desdemona's Handkerchief," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 47 (1996), 235-50.
7. On *Titus's* reinforcing of the stereotype of the black man and *Othello's* questioning of that stereotype, see Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 45-62.
  8. Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London: Longman, 1987), pp. 35-40; Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed. Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 252-53. Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (New York: Viking, 1996), p. 25. Clive Holmes notes that "[t]he crowd was an important actor in the denouement of the drama" of a witchcraft trial and could sway the jurors ("Witches, Magistrates, and Divines," *Witchcraft in England, Articles on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology*, vol. 6, ed. Brian P. Levack [New York: Garland, 1992], pp. 36-37.) For a similar claim about the theatrical display of exorcisms in this time period, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988), pp. 94-128.
  9. *The Wonderful Discovery of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Philippa Flower, Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640*, ed. Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1985), p. 374.
  10. *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, quoted in Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, "Before *Othello*: Elizabethan Representations of Sub-Saharan Africans," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 54 (1997), p. 28.
  11. Eldred Jones, *Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 1-7; Elliot H. Tokson, *The Popular Image of the Black Man in English Drama, 1550-1688* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982), pp. 10-14; Vaughan and Vaughan, p.23.
  12. G. K. Hunter, *Dramatic Identities and Cultural Tradition, Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Liverpool: Liverpool Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 3435; Loomba, p. 42.
  13. Tokson, p. 13.
  14. Quoted in Tokson, pp. 14-15.
  15. Quoted in Timothy McMillan, "Black Magic: Witchcraft, Race, and Resistance in Colonial New England," *Journal of Black Studies*, 25.1 (1994), p. 107. McMillan makes the more general point in this essay that blacks in early America were likely to be suspected of witchcraft because whites associated Africa with devil-worship.
  16. A number of such reported confessions are outlined by Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (New York: New American Library, 1977), pp. 199-200, pp. 22628, and by E. William Monter, "The Pedestal and the Stake: Courtly Love and Witchcraft," *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton, 1977), p. 131. Levack, p. 112, asserts that the Reformation gradually (by the 1660s) brought about a shift "deemphasizing the common view of [the devil] as a physical creature, the black manor animal who appeared at the sabbath" and encouraging a "strictly spiritual concept" of the devil.
  17. Cohn, p. 199, p. 227; *The Trial of Suzanne Gaudry (1652), Witchcraft in Europe, 1100-1700: A Documentary History*, ed. Alan C. Kors and Edward Peters (Philadelphia, Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), p. 270.
  18. For a good study on such travel narratives (among other related topics), see Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1995).
  19. Catherine Bates, "Weaving and Writing in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Survey*, 46 (1994), pp. 51-60, demonstrates how prominently these ancient myths were featured in early modern English literature.
  20. *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken, 1975), p. 30.

80 *The Upstart Crow*

21. Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson (Boston: Houghton, 1987), p.110,11. 399-402.
22. Quoted in Henderson and McManus, *Half Humankind*, 47.
23. Levack, p. 12, p. 37; *The Wonderful Discovery*, 374; Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 38-39.
24. See Loomba, pp. 119-30, and related arguments by Paster, pp. 238-47, and by Hall, pp. 153-58, pp. 182-87.
25. *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972), p. 181.
26. Fiedler, p. 67; A. D. J. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 158-89; Christina Lamer, *Witchcraft and Religion: The Politics of Popular Belief*, ed. Alan Macfarlane (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994); Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 187.
27. That Ravenous Tiger Tamora': *Titus Andronicus's Lusty Widow, Wife, and Mother*," Thus *Andronicus*": *Critical Essays*, ed. Philip C. Kolin (New York and London: Garland, 1995), p. 327.
28. Cohn, pp. 164-205; Levack, pp. 34-35.
29. Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. Rev. Montague Summers (New York: Dover, 1971), p. 111.
30. Woodbridge, p.172, speculates that Aaron's lines here point to the native practice of chiromancy, or palm-reading, still practiced at the time of the play's performance (likewise in *Othello*, when Othello detects a "sweating devil" in Desdemona's palm). In this practice Saturn is associated with the middle finger; furthermore, according to the 1558 "Brief Introduction- unto the Art of Chiromancy," a certain configuration of lines in the hand denoted an "evil... Saturnine nature."
31. Marion Wayne-Davies, "The Swallowing Womb': Consumed and Consuming Women in *Titus Andronicus*," *The Matter of Difference: Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Valerie Wayne (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 142-43.
32. Cohn, p. 115.
33. Kramer and Sprenger, pp. 25, 28, and 112; Holmes, p. 96; Levack, p. 131.
34. Kramer and Sprenger, p. 112.
35. An interesting twist on this presence is given in the BBC production of *Titus* directed by Jane Howell, in which the baby boy has been killed and is encoffined in the final scene, making him one of the play's many slain. In the 2000 film *Titus* directed by Julie Taymor, the action closes with the young, white Lucius carrying the black baby boy toward a suggestively hopeful horizon.
36. the monster Caliban, for instance, is born of a witch and an unnamed father (*Tempest* 1.1.339).
37. Cohn, p. 100, pp. 227-28.
38. Macfarlane, p. 15.
39. Macfarlane, p. 19.
40. See, e.g., Lawrence J. Ross, "The Meaning of Strawberries in Shakespeare," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 7 (1960), 225-40; Kaula; Boose; and Neely.
41. Garry Wills, *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's "Macbeth"* (Oxford and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 99-100.
42. McMillan, pp. 104-05.
43. Kaula, pp. 122-23.
44. Woodbridge, pp. 26 ff.
45. Macfarlane, pp. 115ff; Briggs, pp. 277-81.
46. Macfarlane, p. 121.
47. Macfarlane, p. 122, p. 125, p. 124.
48. According to popular lore, the devil conducted his sabbats mainly in the wild, in the woods and forests.
49. Winifred M. T. Nowotny, "Justice and Love in *Othello*," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 21 (1952), 330-44.
50. Levack, p. 68; Briggs, p. 332.
51. Briggs, p. 332.
52. Macfarlane, p. 19; Levack, p. 68.

53. "Unproper Beds: Race, Adultery, and the Hideous in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40 (1989), 412. For related arguments on the play's withholding of the bed scene, see Arthur L. Little, Jr., "'An essence that's not seen': The Primal Scene of Racism in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 44 (1993) and Parker, pp. 229-72.
54. Parker, p. 234, p. 237.
55. Parker, pp. 237-38, pp. 245-52.
56. Kramer and Sprenger, p. 114.



***Thersites (James Newcomb) in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's 2001 Production of William Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida. Directed by Kenneth Albers; scenic design by Richard L. Hay; costume design by Susan E. Mickey; lighting design by Robert Jared. Photo by David Cooper.***

## Titania's Reference to Woodbine in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, IV. i

by Rodney Sterling Edgecombe

In their editions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, both Harold Brooks and Stanley Wells support the assumption that Titania has convolvulus in mind when she proposes to wind Bottom in her arms, and reject Joseph Hunter's proposal that "woodbine" and "honeysuckle" are in apposition to each other. I shall argue on additional aesthetic grounds that Hunter's reading should be restored. Here are the lines in question:

Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.  
Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away.  
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle  
Gently entwist; the female ivy so  
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.<sup>1</sup>

Brooks comments, "as . . . ivy and elm-twigs stand for Titania and Bottom, so do woodbine and honeysuckle here. Though it is Titania who actively "entwists," the word calls up a picture of "two climbing plants" twined "about each other" (W. A. Wright). Difficulty has been felt because "woodbine was undoubtedly another name for 'honeysuckle.'"<sup>2</sup> And Wells concurs:

This has caused difficulty. *Woodbine* can mean 'honeysuckle' (II. i. 251, and *Much Ado About Nothing* III. i. 30). Here it seems to mean "bindweed," or "convolvulus." "The honeysuckle . . . always twines in a left-handed helix. The bindweed family . . . always twines in a right handed helix. . . . The mixed-up violent left-right embrace of the bindweed and honeysuckle . . . has long fascinated English poets." (Martin Gardner, *The Ambidextrous Universe*, 1964; Pelican edition, 1970, page 62).<sup>3</sup>

I would have thought that Martin Gardner's observation of a "mixed-up violent left-right embrace" was in itself a persuasive argument *against* the assumption that Titania has bindweed in mind, for her image here is nothing if not restful, and predicated on the total passivity of her lover. Observe that she begins by saying "Sleep thou, and I will wind thee." There is no mutuality in the entanglement. Indeed, it seems to be slightly startling in terms of Elizabethan sexual codes and might even have struck contemporary audiences as challenging convention, rather as the celebrated kiss in *From Here to Eternity* (with the female protagonist on top of the male) broke with Hollywood traditions in 1953. No doubt Titania owes her amorous "maistrye" to her doubly privileged status as queen and fairy, for in all the other Shakespearian instances that I can think of, embraces are initiated by a male. Even Coriolanus receives Aufidius' overtures (though these are companionly rather than erotic) as passively as Bottom does Titania's: "Let me twine / Mine arms about that body, where against / My grained ash an hundred times hath broke."<sup>4</sup>

Since Bottom is the passive party, it seems to me crucial that he should *not* be

conceived as winding his limbs around Titania in contrary motion—not only because of the *lése majesté* of an orgiastic tangle, but also because the built-in stage direction (“Sleep thou”) expressly forbids it. And if Bottom is not allowed to twine, he *cannot* be the analogue for the honeysuckle embraced by Titania the bindweed. The “barky fingers of the elm” show that she is conscious of his worker’s hands, as she had earlier been conscious of his “fair *large* ears.” If we extrapolate backwards, as Brooks says we should, this crucial consciousness of difference (which is the crux of the joke) is lost altogether. Titania becomes a bindweed, and Bottom a “sweet honeysuckle” in a way that effaces his rankness instead of stressing it. Equally telling is the way the editorial equation of woodbine with bindweed violates what we might call Shakespeare’s botanical decorum. Bindweed is the morning glory, not only shut at night but additionally undetectable through lack of fragrance. Shakespeare’s floral catalogues in this play and others all show his sensitivity to occasion, matching marigolds with sunrise in *Cymbeline* or, in Oberon’s nocturne about Titania’s bower, stressing attributes of scent and pallor (oxlips) that enhance the perceptibility of the flowers he lists.

I would accordingly suggest that we go back to Joseph Hunter, who in *New Illustrations of the Life, Studies and Writings of Shakespeare* (1845) argued (in Brooks’s paraphrase) that “woodbine” and “honeysuckle” are in apposition, and “entwist” is intransitive.<sup>5</sup> I fail to see why the Arden editor should dismiss this—“No attempt to explain Shakespeare’s image in terms of a single plant is satisfactory.” First of all, Shakespeare is not averse to botanical appositions, or something like them, as when Gertrude, cataloguing the flowers of Ophelia’s garland, glosses “long purples” as blooms

That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,  
But our cold maids do dead men’s fingers call them.<sup>6</sup>

Names as beautiful as woodbine and honeysuckle both deserve mention as foregrounding different properties of the plant, its sweetness and “amorous” tendency to wind round woods, and *both* of these apply here to Titania. If Shakespeare had access to William Bullein’s *Booke of Simples* (1562), he would have carried away the image not of violent pythonical tangles (such as arise from bindweed and honeysuckle), but rather of *trees* being gently clothed by woodbine as Titania’s elm by ivy:

Ah how swete and pleasunt is Woodbinde, in woodes or arbours,  
after a tender soft rayne: and how frendly doth this herbe, if I may so  
name it, imbrace the bodies, armes, and branches of trees, wyth  
his long winding stalkes, and tender leaves, opening or spreding  
forth his sweete Lillies, like ladies fingers, among the thorns or  
bushes.<sup>7</sup>

In Titania’s first simile, the accent falls on the adverb “gently.” She is demonstrating, no doubt with mesmerically sinuous *port de bras*, *how* the honeysuckle goes about its business of entwisting (Bottom all the while staring impassively with his immobile head, or nodding foolishly). In the second simile she moves from manner to objective—clothing a passive tree—and embraces Bottom as she does so. Turner’s reading makes perfect sense in itself; it receives philological support from the widespread identification of woodbine with honeysuckle; and it harmonizes much more satisfactorily with the larger context of the speech.

## Notes

1. William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Harold F. Brooks (London: Methuen, 1979), p. 88.
2. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, p. 88.
3. William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Stanley Wells (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1967), p. 152.
4. William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. Philip Brockbank (London, Methuen, 1976), pp. 255-56.
5. Shakespeare (above, note 1), p. 88.
6. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London, Methuen, 1982), p. 374.
7. Quoted in Geoffrey Grigson, *The Englishman's Flora* (1958; Rpt. St. Albans: Paladin, 1975), p. 380.



***Prospero (Demetra Pittman, front) with Ariel (Cristofer Jean) in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's 2001 production of William Shakespeare's The Tempest. Directed by Penny Metropulos; scenic design by William Bloodgood; costume design by Christina Poddubiuk; lighting design by Robert Peterson. Photo by David Cooper.***

## Dreaming and Remembering: The Performances of Clemson Shakespeare Festival X

by John R. Ford

The theme of the 2001 Clemson Shakespeare Festival was 2001: A Shakespeare Odyssey. It was an apt title. In part it commemorated the first ten years of James R. Andreas's remarkable accomplishments with the Clemson Shakespeare Festival, which he founded with Chip Egan in 1992. The timing of the tribute was sadly fortunate, for Jim Andreas would die unexpectedly within a year, on February 12, 2002. Central to Jim Andreas's leadership of the festival was his passionate belief that scholarship and performance were vital, interanimating, modes of discovery and discourse necessary to seeing Shakespeare steadily and seeing him whole. During the festival's first ten years, scholars such as Carol Thomas Neely, Jeanne Roberts, H. R. Coursen, Jean Howard, Alan Dessen, Lynda Boose, Ralph Alan Cohen, Kim Hall, Janet Field-Pickering, Charles Frey and others would eke out the imperfections of fine performances by companies like Shenandoah Shakespeare, ACTER, the Clemson Players, and the Warehouse Theatre. And of course the performances themselves worked as touchstones that challenged, adjusted, and ratified the ideas of the scholars. Always the voices found a colloquy. Each group of voices required and complemented the other. It was appropriate that Juana Green, who, upon Jim's retirement the year before had become the festival's second director, announced the establishment of the James R. Andreas collection of scholarly books, written by contributors to the festival, to become a permanent and growing collection to be held at Clemson's Robert Muldrow Cooper Library.

All five performances by the two participating companies at the 2001 festival, the Warehouse Theatre of Greenville, South Carolina, and Shenandoah Shakespeare of Staunton Virginia, offered Shakespearean odysseys of varying distances and intensities.<sup>1</sup> Both companies, for example, provoked traditional and familiar plays such as *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* out of their classical forms into more disquieting shapes. Shenandoah Shakespeare took a rarely performed play, Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*, moreover, a play marked by a thicket of verbal density, and then proceeded to find in that same language an energy and directness that made the play immediately comprehensible and thoroughly enjoyable to an audience, many of whom had neither read nor seen the play. And finally, Shenandoah Shakespeare, by playing *Hamlet* and *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead in sequence*, effectively started a wild conversation, a wonderfully metatheatrical discourse wherein each play attempted to pluck out the heart of the other's mystery.

Jack Young's Warehouse Theatre's production of *As You Like It*, a play that explores the restless definitions of social and romantic relations, opened to a world of dark isolation. We saw a solitary figure dressed in what appeared to be a prisoner's uniform, lost in the mechanical rhythm of lifting weights. As he did so, he complained bitterly to no one in particular of the rustic breeding imposed on him by a brother who had neglected the gentle condition of blood. It was Orlando. Only later in the scene, when Adam finally entered, did the play offer a hint of social engagement, "[t]he constant service of the antique world" (2.3.57).<sup>2</sup> That sense of social malice never entirely left this production even as it submitted to the spirited charm and imaginative buoyancy of

86 *The Upstart Crow*

Rosalind. Charles the wrestler and his entourage marched in goose step fashion towards the arena, and, as sometimes happens in contemporary productions of this play, all of Duke Frederick's palace activities, especially those involving the men, took on the choreography of a stiff-legged military march.

Arden was, Touchstone's genial skepticism to the contrary, a better place, but there were limits even to its restorative powers. The kindnesses of the Duke Senior and his men could not protect old Adam from succumbing to Arden's winter and rough weather. Aggression and conflict were still here, but their energies were assimilated into a more redemptive choreography. As if to signal the change, the curtain fell between Act I and Act II. It then rose to reveal an Arden dominated by a wooden complex of ladders, chutes, ropes, chin-up bars, a place where aggression and violence could transfigure themselves into an athlete's discipline and grace. And yet there was also a dark hint of [Orlando's] prison house weights.

This "jungle gym," Arden nicely realized a sense of child-like experiment and play, but there was also a suggestion of the ardor and difficulty imposed by the forest labyrinth, a green world full of briars. It mostly provided the opportunity for athletic exuberance or detached observation. So Silvius (Jeff Bass) might scramble up the lattice work, over the rickety bridge, then down the other side, driven by the energies of unrequited love. Or Rosalind (Maggie Kettering), as Ganymede in her more coming-on disposition, might act out the wise, wayward actions of a woman's wit as she performed for Orlando various acts of playful athleticism on the bars, finally sliding down the chute to land at his feet, as if to punctuate the range of moody contortions Orlando might encounter in a marriage with Rosalind.

The performance did lose some of that equipoise through two curious decisions it made at the end of the play. The first was to eliminate Jaques's decision to join Duke Frederick in his hermetic religious life. At that moment the play lost its hard-won balance between irony and happiness, falling into sunshine, especially as we also lost Jaques's final benedictions, at once genial and sardonic, to the lovers. *Everyone* in this finale was for dancing measures. If Jaques's inclusion at the end simplified the tone, depriving the play of any sense of the cost of happiness, the decision not to give Rosalind her epilogue erased the overdetermined marks of gender and identity that delighted and mocked all our judgments throughout this performance. We needed more virtue. We had just been given the pleasure of watching Ganymede in Act V transform himself into our very Rosalind, as both Rosalind and Celia re-appear, according to the stage directions, as themselves. *If only* Rosalind might disappear yet again, this time into the actor who impersonated her, as she or he would set to work conjuring the audience, unveiling for us her true gender while teaching all of us how to woo her with our sweet breaths. But I can live no longer by thinking.

To be struck by the wonder of *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* miraculous harmonies is, as critics like Joseph Summers and Alexander Leggatt have reminded us, only to concede how cacophonous this play should have been.<sup>3</sup> From the opening moments of their performance, even before its first words had been spoken, Shenandoah Shakespeare gave us musical confusion (4.1.107).<sup>4</sup> This sense of fissure and contention achieved powerful articulation given the company's long-standing practice of minimalist staging, audience engagement, and its playful and judicious use of popular music. With this company, there are no permanent sets or lighting effects to claim the open stage for Theseus's palace or for the moon-drenched woods of the fairies, or for Peter Quince's secret rehearsal space, a mile without the town, where, Quince is certain, they will not be dogged with company. But lacking the banners of sets or props to mark the territory, how do these isolated groups of actors, so dependent on, if unconscious of, the presence of others, colonize the stage as their own if not by their language? Each actor, or community of actors, negotiated with the audience for

the space he occupied by filling it with words.

Or with song. Shenandoah often begins a performance with a song that sets the tone for what we will encounter. Here we had a contest of songs. A group of actors took the stage. They were dressed in hard hats, denim coveralls, with ropes, flashlights, and heavy tools hanging from their belts, a kind of Forest People. These were the mechanicals, who would double as the fairies. A quick look assured them that there were no competitors on stage, and they began singing *In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree*. Suddenly Theseus and Hippolyta, who also played Oberon and Titania, entered, followed by the lovers. Each group sang their own song declaring *their* story: *Tainted Love, Sometimes I feel I've Got to Run Away*. Annoyed by the singing presence of such rude competitors, the mechanicals sang their song all the louder. Not only was each group irritatingly dogged with company, but their contesting songs imitated the strange music of hounds and echoes in conjunction, leaving the audience even before the play proper has a chance to begin, with Theseus's question: "How shall we find the concord of this discord?" (5.1.60).

In this production the isolation of the lovers was oddly intensified by their utter interchangeability. All four dressed in identical red and white cardigans, 50's style high school sweaters, no doubt the colors of the local Petrarchan school, with a large, white "A" for Athens embroidered over the breast. You wouldn't know any of them by the Athenian garments they had on. The identical red and white emblematic outfits seemed to suggest, for all the lovers, a kind of self-estrangement from the heart. Hermia, Helena, Lysander, and Demetrius were about to enter into the dark woods of erotic desire armed only with rhymed couplets and poetic decorum. That sense of linguistic unease showed itself in the blocking and verbal patterning of Hermia's famous duet with Lysander about the course of true love. The two, played by Amanda McRaven and Michael Newman, spoke to each other over a great spatial distance, addressing their lines as much to the audience as to each other, as if they were not entirely certain of their words, using the audience to explore the capacity of their formal conceits to carry the unruly truth of such wild feelings. Later in that scene, Lysander, uncomfortable at the homosocial display of affection and loyalty between Hermia and Helena, re-asserted his primacy with a lover's gambit, clasping Hermia from behind and pulling her away from Helena as he interrupted Hermia's words to her friend: Helen, to you our minds we will unfold (1.1.209).

Murray Ross, who directed the play for Shenandoah, visualized this contest of passion and form through a choreography of movements somewhere between aggression and dance. The lovers often accompanied their verbal wrangling with physical movements, a kind of stylized wrestling that also resembled rock-and-roll dance turns, as when Hermia playfully grappled with Lysander during their exchange of lover's vows, turning him about at "[b]y all the vows that ever men have broke / (In number more than ever women spoke)" (1.1.175-76). Throughout the play, aggression moved in and out of dance, as when Helena (Brandy Mettert) pulled down Demetrius (Mark Allan Jeter) in 2.1, the dove pursuing the griffin, or during the wild entanglements of all four lovers in 3.2. Recognizing comic synthesis as an energy born of contention and violence was an interesting and dangerous comic experiment. Only once did it fail. When Lysander, awakened by Helena, switches his loyalties with comic alacrity, the passion of his early attachment turns to hate. As if to punctuate just how quickly a "surfeit of the sweetest things / The deepest loathing to the stomach brings" (2.2.143-44), Lysander spat in Hermia's face. At that instant Lysander, and the play, wandered out of comedy.

Like the lovers, the mechanicals also reeled their way in and out of balance as they tried to reconcile their passionate desire to imagine with language and forms not always up to the task. There were, however, moments, such as the one in "Pyramus and Thisbe," when Flute (James Hurdle) miraculously found his/her voice during Thisbe's

88 *The Upstart Crow*

death scene. For a moment the broad audience laughter metamorphosed into something else, catching us off guard.

In fact, our whole relationship to the production was complicated by Shenandoah's use of two of us as "extras" in "Pyramus and Thisbe", called upon, even as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was in progress, to play the roles of Moonshine and Wall. We could see them rehearsing at the edge of the stage. We couldn't judge the mechanicals too harshly, then, because we *were* the mechanicals. We weren't that bad, either. As Thisbe slipped her arms around Wall's legs, looking for stones, Wall responded with a comically sudden, unforgettable, appreciation of his dilemma.

There were one or two things in this comedy that would not please. Occasionally, the production seemed to lose its focus as it played for isolated comic moments. There was a good deal of pulling down of pants and sweaters, revealing some droll undergarments. But unlike the comically passionate stripping away of clothing in, say, Peter Hall's *Dream*, these were sight gags. And there were the glasses. All four lovers began the play in nerdish, black-rimmed glasses. Throughout the play they would come off, then back on, usually to signal the advent of love at first sight. But in the woods, where love looks not with the eye, and where the awakening lovers learn to see with parted eye where everything seems double, why not take the glasses *off* and *lose them once and for all*? But these objections are merely reasonable. And reason and love keep little company together nowadays.

In the last several years Shenandoah Shakespeare has distinguished itself, not merely for its productions of Shakespeare's plays, but also for those less frequently performed plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries. Since 1995 there have been two productions of *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, as well as productions of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *The Roaring Girl*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *The Alchemist*. Ralph Alan Cohen, the co-founder of Shenandoah Shakespeare, has just completed a reconstructed Blackfriars Playhouse, built to the specifications of an Inigo Jones indoor theatre. The new playhouse enables both scholars and theatre-goers the experience of seeing, not just plays fitted for the Globe, but plays designed for other Renaissance venues as well.

Ralph Alan Cohen's production of *The Alchemist*, in particular, allowed us to see a different kind of early modern theatre, a different kind of theatrical imagination than that we comfortably describe as "Shakespearean." Unlike Shakespeare's theatre, Jonson's is rooted in the particular material culture of late 16th- and early 17th-century London: its languages, its local geography, its topical references, its economic practices, its smells. If a play holds the mirror up to nature, this is a different mirror and a different nature, one more suited to the competitive squabble of Jonson's London. As Jim Andreas put it, the difference between our understanding of Shakespeare and that of Jonson is that we *think* Shakespeare, but we *act* Jonson. We like to think of ourselves as egalitarian, democratic, rooting for Bottom. But we're actually hierarchical, like Jonson.

*The Alchemist* consists of a wonderfully complex plot structure that rests on a simple premise. Lovewit, the owner of a house in London, has fled to the country while the plague infests the city, leaving his servant Jeremy in charge. Jeremy, helped by two other con-artists, appropriately named Subtle and Dol Common, immediately transforms this respectable middle-class house into something by turns resembling a brothel, an alchemist's workshop, a stock exchange, and a theatre, or, as Jonson seems to be suggesting, four versions of the same thing, a place where, for a modest price of admission, the base metal of our desires can become transformed imaginatively into something rich and strange, the pure gold of our dreams. During the play, a parade of character types, or humors, enters the house, opening themselves up to a variety of wickedly sharp satiric probings as they each wait for the fulfillment of their

desires. Meanwhile, we in the audience, having already paid *our* admission, are allowed to indulge our fantasy: to sit and judge as we gape.

This play challenged Shenandoah Shakespeare in several ways, but three in particular are worth noting. The company needed to redesign its approach to characterization, language, and space. In all three areas the company shone. For both Shakespeare and Jonson, there is an intimacy between character and language, but the alchemy works on different principles. For Shakespeare, language is the conduit, whose imagery, rhythms, and contradictions lead both an actor and an audience into the interiority of a character. Even in Shakespeare's comedies, where the focus is on social groupings and social types, language hints at consciousness. Jonson's comic types, on the other hand, look backward to allegory and forward to Dickens. For Jonson, language informs and distorts the allegory of caricature to comic disproportions. Jonson's verbal energy is fueled, like his characters, by monomania, the claustrophobic repetition, accretion, variation on a single theme, or humor, building up momentum and heat until it explodes, or implodes, like the public riot that, for Jonson, language mimicked.

Shenandoah Shakespeare's sharp clarity of language, always one of their strengths, worked wonders here. Whether we were listening to James Hurdle delivering Epicure Mammon's ever-escalating erotic fantasies, or Brandy Mettert giving us Ananias's dreams of religious power, or James Ricks as Kastril, the Angry Boy, performing his rehearsals of rant, we heard those words clearly, riding them into wider and wider circles of comic obsession. The three principle actors, David Loar as Subtle the Alchemist, Michael Newman as Face, and Amanda McRaven as Dol Common, were masters of ventriloquism, transforming themselves through language from one fantastic construction to another. Ralph Alan Cohen has argued that the original audiences came to an Elizabethan or Jacobean play not in possession of its language but *in search of it*. Here we found it.

As with language and character, there is a special relation between plot and space in Jonson. The action of the play begins with a verbal explosion, as Mol, Face, and Subtle assault each other, and the newly arrived audience, with a bombast of insults and accusations. Then there is quiet, followed by a slow simmer, as the gulls begin to visit. Finally, as their visits and desires grow more complicated and intertwined, the action heats up again until there is a second explosion, this time a literal one. Such an action requires a commensurate space. Ralph Alan Cohen pointed out that *The Alchemist* was written for a closed space, for its explosive action operates according to the strict observance of Boyle's Law.<sup>5</sup> Shenandoah Shakespeare did a fine job closing the vast spaces of Brooks Auditorium into something more claustrophobic. The gulls would often make their entrance through the audience, surprising and jostling us as they did. Still, as Cohen argues, *The Alchemist* may not have been an ideal play for the open Globe Theatre. Some seven months later, in October 2001, the same company performed the play at the Inaugural Conference celebrating the opening of the new Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, Virginia. It was a magnificent production which *did* make skillful use of the spatial limitations and promises of that theatre. But that's a different essay.

In his Albert Hamilton Holt Lecture delivered at the Festival, *From Out of Silence: Shakespeare on Film*, H. R. Coursen observed that, curiously, those productions that seem most radically to resist Shakespeare's playtext sometimes by the very eccentricity of their approach re-discover afresh the archetype at the center.<sup>6</sup> Free from the canonical authority of a printed text, such a production may learn to see the play feelingly. Coursen was speaking particularly of adaptations like Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, but his argument also applies to Jim Warren's production, at once subversive and appreciative, of *Hamlet*. Right from the beginning, the production began to challenge our secure confidence in this most canonical of plays. Just before

90 *The Upstart Crow*

the production began, one of the players addressed the audience. He told us we were about to see Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. And then, sounding just a little like Tom Stoppard's First Player, he mischievously added: Which Hamlet do you want? Quarto or Folio? We voted for the quarto, that is the bad quarto, that is the *scenic structure* of the bad quarto, but the *language* of Folio and Q2. What play might we expect to encounter? What text? To see *Hamlet* or not? *There's the point!*

Jim Warren's casting of James Ricks as Hamlet was an inspired choice that by indirections found directions out. Ricks, by chafing against the burden of being Hamlet, found the role. Ricks, who must stand five feet something in shoes and has a solid, compact build, spent much of the play trying to fit into the body and soul of a "classical" Hamlet. By resisting the role, Ricks became the character, for Hamlet is himself miscast for a role no more like him than Hercules. Throughout the play Ricks performed that self-estrangement brilliantly, foregrounding the dissonance between actor and role, like sweet bells jangled, out of time and harsh. When he remembered his mother's display of mourning while "she followed my poor father's body", he stopped for a moment, his mind reaching for an apt comparison, until he surprised himself with "[i]ike Niobe" (1.2.48-49).<sup>7</sup> When Hamlet reminded Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, "[w]hat a piece of work is a man" (2.2.286), he stood on one of Shenandoah's protean on-stage boxes, as if to get a better view. The gesture worked both to underscore the irony Hamlet uses with his false friends as well as a moment of self-parody he shares with the audience. Some of the doubling choices re-enforced this sense of self-estrangement, expanding it beyond Hamlet to a kind of duality that infected all of Denmark. So David Loar doubled as both Claudius and the Ghost, creating an intriguing feeling of psychological displacement. For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak with most miraculous organ. Leah Roy, who played Guildenstern, also played the Ambassador from England, setting the stage for a wildly ambiguous moment, one that both Stoppard and Hamlet might have appreciated. When the ambassador proclaimed, in 5.2, "[t]hat Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead (5.2.350), the audience had the uncanny experience of watching Guildenstern announce his own death, hoist, as it were, by his own petard, and demonstrating once and for all that Aevery exit [is] an entrance somewhere else."<sup>8</sup>

There was an integrity to these meta-theatrical moments that perfectly inhabited the world of *Hamlet*, for these are indeed actions that a man might play. Perhaps the most compelling example of simultaneous discovery and estrangement, character and player, was made possible by the unfamiliar scenic order of Q1. There, the fishmonger encounter between Hamlet and Polonius immediately follows the nunnery scene. Hamlet, performing his antic disposition, gathered up the scraps of his letters to Ophelia from the stage floor and read them with an absorption that was and was not feigned. When Polonius asked what he read, Hamlet looked again at his love letters and answered, "Words, words, words" (2.2.189) in a moment of terrible recognition. *He* was the satirical rogue whose slanders, uttered only moments ago, still rang in our ears.

In some ways, Jim Warren's *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* represented the inevitable realization of his *Hamlet*, especially given that the two plays were performed in repertory. In his director's notes Jim Warren states that *R&G* is the perfect match for a repertory company performing *Hamlet*. The characters in the two plays are the same. They are trapped inside the same plot.<sup>9</sup> There were indeed some wonderful reflections, Warren's directorial allusions to both Stoppard and himself. As the play began, we saw James Ricks, the mis-cast Hamlet of the earlier play, pipe out the theme song of *Masterpiece Theatre* on a recorder, a motif that recurred throughout the performance. When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, having been sent for, wait patiently in some anteroom for their summons, they were jostled by the sudden entrances of Hamlet and Polonius, who proceeded to walk together in circles around the stage, a surreal couple in promenade. We could hear the words "except my life" and so were able

to place the moment, but most of their conversation was theatrical murmur, inaudible either to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern or us. Words, words, words. At another moment, R & G's conversation was interrupted by the sudden presence of Polonius's body careening through the arras. As he fell, dying, he pulled out a long, red ribbon from beneath his clothes, a playful allusion to an old Shenandoah Shakespeare convention of stylized blood and violence, most notably in *Julius Caesar*, where, we remember, Caesar was killed in the capitol. Brutus killed him.

Jim Warren caught the spirit of both plays in this production, helped by the sharp, witty, and tragi-comic performances of Mark Allan Jeter and Leah Roy as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Both these actors talked about the dynamic and synergistic process by which the two plays, and the two sets of characters, illuminated one another. They found that their characters in *Hamlet* began to take on some of the features of themselves in Stoppard's play, while the comic, blustery intrusions of the *Hamlet* characters into their counterparts in *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, infused a hint of tragic memory into an absurd moment. For there was an integrity in Warren's double theatre, where all those entrances in his R&G modestly complemented his *Hamlet* exits.

All of these productions attempted, to one degree or another, to displace these plays, and our understanding of them, from the comforts of orthodoxy. Each production was a kind of odyssey that dreamed of wider, more disturbing possibilities within and beyond these playtexts. And yet there was a modesty as well to all five productions. They became rites of memory that recovered the plays by displacing them. For these resistant journeys, like all odysseys, mapped out the way home.

Delta State University

### Notes

1. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shenandoah Shakespeare, directed by Murray Ross, Brooks Theatre, Clemson University, 4 Mar. 2001; *Hamlet*, Shenandoah Shakespeare, directed by Jim Warren, Brooks Theatre, Clemson University, 5 Mar. 2001; *The Alchemist*, Shenandoah Shakespeare, directed by Ralph Alan Cohen, Brooks Theatre, Clemson University, 6 Mar. 2001; *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, Shenandoah Shakespeare, directed by Jim Warren, Brooks Theatre, Clemson University, 7 Mar. 2001; *As You Like It*, Warehouse Theatre, directed by Jack Young, Brooks Theatre, Clemson University, 8 Mar. 2001.
2. William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, New Cambridge Shakespeare, ed. Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000). All quotations are from this edition and cited parenthetically in the text.
3. See, for example, Joseph H. Summers, *Dreams of Love and Power: On Shakespeare's Plays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), and Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (London: Methuen, 1973).
4. William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, New Cambridge Shakespeare, ed. R. A. Foakes (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984). All quotations are from this edition and cited parenthetically in the text.
5. Ralph Alan Cohen, Conversation with the Director, Blackfriars Playhouse Inaugural Conference, 12 Oct. 2001.
6. H. R. Coursen, AFrom Out of Silence: Shakespeare on Film, Albert Hamilton Holt Lecture, Clemson University, 3 Mar. 2001.
7. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, New Cambridge Shakespeare, ed. Philip Edwards, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985). All quotations are from this edition and cited parenthetically in the text.
8. Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* (London: Faber, 1967), p. 20.
9. Jim Warren, Director's Notes to *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, 2001: A Shakespeare Odyssey, Clemson Shakespeare Festival X Program, no pagination.



*Ajax (James J. Peck) demonstrates his displeasure with Thersites (James Newcomb) in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's 2001 production of William Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida. Directed by Kenneth Albers; scenic design by Richard L. Hay; costume design by Susan E. Mickey; lighting design by Robert Jared. Photo by Andrée Lanthier.*

## 2001 Ashland Season

by Michael W. Shurgot

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival's 2001 season was unusual in that the four Shakespeare plays presented were all types of "comedy": *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and the rarely seen *Troilus and Cressida* were staged in the outdoor Elizabethan Theatre. Shakespeare's final "comedy of forgiveness," *The Tempest*, was staged in the indoor Angus Bowmer Theatre. The productions were as different as the plays themselves, offering spectators a broad sampling of Shakespeare's, and the Festival's, comic artistry.

Lillian Groag's production of *Merry Wives* became a three-hour marathon of sight gags, pratfalls, and petty stuff. The set and costumes were overly Elizabethan; several characters, especially Shallow, Hugh Evans, Slender, and the merry wives and their husbands, wore elaborate costumes that seemed designed primarily to out-do each other. The set featured two brightly colored doors stage left and right, suggesting the twin doors of an Elizabethan theatre, and the leaded casement windows on the upper level, which were used often, sported ample flowerbeds.

The upper stage, which is reached by two spiraling staircases, was Falstaff's chamber in the Boar's Head. Two features of this upper room dominated this production. Stage right hung a large tapestry of Dan Donohue, last season's Henry V. Stage left was a tall mirror into which Falstaff gazed every time he needed some encouragement or self-assurance. Every time Falstaff gazed into this mirror he saw not a reflection of himself but rather an idealized "portrait" of himself: a much younger, slimmer man wearing clean duplicates of Falstaff's own ill-fitting and filthy doublet and hose who sang arias from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, as if Mozart's swaggering lover were the fat knight's alter (later) ego. This time warp notwithstanding, the contrast between Henry's dismissal, "I know thee not old man," which boomed throughout the theatre the first time Falstaff gazed at the King's tapestry, and Don Giovanni's stunning portrait and seductive voice, captured the play's farcical center: the discrepancy between Falstaff's bloated self-image (Ray Porter's fat knight could *not* see his own knee!), and his mechanical, egotistic, hopeless pursuit of sex among these witty Elizabethan country women.

Equally mechanical, and equally elaborated, were Master Ford's jealous pursuits of Falstaff's supposed liaisons with his wife. Sounding like a petty Othello, Richard Howard bellowed his revenge against Falstaff and led two frightfully noisy invasions of his own house. This farcical SWAT team, comprised of geriatrics like Justice Shallow and Hugh Evans, who exhausted themselves trying to climb the stairs, and rambunctious clowns like Slender and Simple, spent way too much time running helter-skelter all over both levels of the stage while stupidly waving their arms overhead. Slender and Simple became so enraptured with the chase that they continued to run back and forth well after Ford had abandoned his search. Falstaff's two narrow escapes from Ford were cleverly staged. Mistress Ford's servants John and Robert cringed before strenuously lifting Falstaff stuffed into the laundry basket. Just before Ford entered his house for the second search, Porter tried frantically to stuff his huge, pliant belly into a small, square container downstage right. When that didn't work, he opened a small, wooden box sitting on a table, only to shake his head at his own desperate situation. His escape as "my maid's aunt of Brentford" prompted more mad dashes all over the stage, with Falstaff rolling and then Slender leaping over the stage into the audience to escape Ford's wrath.

94 *The Upstart Crow*

Mere matter for a May morning.

The Windsor Forest finale featured Heme's oak rising from beneath the stage. As the Windsor residents played fairies and satyrs, Falstaff shivered, his huge belly making him roll side to side even as he hilariously tried to remain invisible. Porter delivered Falstaff's confession, "I do begin to perceive that I am made an ass"<sup>2</sup> perfectly flat, creating a marked contrast between him now and his flamboyant escapades throughout the play. No Don Giovanni here. His adventures over, Falstaff glanced up to his former lodging above the Boar's Head. His alter ego now gone, a fairy spirit pulled down Henry's portrait, and Falstaff disappeared into the Ashland night, no more to roam the halls and forests of Windsor.

Michael Donald Edwards's production of *The Merchant of Venice* eschewed the elaborate set and clothing of *Merry Wives* for a bare stage and formal Edwardian three-piece suits and evening gowns. The play exploded on stage: several businessmen, pencils and note pads in hand, raced onto the platform shouting numbers, while above them on the second and third levels panels slid open to reveal the trading boards of the stock market, attended by young men anxiously adjusting numbers according to orders shouted from below. As the bell sounded ending the day's transactions, several men departed, leaving Antonio, Solanio and Salerio smoking cigars, sipping cognac, and musing about the day's business and Antonio's weariness. His caustic "Fie, fie!" in response to Solanio's "Why then, you are in love," betrayed Antonio's fear that others knew of his homosexual longing for Bassanio, which was readily evident during their initial moments in 1.1 and again in 4.1 as Antonio grasped Bassanio for what he assumed was the last time. Antonio was obviously distressed when Bassanio told him of his desired journey to Belmont, and his embrace of Bassanio was a painful farewell.

Robin Goodrin Nordli as Portia showed how utterly weary she was of this "great world" by flopping on a long table in 1.2 on which was later served tea and crumpets as she and Nerissa discussed her wooers, all of whom Portia quickly and contemptuously rejected, even spitting out tea to emphasize her "distaste" of the drunken German. Elegantly dressed in a low cut black evening gown, as if this review of potential lovers were a state occasion, Portia exhibited a quick wit and a bubbling energy that desperately sought access to the outside world, thus suggesting here how energetically she would hurl herself into the sordid legal affairs of Venice.

Edwards staged 1.3 in a small café. Shylock entered with Bassanio and also Tubal, who appeared here and, though both times unscripted, again with Shylock in 4.1. In a discussion about the play afterwards, Tony DeBruno explained that his Shylock was not a religious Jew, and that Tubal, who wore the traditional yarmulke, represented the religious side of Judaism. As Shylock, wearing a black suit and tie, and a heavy gabardine overcoat, sat with Bassanio and Tubal sat alone at an adjacent table, a few customers left. When the waiter approached Bassanio's table, he refused to serve them when he recognized Shylock, and he never approached Tubal's table. Anti-Semitism obviously infected all strata of this society.

DeBruno spoke with a slight German or Yiddish accent, not pronounced, but sufficient to indicate his "otherness" in this staid Edwardian society. Initially, Shylock was jovial with Bassanio, despite the waiter's insult and the painful irony of Bassanio's "If it please you to dine with us." When Antonio entered, Shylock turned away and spoke his aside "How like a fawning publican he looks" to Tubal, who winced at Shylock's hatred. Yet as the three men discussed the terms of Bassanio's bond, Shylock began to enjoy the game, and his story of Jacob was less a self-justification than a Jewish fairy tale designed to entertain Antonio. Shylock's reply to Antonio's judgment of Jacob's venture, "I cannot tell. I make it breed as fast" was a humorous rebuff that emphasized the spite of Antonio's lines about the devil citing Scripture and Shylock being a "villain with a smiling cheek."

Shylock's reminder of Antonio's past insults, "Signor Antonio, many a time and oft" was a scathing indictment of the merchant's racism that Shylock delivered as a logical, almost legalistic analysis of Antonio's crimes and Shylock's suffering. Antonio's response to this indictment was furious, as if he knew that Shylock's muted contempt was justified. Having trapped Antonio into a violent confession of his own bigotry, Shylock, knowing he was in control of the scene, gently chastised Antonio's "storming" and genially offered his bond as "kindness," on which he and Antonio shook hands and laughed together. A merry bond, indeed. DeBruno portrayed a Shylock who suffered grievously, but patiently; who knew what he had to do and say to survive in a viciously anti-Semitic society; and who genuinely desired friendship with "these Christians" if only they would leave him alone, let him work, and stop spitting on him.

Parts of the production were genuinely funny. Morocco, wearing a flaming red cape, drank his tea and then suddenly brandished a long scimitar that sent Portia and Nerissa diving under their table. Portia's "Let all of his complexion choose me so" was spoken with utter contempt for Morocco's black skin.<sup>3</sup> Launcelot Gobbo, in his motley of plaid coat, short, striped pants, and bowler hat, was an annoying Edwardian clown, whose psychomachia about serving "the devil Shylock" was interminable and who utterly flummoxed his "sand-blind" father, Josiah Phillips. Old Gobbo's gift to Shylock was two dead and smelly birds and a banana that Launcelot promptly ate: firm evidence that he either was or was not the "huge feeder" that Shylock claimed he was. Aragon was a tall, elegantly dressed Spanish prince, and his Hispanic complexion and clothing, complete with a matador's cape, suggested again the unwanted outsider come to woo in Belmont. When she knew that he had chosen wrongly, Portia, this time upstage looking "down" on her suitor, and Nerissa sighed deeply. Twitching visibly and desperately trying to control her anxiety, Portia also stood "above" as Bassanio deliberated; when he chose the lead casket, Portia screamed in relief, now finally able to exercise all that passion and energy.

2.5, a scene of only 58 lines, was riveting. Shylock eagerly released Launcelot from his service, spitting out his contempt for "drones." In parting with Jessica he was both warm and stern; he held her hand as he gave her his keys, yet in his "I am bid forth to supper, Jessica," one heard the anguish of the café scene in 1.3: where would Shylock be served? Bassanio's house, throwing a feast with Antonio's (i.e., Shylock's) money? Antonio's office at the stock market? Another café? Edwards's direction in 1.3, the small gesture of a waiter refusing Shylock service, suddenly emerged as a major subtext in this scene. Shylock's reaction to the masque was immediate; he sternly warned Jessica to lock up his house, and his contempt for the "Christian fools" was palpable. Jessica's closing couplet was equally contemptible of her father, thus establishing the degree of hatred within Shylock's own house.

The masquers appeared in white robes and hoods that frighteningly suggested the KKK, another image of the racism permeating this production. Jessica eagerly threw down many bags of ducats when the masquers approached, and leaped into a trampoline that Lorenzo and Gratiano held up for her. When Salerio and Solanio confronted Shylock in 3.1, Salerio wore a devil's mask as they grotesquely taunted Shylock about his daughter and his ducats. Shylock's "Hath not a Jew eyes," like his speech to Antonio in 1.3, was a passionate, yet logical and controlled lecture that Shylock believed any rational person would understand. Accompanying this lecture was Shylock's self-dramatization as a victim, which DeBruno conveyed with obviously exaggerated gestures that captured the complexity of this moment. Shylock's faith in logic and reason, as 4.1 clarified, was his major error, yet his self-dramatization was clearly an attempt to obfuscate his murderous intent. He writhed in visceral agony as Tubal detailed Jessica's spending and Antonio's losses. As DeBruno explained in his talk, when Shylock reappeared in 3.3 the sight of Antonio with the jailer and the memory

96 *The Upstart Crow*

of his accumulated losses convince Shylock to pursue his bond: he will not be made a "soft and dull-eyed fool, / To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield, / To Christian intercessors" (3.3.14-16). Having been insulted, called dog and devil, refused service in the café spat on, invited to a dinner which he suspects as part of a plan to "steal" his daughter, whom the Christians deny is his child, and heard Antonio say "The Duke cannot deny the course of law," DeBruno's Shylock clung to his legalistic bond as to a messiah.

Accompanied by Tubal, Shylock entered 4.1 carrying a knife and a scale, and stood opposite Antonio. Shylock's response to the Duke's request for a "gentle answer" was another lecture about the rule of law and a defense of his "humor"; DeBruno's controlled tone and precise diction emphasized Shylock's confidence. Shylock delivered his reproach about slaves turned towards the audience, thus suggesting a link between the KKK robes of act 2 and American slavery. Gratiano's racist outbursts heightened the tension, especially during Shylock's repeated insistence on the law. When Portia entered, she immediately took the Duke's chair upstage center, thus assuming a position of authority. Exuding the energy that Bassanio's choice had released in her, Portia moved quickly around the stage, speaking confidently of mercy and its efficacy as Shylock had spoken of the law. When Shylock craved the law, Portia seemed surprised, and offered thrice the money with a hint of fear, as if she had not anticipated Shylock's being so fierce an adversary. After Portia agreed that the bond was "forfeit," and that Shylock could "lawfully" take a pound of Antonio's flesh, Gratiano and the other Christians protested loudly, and Gratiano had to be restrained forcefully from attacking either Portia or Shylock (or both). When Portia insisted that Shylock, for charity, have by some surgeon, Shylock's refusal because such was not expressed in the bond prompted Tubal to walk out, thus leaving Shylock totally alone in the court. Given this directorial choice, DeBruno explained that he played Shylock as restrained and "reasonable" early in this scene because had he stormed and railed, as many actors do, the Christian "mob" that Edwards created in this scene, led by the venomous, buffoonish Gratiano, would have killed Shylock before the end of the trial.

Antonio hugged Bassanio desperately, suggesting strongly the homosexual "bond," or at least longing, between them, and Bassanio's claim that neither his life nor his wife was esteemed above his love for Antonio evoked Portia's startled look and hinted that Portia's ring trick after the trial was engineered mainly to secure a husband she feared she might lose, especially given her knowledge that she could interpret the law to save Antonio's life. Antonio prepared to die by baring his chest as he was strapped to a chair, a piece of wood stuck between his teeth. As Shylock approached Antonio, Gratiano again lurched towards Shylock, and again was restrained. Portia waited until the last possible second; as Shylock's knife started down towards Antonio, her "Tarry a little" stopped it just above Antonio's flesh. Her ensuing dialogue with Shylock competed with the mob's (especially Gratiano's) shouting for Shylock's life, and led to the most startling moment in the production. As Shylock knelt to receive the Duke's pardon, Antonio took from off his neck a gold chain attached to which was a crucifix. He reached down, opened Shylock's right hand, and in it placed the crucifix. Shylock lowered his head, heaved as if to vomit, rose, and staggered off stage, hounded by Gratiano's wishing him to the gallows.

Foremost in Edwards's staging was one of the most troubling questions about this scene: why no one in the court attempts to control Gratiano. As DeBaros explained, the bystanders resembled a raging mob, emphasizing the thoroughly un-Christian nature of this play's dominant culture. Given the Ashland Festival's desire to mitigate criticism from Jewish organizations for even producing this play, Edwards's direction may have exaggerated its anti-Semitism. However, Gratiano's bigotry is undeniably present in the script, and Edwards's decision to emphasize Gratiano's virulent anti-Semitism, in a

court of law set in the Edwardian period, forecasts the tide of savage European anti-Semitism that would soon consume the entire continent, and suggests how a mob mentality, fueled by racial hatred, could lead to *Kristallnacht* and beyond.

Lorenzo's and Jessica's paean to heavenly beauty, accompanied by lovely music, beautifully heralded the romantic finale. Jessica spoke her final line "I am never merry when I hear sweet music" (5.1.69) downstage left away from Lorenzo, Shylock's stage position for most of 4.1, suggesting a sorrowful memory of her father's warning about music in 2.5. However, she and Lorenzo embraced after he read the letter about Shylock's "deed of gift"; apparently Jessica was reconciled to the cultural loss of her Jewishness, although obviously pleased to have her father's "manna." Obviously enjoying one final exercise of power, Portia engineered the ring episodes as coquettish warnings to Bassanio and Gratiano about future dalliances should they again "lose" their rings. The large table upon which Portia had flopped from ennui in 1.2 now furnished forth a wine party in which all, save Antonio, the play's final outsider, participated. He remained downstage right, gazing longingly at the celebration.

Large bronze helmets, shields and spears, criss-crossed on pillars at stage level and above, adorned the stage for Kenneth Albers's *Troilus and Cressida*. The weapons evoked the war of Thersites's epilogue to 5.2: "Lechery, lechery, still wars and lechery; nothing else holds fashion" (5.2.198-99). Helen's sleek body provided the lechery. After Thersites, crippled (by war?) and dressed in foul rags, spoke the prologue, he turned and gazed up at Helen, who stood on the second level, her back to the audience, wearing a long black cape. Thersites ambled over beneath her, reached up, and pulled off her cape, revealing Helen's bare back and alluring black dress. Paris approached, and the lovers embraced lustily. War and lechery dominated this intelligent, well-acted production of Shakespeare's play.

The principal characters were vividly realized. Kevin Kenerly entered 1.1 hurling his armaments everywhere and complaining bitterly about being "tamed" in war by his passion for Cressida. He remained immature and boisterous throughout, so that Cressida's initial hesitancy to love him was believable. Tyler Layton played Cressida as worldly-wise and frightened by both Troilus's youthful passion and the war around her; her soliloquy in 1.2, a cogently argued defense of her virginity rather than a mere delaying tactic by a romantic heroine, indicated Cressida's greater self-awareness and heightened the pathos of her later treatment by the Greeks. James Peck as Ajax and Jeffrey King as Achilles, both huge men, turned the Greek camp into a World Wrestling Federation training session. Their favorite victim was James Newcomb's wily, bitter Thersites, whom they beat regularly and who used their beatings to justify his vilification of them, especially in act 5.

Mark Murphey's Ulysses, with Newcomb's Thersites, anchored this production. Murphey's diction and rhythm were superb throughout. His elucidation of the issues in the Greek council scene (1.3) became the fulcrum for the remainder of the play. Everything that followed, from the Trojans' council scene to Thersites's scathing remarks, was understood in relation to Ulysses's speech on order. Murphey controlled the verse superbly, so that Ulysses's several arguments emerged logically and clearly. Unlike the other Greeks, dressed in soldiers' gear, Ulysses walked about in a knee-length black toga, drawn at the waist, with a white shawl carried over his left arm: a peripatetic among soldiers lecturing them on chaos theory. Where the other Greeks carried swords, Ulysses, like Hamlet, carried a book. Given Murphey's verbal mastery, his plot to rekindle Achilles by praising Ajax seemed perfectly rational, as did his lecture to Achilles in 3.3 on time's corrosive power. Like Don Pedro in *Much Ado* (2.1), where he plots to lead Benedick to Beatrice, Ulysses commanded loyalty by his persuasiveness.

Paris and Helen, in bright light on the upper stage, vigorously fondled each other during the Trojan council scene, thus visibly supporting Thersites's claim that "The

98 *The Upstart Crow*

argument is all a whore and a cuckold." The upper stage was also the location of Achilles's tent, where he and Patroclus, to Thersites's scurrilous delight, openly kissed and embraced while the Greek army floundered. During 3.1 Paris and Helen, scantily dressed, tumbled on a bed center stage while Pandarus lustily sang of "Love, love, nothing but love, still love, still more!" (l.114). 3.2 was also played downstage center, with Troilus and Cressida sitting on the bed and anxiously yet gently touching, eager for lovemaking. Pandarus sat on the edge of the bed, a lecherous voyeur, making another private moment "public," like Paris's and Helen's fondling in 3.1 and above the Trojan council in 2.2. Troilus and Cressida also disappeared together above, and when they emerged the morning after to learn Cressida's fate, Troilus fled down the stairs stage left, while Cressida descended stage right, signaling their separate fortunes and emphasizing visually the cruelty of Troilus's "And, my lord Aeneas, / We met by chance; you did not find me here" (4.2.72-73).

The "general kissing" of Cressida in 4.5 was brutal. She resisted every embrace and kiss, and to an audience familiar with 20<sup>th</sup> century combat, the scene evoked accounts of rape camps set up, most recently, in the Balkan wars of the 1990's. Cressida was a thing, an object of more lechery in war. Albers made full use of the large stage for 5.2, the infamous assignation scene. Thersites knelt on the stage right staircase; Aeneas and Troilus huddled opposite him on the stage left stairs; and Cressida and Diomedes appeared downstage center. This staging gave equal weight to the choric comments of Thersites on one side and Aeneas and Troilus on the other,<sup>4</sup> and foregrounded Cressida's fear rather than Troilus's incredulity: "This is and is not Cressida" (5.2.150). Layton's earlier playing of Cressida was now justified; her sense that men will never tarry and her fear of commitment to an immature soldier wary of his reputation among his mates prompted an anguished cry to Diomedes: "Come hither once again" (l. 50). Troilus never understood his part in Cressida's "treachery," while Ulysses, father-like, coached Troilus to accept the reality before him. Given her treatment in 4.5, Cressida preferred Diomedes to more rounds of "general kissing" among the merry Greeks.

Albers's staging of the fight scenes was brilliant. As the combatants moved in an ironically graceful pantomime of slaughter, Thersites darted among them, vilifying them as "curs" and "varlets." His final speech, to the bastard Margareton (5.7.16-22), was a raucous celebration of bastards and cowardice; like Falstaff, Thersites chooses life in a war he deems absurd. Patroclus's bloodied body was hanged from the upper stage, the "place" of lechery, and Achilles's Myrmidons wore death masks as they butchered Hector. After Pandarus bequeathed his diseases to the spectators, Thersites re-emerged and pointed to the upper stage. There stood Diomedes and, in his arms, Cressida, wearing a white replica of Helen's clothing from the opening scene. Thersites repeated the prologue, and then gleefully pulled down Cressida's white cape, revealing her bare back and alluring dress. In its end is its beginning; black is white. "War and lechery; nothing else holds fashion."

*The Tempest* occurs on an island, but William Bloodgood's spectacular set evoked a mountain village in Tibet or Nepal. From the steeply raked stage a rock wall often used by Ariel and Caliban exited upwards stage left. Downstage right was a crooked, bare tree, straight out of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, on which Caliban and Ariel often stood. Further back, other rock walls zigzagged like switch-backs going up a steep ridge into seemingly infinite terrain created by huge, billowing, white and black cloths that shifted constantly to suggest clouds scurrying over the mountains. Soft reds and blues danced across the clouds, evoking the constantly changing light of the high mountains. Demetra Pittman, a female Prospero, walked to center stage and unfolded a large scarf, resembling a scroll, on which appeared to be written names, perhaps of her tormenters, and perhaps important historical information. She surveyed the scroll, wound it up,

looked to the heavens, and exited stage left up the rocky path.

A blue curtain dropped to initiate the action. Sailors clung to heavy ropes dropped from the ceiling as the tempest struck. After the shipwreck, Antonia, Prospero's sister, the Duchess of Milan, and Alonso sat transfixed downstage right as Prospero, carrying her staff, moved towards them and gazed silently at her principal enemies. After a long pause, and Prospero's deep sigh, Antonia and Alonso exited stage right, Miranda entered, and Prospero initiated her daughter's education in 1.1.

Director Penny Metropulos insisted in her program notes that "Gender is not the issue of this production." I respectfully disagree. A mother-daughter relationship is simply different than a father-daughter relationship; and, given the apparent loss of Ferdinand because of the journey to Africa to marry his sister, perhaps to ensure colonial power, this Prospero's maternal care for Miranda emerged as significantly different from Alonso's apparent "disposal" of his daughter in Africa. If Miranda were to marry, it would not be for reasons of state, but only for love. Further, Pittman's Prospero was not an angry, avenging monarch but rather a priestess in Buddhist garb—pants and a long robe—whose story was more contemplative than caustic in this serene environment. Though Pittman's Prospero could be angry, as with Caliban's plot, she was mostly weary of human perfidy. Prospero seemed so in tuned with her mountain retreat, island though it might be, that at play's end one sensed not joy at her magical deeds but rather regret that her magic had to be used to right such hideous wrongs.

As if to defuse the colonial exploitation often suggested in this play, John Pribyl's Caliban was an albino creature with long, scaly nails, unruly, tangled hair, and "clothed" in white rags and fish-net, as if he had been plucked from the sea. Ariel, played by the tall, slender Cristofer Jean, dressed, like Prospero, in a long Oriental gown, glided gracefully across the set, his movements creating an obvious contrast to Pribyl's lumbering Caliban.

The European finery of Linda Alper's Antonia, Tony DeBruno's Alonso, and James Newcomb's Sebastian contrasted vividly with the evocative set and simple clothing of Prospero, Ariel, and Linda Morris's lovely Miranda, suggesting visually how "out-of-place" and potentially destructive European nobility was in Prospero's placid retreat. The extent of this evil was sharply indicated by Antonia, who grabbed Sebastian's crotch when trying to convince him to kill Alonso. Evoking Lady Macbeth trying to convince her husband to kill Duncan, another sleeping king, Antonia brazenly used sex as a "woman's" tool in pursuit of regicide. Perhaps Metropulos's point was that women, like men, could employ sexuality in the pursuit of raw power, and so this fact became part of what Prospero had to tell Miranda, not only about Antonia, but about women in general. In this sense, one sympathizes with Metropulos's claim that her production was not about gender; women can be as ruthless and sexually perverse in the pursuit of power as men. Fair enough. But the scenes between Prospero and Miranda resonated a mother's care for her daughter's inevitable entry into the tragi-comic human community that no father could have imagined.

Trinculo and Stephano over-played their roles for visual gags and pratfalls. Perhaps their drunken forays into power with Caliban were deliberately overdone to stress their debilitation, but their scenes became overly long, predictable, and thus tedious, reflecting Ashland directors' tendency to overdo every comic routine they or their actors can imagine. Not so with the scenes between Miranda and Ferdinand. Miranda blushed noticeably when she first spied Ferdinand, and her joy was genuine when she exclaimed that he was the first man that ever she saw; having fled with her mother, not her father, Miranda showed an intuitive sexual awakening upon seeing Ferdinand. Yet Prospero's protective power was always evident. While Ferdinand struggled with the log in 3.1, as Miranda insisted that she help him it suddenly became so light that Miranda almost lost her balance lifting it. This was, obviously, a "magic" log, heavy for the young

100 *The Upstart Crow*

prince still earning Miranda's hand. As they pledged their love in 3.1, Prospero, standing behind them with her staff, looked upon them intently.

Pittman's hesitant delivery of Prospero's short speech, "So glad of this as they I cannot be, / Who are surprised with all; but my rejoicing / At nothing can be more" (3.1.93-95), captured the anguish of a woman who had given birth and had been betrayed by a sister, and who knew that daughters were often political pawns in the hands of European nobility. Before exiting, Prospero sat quietly and gazed at her long scarf. Standing behind her, Ariel sensed the emotions of this tableau, and wept. Although extra-textual speculation about Shakespeare's characters is useless, this production nonetheless made one wonder about, not the absent mother, as in many of Shakespeare's plays, but rather the absent father. A female Prospero could not avoid raising questions about how differently a mother, as opposed to a father, living in a world in which powerful fathers often control their daughters' lives and women use sex to encourage regicide, would raise a daughter to enter that world. Pittman's Prospero knew that her only daughter would have to leave this island and its serene mountains, and her care was to see that Miranda left with sufficient knowledge about the roles that European nobility could impose on her and *her* daughter. Mothers will tell their daughters of the evils, political and sexual, that men may do them; fathers probably will not.

Ariel relished disarming the would-be assassins, chasing them around the rocky ledges where they stumbled helplessly. Pribyl's melodious account of the island's "noises" showed that he had obviously learned much more than how to curse. Ariel's music continued while Alonso, etc. entered, and heralded the banquet, huge shapes of food, such as bread loaves, plates of fruit, and prepared meat that Ariel's fairies carried about the stage, inviting the King's company to eat and then teasingly withdrawing again as they ran about the stage. For Prospero's "vision" of the three deities Ariel waived aloft a huge white sheet, supposedly granting "magically" to Miranda and Ferdinand visions of the deities that spectators could not see. Only here did Pittman's contemplative mood alter; as she lamented the world's transience, she threw off her shawl, angry at the limitations of her power in the face of human evil. When Trinculo, Stephano, and Caliban stumbled drunkenly on stage, Ariel's fairies assumed the shapes of huge monsters, symbolic of the evil that they drove off the cliffs into the horse-piss.

In 5.1 Pittman stood alone center stage, drew a circle with her staff, and gazed intently at her book, in the center of which was a small mirror; she literally saw herself in her magic. The final vestige of this magic, her reconciliation scene, was solemn and peaceful. As she spoke to Antonia, "For you, most wicked [lady], whom to call [sister] / Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive / Thy rankest fault" (5.1.130-32), Prospero took from off Antonia's finger a ring. This transfer of political power complete, Prospero offered her hand to her sister, which Antonia refused. As in most productions of *The Tempest*, Prospero's power here could not penetrate Antonia's thoroughly evil heart. Miranda spoke "O brave new world / That has such people in 't!" (II.185-86) walking towards Antonia, so that Prospero's "'Tis new to thee" emphasized how little Miranda knew of humanity, much less her own family. Promising to "seek for grace," Caliban reached for Prospero, who touched him gently as he wobbled off stage. Alone, after Ariel's exit, her contemplative journey over, Prospero dropped her staff, and then threw down her book, not so much in anger as in regret that she had to relinquish her magic and that, in Milan, unrepentant siblings remained for her and her daughter.

Prospero, in spotlight, spoke the epilogue center stage as Caliban and Ariel stood in shadows behind her. Prospero opened her hands to the spectators, begging our indulgence; Caliban, seeing this gesture, copied it. Ariel, free at last, blessed us all.

**South Puget Sound Community College**

## Notes

1. See Robert G. Hunter, *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1965.
2. All textual references are to David Bevington, ed. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Harper Collins, 1992.
3. On Portia's response to Morocco and the pervasive racism of the play, see Ralph M. Cohen, "Unpalatability in the Web of *The Merchant of Venice*." *The Upstart Crow*. 19 (1999): 2-10.
4. On possible stagings of this scene at the Globe, see Douglas Sprigg, "Shakespeare's Visual Stagecraft: The Seduction of Cressida," in *Shakespeare: The Theatrical Dimension*, eds. Philip C. McGuire and David Samuelson. New York: AMS Press, 1979; and Michael W. Shurgot, "Seeing and Believing: Audience Perception and the Character of Cressida in Performance," in *Stages of Play*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998.



***Bassanio (Jeff Cummings, left) works a deal with Shylock (Tony DeBruno, center) as Tubal (Daniel Grossbard) listens in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's 2001 production of William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice. Directed by Michael Donald Edwards; scenic design by William Bloodgood; costume design by David Zinn; lighting design by Robert Jared. Photo by David Cooper.***





# SHAKESPEARE AND POSTCOLONIAL INDIA

## INTRODUCTION

by Bindu Malieckal

In an important article titled "Othello's African American Progeny," James Andreas argues that Shakespeare's *Othello* influenced Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, and Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*, all African American classics.<sup>1</sup> Andreas's comparative study merges with other recent analyses that address race, gender, and nationality in early modern plays and in modern and postmodern fiction, such as Christy Desmet's and Robert Sawyer's *Shakespeare and Appropriation* (1999)<sup>2</sup> and a variety of examinations dealing with India's affair with the Bard, from Charles Jasper Sisson's *Shakespeare in India: Popular Adaptations on the Bombay Stage* (1926) to Ania Loomba's "Local-Manufacture Made-in-India Othello Fellows': Issues of Race, Hybridity and Location in Post-Colonial Shakespeares" (1998).<sup>3</sup> *The Upstart Crow's* special section on "Shakespeare and Postcolonial India" continues the trend, through its review of Shakespeare in the Indian novel and on the Indian stage, but "Shakespeare and Postcolonial India" is also concerned with the ingredients of Shakespearean re-visions: politics, language, culture, perspective, and approach in Indian texts and theater. India's possession of both a colonial legacy and postcolonial identity makes the diverse nation a unique mirror for Shakespearean drama. Thus, all the essays in this collection try to answer a basic yet essential question: By placing Shakespeare and postcolonial India alongside each other for the purposes of our study, what will we learn about the early modern period, Shakespearean drama, India, colonialism, postcolonial literature, and of course, the "Upstart Crow" himself?

Each of the essays in "Shakespeare and Postcolonial India" addresses this question, albeit in diverse ways. In "The Politics of Choice: English Language Shakespeare Productions in India," Parmita Kapadia presents the results of her interviews with directors of Shakespeare in Bombay, who attempt to justify their adoption and alteration of Shakespearean language. Issues raised and choices made concern the colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial implications of English theater. Tamara Valentine, in "Nativizing Shakespeare: Shakespearean Speech and Indian Vernaculars," focuses on the linguistic and cultural manipulations of the plays in mostly colonial and regional productions. Both Kapadia and Valentine evaluate the "makeover" of early modern Shakespeare for nineteenth- and twentieth-century Indian audiences. Ananya Kabir's "Abuses of Authority: English Literature, Colonial Pedagogy, and Shakespeare in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*," like the analyses of Kapadia and Valentine, scrutinizes language and culture in a postcolonial rewrite; however, Kabir's focus is an Indian novel set during the Partition. Patriarchy and pedagogy collide when the character of Harish, a professor of English and Shakespeare, manipulates and moulds Virmati, his student and future wife.

The next set of essays concentrates on politics and race in colonial and postcolonial India. In "Perspectives on Addressing the White Gaze: Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and *Othello*," Jesse Swan discusses the intersecting function of narrative, perspective, and race in Shakespeare's and Roy's text. According to Swan's carefully crafted argument, both the early modern and post-modern context can elucidate the evils of patriarchy and white supremacy. Similarly, in "Shakespeare's Shylock, Rushdie's

104 *The Upstart Crow*

Abraham Zogoiby, and the Jewish Pepper Merchants of Precolonial India," Bindu Malieckal documents the antisemitic remarks of early modern westerners who encountered India's Jews. Malieckal posits that descriptions of the economically powerful Indian Jews affected Shakespeare's depiction of Shylock, reincarnated as Abraham Zogoiby in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*. In "Teaching Shakespeare's India, Then and Now, Here and There," Mark Houlahan explains the rationale behind his seminar course, "Shakespeare Wallahs," that deals with Indian novels based on Shakespeare's plays. Readings included, among others, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Vikram Chandra's *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, and Leslie Forbes' *Bombay Ice*. "Shakespeare and Postcolonial India" ends with two book reviews. Jonathan Gil Harris appraises Jyotsna Singh's *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: "Discoveries" of India in the Language of Colonialism* (1996) and Rachana Sachdev assesses Imtiaz Habib's *Shakespeare and Race: Praxis in the Early Modern Period* (2000).

In closing, I wish to acknowledge James Andreas, the late Editor Emeritus of *The Upstart Crow*, who passed away earlier this year. Jim was very excited about "Shakespeare and Postcolonial India" because he was particularly interested in appropriations of Shakespeare that investigated, both in the plays and in their adaptations, the causes of and solutions to political conflicts, social injustices, and gender inequality. Through Jim's leadership of the highly successful Clemson Shakespeare Festival and *The Upstart Crow* (both are now in Juana Green's capable hands), as well as Jim's profound influence on his students (many of us went on to earn doctorates in early modern literature), Jim will be remembered for his enthusiasm and passion. Thus, "Shakespeare and Postcolonial India" is dedicated to Jim's memory and to the hope that the we continue to teach and write about Shakespeare with the same brilliance, humor, honesty, and compassion that made Jim a talented professor and a remarkable person.

Saint Anslem College

### Notes

1. James R. Andreas, Sr., "Othello's African American Progeny," *South Atlantic Review* 57.4 (1992): 39-57.
2. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer, eds., *Shakespeare and Appropriation* (New York: Routledge, 2000). Also see Marianne Novy, ed., *Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare: On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H. D., George Eliot, and Others* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1990); Lemuel A. Johnson, *Shakespeare in Africa (and Other Venues): Import and the Appropriation of Culture* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998); Marianne Novy, ed., *Transforming Shakespeare: Contemporary Women's Re-Visions in Literature and Performance* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999); Aleksandur Shurbanov and Boika Sokolova, *Painting Shakespeare Red: An East-European Appropriation of Records* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 2001).
3. Ania Loomba, "Local-Manufacture Made-in-India Othello Fellows': Issues of Race, Hybridity and Location in Post-Colonial Shakespeares," *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, eds., Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (London: Routledge, 1998) 143-163; Also see Ania Loomba, "Teaching the Bard in India," *Journal of English and Foreign Languages* 7-8 (1991): 147-162; Ania Loomba, "Hamlet in Mizoram," *Cross-Cultural Performances: Differences in Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare*, ed., Marianne Novy (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1993) 227-250. Jyotsna G. Singh has also published extensively on Shakespeare and postcolonialism. See, for instance, "Caliban versus Miranda: Race and Gender Conflicts in Postcolonial Rewritings of *The Tempest*," *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, eds., Valerie Traub et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 191-209; "The Postcolonial/Postmodern Shakespeare," *Shakespeare: World Views*, eds., Heather Kerr et al. (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1996) 29-43.

## The Politics of Choice: English Language Shakespeare Productions in India

by *Parmita Kapadia*

From the middle of the 18th century, English plays were produced for the social entertainment of the British colonials living in Calcutta. By 1770 *Richard III* and *Hamlet* were regularly staged at the Calcutta Theater, one of the earliest Western-style theaters in Bengal. Other auditoriums employing Western theater practices and catering to British audiences soon followed: the Private Subscription Theater and the Sans Souci emulated the Calcutta and offered Shakespeare. Theaters similar in design, target audience, and repertoire sprang up in Bombay and Delhi. Employing racially exclusive policies, these theaters reserved all performances for Britishers only. Moreover, attempting to keep the theatrical experience "pure," managers hired only Britishers as actors, ticket agents, and even ushers.

In 1848 the Sans Souci caused great consternation by casting Bengali actor Baishnav Charan Adhaya in the title role of *Othello*. Adhaya's portrayal of the Moor disrupted the carefully established traditions of Western theater in Bengal. His presence on the "British" stage was depicted in racial terms: the production was advertised as an opportunity for colonials to see "a real live nigger" perform. Adhaya thus functioned as a theatrical sign denoting racial issues hitherto absent from the colonial stage.

The casting of a Bengali as Othello provides an example of the cultural issues and anxieties surrounding the nineteenth-century English language theater in India. The 1848 Sans Souci *Othello* may thus have been the first production to allow an Indian actor to perform in an English language production. Adhaya's performance continues to resonate today as the intersections between race and language grow more conflicted. For Adhaya, using Shakespeare's English and being awarded the title role could be read as an individual triumph that resonated throughout colonized Bengal. However, mimicking colonial performance techniques could also imply slavish imitation. The contradiction embodied in Adhaya's performance remains problematic.

Situated between the genre of post-colonial theater and the discourse of language semiotics, India's English language Shakespeare productions provide a unique space through which to witness a culture negotiating with itself. English in India prompts conflicting responses. Using English implies modernity and power; writing in English is sometimes seen as an expression of resistance to colonialism and sometimes dismissed as a reification of imperialism. Shakespeare is doubly problematic because of the iconic status awarded to and contained within the text. During colonialism Shakespeare's plays were translated into the major Indian languages and much scholarship exists on these translations and their subsequent productions. Post-colonial translators and directors have also produced Shakespeare in Hindi, Marathi, Bengali and other Indian languages.<sup>1</sup> These texts and productions grapple with the difficulties of possibly constructing a neo-colonial theater by relying on a British dramatic tradition with a racist, exclusionary colonial past.

This paper concentrates on a smaller, but more complicated, piece of the Shakespeare in India puzzle. Specifically, I look at how English language Shakespeare functions on the Indian stage today. My purpose here is to give voice to members of Bombay's theater community whose productions consciously foreground the English

language, using it as a tool for the appropriation of Western canonical drama. Drawing on interviews with actors and directors who are active participants in the English language theater, I explore the problematics of performing Shakespeare through what sometimes is still considered to be the colonizers' language on a post-colonial Indian stage. I discuss how the deliberate use of English blurs the easy oppositions of colonialism and post-colonialism, mother tongues and foreign languages. This paper turns the tables, so to speak, on traditional scholarship by subordinating the play text so that the performance text speaks first, literally and metaphorically. By foregrounding speaking, staging, and listening, a post-colonial society's use, manipulation, and appropriation of the colonizers' language and literature is examined. While much critical work explores the issue of Indian dramatists writing in English, I examine how the English language theater appropriates Shakespeare's English and, through theatrical strategies, constructs new interpretations of these established, canonical texts. Focusing on the performance texts instead of the play texts exposes the ways in which post-colonial Indian directors manipulate the English language itself: such a focus highlights how foregrounding English provides a vehicle through which to explore the tensions present in contemporary Indian society. Using the English language as the medium of expression as well as the means for it, allows these directors to comment on how the issues surrounding language choice in post-colonial India are closely tied to the cultural, social, political, and economic spheres.

Recent critical interest has focussed on how the theaters of non-Western cultures provide a possible space from which to articulate a resistance to colonial superiority by exploring the divergences between canonical play texts and the hybridized performance texts. *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* argues convincingly that theater as a genre offers a greater opportunity to destabilize canonical texts than do fiction and poetry. Authors Helen Gilbert and Joanna Tompkins write,

the staging of a scene, for example, or the costuming of a character can provide additional layers of signification that call the assumptions of a canonical text into question, whether by subverting its usual codes, as in parody, or by appropriating those representational signs normally reserved for the dominant group/culture. (19)

With regards to Shakespeare in India, directors have manipulated various production elements subverting established meanings and creating more localized ones. The work of Utpal Dutt provides a good example of Gilbert and Tompkins' assertion. Dutt, a one time member of Geoffrey Kendall's Shakespeariana troupe and later an eclectic director, incorporated elements of jatra, a Bengali dance form, into his open-air productions of *Macbeth* in order to explore how the play reflected concerns of rural Bengalis.<sup>2</sup>

The more recent *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* edited by Anai Loomba and Martin Orkin explores just such productions. These essays explore how the "global presence and the historical interactions between 'Shakespeare' and colonialism have been in the last decade subjected to new and exciting critiques"(3). This collection reveals the discrete ways in which individuals from different parts of the colonized world have responded to Shakespeare. In their introductory essay, the editors write:

sometimes they mimicked their colonial masters and echoed their praise of Shakespeare; at other times they challenged the cultural authority of both Shakespeare and the colonial regimes by turning to their own bards as sources of alternative wisdom and beauty. In yet

other instances, they appropriated Shakespeare as their comrade in anti-colonial arms by offering new interpretations and adaptations of his work. (2)

*Post-Colonial Shakespeares* offers wide-ranging scholarship on colonialism in *The Tempest*, the "whiteness" within the sonnets, and the issue of land in *King Lear*. Besides examining how individual plays reflect issues of colonialism and/or post-colonialism, the collection comments on the overall position of Shakespeare as a site of mimicry and resistance within post-colonial cultures.<sup>3</sup>

These recent developments in post-colonial performance studies signal a refreshing move away from the universalizing tendencies of scholars such as Antonin Artaud and Richard Schechner. Despite this progress, looking particularly at the issue of language in post-colonial Shakespeare exposes a critical bias: most critics focus exclusively on translations.<sup>4</sup> The work that moves beyond translations focuses on using dialects, on switching between languages, and on pidgin. *Foreign Shakespeare* edited by Dennis Kennedy, *Shakespeare and Cultural Traditions: The Selected Proceedings of the International Shakespeare Association World Congress, Tokyo, 1991*. edited by Tetsuo Kishi, Roger Pringle, and Stanley Wells, and *The Play Out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture* edited by Hannah Scolnicov and Peter Holland all provide examples of such scholarship. Focussing specifically on Shakespeare in post-colonial India reveals the same difficulties. In 1964 an entire issue of the journal *Indian Literature* was devoted to articles on Shakespeare in different Indian languages. More than thirty years later, this critical trend continues: articles and entire books investigate Shakespeare in Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, and other Indian languages. The issue of appropriating the English language so that it functions as a deliberate sign of post-colonial Indian identity remains to be examined.

English language Shakespeare theater in India uses the linguistic medium to convey and inscribe its cultural message. While various productions like Dutt's have creatively and successfully appropriated costume, setting, scenery, lighting, music, choreography, and other production components, I believe that the English language remains a key instrument through which the post-colonial Indian theater can express itself. The unique position of English in India allows for the artistic manipulation that enables such productions to move beyond the dichotomies of assimilation and resistance.

English in India, both on- and off-stage presents critical difficulties. In India, perhaps more so than in other post-colonial countries, the use of the English language carries conflicting messages. As the colonizers' language, the study of which was promoted to facilitate the occupation of India, English prompts the remembrance of the colonial past replete with its oppression. The Charter Acts of 1813 and 1883, Francis Warden's Minute of 1823, Thomas Macaulay's better known 1835 Minute on Indian Education as well as a host of other legislation reveal the colonial government's efforts to advocate using English as a tool that would promote British superiority and as Warden attests, "produce rapid change in the [the natives] opinions on the fallacy of their own religion." To ensure this result, colonial policy toward Indian education mandated an English-only medium of instruction, increased funding for English literature curricula, and established colleges in Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta devoted to the study of the Western humanities. The rise of English language and literature studies in India during the nineteenth century has been explored by many scholars.<sup>5</sup> The ideological motivations behind Britain's commitment to bringing the English language and literary studies to colonial India have been flagged as being political, cultural, or nationalistic respectively. These scholars focus primarily on the colonial imposition of the English language and the Western values embedded in its literature. Furthermore, they argue that the

108 *The Upstart Crow*

elitism inherent in using the English language fostered first by the British and later encouraged by educated Indians themselves reflects a continuing of the master/servant dichotomy.

However, India's indigenous linguistic heterogeneity gives English a unique status, one that sometimes undermines its label as tool of oppression. The British colonial government was itself keenly aware that the English language provided a means of challenging imperial rule. Although explicitly committed to promoting the creation and implementation of an English language curricula, the government censored English translations of Indian plays. For example, the colonial government's reaction to the English translation of the Bengali drama *Nildarpana* reveals the anxiety surrounding the language issue.<sup>6</sup> Written by Dinabandhu Mitra, *Nildarpana* dramatized the 1858 peasant revolt in which Bengali indigo planters were persecuted by their cruel British landowners for refusing to plant their crops. Published in 1860, the play was staged in Dacca a year later; there was no response from colonial authorities and no action seems to have been taken. Following its theater run, *Nildarpana* was translated into English by the Reverend James Long under the title *The Mirror of Indigo Planters*. The translation elicited a swift and unmistakably hostile response from colonial officials. Only 14 of the nearly 500 copies of the translation were released for circulation, and the Reverend was fined and imprisoned for his work. While the English version of the play was quickly suppressed, the Bengali text was allowed to circulate freely. Although English was the colonizers' language, its potential as a medium that could unite the linguistically diverse regions of India was not lost on the skittish colonial government. In the above case of *The Mirror of Indigo Planters* English was seen as vehicle for social protest and was silenced; later the language would function as a means of sustaining a nascent nationalism.

Post-colonial India's use of the English language and its texts is more problematic and highly conflicted. Today, while advocates of Hindi view the continued use of English as being anti-national and neo-colonial, supporters argue that the very foreignness of English allows it to function as the so-called "link language" between linguistically separated provinces. In *The Alchemy of English: The Spread, Functions, and Models of Non-Native Englishes*, Braj Kachru suggests that although English was the colonizers' language, it has in some countries "acquired a neutrality in a linguistic context where native languages, dialects, and styles sometimes have acquired undesirable connotations. Whereas native codes are functionally marked in terms of caste, religion, region and so forth, English has no such 'markers'"(31). In India, where language often operates as a divisive force, the relative neutrality of English becomes significant. As the "link language," English connects Hindus, Marathis, Bengalis, Gujeratis, and other linguistic communities to one another. Moreover, many non-Hindi speakers view English as a buffer against a Hindi dominated culture. As M. Karunandhi, minister of Tamil Nadu warned in 1990, "If English, which protects us like a shield, is banished, the Hindi sword will cut us to pieces." In contemporary Indian society, English represents contradictory cultural issues: colonial hegemony on the one hand and a guard against Hindi domination on the other. It is against this backdrop that post-colonial India's English language Shakespeare productions must be situated.<sup>7</sup>

Given the ironic position of English in India, the post-colonial Indian stage presents unique potentialities for political expression. As noted above, in contemporary India, the English language denotes a multiplicity of meanings. It functions as a sign of neo-colonial assimilation, as a protection against Hindi, and as the communicative link across regions. However, on the Indian stage, the use of English creates an added layer of interpretation. Producing English language Shakespeare—as opposed to using translations—raises unique critical questions. At the most rudimentary level, such productions can signal an imitation of colonial teaching; conversely, they can act as tools

of resistance. More significantly, these productions reveal how, in post-colonial India, the English language functions as a discrete trope through which directors express their views on the complexities that govern their own contemporary cultural hybridity.

Post-colonial criticism thus needs to address international Shakespeare productions that consciously foreground the English language as a semiotic code for mimicry and resistance. Gilbert and Tompkins assert that "Theatrical manipulations of the English language [that] significantly amplify the political effects of a play" can "reshape theatrical texts" (12). Bombay's English language theater community provides a striking example of just such linguistic manipulation. Today, in urban centers throughout India, English language theater flourishes. Choosing English as their linguistic medium, directors and their companies negotiate between the controversial cultural, political, and economic ramifications inherent in their choice. Staging English language Shakespeare means balancing between imitating the West and appropriating the text. One of the obstacles of working in this highly specific genre is dealing with the perception that an English language Shakespeare production necessarily denotes either mimicry or resistance exclusively. Sandwiched between these two precepts, individuals working in this genre must struggle to overcome the simplicity of such judgements. In practice, most English language Shakespeare productions deliberately reflect a much more complicated and highly nuanced response to the colonial legacy. Interviews with actors and directors, professional as well as amateur, suggest that the language issue, especially as it concerns English, may provoke more attention than any other. Exploring the reasons behind their decisions to produce English language Shakespeare demonstrates that the language issue is entwined with a host of other cultural concerns theorized by critics working in the field of post-colonial studies. In the interview excerpts that follow, various directors and actors articulate their perspectives on the appropriation of Shakespeare, the continuing influence of British culture, the different ways in which language operates within the theatrical space, the underlying tensions between language and class, and the different ways in which English functions in contemporary India and on the Indian stage.

According to Firoz Khan, a prominent member of Bombay's theater community, the manipulation of language on stage is a potent theatrical tool.<sup>8</sup> He believes that in India, where language differences are so pervasive, calling attention to linguistic attributes prompts spectators to acknowledge their own ethnic, cultural, and geographical distinctions from one another and between their communities. He argues that foregrounding language and, more importantly, "making audience members aware of their own place in society, culture, and community as it is *decided* by language" can prompt individuals to rethink the connections between language and class. He notes that "in India speaking English, speaking it well, is always seen as a sign of education, wealth, success, and most of all, modernity. If someone uses English, then there is an implication—right or not—that he knows what he is talking about." Discussing the specific issue of the English language on an Indian stage, Khan maintains that there is "no real way for a production to escape from being marked" by remembrances of the colonial past. Using English "opens the political box of colonialism, nationalism, and Indianness [and these] productions are always marked; they are always seen as making some sort of political statement regardless of the director's intentions." He says that productions in English do not necessarily have to convey a political position any more than productions in Hindi or Marathi or any other indigenous Indian language do. He asks, "Why does an English language production have to have a political motive at the exclusion of everything else? Why can't using English be seen as yet another form of expression? Another tool, another directorial choice?" He states that directors must fight against this label of "political production" in order to convey their own objectives. For Khan, this inevitability can limit an English language production's ability to express

110 *The Upstart Crow*

an artistic theatrical vision and that "sometimes such a fight can take the energy away from the production itself." He argues that despite this obstacle, "we must try and relate Shakespeare to the contemporary consciousness of the audience," and that productions that do not attempt to do this and merely imitate the West create a "museum experience rather than a theater experience." About such productions, Khan questions their motives; he argues that such productions simply want to "show the world that Indians can recite Shakespeare's poetry as well as the British" but that they do little else.

As Khan cautions against judging English language Shakespeare as being politically motivated, conversely, some actors and directors maintain that English language Shakespeare carries a stamp of colonial "Englishness" that persists despite their concerted efforts to dislodge it. This type of English language Shakespeare theater continues to flourish in Bombay; these imitative productions illustrate the deeply entrenched colonial influence as it pertains to language. Hima Devi is one of the strongest proponent of this theater.<sup>9</sup> Before she began to direct English language Shakespeare, Devi was a professional dancer of *bharat natyum*, an ancient Indian dance form. Founder and manager of The Hima Kala Kendra Institute for Speech, Drama, and Creative Dance, Devi, during her highly successful dancing career, toured throughout Europe and Asia and she concedes that to "make *bharat natyum* more readily accessible for Europeans", she would "reshape" the complex choreography. Conversely, she refuses to appropriate Shakespeare's language. She says, "I feel that we only know Shakespeare because of the spoken word, and we value the work because he did not have all these gimmicks of sets and props and things. He had to build the picture in the minds of his audience—that was the great thing about his plays. It is in his words that we find the beauty of the scenes." The Hima Kala Kendra has produced *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* and for each production Devi insisted her actors pay close attention to the language. About the preparations for *Hamlet*, she says, "We worked for one entire year on the speech. I wanted everyone to realize that Indians can do it; that we are not such bloody fools that we cannot, after having the British in this country for two hundred years, . . . really achieve perfection." For Devi, the hallmark of a successful Shakespeare production lies in the accuracy of the actors' enunciation and recitation of the script. I mention The Hima Kala Kendra productions only to illustrate the other extreme that English language Shakespeare must guard against. Productions such as Devi's can, for some viewers and critics, carry a patina of authenticity on the grounds that if the speech is so "correct," then the production as a whole is viewed as containing some "true meaning." Such reasoning leaves productions that use the English language as a trope through which to destabilize established meanings with a disadvantage; they are seen as somehow being counterfeit performances.

One particular production that was judged by many reviewers and spectators to be "incorrect" in its depiction was the 1992 staging of *Julius Caesar*. Co-directors Naseerrudin Shah and Vikram Kapadia consciously used the English language as a means to disrupt conventional interpretation. Both Shah and Kapadia have experience working in English language Shakespeare productions. Shah, much better known for his starring film roles in the Hindi cinema, has performed in such productions since he was 14 years old. He has had small parts in *Julius Caesar*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, and *King Lear*. Kapadia played Romeo in the 1985 National Center for the Performing Arts' production of *As You Love It*, a compilation of love scenes from different Shakespeare plays. He has also directed Shakespeare for several schools in the Bombay area and works as the theater critic for various city newspapers. Both directors have strong ideas about producing English language Shakespeare for the contemporary Indian stage.<sup>10</sup>

Performed by Motley, Shah's theater company, their *Julius Caesar* generated much controversy, controversy that the directors claim they enjoyed immensely. The following conversation regarding their specific focus on English for *Julius Caesar* as well as their views on the position of English language theater in India is excerpted from larger interviews discussing other aspects of their production. Both directors believe English language theater offers great potential for creative expression that can contribute a valuable perspective on the power of language to its Indian audiences. Kapadia believes that theater as a genre is capable of intensifying existing issues because the stage functions as a space that "echoes and emphasizes" social concerns. He says, language "is a big issue in this city. In the theater it becomes an even bigger one." The directors maintain that audiences, and particularly critics, more willingly accept changes to the Shakespeare text if the production is a translation. According to Kapadia, "audiences expect Shakespeare in English to be all the same. If the production is in Hindi, then, well, the audience knows, it assumes that changes have been made to the play[*text*]. But, English [language] Shakespeare is supposed to be 'real' Shakespeare, and here 'real' Shakespeare means British." Elaborates Shah, "The critics massacred us. Here, Shakespeare in English still means England's Shakespeare and people don't look beyond the language before they make their judgments. I had people complain that we had ruined the meaning of the play. School teachers complained that we had ruined their [exam] questions about the play." Akash Khurana, who played the role of Caesar, reinforces Shah's and Kapadia's statements: "In India all the reference points always go back to England and colonialism. We can't get away from it. Even when there is no conscious symbolism towards colonialism, it's still there."<sup>11</sup>

Kapadia, however, believes that with regards to Shakespeare at least, productions need not be seen as inevitable extensions of colonialism. He argues,

It depends how you produce [the play]. It depends on what you do with the text, with the issues of the play, how you relate the issues to your audience and to what's happening around you. Change is good as long as it's dramatically effective. Language is a powerful tool through which to create a particular vision or meaning, whether that language is English or something else, well, . . . the language must *do* something.

He adds emphatically,

Productions that are aping the West are just enunciating on stage. It's copybook and very traditional theater without any vision or essence. Sometimes I feel that translations are more honest and true because they are trying to create some meaning. English was an important choice for us with *Julius Caesar* because people come to English with certain expectations; they come expecting to see a production that mimics the *Julius Caesar* interpretation they learned in school. We tried to create a lot of disappointments, a lot of color, a lot of changes. Now, that doesn't mean we know more than Shakespeare. We were just trying to make it work for us today.

The directors counted on the audiences' established familiarity with the play text as they constructed a performance text designed to disrupt expectations and anticipations. The play's well-established status as a canonical and popular text in both the schools and the theater was, in effect, turned against itself. Kapadia:

112 *The Upstart Crow*

[In] trying to make it work for us, the 'it' is the play; it is Shakespeare; it is a classic, a Western work. But the 'it' is also the audiences' expectations and the notions of the thing itself, the text. And by doing *Julius Caesar* in English we were able to connect, to comment on what the 'it' was and what that represented.

Kapadia believes that textual familiarity with the play is useful but also problematic for the theater. He states

It can work both ways. If the individual isn't groping to understand the plot, he can focus on the other parts of the show. But this familiarity mustn't become a strait-jacket that you put the production in and then dismiss it. Using English doesn't necessarily signal subservience to England. People assume that Shakespeare in English must be a British or colonial offshoot or something and it doesn't have to be. We wanted to show people that English is a part of modern day India and that Shakespeare has a place in this India. We don't have to keep the meanings, the status quo from a hundred years ago.

Shah and Kapadia wanted their production to highlight issues they see as pertinent to modern-day India. They sought to move away from the image of India as a place that is preoccupied with only religion, ritual, and tradition. Says Kapadia, "We tried to create a production that pointed to the quarreling and bickering between political parties and how the end of colonialism didn't lead to this united, holy place. Everybody always talks of India as this place of old, ancient beliefs—and it is that—but, it is also a place of modern ideas and modern problems. That part of India gets forgotten sometimes." Their production tried to express a contemporary vision of India with its ethnic diversity and its regional strife using the language issue. They used the idea of controlling and manipulating language as a metaphor for their ideas about power, and how it is achieved, maintained, and lost. Shah explains,

*Julius Caesar* deals with a number of issues in my opinion. It deals with friendship, it deals with rivalry, it deals with power and it deals with all the complications that go with attaining power, keeping it and losing it. That is the theme of the play in my opinion—the parallels of power—and this is what I hoped to get across. [We] tried to evoke a contemporary quality because this is what is happening everywhere there are politicians. This infighting, this murdering—physical and spiritual killing of each other. The fact that you can't trust your own brother, you can't trust a friend who has sworn his friendship to you for the last 30 years, the fact that [power] is all so temporary.

Kapadia elaborates on this connection between power and language: "In India language means power. We always, in this country, come back to language. English conveys power above all else. Speaking in English means you will at least be heard, even if people disagree with you." He explains how this idea is illustrated in the production.

Characters in *Julius Caesar* are individuals but they are also represen-

tatives of different factions, the sides at war with one another. Each trying to gain power. I think India today is similar to this. Everyone is an individual, but each also represents his group, his religion, whatever, and, each group wants more power, more influence in government, in the schools; each wants an advantage. Because of this, using English becomes important. These groups talk to one another in English but what they really want is to push their own language, their own vision on the others. That is what Antony and Brutus and Cassius want too.

Kapadia points to the play's famous "persuasion scene" in which Cassius convinces Brutus of Caesar's ambitions as an example of this: "Cassius gets Brutus on his side against Caesar by creating a connection between Brutus and Caesar telling Brutus that he would be as good as Caesar, could be a Caesar, when all along [Cassius] wants really to convince Brutus of his own plans."

In their effort to draw attention to the theme of the transiency of power, the directors cut entire scenes, reallocated lines, and "fused" separate parts of the play together creating an alternative narrative sequence. One example of this fusion highlighted Caesar's ignorance about the weakness of his position and the conspirators' decision to assassinate him. During the conspiracy scene, the audience also saw Caesar silently don his elaborate robes preparing to go to the Senate. The contrast arising from Caesar's silence and the conspirators' deliberations created a strong metaphor for the changing power structure as those individuals able to articulate their position gained control. In another example of destabilizing established meanings, the production "silenced" Antony's famous "Friends, Romans, countrymen" oration. The speech was rendered almost inaudible by a loudly vocal mob. By allowing the plebeians to assert themselves, the scene effectively blurred the boundaries between speakers and listeners. The power traditionally associated with Antony's oratory was subtly weakened, hinting at the transiency of his own victory.

The mob presence during and immediately following Antony's oratory reflected another significant component inherent in the issue of theatrical language: accents. As Christopher Balme in *Decolonizing the Stage Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial Drama* writes that although, "Of all the theatrical sign systems language appears to be the most stable[. . .] What appear[s] on the printed page of the dramatic text to be stable, even relatively incontrovertible, accumulate[s] in the act of enunciation on stage a range of additional signifiers"(106). One of these signifiers is accent; accent imbues the play text with an alterity that suggests a multiplicity of meanings. Different accents clearly illustrate the "Indianization" of English. The language has been influenced by its various speakers. According to Anju Sahgal in "Patterns of Language Use in a Bilingual Setting in India," English "has linguistically evolved its own characteristic features at the phonological, lexical, syntactic and even discourse level"(303). Sahgal continues that although these changes have gained greater acceptance, they have also, "led to new problems and anxieties which are primarily related to pedagogic standards, national and international intelligibility as well as to the technical problems of description and typology"(303). The nearly sixty cast members of *Julius Caesar* all had different accents. As Shah explains such an occurrence is common in India.

This was not intentional but if you cast a play in English with sixty different actors, in India, you're going to get sixty different accents. I did not try to get them to speak like Englishmen or anything of that sort. I don't like that. We spoke [on stage] the way we speak ordinarily. And that also got a lot of criticism from the purists but that doesn't bother me.

Hearing Shakespeare's language with a conglomerate of Indian accents layers the performance text with an additional cultural sign. Kapadia attests that the production used the diversity of accents to underscore the competing loyalties and multiple rivalries within the Roman populace that exist following Caesar's death. "We wanted to stress the vacuum that was created once Caesar was killed and the problems that spiraled afterward. Antony, Brutus, and Cassius to me appear to be like children. It is like the schoolmaster's gone home and the kiddies are all misbehaving." Having the accents function as a trope, the production created a bridge between *Caesar's* political factionalism and India's linguistic division.

The production was criticized for the liberties it took with the text and the use of the various accents in particular. Shah says that after the premiere audience members told him that the accents detracted from Shakespeare's language because "Antony would not sound like that." Shah points out how the "that" is always the "hallowed" Shakespeare text. Kapadia says, "Shakespeare is more sacred here than he is in Britain."

Kapadia points to the reception Barrie Rutter's 1993 Northern Broadsides production of a play titled *The Merry Wives* received in Bombay. Rutter's company deliberately performs Shakespeare in the accents of Northern England, rejecting the upper crust accents favored by traditionalists.<sup>12</sup> Ironically, the production was well-received by Bombay audiences. Says Kapadia, "It was very successful; people said it was 'interesting'." About its reception during its Indian tour, he says

Nobody said anything about Rutter's changes because the play isn't on our syllabus here. Besides the *Merchants*, the *Hamlets*, and the *Caesars*, most people don't know the other plays that well. No one knew what was changed and what wasn't. And, there were a lot of changes. There wasn't too much criticism about it like there was towards our *Julius Caesar* but that's because the text wasn't so familiar.

Kapadia maintains that the success of *The Merry Wives* reflects a prejudice against Indian appropriations of Shakespeare; "English productions can do what they like; they are seen as 'knowing' Shakespeare in a way that Indian [productions] are not." Reviewing the production for *The Independent* Kapadia commented on the irony of its success saying, "If somebody here did it, the 'experts' would lambaste them." It is perhaps ironic that Indian directors believe that their audience more readily accepts theatrical appropriations that come from England over homegrown ones.

Post-colonial directors choosing to appropriate Shakespeare's plays in such a manner must work to overcome the conflicting realities and responses contained within and prompted by their linguistic choice. Their deliberate manipulation of Shakespeare's play text foregrounds the conflictedness, not simply of Shakespeare in India, but also of Shakespeare's language in India. The connotations carried by the English language function as vehicles of creative expression as well as reminders of an exclusionary past. With its undeniable links to the colonial past, English language Shakespeare today evokes contradictory responses from audiences and critics. Often judged as confusing hybrids, such productions are labeled as being insufficiently imitative or overly "Indianized;" however, such theater experiences offer glimpses of the kind of cultural negotiation necessary in the wake of colonialism. Because of its diverse theatrical traditions and its numerous languages, India offers a unique site through which to explore the effects from the intersection of "post" and "colonialism."

**East Hanover, New Jersey**

## Notes

1. For more information on Indian translations of Shakespeare's plays and their subsequent productions please see R. K. Yajnik, *The Indian Theater* (New York: Haskell House, 1970).
2. For more information regarding Utpal Dutt's jatra *Macbeth* as well as his other work please see Rustom Bharucha, *Rehearsals of Revolution: The Political Theater of Bengal* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983).
3. For a more detailed discussion regarding post-colonial theater and performance please see J. Ellen Gainor, ed., *Imperialism and Theatre: Essays on World Theatre, Drama, and Performance 1795-1995* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Bonnie Marranca and Gautam Dasgupta, eds., *Interculturalism and Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1991); and Richard Boon and Jane Plastow, eds., *Theatre Matters: Performance and Culture on the Stage* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
4. For earlier work on the "Oriental theater" and interculturalism please see Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and its Double* (New York: Grove Press, 1958); and the following works by Richard Schechner, *The Future of Ritual: Writing on Culture and Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993); *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1985); *Performance Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1977); and *The End of Humanism* (New York: Routledge, 1973). For a critique of Schechner's work, see Rustom Bharucha, *Theater and the World* (Columbia, MO: South Asia Publications, 1990).
5. For more information please see Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism: 1848-1932* (New York and London: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, ed., *The Lie of the Land: English Literary Studies in India* (New York and London: Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1992).
6. Farley Richmond offers a detailed account of this event in "The Social Role of Theater in India" in *Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature*, ed. Carlo Coppola (Michigan State University Press, 1974).
7. For greater analysis concerning the language issue and its position in Indian politics and education please see V. V. John, *Education and Policy* (Jaipur: Rajasthan University Press, 1970).
8. Firoz Khan. Personal Interview. July 16, 1994.
9. Hima Devi. Personal Interview. July 24, 1994.
10. Vikram Kapadia. Personal Interview. July 10, 1994; Naseerrudin Shah. August 4, 1994.
11. Akash Khurana. Personal Interview. August 6, 1994.
12. Ironically, Rutter's productions have met with greater resistance in England.

## Works Cited

- Balme, Christopher. *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial Drama*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.
- Gilbert, Helen and Joanna Tompkins, Eds., *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*. New York, Routledge, 1996.
- Indian Journal*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi. 3:1, 1964.
- Kachru, Braj. *The Alchemy of English: The Spread, Functions, and Models of Non-Native Englishes*. Oxford: Pergamon Institute, 1986.
- Kapadia, Vikram. "Full Throttle." *The Independent*. November 22, 1993.
- Karunandhi, M. in "A Ploy to Thrust Hindi." by V. Jayantha. *The Hindu*. August 26, 1990.
- Kennedy, Dennis, Ed. *Foreign Shakespeare*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Kishi, Tetsuo. Roger Pringle, and Stanley Wells, Eds., *Shakespeare and Cultural Traditions: The Selected Proceedings of the International Shakespeare Association World Congress, Tokyo, 1991*. Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 1994.
- Loomba, Anai and Martin Orkin, Eds., *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*. New York:Routledge, 1998.
- Sahgal, Anju. "Patterns of Language Use in a Bilingual Setting in India" in *English Around the World: Sociolinguistic Perspectives*. Ed. Jenny Cheshire. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge

116 *The Upstart Crow*

University Press, 1991.

Scolicov, Hannah and Peter Holland. *The Play Out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Warden, Francis. "Minute of 1823" in Gauri Viswanathan. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.



***Portia as Balthazar (Robin Goodrin Nordli) makes a point as Antonio (Michael Elich, center) and Bassanio (Jeff Cummings, right) listen in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's 2001 production of William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice. Directed by Michael Donald Edwards; scenic design by William Bloodgood; costume design by David Zinn; lighting design by Robert Jared. Photo by David Cooper.***

## Nativizing Shakespeare: Shakespearean Speech and Indian Vernaculars

by Tamara M. Valentine

Is Shakespeare relevant to our times and to Indian Theatre? ...Shakespeare is everywhere – mutilated or otherwise – right from the Parsi theatre days to the films. Shakespeare has dug his roots in human drama the world over. (playwright Raghuvir Sahai, *Tribute*, 1989)

I generally choose Shakespeare because he deals with human emotions like compassion, mercy, love, violence and hatred which would give a chance to the prisoners to feel, think and redeem themselves. It also provides spectators a chance to view the prisoners differently (Hulagappa Kattimani, director of *Hamlet* performed in a Bangalore prison (*The Hindu*, Oct 1, 2000)

An Indian athletic champion holding the first place stance at the Sydney Olympics. caption: "We are such stuff as dreams are made of..." (*Shakespeareanics*, *The Statesman*, Oct 17, 2000)

I heard Prospero and Caliban speaking in German, and I heard the spirits of the isle, headed by Prospero's favourite Ariel, singing in Malayalam, dancing like a Kathakali actor without the costume... A "cross-cultural" interpretation of Shakespeare's last play in which...Malayali actors played the spirits. I was caught in a multicultural, polyphonic tempest in a dark hall, and when the Ariel from Kerala cried "swatantryam" (freedom), I thought it was coming from the dead poet himself. (Review of *The Tempest* by newspaper editor SPrasannarajan, performed in New Delhi, *India Today*, Dec. 3, 2000)

I just enjoy doing Shakespeare....because of this colonial hangover, which most of us have....I think we have various perceptions of how Shakespeare has to be played.... unless there is some actual communication happening nothing really works, so the whole idea is to actually make him very accessible, thereby grounding him into our own reality. ....I am just contextualising it, wherever, whichever context we are in. (Theatre director Roysten Abel, *Indiatimes Exclusive*, Dec. 23, 2001)

### INTRODUCTION

These references to William Shakespeare have more meaning to me now, having recently returned from an extended research stay in India.\* For the most part, as a linguist, not a student of drama or theater historian, I regarded the study of Shakespeare within the context of European culture and society, but soon realized that under every stone I turned in India, Shakespeare, his words, and his language were speaking to

me: the cultural fusion of Shakespeare and Kathakali in a version of *The Tempest* at the Shri Ram Centre in New Delhi, the cross-cultural performance of two men in the loving relationship of Romeo and Juliet in Roysten Abel's *Goodbye Desdemona* at the India Habitat Centre, and the 1982 Hindi film adaptation *Angoor* "Grapes" of *The Comedy of Errors*. Although it has been argued that the vogue of Shakespearean adaptations has declined in India since 1912 (Sisson 1926), the efforts to Indianize Shakespearean performances to reflect contemporary social realities has not. The influence of Shakespeare on India extends to the walls of Delhi's National School of Drama, the pages of the English newspapers, the classrooms of schools and colleges, and the stages of amateur and professional societies. I viewed archived Shakespearean stage performances by casts of urbanized long-haired, jeans-clad, cigarette-smoking college students; I anticipated *Shakespeareanics*, cartoon sketches of Indian situations alongside oft-quoted Shakespearean lines, an original weekly feature by Harsho Mohan Chattera; and I looked forward to the regular literary reviews of regional and international adaptations of *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*, two popular productions throughout India. I visited the Shakespeare Society at St. Stephens College, the amateur stage of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in English; and I interviewed prominent actors of Indian theatre who had dramatized Shakespeare in an Indian tribute to his works in 1989. It was clear to me that India's love for theatre never declined.

For these reasons, William Shakespeare was reintroduced to me not as a European literary figure but as an Indian *kavi*, an Indian Shakespeare. Fascinated by India's fascination with the great sixteenth century dramatist, I took on the task of examining the tradition of the Bard in India, from the early nineteenth century when English was decreed the language of Indian education and Shakespeare was adopted the "patron saint" of Indian literature, through the appropriation of his works in the regional *bhasas* of India, to his wide popular appeal in contemporary Indian society. Through the centuries, Shakespeare has undergone many avatars and his language has been transformed, transcreated, translated, and appropriated to meet the linguistic needs and suit the cultural tastes of the audiences throughout India.

Many would argue that Shakespeare should remain untouched. "No translation can take the place of its original, as the best appreciation of an author is possible only through a study of his works in the original" (Mishra 1970, 30). Raja Rao (1938), too, admits that there are difficulties in using "a language that is not one's own" in "the spirit that is one's own," and conveying "the various shades and omissions of certain thought-movement that look maltreated in an alien language." If translations are second rate to the original, then why are hundreds of adaptations of Shakespeare's works available in Indian languages? Why are Shakespearean dramas still transformed on the stages of India and scenes still recited in schools and colleges? How influential was the British anglicizing of Indian education in popularizing Shakespeare? What part did the Indianization of the original European plots, settings, and characters play in making Shakespeare the most admired English writer in India? In this paper, I will look at how some translators have filled the linguistic and cultural gaps, how they have translated the English notions of Shakespeare into the cultural realities of India, and how they have appropriated the diverse social, cultural, and linguistic meanings through the use of language.

## ENGLISH EDUCATION POLICY IN INDIA

Although the earliest attempts to put William Shakespeare on the stage in India date back to 1788, the "beginnings of English literary study" in India began with the passing of the Charter Act of 1813, whereby the British colonial power took the responsibility upon itself to improve the social, religious, moral, economic, and personal lot of its Indian

subjects (Viswanathan 1989). The undertakings by the Act of Parliament to authorize a renaissance of learning in India advocated "the revival and promotion of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives...among the inhabitants of the British territories." It wasn't until Thomas Babington Macaulay's influential "Minute in Indian Education" in 1835, when the momentum to establish English language and literature began in India contributing to a *cultural awareness* and a *national awakening* in a subjugated people—a momentum which picked up speed and its own rhythm in all parts of India through the decades to follow (Kachru 1992). The theory that "cultural values percolate downwards from position of power" assigned an intermediary class of Indians to act as interpreters between the governing English and the millions whom they governed (Viswanathan 1987, 10), the hope being, according to the Minute, to educate "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." Macaulay believed that in order to "educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue, we must teach them some foreign language." Standing "pre-eminent" among the "dialects commonly spoken among the natives...of India" as well as "even among the languages of the west," Macaulay argued for the dominance of the English language as "the most useful tongue" and Western literature as intrinsically superior to any other.

The decision to promote the English language and literature resulted in a formidable anglocentric educational policy in British India. Believing that enculturation was a means of cultural imperialism, the colonial rulers established programs legitimating English education, but in the same breath such a maneuver helped to justify their presence in India. English became the sole medium of learning, and a European-style education and a knowledge of the language were the primary means by which Indians could advance economically and socially. Motivated by the new educational provision and a desire to emulate the patterns of the West, many Indians were recruited as major players, if not accomplices, to their own continuing domination. They served as the principal agents for spreading the word of English language and literature and assumed the power and prestige associated with it.

In hopes of making Indians "thoroughly good English scholars," soon after the Minute, the English Education Act in 1835 was passed requiring English to be the official language of study and instruction in India. It was thought that only when the British initiate the Indians "into our literature, particularly at an early age, and get them to adopt feelings and sentiments from our standard writers, [can] we make an impression upon them, and effect any considerable alteration in their feelings and notions" (Horace Wilson qtd. in Viswanathan 1987, 14), hence maintaining control not only over the economic and political structures of British India, but shaping the thoughts and penetrating the consciousness of a people.

## THE ENGLISH LITERARY TRADITION IN INDIA

Soon after Lord Macaulay's pronouncement and the English Education Act in 1835, in the midst of the anglicizing process of Indian education, selected English literary texts that promoted Christian religious values and philosophy of life were incorporated into the Indian curriculum. William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* were prescribed alongside John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Francis Bacon's *Moral and Civil Essays*. The thumping of "Protestant Bible principles" in Shakespeare and in the works of other authors paved the way for the introduction of English literature into the folds of Indian literary culture (Viswanathan 1987, 86). Hence, William Shakespeare and his works were introduced into Indian schools by European teachers, staged and recited on ceremonial occasions, and by 1857 adopted in institutions of higher education in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras (Mishra 1970). Shakespeare was a political investment

## 120 *The Upstart Crow*

into Englishizing India's literary future."Shakespeare kept alive the myth of English cultural refinement and superiority—a myth that was crucial to the rulers' political interests in India" (Singh 1989, 446).

A natural result of the renaissance of learning was the development of English drama becoming a part of the literary repertoire of British India. Introduced into the college curricula as a compulsory subject, Shakespeare was discovered by all Indian students: university students were required to enroll in classes devoted to the serious study of Shakespeare, to the recitation of selected passages, and to the critical reading of full-length plays; students at all levels prepared for examinations on well-known passages and entire plays of Shakespeare, not only reciting and paraphrasing select scenes and passages but answering questions on meter and prosody, grammar and philology, dates, authorship, and sources, and lessons on moral philosophy (Nagarajan 1999). Of course, the legacy of Shakespeare was not limited to the classroom; widespread adaptations and translations of Shakespeare's plays occurred in the Indian languages; and professional European troupes of Shakespearean actors staged plays throughout colonial India. By the mid-nineteenth century, Shakespeare's dramatic artistry became a fixture in the hearts and minds of educated Indians.

No longer confined to European-only audiences or the patronage of the privileged Indian society, by the latter half of the nineteenth century, Shakespeare's plays became open to Indian middle-class audiences in public theaters, performed not only in the traditional Elizabethan style but as adaptations in the regional languages of India. As a response to British educational policy and exposure to British dramatic entertainment, the new Indian theater movement emerged (Yajnik 1934). Calcutta and Bombay became innovative theatrical centers to produce, translate, and adapt English plays. Where the Calcutta class of audience consisted primarily of the elite who modeled themselves after the British ways and the dramatic experience was primarily in Bengali and English, the theater encouraged in Bombay experimented with the Indian regional languages Urdu, Gujarati, Parsi Gujarati, and Marathi, fashioning the stage to suit the common popular playgoers of India. A vernacular theater developed whereby Hindi, the lingua franca, and multiple languages traveled to other cities and villages throughout British India taking on a folk theatrical quality.

By the twentieth century, due to the "revival" of literature by the British and the strong desire to emulate Western drama and stage by Indians, adaptations, appropriations, and translations of Shakespeare became an essential part of promoting English literary study in British India. Moreover, by this time, the popular-traditional regional theatre was actively underway. "Shakespeare with his universal appeal and his many features in complete harmony with the spirit of the ancient Hindu drama, was loved and admired, passionately studied, and enthusiastically produced on the college stages first in English and, later on, in the vernacular" (Yajnik 1934, 103).

### A CREATIVE RESPONSE: NATIVIZING SHAKESPEARE

Throughout the nineteenth century translations of English literature dominated the literary scene; during the 1850s, Shakespeare became the most widely translated European author in Indian languages. For the most part, the writers who were inspired by Shakespeare read him in the original, but those who were not familiar with English or were not English educated turned to translations and adaptations which Indianized the Shakespearean characters and situations at the cultural level and Shakespeare's language at the linguistic level (Das 1991, 180). During this time, and even today, the most frequently adapted plays into all the major languages of India were *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *As You Like it*, *The Tempest*, and *Hamlet*, dramas agreeable with the Indian sense of romance, mysticism,

and musical temperament rather than those that relied on historical references to a particular period and place, national sentimentalism, and inhuman qualities of fury, madness, and individual psychology (Shahani 1932).

Shakespeare's influence in all languages of India ranged from literal translations to freely-adapted versions, both in dramatic and in narrative forms. Translations of Shakespeare's works, especially his comedies, were particularly popular. Some of the plays that received momentary success during this period were the following translations or adaptations from the English originals: Harachandra Ghosh's Bengali *Charumukh Chittahara* (1864) of *Romeo and Juliet*; Hemchandra Vandyopadhyay's Bengali *Nalini Basanta* (1868) of *The Tempest*; Kashinath Govind Natu's Marathi *Vijaya Singh* (1872) of *Julius Caesar*; Vavilala Vasudevasastri's Telugu *Caesar Caritramu* (1876) of *Julius Caesar*; Vishnu Moreswar Mahajani's Marathi *Tara* (1879) of *Cymbeline*; V. Visvanatha Pillai's Tamil *Piracanta Marutam* (1880) of *The Tempest*; Gurujada Sriramamurti's Telugu *Venisu Vartaka Caritrama* (1880) of *The Merchant of Venice*; Narayan Bapuji Kanitkar's Marathi *Shashikala ani Ratnapal* (1882) of *Romeo and Juliet*; and Basappasastri's Kannada's *Surasena Charitre* (1885) of *Othello* (Das 1991, 180-1; *Shakespeare* 1964). As an indication of the popularity of Shakespeare throughout India the most popular drama, *The Merchant of Venice*, was translated into many regional languages: in Malayalam as *Porsyaa Svayamvaram* (1888), in Kannada as *Paancaalii Parinayam* (1890), in Hindi as *Venis Kaa Vyapaani* (1896), in Sindhi as *Husna dildar* (1897), in Urdu as *Venis Kaa Saudaagar* (1898), in Tamil as *Venis Vartakan* (1904), and in Telugu as *Vanikpura Vartakodantam* (1906) (Das 1991, 227). Shakespeare was the only English author who had been continuously translated and adapted in all the languages of India.

In order to make Shakespearean plays successful on the Indian stage, the dramatic stories were retold, remade, and restaged not only in English but from one Indian language to another. While the early performances of Shakespeare's plays in urban areas imitated the European theater and drew from the many similarities between classical Sanskrit drama and the Elizabethan stage, the rural areas of India succeeded in developing their own popular folk theatres (Yajnik 1934; Mishra 1970). The regional theaters adapted and translated not only the original English plays, but their Indian translations as well, producing a dramatic form very unlike the original works; some literal renderings remained faithful to the Shakespearean plots and characters, but many of the adaptations were cultural transcreations for mere entertainment and profit.

Catering to the needs and tastes of the non-English speaking, non-European Indian audiences, entire works of Shakespeare were contextualized in the vernaculars of India. The titles of Shakespearean dramas were indigenized to conform to Indian sounds and cultural contexts; settings were relocated to imaginary places or well-recognized geographic locations of lore; and characters were reassigned names to capture Indian allusions or symbolic references to religious deities, mythological figures, and physical or personality traits. Animals and plants were transformed into South Asian flora and fauna. Adorned in bright colorful costumes, headdress, and jewelry, actors danced, sang, and gestured in the traditional Indian musical style, breaking into a mixture of verse and song. Within the linguistic tradition of the region, performers memorialized lines in the local dialects. Bound to the social-cosmic order, characters invoked protection from divine beings, sent greetings to neighboring villagers, summoned servants, and cast aspersions at their opponents; they exchanged familial address forms and kinship terms between friends, family members, and even enemies; and when angered or challenged, they uttered phrases of abuse—the various modes of address that communicate the vast network of relationships and linguistic choices within the Indian social hierarchy.

Themes, endings, and the general atmosphere were modified to reflect the Indian

122 *The Upstart Crow*

human condition, view of life and death, and sense of justice. The fundamental literary conventions found in Sanskrit drama such as *nataka* where idealism prevails and the principle of a "happy ending" is fated and *rasa* "sentiment" where emotion is aroused, and historical references to mythological legends and characters were substituted for the lengthy soliloquies, rhetorical speeches, one-way arguments, and philosophical teachings of the Greeks and Romans. Where Indian dramatic productions favored the evocation of sentiment, the harmony between good and evil, and the "happily ever after" mantra, Shakespearean drama emphasized the concept of a tragic ending, and the basic elements of plot, characterization, and personal conflict. To appeal to the sensibilities of the Indian audiences, writers introduced new scenes and deleted those that were in conflict with social duty, family loyalty, and human qualities of humility and generosity. Ensuring compatibility with Indian cultural and religious values, scenes marked with sexual innuendoes, obscene expressions, ribald comedy, and references to such alien subjects as witchcraft or ghosts were often edited and rewritten (Amin-Zaki 1996). "The English influences merged with indigenous dramatic forms and cultural idioms" (Green 1996: 31).

In the tradition of popular regional theater, Ranjee Shahani (1932) presents the Shakespearean play *Hamlet* through Eastern eyes, illustrating the adaptation of both spectator and actor.

A great placard in front of a theatre announces that a performance of "Hamlet" is to be given. An eager mass of humanity, chewing *pan* and smoking *birees*, awaits the opening of the doors....

The play is, of course, presented in Eastern garb. The scenery and stage properties are all Oriental.... Music is supplied by a harmonium accompanied by *tablas*.

Hamlet appears. He is dressed after the fashion of a maharaja of to-day. His hands glitter with costly rings; a long sword hangs at his side; necklaces of pearl adorn the front of his silken robe; and in his turban blazes a diamond like unto the Mountain of Light. He speaks in Marathi; his gestures are violently expressive; his voice is loud. We have before us an Oriental avatar of the gentle Prince of Shakespeare.

The drama has undergone a strange transformation. Is this the tragedy that we looked forward to? No. What we are seeing seems more like comedy...

Before the curtain falls, we see Hamlet majestically strutting towards the vacant throne, wreathed in smiles, with the fair Ophelia—or, rather, Kamlata, on his arm. The audience clap and shout, and leave the theatre, well-satisfied with the programme. (59-61)

## ADAPTATIONS IN THE VERNACULARS

The first adaptation of a Shakespearean play in India was in 1853 with the vernacular *Bhanumati-Chittavilasa* "Portia and Bassanio", a Bengali rendering of *The Merchant of Venice* written by Haracandra Ghosh. With slight changes, including an additional scene and several new characters, Ghosh intended for this "readable" adaptation to be used for promoting the regional language Bengali for educational and literary reasons, a common explanation for the increasing number of translations in the vernaculars (Green 1996).

Sarah Green's (1996) treatise on Bhartendu Hariscandra's *Durlabh bandhu*, an 1888 literal Hindi translation of Bengali *Suralata* by Pyarilal Mukhopadhyaya, a version

of *The Merchant of Venice*, offers an in-depth look at the indigenization of language use, linguistic structure, and cultural reference. Through such devices of contextualization as translations of single item Indianizations, the use of colloquial forms and proverbs, the treatment of puns and anomalies, and the extensive range of linguistic codes, the translator transforms *The Merchant of Venice* to *Durlabh bandhu* "A Friend Indeed."

Common to most adaptations, in *Durlabh bhandu*, Hariscandra changes the English names to names which reflect the character's personality: Bassanio changes to Basanta "spring" and Portia to Purasri "Saraswati, the goddess of wealth." Anant replaces Antonio, Narshri for Nerissa, Jasoda for Jessica, and Sailaksa for Shylock. The place name Venice is replaced with Vansnagar, Nepal with Naples, Aragon with Aryagaon, Frankfurt with Feridkot, and Genoa with Jaipur (Mishra 1970, 31).

Pivotal to the theme of *The Merchant of Venice* is the Christian-Jew dichotomy. Presented into the vernacular versions as the struggle between Aryan populations, Hariscandra transforms "Shylock the Jew into Sailaksa the Jain and Anthony and the Christian merchants of Venice into the Aryas of Vansnagar" (Green 1996, 70). In the Urdu adaptation *Dil-faros* by Ganga Prasad Arora, Shylock remains a Jew, but his enemies are Muslims. In the Marathi version *Sangita pranaya-mudra* the conflict shifts to Brahmanism-Buddhism. In *Vanipura Vanikar* by Paammal Sambanda Mudaliyar, the Tamil version, the Christian society of Venice is transformed into the Hindu Tamil Society of Vanipuri; the conflict is between the Jain Shamlal, a baniya "merchant," and the Hindu prince, Anandan—a reference to the past friction between Saivism and Jainism in Tamil Nadu (Chellappan 1999).

According to Green (1996), Hariscandra translates English rhyming patterns into simple Brajghosa or Urdu verses with each line ending in rhyme. For example, in reply to Shylock's rhyme "Fast bind, fast find, ' a proverb never stale in thrifty mind." Jessica says,

Farewell; and if my fortune be not cross'd  
I have a father, you a daughter, lost.

In Urdu, however, Jasoda responds to Sailaksa's rhymed Brajghosa proverb "Jaagai so paavai, sovai so khovai" *the one who is awake gains, the one who sleeps loses* in the form of a typical Urdu ghasal:

gar bar aayii aarjuu merii to ruukhsat aapko,  
aapne beTe ko khoyaa aur maiM ne baap ko.

The English translation of the Urdu verse states:

I bid you farewell for if my wish comes true,  
I lose my father and your child is lost to you. (77-78)

Helping to further the development of Hindi as a literary language, in the translation Hariscandra demonstrates the full range of language choices available to a Indian multilingual. Manipulating the plurilingual context to distinguish among characters, regions, and castes, the translator switches from using standard Hindi for prose, Brajghosa and Urdu for poetry, and the local variety Bhojpuri for folk expression. Bhojpuri is used to the servant class, Hindi and Brajghosa are used among the wealthy and merchant groups, and Urdu expresses a theme typically associated with the ghazal form and a cultured audience. Hariscandra's literary creativity conforms to the sociolinguistic tradition of communicating the social meaning of each code within the multilingual's repertoire.

124 *The Upstart Crow*

The Kannada adaptation *Prataparudradeva*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, was written by Sirkantesha Gowda during the revival of Kannada learning in the late nineteenth century. D. A. Shankar provides an interesting review of the indigenizing process and how this play "assimilates the new into an already existing native tradition" (1999, 21). The drama, named after the Shakespearean virtuous character Malcolm, takes place, not in Scotland, but in the partly imaginary places of Odhra, Vidharba, Pataliputra, and Ekachakra Nagari. Rather than Macduff, Donalbain, and Banquo, the Indian characters Virasena, Shurasena, and Jayasimha take center stage.

For the play to appear natural to Kannada audiences, the Kannada play opens with a *Naandi*, an invocatory verse recited at the opening of a ceremony, and a *Mangala*, a benedictory verse pronouncing a blessing for success. The figures of speech in the English play are indigenized to suggest an Indian context free of any Christian imagery—one that the Hindu audience may more clearly accept and understand. Shankar (1999) provides act IV first in English, then in Kannada, then in an English-Kannada translation to illustrate this point.

...The royal father  
 was a most sainted  
 king; the queen that bore thee  
 Oft'ner upon her knees than on her feet  
 Died every day she liv'd.  
*yatiyantirdam pitanum*  
 matiyute ma:te girija:te yantirdal  
 Sutanintiprudarindanu  
 matame:niprudo harihara bommanigidarol  
 Your father was like a *Yati*,  
 Your mother was like *Parvati*,  
 The Mountain-born:  
 Who knows what *Hari*, *Hara* and *Brahma* want?

The verse elevates Malcolm's parents to the divine status of the Hindu model couple, the ascetic-loving Siva and his devoted wife Parvati "mountain-born," daughter of Himalaya; and it appeals to the Hindu trinity of Vishnu, Siva, and Brahma. In other verses, references are continually made to the legends and mythologies of various Hindu gods and the heroic exploits of characters in the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and decisions are built on the traditional belief of the religious notions of *karma* 'action' and *dharma* 'duty'. When the play is read in Kannada, the music is largely in Sanskrit and influenced by classical music; when the play is acted, the music is largely light and folksy and influenced by the music of the native-folk theater (Shankar 1999).

In a final example from Malayalam, translators adapted the blank verse of Shakespeare's plays to prose. *Kalahinidamanakam* "shrew," a free rendering in a colloquial style of *The Taming of the Shrew*, by Malayalee Kandathil Varghese Mappilai published in 1893 introduced to Malayalee readers the nature of plots in English dramas by making significant changes in the adaptation. According to Jayasree Ramakrishnan Nair (1999), the translator Mappilai relocates the play from Padua and Verona to Patalipuram and Varanadesamin. He substitutes Hindus belonging to the *Chettiyar* community for the European Christian characters represented. The translator, too, indigenizes male character names paying close attention to sound and phonetic similarities: Petruchio is Parthasaarathy, Gremio is Graameesan, Hortensio is Hrdyangan, Tranio is Tranakan, and Biondello is PaNdunki, and gives the female characters names that symbolize their psychological character: Arasamalli (anger) for Katharina and Anandavalli (joy) for Bianca. The name Cirattayakakattu Varkky, or

Christopher Sly, translates literally "within the *ciratta* or empty coconut shell." He represents someone who lives every moment in the company of liquor, constantly uttering "oru ceratta kallu kittiyenkil." Nair cites other Malayalee adaptations where the author contextualizes the kinship terms of address: in Kodungallur Kunjikuttan Thampuran's translation of *Hamlet*, Gertrude calls Hamlet *makane* "son," Hamlet calls his mother *amme* "mother," Cordelia addresses Lear as father *accha*, Desdemona refers to Othello as *prananathan*, and Othello calls her *priyatame*; in Chunakkara Krishna Warriar's *Vasantikasvapnam*, an adaptation of a Sanskrit version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Tamil convention of musical dramas is introduced throughout with fifteen *ragas* mentioned with their corresponding *talas*, and the tunes of popular songs; and in M. R. Nair's translation of *Othello*, the translation remains faithful to Shakespeare's poetic quality by using repetition of sound combinations and words, alliterative rhythmic prose, and a natural idiomatic style (Nair 1999).

## CONCLUSION

If Lord Macaulay could look forward to the present state of English in India, he would find that the early anglicizing forces of modernizing India and Englishizing its people led to English-knowing multilinguals and a variety of Englishes worldwide (Kachru 1986). One outcome of promoting English language and literature during the nineteenth century was the development of an Indian literature distinct from earlier traditions, a literary creativity developed by writers and translators that greatly influenced the direction of Indian drama and literature. With the arrival of Shakespeare to India there came a revival of the old traditions in modern Indian literature and an opportunity to be creative with the new forms of dramatic writing. As a result, over time, Shakespeare became Indian Shakespeare; India has made him one of its own.

\*I am grateful to the American Institute of Indian Studies and the National Endowment for the Humanities for providing me with the support to conduct my field research in India during the 2000-2001 academic year.

University of South Carolina—Spartanburg

## Works Cited

- Amin-Zaki, Amel. 1996. *Religious and Cultural Considerations in Translating Shakespeare in Arabic*. Anuradha Dingwaney and Carol Maier, eds. *Between Languages and Cultures. Translations and Cross-Cultural Texts*. Delhi: Oxford University Press. 223-243.
- Chellappan, K. 1999. *Shakespeare in Tamil*. D. A. Shankar, ed. *Shakespeare in Indian Languages*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advance Study. 148-157.
- Das, Sisir Kumar. 1991. *A History of Indian Literature 1800-1910. Western Impact: Indian Response*. Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.
- Green, Sarah Virginia. 1996. *Shylock Becomes Sailaksa: Hariscandra's Durlabh Bandhu and the Late Nineteenth-Century Indian Quest for a National Identity*. M.A. Thesis. University of Texas at Austin.
- Kachru, Braj B. 1992. *Cultural Contact and Literary Creativity in a Multilingual Society*. In Edward C. Dimock, Braj B. Kachru, and Bh. Krishnamurti, eds. *Dimensions of Sociolinguistics in South Asia*. New Delhi: Oxford. 149-159.
- Kachru, Braj B. 1986. *The Alchemy of English: The Spread, Functions, and Models of Non-Native Englishes*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Macaulay, Thomas. 1935. *Minute on Indian Education. Speeches of Lord Macaulay with his Minute on Indian Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

126 *The Upstart Crow*

- Mishra, Jagdish Prasad. 1970. *Shakespeare's Impact on Hindi Literature*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Nagarajan, S. 1999. *Nineteenth Century Indian Editions of Shakespeare for Indian Students*. D. A. Shankar, ed. *Shakespeare in Indian Languages*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advance Study. 171-177.
- Nair, Jayasree Ramakrishnan. 1999. *Towards a Malayalee Shakespeare. The Search for an Ideal Form of Expression*. D. A. Shankar, ed. *Shakespeare in Indian Languages*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advance Study. 127-140.
- Rao, Raja. 1938. *Kanthapura*.
- Shahani, Ranjee G. 1932. *Shakespeare Through Eastern Eyes*. London: Herbert Joseph. *Shakespeare in India*. 1964. Calcutta: National Library.
- Shankar, D. A. 1999. *On Translating Shakespeare*. D. A. Shankar, ed. *Shakespeare in Indian Languages*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advance Study. 15-28.
- Shankar, D. A. ed. *Shakespeare in Indian Languages*. 1999. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advance Study.
- Singh, Jyotsna. 1989. *Different Shakespeare. The Bard in Colonial/Postcolonial India*. *Theatre Journal* 41:445-458.
- Sisson, C. J. 1926. *Shakespeare in India. Popular Adaptations on the Bombay Stage*. London: The Shakespeare Association.
- A Tribute to Shakespeare*. 1989. New Delhi: Theatre and Television Associates.
- Viswanathan, Gauri. 1987. *The Beginnings of English Literary Study in British India*. *Oxford Literary Review* 9.1-2:2-26.
- Viswanathan, Gauri. 1989. *Masks of Conquest. Literary Study and British Rule in India*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Yajnik, R. 1934. *The Indian Theatre: Its Origins and its Later Developments Under European Influence*. New York: E. P. Dutton.

## Abuses of Authority: English Literature, Colonial Pedagogy, and Shakespeare in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*

by Ananya Kabir

Once upon a time there were Radha and Krishna, and Rama and Sita, and Laila and Majnu; also (because we are not unaffected by the West) Romeo and Juliet, and Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn. The world is full of love stories, and all lovers are in a sense the avatars of their predecessors.

— Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*

Salman Rushdie's musings in *Midnight's Children* transform the cultural capital signified by *Romeo and Juliet* from imperial currency to postcolonial irreverence. Projected onto the symbolic geography of South Asia, where they jostle alongside fabled twosomes from Hindu mythology, Persian poetry, and Hollywood, the Shakespearean lovers are newly minted in ways Lord Macaulay could not have imagined in 1835, while writing his notorious but deeply consequential "Minute on Indian Education."<sup>1</sup> If, as Gauri Viswanathan has demonstrated, British imperialism fuelled the formation of English literature as an academic discipline,<sup>2</sup> then the reverence accorded to Shakespeare within its canon is the very weapon with which "Empire strikes back." Playfully disrupting modernist hierarchies between "high culture" (Shakespeare) and "popular consumption" (Hollywood), between "Eastern myth" and "Western literature," Rushdie's *Romeo and Juliet* and their eclectic company emblemize the ways in which he ironizes— but also celebrates— the multicultural legacies of postcolonial India.

I invoke Rushdie's reference to *Romeo and Juliet* as an easily recognizable paradigm of the postcolonial appropriation of Shakespeare, or the ways in which, to cite one critic, "Shakespeare is repositioned, as emerging or residually postcolonial cultures seek either to respond critically to the depredations and misrepresentations of colonialism, or to negotiate Shakespeare's standing as a privileged site of authority within their national formations."<sup>3</sup> Such negotiations of Shakespeare's iconic potential can, however, assume forms more troubling and far less playful than Rushdie's, as demonstrated by Manju Kapur in her novel, *Difficult Daughters*, winner of the 1999 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for "best first book."

*Difficult Daughters* charts the intellectual and emotional growth of a female protagonist, Virmati, against the unfolding backdrop of the Independence and Partition of the Indian Subcontinent in August 1947. As I have argued elsewhere, South Asian Partition narratives function as sites of memory and mourning for minority subjectivities at odds with the national master narrative of the glorious achievement of Independence.<sup>4</sup> In particular, South Asian women novelists have frequently deployed the conflicting cultural affiliations of an elite female subject position in coming of age narratives, where the freedom struggle is reconfigured as the struggle for personal emancipation and the trauma of Partition as the loss of innocence and girlhood. The consequent intertwining of the personal and the political provides a gendered twist to Fredric Jameson's claim that "all third world literature aspires to national allegory."<sup>5</sup> The analogy between the birth of the nation and the coming of age of the female citizen further enables these authors to appropriate the configuration of India as woman in nationalist

128 *The Upstart Crow*

discourse, especially in the debates concerning tradition and modernity, religion and secularism, and shame and honor that have surrounded the self-fashioning of the Indian state from its incipience.<sup>6</sup>

Kapur's contribution to these gendered revisitings of the Partition master-narrative is the linking of English literature to the contested site of the woman's body. In this task, an important role is played by Shakespeare, who becomes metonymic of the cultural authority of English literature and its systematic abuse by patriarchal authority, be that authority colonial or anti-colonial nationalist. By citing Shakespeare at crucial moments in her narrative, and by inserting these citations within an ensemble of literary and other icons of Western culture, Kapur, herself a teacher of English literature at a Delhi college, foregrounds the nexus between colonialism, patriarchy and pedagogy, and critiques thereby the postcolonial legacy of English literary studies in India.

English literature impacts the narrative of *Difficult Daughters* on various levels. On the most straightforward level of plot, it provides the initial complication. Virmati, a young girl growing up in a conservative Punjabi family of pre-Partition Amritsar, falls in love with her Professor of English Literature, Harish, who is already married and a father. Ostensibly concerned with the resolution of this problem, the narrative actually dwells on the numerous delays in proceeding towards any resolution. The main source of delay is Harish's vacillation between the intelligent but pliable Virmati, whom he wishes to mould after his intellectual image, and his illiterate wife, who is an impeccable example of the "traditional Indian woman." Education becomes the means of both escape and entrapment for Virmati. She staves off arranged marriage by accumulating higher degrees, but these degrees trap her into emotional reliance on the Professor (as Harish is usually referred to by the narrator).

After several years of dithering, Harish marries Virmati without relinquishing his first wife, Ganga. Within an embattled domestic space, Virmati continues in the role of the student, reading books chosen by her husband rather than participating in household chores. Reading thus becomes an activity of neither enjoyment nor self-improvement, but the means whereby the Professor maintains equilibrium in his triangular household. This status quo is shattered by the upheavals of 1947. In the aftermath of the Partition riots and transfer of population that tore the Punjab into half, Ganga and the Professor's mother relocate to their ancestral area of the erstwhile United Provinces (the state of Uttar Pradesh in independent India), while Virmati and the Professor find themselves in Delhi. Here Virmati gives birth to their daughter, Ida, the narrator of the novel.

In the birth of both "difficult daughters," Ida, child of newly decolonized India, and the postcolonial novel itself, troped by Ida's "Midnight's Child" entry into the world, English Literature is complexly implicated. Embodied in her father, the Professor, English Literature in its institutionalized form is the prime mover of the narrative and the force that sustains the mutual attraction between the protagonists. Early in the novel, Harish is evoked through books on literary criticism, libraries and classrooms, filtered through the narrator's imaginative and memorial reconstructions. After the death of her mother, Ida goes to Amritsar, and visits the college where her father taught and her parents first met:

We first went to the library.... there were old-fashioned wooden cupboards with glass doors arranged around the walls. In the middle were desks and benches dotted with a few students. The room was cool, even in the middle of summer. The ceilings were high, and the deep, recessed windows covered with wire netting. It looked old and graceful, peaceful and untouched. (51)

...

From one cupboard to the next I looked. How many of these same titles, the same edition even, had I lived with in my own home? What did he do? Reproduce the home in the college and vice versa?

I took out a familiar-looking volume. *Saintsbury* on Dryden in the *English Men of Letters* series, published 1915. ... AS College, the last colonial outpost, where *Saintsbury* and *Gosse* were king, where the *Beauties of Literature* still flourished. (52)

Standing in an empty classroom, she listens to her uncle and the principal of the college reminisce about her father's talent as a teacher of literature:

[Classroom no 8] ... was a large empty room, resembling a theatre... "This used to be the most crowded classroom in the entire college." "Students used to come from Lahore to hear him." "He bought the subject alive. Most of us had never stepped out of Amritsar. The things he talked about, his expression, his way of speaking, we felt we were in another world." ... [O]n the podium, around the lectern, where at one time a teacher performed, working his way into the hearts and minds of captive students. (53)

As this passage suggests, the charismatic Professor is more than a teacher: he is the key to another world that is unlocked through the literature he performs.

Kapur further indicates that the pedagogical impulse is grounded not so much in a vocational altruism as in a self-aggrandizing need to perform and dominate, a need that can all too easily translate into the language of sexual politics. She draws verbal parallels between pedagogic and sexual performance to drive home this point. Just as the Professor captures the "hearts and minds of captive students," so too he desires to "possess" *Virmati's* "heart and mind":

Ignoring the half-dozen young men who rose to give her their place, *Virmati* sat on the floor in front of his desk, looking up at him with her large eyes. The Professor drank in the symbolism of her posture greedily. It moved him so deeply that he remembered it in all its detail even when his children had grown up. ... Later, when the deed was done, and he was in love with her, insisting on death if she were so cruel as to deny him, he discovered she was myopic. ... by then, the Professor's desire to possess had extended to her heart and mind. (47)

Through *Virmati's* pose of imagined submissiveness, Kapur focuses on the conflation between sexual desire, the desire to subordinate, and the desire to instruct. This conflation is already apparent in their first meeting, conducted, significantly enough, over a gramophone:

'You like the music?' he inquired, gesturing to the side table, where the gramophone lay with its lid open, its shiny metal arm bobbing up and down over a record. Lots of red, white, and blue dust jackets lay on either side.

*Virmati* nodded. She was too shy to say anything. The Professor put on his sweetest Bach and was rewarded by the look on *Virmati's* face. This girl has potential, he found himself thinking, while *Virmati* listened and dreamed more intensely than she ever had of her fiancé, that shadowy figure waiting in the wings to marry her. (38-9)

130 *The Upstart Crow*

As Virmati responds intuitively to his "sweetest Bach," the Professor assesses her "potential" as a learner. The greater this potential, the more rewarding his own role as teacher, and the greater his desire for her.

The dynamics of the relationship between the Professor and Virmati clearly derives from and is sustained by an imbalance of power. Already written into Virmati's position as a woman in a traditional society, this imbalance is exacerbated by the Professor's position of authority over her. Different sources of authority come together in the Professor: firstly, the authority that naturally accrues to him as an elite male, albeit one inscribed within the colonial domain; secondly, the respect and honor accorded in Indian tradition to the *guru* or teacher; thirdly, and most crucially for Kapur's postcolonial narrative, his professional qualifications as an Oxford-returned *guru* of English literature—a more ideologically significant specialization in the colonial context than, say, mathematics or geology.

It is now widely recognized that English literature, always "a vital instrument for the insertion of individuals into the perceptual and symbolic form of the dominant ideological formation,"<sup>7</sup> took on an added potency within the charged field of colonial educational policy. In the words of Viswanathan, "the history of education in British India shows that certain humanistic functions traditionally associated with literature—for example, the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking—were considered essential to the processes of sociopolitical control by the guardians of the same tradition" (3). In *Difficult Daughters*, the relationship between Harish and Virmati illustrates how, in the colonial context, these traditional "humanistic functions" of literature functioned as strategies of containment, both in the public world of the academic institution and in the more intimate spaces of household and bedroom.

Through the description of Harish's lifestyle and tastes, Kapur suggests that his choice of academic specialization is part of a wider "habitus," to borrow a useful term from Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>8</sup> The appreciation of literature goes hand in hand with the cultivation of Western culture in its diverse dimensions, and with the desire to mark one's living space as "anglicized" through the accumulation of cultural capital, embodied in the appropriate material goods. Thus, "Harish returned to India, his house, mother and wife, bringing back as much of England as he could. Her art, music and literature followed him in heavy, black metal sea-chests" (37). Kapur's evocation of Harish reminds the reader of Macaulay's vision of an entire class of brown Englishmen,

... a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. (249)

In the opinion of Macaulay, and the Anglicists he represented, these changes could be best effected through the teaching of English Literature to the natives, since "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia" (241). If Macaulay's Minute of 1835 remains the most forceful articulation of the Anglicist argument that Indians urgently required Western-style educational institutions in order to enter the "civilized modern world," Harish, with his wholesale embracing of the Western aesthetic sphere via the ameliorating influence of English literature, is presented by Kapur as the model result of a century of such social engineering.

The impact of Harish's Westernization on his lifestyle and that of his household, and the close connections between the domestic and the intellectual spheres, are conveyed by Kapur through detailed descriptions of the material possessions associated with his anglicized tastes. A memorable passage in this context is her account of Harish's tea drinking habits. Harish brings back to India England's art, literature and music, as well as a taste for tea. "I learnt to like it there," he says to Virmati, offering "a little bit of himself which both flattered and alarmed" her (43). A self-styled cultural purist, he is disdainful of what he sneeringly dismisses as "the medicinal potion"—the Indian version of tea that Virmati is familiar with—"Indumati makes me tea when I'm not feeling well. With milk and honey, tulsi leaves, black pepper and ginger" (43).

For the Professor, in fact, tea itself is not so important as is the paraphernalia of the tea set and tea tray:

The woman emerged from the kitchen, silver tray in her hands. On it was a white cup and saucer with small pink roses, and faint green leaves. A fine gold line could be seen around the rim. Matching this was a small jug with bits of steam curling out, and a round sugar bowl with a silver spoon standing straight up in it. On one side bulged the starched teacosy, with white flowers embroidered against a whiter background. (43)

Focalizing the description through Virmati's eyes Kapur is able to defamiliarize the tea tray and foreground Harish's fetishization of this fragile yet enduring symbol of Englishness. The cup of tea goes hand in hand, moreover, with a particular disposition towards the natural world:

The Professor was on his last cup of tea that evening. He was sitting in the angan looking at the sky. His wife, watching him from the kitchen, could tell from his face how absorbed he was in the beauty of the sunset. His glasses, raised upwards, reflected the brilliant colours he was contemplating. In all her life she had never known anybody as crazy about beauty as her husband. He could talk about it at great length and in such detail that listeners would go away feeling that till the Professor had spoken, they had never really seen anything. (77)

Harish appears here as the ideal respondent to the Kantian sublime, refracted, as is appropriate for a lover of English Literature, through the prism of a Wordsworthian Romanticism. However, the reappearance of the cup of tea, focalized this time through the eyes of Ganga, functions as a rather harsh gloss on this image of the aesthete.

As in the earlier description of the tea tray, the framing gaze of a woman directs the reader to the relationship between English literature, western culture, and patriarchy. Standing at the kitchen door, Ganga reminds us that it is her domestic work that provides the Professor's imperative accompaniment to his immersion in the aesthetics of the sunset: the tea tray bearing his cup of tea, even as her labor-intensive production of tea-time snacks fuels the intellectual conversations of the Professor's circle of friends. Of course, as a further colonial subtext to the tea tray lurks the commodification of tea itself, and the wider story of European expansionism that it charts. At least part of this sordid truth about the glamorous tea tray hits Virmati when, after her marriage, she hears the thud of it being left outside their bedroom door by Ganga: "This tray was really Ganga's. To think there was a time when she associated it with Harish, and only with Harish" (217-18).

Having first invested the tea tray with symbolic capital, therefore, Kapur proceeds

132 *The Upstart Crow*

to demonstrate how that capital accrues at the expense of the colonized woman. Simultaneously, she exposes, through Virmati's gathering disillusionment with all that the tea tray signifies, the ways in which the institution of English literature colluded with other patriarchal institutions in mutual legitimization. This collusion is also signaled through Kapur's earlier invocation of Shakespeare at two intensely emotional moments for Virmati. When, as an MA student in Lahore, Virmati discovers that she is pregnant, memories of Harish's lessons on Shakespearean tragedy interject and give shape to the confusion and fear caused by this unplanned event:

Now, each of Harish's words echoed in her mind with an irony he had taught her to recognize in Shakespeare's texts. Tragic irony, comic irony, how he had loved to expand on them. Which species was this? It lacked the epic proportions of tragedy, and the love-courtship marriage theme of comedy. In either case, she was the Fool, that much at least was certain. (154)

This recollection of Shakespearean drama does little, however, to soothe Virmati. As the hitherto merely academic category of irony strikes home, she feels not comforted but cheated; the lineaments of literary criticism do not appear to encompass her own life, which lacks both tragic grandeur and comedic fulfillment.

Edging closer to the choice she must make, Virmati's circle of remembrance narrows to that most sublime member of the Shakespearean corpus: tragedy. This second, lengthier, reference to Shakespeare occurs when Virmati returns to her home in Amritsar to take a decision about her pregnancy. Lying on a bed on the terrace, but unable to sleep, she thinks of Lady Macbeth:

Eventually her tears stopped, and she lay drained and corpse-like. The other sleepers had long since come and settled down. She was the only one awake. Like Lady Macbeth, she had murdered sleep. How Harish's face had glowed as he murmured, tasted almost, 'the multitudinous seas incarnadine/ making the green one red', so that the stretched-out vowel sounds seemed to contain the mysteries of life. Given all that, she might as well wander around like Lady Macbeth. (162-3)

The recollection of Lady Macbeth by a woman on the brink of aborting her fetus is apt, perhaps. But more telling is Virmati's conflation of Macbeth, who murdered sleep, and his wife, who would dash from her breast the suckling babe in order to fulfil her life's ambitions. Evidently, Harish's teaching had not burnt each textual detail of the play into her memory. What does remain is Harish's sensual enjoyment as he "tasted" the luxury of the words in which the power and mystery of Shakespeare's blank verse crystallize. The gulf between his aesthetic immersion in the poetry, embodied in his "glowing face," and her pragmatism and bitterness, captured equally by the verbal shrug of "given all that," prefigures the gulf between Virmati's first infatuation with the tea tray and her later realization that "it was really Ganga's."

By thus invoking Shakespearean tragedy, the English literary text supposedly closest to the human condition, does Kapur point to the Bard's feet of clay? It is perhaps more appropriate to read her criticism as of not the Bard *per se*, but of bardolatry, and, more specifically, its ideological alignment with the discursive construction of "Englishness," the nuts and bolts of the Empire's hold over its colonial elite. In this context, Michael Dobson's speculative comments on the connections between the material effects of imperialism and the rise of bardolatry are particularly cogent:

[From the 1760's onwards], Shakespeare has been as normatively constitutive of British national identity as the drinking of afternoon tea, and it is now probably as hard for any educated Briton to imagine not enjoying the former as it would be to imagine foregoing the latter. This analogy may be less trivializing than it appears: the national habit of Shakespeare, after all, and the national habit of tea have their origins in exactly the same period of expanding trade abroad and vigorous nationalism at home—both rise from being novelties with Pepys in the 1660's to being addictions with Dr Johnson in the 1760's. That Shakespeare was declared to rule world literature at the same time that Britannia was declared to rule the waves may, indeed, be more than a coincidence.<sup>9</sup>

Through the metonymic association of afternoon tea and Shakespeare with Harish, Kapur suggests that the construction of such emblems of English culture was interlocked equally with the imperial need to consolidate "Englishness" and the colonial desire to mimic that identity. Yet, in her portrayal of Harish's mimicry of colonial institutions big and small, there is no redeeming humor, no suggestion of his sly civility.<sup>10</sup> Rather, the domestic spaces of Harish's life and wives link Shakespeare to not only colonial pedagogy but the impact of that pedagogy on the colonial woman's body—a point made most acutely by the references to Harish's New Critical teaching of Shakespeare that frame Virmati's discovery of her pregnancy and her decision to abort.

Through these framing references to Shakespeare, Kapur reminds us of one of the greatest ironies of anti-colonial nationalism: its wholesale espousal of the colonial drive to modernize, via the elite corps of Macaulay's "brown Englishmen," the native woman. In Bengal especially, the first laboratory of the Anglicist experiment, the reformist Brahmo Samaj set out to modernize the Bengali Hindu woman by bringing her out of seclusion, sending her to Western-style schools and colleges, dressing her in Victorian versions of the sari, and teaching her to play the piano. In the words of Partha Chatterjee:

Formal education became not only acceptable, but, in fact, a requirement for the *bhadramahila* (respectable woman) when it was demonstrated that it was possible for a woman to acquire the cultural refinements afforded by modern education without jeopardizing her place at home, that is, without becoming a *memsaheb*. Indeed, the nationalist construct of this new woman derived its ideological strength from making the goal of cultural refinement through education a personal challenge for every woman, thus opening up a domain where woman was an autonomous subject. This explains to a large extent the remarkable degree of enthusiasm among middle-class women themselves to acquire and use for themselves the benefits of formal learning. They set this goal for themselves in their personal lives and as the objects of their will: to achieve it was to achieve freedom.<sup>11</sup>

Yet female autonomy was not so easily obtained; as Chatterjee himself remarks, "the story of nationalist emancipation is necessarily a story of betrayal.[sic] Because it could confer freedom only by imposing at the same time a whole new set of controls" (154).

This observation is exemplified by the relationship between Virmati, Harish, and the teaching of English literature. Virmati's family belongs to the Arya Samaj, a North Indian equivalent of the Bengali Brahmo Samaj, and more inclined than the latter to quarry the tenets of "pure" Vedic Hinduism in its construction of an anti-colonial

134 *The Upstart Crow*

modernity.<sup>12</sup> Virmati's mother, Kasturi, and Virmati herself are educated in Arya Samaj schools, but, as Kasturi's life demonstrates, that education consolidated rather than challenged the traditional female role of domesticity and childbearing: "During Kasturi's formal schooling, it was never forgotten that marriage was her destiny" (62). Virmati looks to English literature, distinct from the Arya Samaj curriculum of needlework, home management and prayer, as the instrument of her emancipation from that traditional role. In the hands of Harish, however, English literature aligns itself with that age-old institution of patriarchy, marriage, to interpellate her in a subject position hardly dissimilar to that of Kasturi, or, for that matter, Ganga.

Despite the Professor's efforts, Ganga remains illiterate and, therefore, unable, to participate in his modern life. She spends her time cooking, doing laundry and keeping the house spotless. Yet these domestic chores bestow on her an agency, which Virmati, with her BA, MA and teaching experience, finds herself deprived of in her marital home. "She is a wife, not a showpiece," retorts Harish's mother to his complaints about Ganga not being able to mingle with his friends (209). Virmati—trotted out to reflect his modernity while his intellectual circle feasts on the food prepared by Ganga, but trapped in a small dressing room at all other times—illustrates what happens to a wife who *is* one. As Kapur demonstrates, the promise of autonomy was a shallow one. The structures of English literature merely replicated those of traditional patriarchy, and, even more ironically, cut Virmati off from more traditional means of succour and self-realization, the company of women and the performance of what the narrative presents as women's work.

Of course, Kapur does not fall into the reactionary nativist trap of positing women's work—cooking, sewing, laundry—as the true emancipatory alternative to English literature for the postcolonial woman. In fact, the role of such work, especially cooking, is highly ambivalent in the novel, functioning, in a way, as its aporia. Kapur repeatedly presents the fetters of domesticity through elaborate accounts of equally elaborate food preparation. After finishing school, for instance, Kasturi spends her time learning "how to please her [future] in-laws:"

How?

Let me count the ways.

With all the breads she could make, puris with spicy gram inside, luchis as big as plates, kulchas, white and long, tandoori rotis, layers of flaky flour, paranthas, crisp and stuffed. With morabbas, never soggy, and dripping juicy sweet. With seasonal pickles of lemon, mango, carrot, cauliflower, turnip, red chillies, dates, ginger and raisins. With sherbets of khas, roses, and almonds, with hot and cold spiced milk, with sour black carrot canji, with lassi, thin, cool and salty, or thick and sweet. With barfis made of nuts and grains soaked overnight, and ground fine between two stones. With sweets made out of thickened milk. With papad, the sweet ones made of ripe mango, the sour ones with raw mango, the ones to be fried with dal and potato. With thread spun, with cloth woven, with durries, small stitched carpets, and phulkaris, with pyjama kurtas, shirts, and salwar kameez. (62-3)

The narrator's attitude towards her grandmother's "higher education" is distilled in her sarcastic allusion to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways." Neither Ida nor her mother, Virmati, are interested in cooking—an activity which, for the latter, is associated wholly with the tyranny of the kitchen that she seeks to escape via literature. Yet, in the very plenitude of the inventory, we sense a disjunction between narrator and protagonist on the one hand, and authorial attitude

on the other. The authorial attempt to recreate the sensory dimensions of Kasturi's world undercuts the narratorial disdain of Kasturi's labor, betraying, in the process, a strong current of nostalgia for what was irretrievably lost in the attempts to modernize the incipient nation.

Kapur does not wholly blame the collusion of English literature and patriarchy for this loss. When Ida first goes to Amritsar to ferret out Virmati's story, we see through her eyes the new ugliness of the decolonized world:

The litchi and the mango orchards are all gone. The Urban Land Ceiling Act has transformed the huge gardens into little suburban plots. The fields where gajjar-mooli grew have been replaced by ugly concrete houses. They have little gardens and tall hedges to fence out prying eyes. The hand-pump situated at a corner of the old, yellowing house now hangs dry and useless, with rust gathering around the handle. Everything has changed, become smaller and uglier, more developed. (48)

Here, the nostalgia for the trees and spaces of the past overtly acknowledges the price paid for independence, while covertly glossing the price paid for the independence of the female subject. Allegory thus steps in where the logic of feminist reasoning would perhaps fear to tread. Like the smaller, cramped, but arguably more democratically distributed spaces of the new nation, the emotional life of the decolonized woman is perhaps no more satisfying than that of her grandmother, whose expressivity was limited to cooking and embroidery, and her mother, whom English literature and Shakespeare had failed to free from those constraints. Ida is freer than them both—she is divorced, she does not have to cook, or even enjoy literature—but she is not shown as being any happier.

The wider question that Kapur seems to be asking, then, pertains to recuperation. If neither the high aesthetics of English literature, taught in the colonial style, nor the pragmatics of the decolonized national space, can compensate for the emotional and cultural losses occasioned by the independence of the female subject, then wherein lies the possibility of healing from the trauma of breaking free? An answer is suggested by the passage that follows Virmati's dispirited realization of "given all that, she might as well walk around like Lady Macbeth."

Rapidly Virmati walked up and down the terrace, the firmness and lightness of her tread ensuring that she made no noise. Gradually her mind grew empty. She began to be more wholly alive to the brilliance of the moonlight, to the faint moist touch of the night air, to the fragrance of the raat-ki-rani, and the soft, quick flap-flap of her slippers. Whatever it was, she thought, she would be able to tackle her problems on her own. She had lived away from home for almost a year, she had seen women growing in power and strength, claiming responsibility for their lives, declaring that society would be better off if its females were effective and capable. Why had she been so upset to learn of Harish's absence? She would solve her problems on her own. She was worthy of independence. (163)

Not *Macbeth*, therefore, but the synaesthetic pleasures of the subtropical night soothe Virmati when she lies sleepless on the terrace of her family home, worrying about her pregnancy. The fragrance of the *raat-ki-raani* (queen of the night), the moonlight and the sound of her slippers combine to suggest delicately that indigenous "Indian" resources

136 *The Upstart Crow*

were the most conducive route towards Virmati's realization that "she was worthy of independence." Directly following the Shakespearean allusions that press us to reconsider the connections between modernity, liberal humanism and independence, this passage leaves ajar, albeit very slightly, the door to a possible alternative aesthetics for the decolonized female subject.

In *Difficult Daughters*, therefore, Kapur presents Shakespeare, the Professor and English literature as mutually empowering in order to suggest that programmatic educational reform for Indian women was too implicated in the colonial project to become an instrument of feminine empowerment. Rather, the ideological congruencies between patriarchy, imperialism and the colonized subject's desire to modernize rendered Western-style education as a continuing means of female containment and subjugation. Kapur's refusal to provide a happy ending for her novel is further complicated by the framing device of the narrator as the socially maladjusted daughter of Virmati and the Professor, whose desire to rewrite the story of her mother transmutes into the need to overwrite her father. The author leaves us to consider whether or not she, as creator of her fictional world, has abused *her* authority by presenting such an irredeemable figure as the Professor through the voice of his disenchanting daughter; by yoking him to Shakespeare, however, she reminds us that such abuses of authority are postcolonial lessons learnt from colonizers, canonizers, and perhaps also the canonized and the colonized.

Cambridge University

### Notes

1. For the repercussions of this Minute, see Sirkin and Sirkin, "The Battle of Indian Education," and Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, pp. 45, 144-5, and *passim*. Citations of the Minute are taken from Macaulay, *Selected Writings*, ed. Clive and Pinney, pp. 235-52.
2. See Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*.
3. Cartelli, *Repositioning Shakespeare*, p.1
4. In "Subjectivities, Memories, Loss: Of Pigskin Bags, Silver Spittoons and the Partition of India," *Interventions* (forthcoming, 2002).
5. Jameson, "Third World Literature."
6. For which see, for example, Das, *Critical Events*, pp. 55-83 and Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence*.
7. Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology*, p. 7.
8. See Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.
9. Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet*, p. 7.
10. For the concepts of mimicry and sly civility, see Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 93-101.
11. Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, pp. 128-9.
12. For the Arya Samaj, see, for instance, Vable, *The Arya Samaj* and Lewellyn, *Legacy of Uplift*. For an insight into how women's lives were affected by the similar program of the Brahmo Samaj, see Karlekar, *Voices from Within*.

### Works Cited

- Bhabha, Homi, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).  
 Bourdieu, Pierre, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1977).  
 Butalia, Urvashi, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (New Delhi: Viking, 1998).  
 Cartelli, Thomas, *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations* (London: Routledge, 1999).  
 Chatterjee, Partha, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton,

- N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993)
- Das, Veena *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India* (New Delhi and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- Dobson, Michael, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994)
- Eagleton, Terry, *Criticism and Ideology* (London: Verso, 1978).
- Jameson, Fredric, "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text*, 15 (1986): 65-88.
- Kapur, Manju, *Difficult Daughters* (Faber: London, 1998)
- Karlekar, Malavika, *Voices from Within: Early Personal Narratives of Bengali Women* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991).
- Lewellyn, J. E., *The Legacy of Women's Uplift in India: Contemporary Women Leaders in the Arya Samaj* (New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 1998).
- Sirkin, Gerald and Nancy, "The Battle of Indian Education: Macaulay's Opening Salvo," *Victorian Studies* 14 (1971): 42-61
- Vable, D., *The Arya Samaj: Hindu without Hinduism* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1983).
- Viswanathan, Gauri, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989)

## **Perspectives on Addressing the White Gaze: Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and *Othello***

by Jesse G. Swan

In part, because white supremacy is a shameful, immoral, murderous state, it has proven difficult “to fully explore the way white supremacy determines how [teachers] see the world,”<sup>1</sup> which has contributed to the allure of studying race instead.<sup>2</sup> The difference is extraordinary not only because people who derive pleasure from their white identities do not wish to recognize the reprehensibility of those identities and pleasures, but, perhaps even more decisively, because knowing ways of seeing disturbs the (modern) academy’s insistence on denying the shaping influence of the properly disposed intellectual gaze, in favor of the supposed integrity of an object of study. Objects have meaning; knowers, properly disposed, do not, the knowing culture of modernity emphatically implies.<sup>3</sup> This is not to suggest that the consideration of race has entirely “avoided and [left] unanalyzed . . . the effect of racist inflection on the subject” – Cornell West, George Lipstiz, Mike Hill, generally, and Ania Loombo, Kim F. Hall, Virginia MasonVaughan, and Jyotsna G. Singh, specifically in relation to early modern English literature, are notable authors enunciating the effect of racist inflection on subjects.<sup>4</sup> It is to emphasize a deeply reified way of being that excecates knowledge so that its transcendence is disabled and its own repetitious perpetuation is produced.<sup>5</sup>

Studying white supremacy rather than race resists modernity’s obfuscation of the powerful agent of knowledge, especially when the studying attends to how the powerful agent of knowledge is addressed. Relinquishing, perhaps even renouncing, the perspective of the modern gaze while not forgetting it, I wish to consider the manipulation of perspective of two works that depend upon perspectival transposition for much of their remarkable achievement, Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* and William Shakespeare’s *Othello*.<sup>6</sup> As a fundamental component of the modern self, linear and atmospheric perspective, which has become known simply as perspective, constitutes perhaps the single greatest influence of quattrocento Florence, a fact well known to the playwright as much as to the architect, the early modern dramatist as to the post- modern novelist.<sup>7</sup> To both the early modern Shakespeare and the post modern Roy, the innate superiority of linear perspective is not a given; indeed, to both, the tragic, dehumanizing limits of the perspective are highlighted as the perspective is directly addressed. A mind committed to the emphatically unmarked subjectivity of modern perspective, be the commitment borne of willful and gratifying desire, limited and limiting education, or popular ignorance, can achieve perspective with both of the texts. However, such accomplishment can only be by way of denying the texts’ unmodern madness in the decision that organizes and establishes order. Such modern order is in a milieu of time and space and contrasts sharply with the play’s or the novel’s “milieu of perversion,” a milieu which “detaches the soul from all that is immediate and natural in feeling and leads it into an imaginary world of sentiments violent in proportion to the unreality, and less controlled by the gentle laws of nature.”<sup>8</sup> This mind that refuses to relinquish its perspective regardless of the demands, pleas, or tricks of its object is directly addressed in the two texts considered here; indeed, it is through that perspective, at once modern and white supremacist, that the two texts lay claim to sensationalism. Additionally, however, and much more significantly for some, the texts also address that

gaze in disruptive, perspective challenging ways in an effort to generate a reciprocal relation; a relation both unmodern as well as ante or post white supremacist; a relation of pathos. To see these simultaneous differences in how the two texts address the white gaze, critique it, and attempt to transform it, we have to cultivate a capacity for experiencing multiple perspectives simultaneously, something like the two authors do.<sup>9</sup>

Both Shakespeare and Roy employ perspective challenging devices, some similar, others distinct one to another, but all suggestive of authorial play. One important common device is that of commencing with and exploring the effect of interpreting events *in medias res*. "Tush! Never tell me? I take it much unkindly / That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse / As if the strings were thine, should know of this," Shakespeare begins (1.1.1-3), while Roy begins with three short paragraphs establishing the richly textured, animated setting before presenting a character: "It was raining when Rahel came back to Ayemenem. Slanting silver ropes slammed into loose earth, plowing it up like gunfire" (4). The language of Roy's description serves to direct our interpretation of Rahel's character much the way the casting, costume, and blocking direct our interpretation of Roderigo's – animated but not soulful and indignant but not elevated, respectively. Though directed, the interpretations are modified through the course of the works so as to indicate not how they were absolutely wrong, but, rather, to indicate that they were not informed, certainly not sympathetic. Variations of the *in medias res* technique subsequently in the works show how interpretations are always shaped by factors other than those one knows of and how disappointing, if not always entirely tragic, confidence in one's power of comprehensive interpretation can be.

In *Othello*, the technique of starting in or depicting interpretation from the middle creates and sustains much of the tension and tragic effect from the first lines to the final ones. In the first act, each new scene, and even every new character to the stage, either enters into the middle of something or appears in the middle of something, leaving the audience always to find a position, often new, but sometimes old, from which to achieve perspective. Opening with the middle of the discussion between Roderigo and Iago, the first scene then brings Brabantio into the middle of both Iago's machinations as well as the matrimonial events about which he must learn. Brabantio is confused and does not know how to interpret the intrusion into the middle of his night's "quiet" (1.1.98), except to know that Roderigo pines for Desdemona despite being told clearly that "My daughter is not for thee" (1.1.95). Brabantio is certainly not wrong in this interpretation, just not fully informed about the machinations, and certainly not sympathetic to the marriage or even Roderigo's alternative courtship. The second scene, then, opens with Iago in the middle of complaining to Othello, the substance of which becomes clear only slowly – he is betraying the "magnifico" Roderigo (1.2.11). Before the audience can fully appreciate the realization of Iago's advanced betrayal, Cassio and many officers come on stage and, like Iago if not only because of Iago's misinterpretation, the audience believes that "Those are the raised father and his friends" (1.2.28). In order to alert Othello of the new military emergency in Cyprus and the Duke's summons, it is actually Cassio who enters unknowingly into the middle of marriage discussions between Othello and Iago, as is accentuated by Othello's short removal from the stage so that Iago can disclose the fact that Othello has "boarded a land carack" or, less crassly and more simply, that "He's married" (1.2.49, 51). Immediately, Brabantio enters, whose misunderstanding of the situation permits Othello the opportunity to appear gracious in his stymying of Brabantio. By pretending to want to comply with Brabantio's desire that he relinquish himself "To prison, till fit time / Of law and course of direct session / Call thee to answer" (1.2.84-86), Othello avails himself of his superior knowledge of the situation over Brabantio, who only knows it as he saw it half-way done, ignorant of the military emergency. Othello, in this way, is able to appear cool, calm, and command-

140 *The Upstart Crow*

ing in his gentle, earnest sounding rhetorical questions rebuffing Brabantio: "What if I do obey [your desire to imprison me, Brabantio]? / How may the Duke be therewith satisfied, / Whose messengers are here about my side / upon some present business of state / To bring me to him?" (1.2.86-90).

Brabantio thwarted and Othello triumphant, at least for the moment, they all go off to the Duke's meeting rooms, where the third scene opens with the Duke energetically exclaiming, "There's no composition in this news / That gives them credit" (1.3.1-2), which can hardly mean anything definite to an audience member, regardless of how hard he or she has been concentrating in an effort to follow the various strands, since the various strands have been introduced quickly and *in medias res*, just as this scene is being introduced. After providing more of the detail of the crisis through reports of a sailor and a messenger, the scene presents Othello and Brabantio to the pleasure and then confusion of the Duke – the Duke is so happy to see Othello that he does not notice Brabantio, and then he utterly fails to understand Brabantio's complaint, interpreting the exclamation, "My daughter! O, my daughter!" (1.3.59) as indicating that Desdemona may be "Dead?" (1.3.59). The situations all get worked out in the course of the scene, all, that is, to the Duke's desires for Othello's military service over Brabantio's racial and patriarchal claims,<sup>10</sup> but the working out only serves to yield a new set of circumstances for which Iago to work upon, from the middle. Conceiving his new strategy in a soliloquy, which forms the final lines of the act, Iago capitalizes on the destabilizing employment of proceeding *in medias res*: "After some time," Iago determines "to abuse Othello's ears / That [Cassio] is too familiar with his wife. / He hath a person and a smooth dispose / To be suspected – framed to make women false" (1.3.386-389). Of course, this is precisely what unfolds, with the problems of interpreting from the middle forming an integral part of the culmination of the catastrophe in Othello's final, full recognition. In begging Lodovico, when Lodovico "shall these unlucky deeds relate," to "Speak of me as I am. Nothing extenuate, / Nor set down ought in malice. Then must you speak / Of one that loved not wisely, but too well; / Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought, / Perplexed in extreme" (5.2.337, 338-41), Othello expresses his realization of the tragic possibilities of reductive, confident conclusions produced from engaged, self-interested perspectives looking onto events as they appear in the midst of their performance.

Similarly, from the epigraph of the novel – John Berger's comment that "Never again will a single story be told as though it's the only one" – to the final words of the novel – a description that confounds chronology's hold on experience in favor of multiple, paradoxical understanding borne of emotional association – Roy, like Shakespeare, addresses the problems of interpreting *in medias res*, though Roy's consideration also yields a palpably revitalized possibility for ethically knowing from a position of engagement and experience, something Shakespeare's text can yield as well, but something that it does not insist upon to the degree Roy's text does. The disorienting effects of starting in the middle are stressed in the novel, not least by opening effectively in the middle even if some, perhaps those who insist upon "a purely practical sense" (32), might note that the novel opens at the end – Rahel and Esthappen's return to their childhood home, a return, like most events, not of their doing, since they, through the handling of Esthappen, have been "re-Returned" (11), upon their father's emigration to Australia. A realization that the novel opens at the end, though, does not meaningfully obtain until the conclusion of the narrative, and then it does so only to stress how disfiguring and violent such an ordering of the novel is, an ordering akin to the ordering forces inspiring "history's henchmen" (292) in their brutalization of the beautiful, talented, loving Velutha. Such an ordering does violence to the novel because the novel labors to communicate how embedded knowing and memory are. As John Berger construes memory, so, in significant ways, does Roy in the novel. Berger propounds that "Memory itself is not made up of flashbacks, each one forever moving inexorably

forward. Memory is a field where different times coexist. The field is continuous in terms of the subjectivity which creates and extends it, but temporarily it is discontinuous."<sup>11</sup> In this way, the conclusion of the narrative, entitled "The Cost of Living" to remind us of how the horror surrounding the novel's most exquisite love scene, which forms the final chapter, is the past we presently know "Tomorrow" (321) as it is also the center of the story, at least for the twins, whose loving incestuous conjugation is described immediately before the final description of the miscegenate "dance" that "biology designed" and "Terror timed" between the twins' mother, Ammu, and the "untouchable" Velutha (317). "But what was there to say?" (310), synecdochically, about the incestuous love between Rahel and Estha, the narrator asks. "Only that once again they broke the Love Laws. That lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much" (311), she answers. And we might answer similarly about the reconstitution of what counts as the "middle," what counts as knowing from the middle: like the commencement of the narrative, the conclusion of the narrative once again breaks the Time Laws. That lay down what can be known. And how. And in what order. Certainly this is a disorientation, but one that transposes out of brutality and rational law and into, the novel hopes, "The God of Small Things" (312).<sup>12</sup>

The authorial play achieved through employing the disorienting technique of *in medias res* directly addresses itself to the problem of the reader's or spectator's interpretive perspective. The dimensions of perspective I am considering include the modern one embedded in the culture of knowledge and the Anglo, white supremacist one embedded in the language, but there are many dimensions of interpretive perspective challenged, including, among them, patriarchal, kinship, class, economic, and romantic. Paradoxically, perhaps, we seem to lose our appreciation of the instability of perspective implied by the works as we come to feel that we love them by knowing them. The effect of *in medias res* dissipates if it is not adhered to, and this dissipation is experienced by a mind committed to chronology. An incorrigibly chronological mind re-organizes the texts so as to understand, in its way, what is going on when Roderigo exclaims, "Tush!" or when Roy's narrator mentions Rahel's return to Ayemenem. This form of understanding is that of control – it supplies the antecedents the text offers only subsequently – while the texts imply a form of understanding that is participatory, experiential, paradoxical in their multiple, even contradictory states of knowing by way of their perspective-challenging devices, such as *in medias res*. This form of understanding is especially compellingly solicited in the texts' treatment of whiteness.

In the novel, the blend of simple references implying white supremacy with the quality of the narrative voice and the development of themes renders a distinct, human-affirming perspective cognizant of its genesis from an equally distinct, human-denigrating, white supremacist perspective. Some references are simple and vulgar, such as in Rahel's memory of working at a convenience store in Washington, D. C., where a "punctual drunk with sober eyes" shouted at her nightly "exactly at 10:00 P.M.: 'Hey, you! Black Bitch! Suck my dick!'" (179). Other treatments are more nuanced and elevated, but no less denigrating and, in their way, much more insidious, such as during Chacko's reflections, in the "Reading Aloud voice" he assumes when in one of "his Oxford Moods" (53), on the fact that they "were a family of Anglophiles" (51). The episode's complexity derives from the nature of Chacko's character (he is in no way a simple voice of authorial attitudes, even when he expresses attitudes something like Roy's might be), the narrator's voice (it is the composite voice of Rahel at various ages and in various states of knowledge, Chacko, the implied reader of Standard English,<sup>13</sup> and the implied reader of the novel), the subject matter, and the ironic or paradoxical suggestions made by such a mixture. Explaining what he means by saying that the family is a collection of Anglophiles, Chacko propounds that they are all

142 *The Upstart Crow*

Pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away. He explained to them that history was like an old house at night. With all the lamps lit. And ancestors whispering inside. (51)

The novel implies that this is certainly true of the family, but the significance of its truthfulness is not for the novel what it is for Chacko. For Chacko, the fact that their history had been swept away by the internalization of Anglo values, an internalization that marked, he further explains, the loss of "the War of Dreams," which is "A war that has made us adore our conquerors and despise ourselves" (52), serves to elevate him among his family, just as the patriarchal law makes the family's pickle factory Chacko's, "because Ammu, as a daughter, had no claim to the property" (56). Chacko's elevation comes by way of his special claims to understanding who he and his family are. Besides having the status of his shibboleth knowledge that "After *reading* at Oxford you *come down*" (55), a knowledge he uses to rebuff Ammu's challenge that "Going to Oxford didn't necessarily make a person clever" (54), Chacko has the status of understanding and being able to explain to them who they are. As such, like his being "a self-proclaimed Marxist," or, as Ammu sees it, "An Oxford avatar of the old zamindar mentality – a landlord forcing his attentions on women who depended on him for their livelihood" (62, 63), his understanding, while accurate, is not right, inasmuch as it reinforces rather than transforms the dehumanizing effects it so clearly discerns. In its accuracy but unjustness, it only serves to aggrandize his status. Chacko's appeal to whiteness, though cognizant of its human-denigrating effect on him, his family, and his country, maintains a white supremacist perspective by assuming his position in the hierarchy of white supremacist thought in English, a position above other Indians, especially women, but below all the English, even women as exemplified by his ex-wife.

Transforming this white supremacist perspective, the narrative voice makes a human-affirming perspective out of the cruelty of the economy of whiteness and out of what the novel repeatedly shows to be essentially human, the small thing, love. Immediately upon having Chacko introduce the concept of history in relation to the family being Anglophiles and defining history by way of a simile comparing history to an old house at night, the narrative moves to what the young Estha and Rahel understand by what Chacko said. The move comes in the midst of the report of Chacko's "Reading Aloud" discourse on the family's Anglophilia, disrupting the reification of Chacko's white voice with the perspectives of the children, multiple moments in time, and implied readers. The presentation of this voice at this moment is characteristic of an important, pervasive way the novel knowingly addresses the white gaze as it transforms the gratifying material of the white gaze into shameful indictment and promising post-white humanism. In the paragraph expressing this narrative move, notice the movement from the children's consciousness to an implied reader who is, incrementally white, sexual, then, sardonically, legalistic, before returning more knowingly to the twins' young sense.

Estha and Rahel had no doubt that the house Chacko meant was the house on the other side of the river, in the middle of the abandoned rubber estate where they had never been. Kari Saipu's house. The Black Sahib. The Englishman who had "gone native." Who spoke Malayalam and wore mundus. Ayemenem's own Kurtz. Ayemenem his private Heart of Darkness. He had shot himself through the head ten years ago, when his young lover's parents had taken the boy away from him and sent him to school. After the suicide, the property had become the subject of extensive litigation

between Kari Saipu's cook and his secretary. The house had lain empty for years. Very few people had seen it. But the twins could picture it. (*The History House*, 51)

The narrative voice of this passage draws on attitudes associated with varying perspectives to suggest how expansive and encompassing our knowledge can be. The History House, through this narrative voice, becomes, at once, a figure and a trope, depending upon the reader's capacity and perspective. That is, the History House becomes a literary representation of a certain social force, while it also becomes the lived experience of the social force called history. The controlling perspective of chronology, white supremacy, romanticism, sexuality, property – to name the components of the perspective addressed in the passage – reduces the History House into a figure for representing the atrocities depicted by the novel. The more participatory, experiential, paradoxical perspective commensurate with the narrative eclecticism, by contrast, comes to understand the History House as a tropological construction and as such this perspective, like the narrative voice, involves itself in the knowing that the novel offers. The white jokes implicit in "The Black Sahib" or "gone native" remain white jokes, but they also take on tones of postcolonial re-vision and valorization. Kari Saipu's suicide for love, then, is romantic turned simultaneously sexual, followed by the absurd legal wrangling of the cook and secretary, an absurdity, coupled with the plain, declarative style of the sentences, that challenges the horror of the romantic, homophobic, property-invested perspective the content addresses. This multiplicity is combined with the multiplicity in narrative time – the moment of the passage is not indeterminate as much as it is multiple: the moment is, at least, the end of all the events described by the novel, the moment Chacko is holding forth about the family's Anglophilia, and ten years after the suicide. All of these factors, as well as simultaneously knowing and not knowing what is narrated on the following pages of the novel about the History House and everything else, create the expansive perspective the narrative voice expresses and elicits. Such a perspective addresses the white gaze, but hopes to transform it with itself and other values and experiences.<sup>14</sup>

*Othello* similarly implies a form of understanding that is participatory, experiential, paradoxical. The scene in which Iago gives Othello the clinching evidence for proving Cassio and Desdemona's alleged affair – i.e., the scene in which Iago gets Cassio to appear to laugh at and mock his supposed affair with Desdemona as Othello, hidden from Iago and Cassio, looks on and, then moving forward, listens in (4.1.1-171) – is perhaps the most extreme instance in the play of the text requiring a participatory, experiential, paradoxical exegesis. Indeed, the great sensation of the scene can only arise from an appreciation of the false irony Iago creates, which creates the tragic irony of Othello's interpretation, both kinds of irony borne of the desire to think that facts are plain, material, and logical. What could be plainer than actually seeing the accused behave in a guilty manner, hearing the accused confess to the crime, and having a material object associated with the crime tendered? This is precisely what Othello is made to believe he sees and hears, and we understand fully how he has been made to believe as he does, while we simultaneously see and hear the means by which Othello's capacity to interpret is perverted. We participate in the scene by experiencing both Othello's viewpoint as well as our spectatorial viewpoint.<sup>15</sup> Such participation renders the paradoxical understanding of how the bare material fact of a prostitute returning a general's wife's handkerchief to a stunningly handsome military officer simultaneously indicates the wife's infidelity as well as the wife's innocence and victimization. To expect Othello to consider alternative possibilities in his situation, as some have,<sup>16</sup> would be something akin to expecting a spectator of the play to be confused about why Othello, impersonated by an actor on stage who is much closer

144 *The Upstart Crow*

to the actors impersonating the characters Iago and Cassio than the spectator is to those actors, cannot hear everything expressed between Iago and Cassio and thereby "rightly" see what Iago is doing. Objects – be they handkerchiefs or actors – do not mean in themselves, this scene and this play stresses. How one is disposed to or manipulated into interpreting objects generates meaning and, as the play moves on, action.<sup>17</sup>

As Othello's interpretations define him, our interpretations of Othello define us. A common way of understanding Othello's disposition is to see Othello as a sort of everyman, a victim of the trappings of his own romantic state coupled with those of a malevolent force. Another, perhaps competing way of understanding Othello's disposition is to see him as inexperienced and thereby ill-equipped to participate in the "real world" of Venetian society.<sup>18</sup> Both of these ways of interpreting Othello whiten Othello at least inasmuch as they fail overtly to account for the function of the Africanist presence even as they respond to that presence in distinctly white ways. To draw from Toni Morrison, we can see that both sets of views imply critics who use "the Africanist character as surrogate and enabler," that is, critics who see themselves – either wistfully or cynically – in the romantically-driven or gullible other they see in the character, Othello.<sup>19</sup> These views whiten Othello by implying the character is in some sense universal, while these views simultaneously whiten the espousers of these views by implying that the espousers have advanced beyond the character. Recognizing their dark and innocent beginnings in Othello, the espousers of these views suggest that they have more experience than Othello, whether this increased experience be romantically melancholic or modernly cynical, which are both means of employing Othello's Africanist persona for another typical white purpose, namely "to signal modernity."<sup>20</sup> Such perspectives of the Africanist presence dominate critical reception, but they do not have to, just as they may not have dominated, at least in the same way or to the same extent, in Shakespeare's day.

Two superficial, but extraordinarily significant ways the Africanist presence did inform Shakespeare but does not inform modern criticism include the performance of the character of Othello in blackface and the focus on a specific audience, that of King James, whose views of dark others were quite well known. Unlike today's theatre, Shakespeare's theatre had to create blackness and whiteness with cosmetics if such features were to be noted. Certainly modern stage and celluloid productions employ cosmetics to accentuate or otherwise shape qualities of whiteness and blackness, but they usually start with actors taken to be either white or black.<sup>21</sup> In early modern England, by contrast, a black African and a female might not have been taken to be either a Moor or a lady, had such an appearance been permitted on stage. To communicate the quality of a Moor or of ladyship on the early modern stage, actors painted themselves, in this case, Othello in blackface and Desdemona in whiteface.<sup>22</sup> Just as it is difficult for some to imagine a culture and way of living in which one knows people in ways other than as black or female – that is, a culture that is not determined by a history that has created an Africanist presence, to reference Morrison, or bodies that matter, to reference Judith Butler<sup>23</sup> – it may be difficult for some to imagine how blackface and whiteface could function in any way other than as a travesty,<sup>24</sup> which is why, in part, we would never today have a production of *Othello*, regardless of how "authentic" it might advertise itself as being, that produced Othello on stage or screen in blackface and Desdemona in whiteface. Nonetheless, such cosmetics appear to have functioned in ways other than burlesque, as they, ironically, perhaps, were being employed to create or gratify, seriously, the anti-black, white supremacist associations of phenotype and morality that they came to represent.<sup>25</sup>

The audience for whom *Othello* was initially performed is a second informing factor creating the Africanist presence for Shakespeare not shared with modern audiences and critics. Evidence indicates that the first performance of *Othello* was at Whitehall on

01 November 1604. This was also the first performance of the season, and the play was not known as *Othello* but as *The Moor of Venis*, the title, incidentally, it retains in most contemporaneous court documents throughout James's reign and into Charles's.<sup>26</sup> Concomitant with the court season's performance of *The Moor of Venis*, Ben Jonson's first masque, *The Masque of Blackness*, was performed, a fact that C. H. Hereford and Percy Smith find "piquant to recall. . . . But . . . idle to suspect any connexion" because of.<sup>27</sup> The play that is recorded to be most popular with the audience was *The Merchant of Venice*, the only play recorded to be "Againe Comanded By the Kings Maiestie" that season, and the play that was well known as anti-Semitic, if the advertised title of the first quarto, published in 1600, is to make any sense: *The most excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice. With the extreme crueltie of Shylocke the Iew towards the sayd Merchant, in cutting a just pound of his flesh. . . .*<sup>28</sup> Certainly there were many other plays performed at court this season, including *Measure for Measure*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *The Comedy of Errors*, so there does not appear to have been an exclusive interest in dark otherness during the season. However, an exclusive interest is not required to suggest a substantial interest or to suggest an interest well known, so well known as to be consciously accommodated.

Among the ideals informing royalist white supremacist racism that appear to be accommodated by *The Moor of Venis* include the belief in a natural hierarchy of humans based upon the dependent ancillary belief that virtues and vices are essentially embodied, that is, innately linked with the body. Much of James's thinking can be characterized as elaborating such principles. For instance, the opening of the first book of the *Basilicon Doron* asserts the belief in God-given qualities to all according to how each is born. For Prince Henry, the direct and specific intended audience for the work, James requires,

Therefore (my Sonne) first of all things, learne to know and loue that  
God, whom-to ye haue a double obligation; first, for that he made  
you a man; and next, for that he made you a little GOD to sit on his  
Throne, and rule ouer other men.<sup>29</sup>

Because Prince Henry is essentially superior to other men, he has an obligation to rule over them, just as he has been made to be essentially "farre beyond others."<sup>30</sup> Some of these others he is most far beyond are "barbarous *Indians*," whom James describes in his *Counterblast to Tobacco*.<sup>31</sup> The "barbarous and beastly maners of the wilde, godlesse, and slauish *Indians*" include, among other things, the use tobacco as an antidote for "the Pockes," which, as "pockie Indian slaues," they are especially subject to, according to James.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, Prince Henry is far beyond women, whom James describes in his "A Satire Against Woemen." In this verse satire, essentially an extended simile comparing women to various beasts of nature, James endeavors to show that "all wemen are of nature vaine. . . . / Ambitious all without regarde or shame."<sup>33</sup> The "*Exposition*" of the poem, which forms the last stanza, drives home James's belief in the embodiment of virtues and vices by way of a meager paradox that forms the exception to the natural rule he propounds:

Expone me right ye Dames of worthis fame  
Since for your honours I employed my caire  
For wemen bad hereby are lesse to blame  
For that they followe nature everie whaire  
And ye most worthis prayse, whose reason dants  
That nature, which into your sexe, so hants.<sup>34</sup>

Women of good repute, like any other human who excels his or her natural station, do so through unusual and even unnatural exertions of "reason," the unnaturalness of which always threatens to break.

This pattern of hierarchical supremacy and inferiority based upon somatic embodiment of moral character is gratified directly by *The Moor of Venis* in several ways. One important way that is usually overlooked involves the implied and expressed differences between the senatorial and the commoner classes in the play. Usually conflated into whites, the class differences of these "whites" suggest the hierarchical nature of racism even among characters that, today, may initially appear the same. The current obfuscation of the distinctions among these "whites," I contend, is the product of the allure of racist white supremacy that has partially extended the royalist assertions of superiority to commoner class peoples: while not granted equal status with kings and nobles, dukes and senators, commoner class Londoners and Venetians have been enticed with a discursively middle status above dark foreigners, dark others. Iago's character embodies this vicious discursive middle ground, dramatically depicted by the irrelevance with which the senatorial class treats him—only Roderigo and Othello give him credence.

From the opening scene of the play, Iago's character presents a typical and even stereotypical elite class figuration of members of Iago's middle-class: Iago is presented as a malcontent servant. Explaining his approach to "the curse of service" (1.1.35), Iago explains,

I follow him to serve my turn upon him.  
 We cannot all be masters, nor all masters  
 Cannot be truly followed. . . . [There are those]  
 Who, trimm'd in forms and visages of duty,  
 Keep yet their hearts attending upon themselves. . . .

These fellows have some soul,  
 And such a one do I profess myself. (1.1.42-55)

Iago's self-serving attitude toward service confirms suspicions of the served about many of the serving, and this, coupled with the manifest irrelevance with which the senatorial class treats him, dramatically represents and embodies the character's assumed inferiority to the whitest characters of the play. Along these lines, the cultural significance of having Roderigo inform Brabantio of the elopement becomes apparent: Roderigo's class status allows him to speak directly and frankly to Brabantio, while Iago's disallows such communication.<sup>35</sup>

Establishing the sort of class-racial hierarchy James liked to maintain is only part of the first scene's function for the royalist audience at Whitehall that autumn evening of the first performance.<sup>36</sup> Complementing hierarchical royalist fantasies, the scene foregrounds anti-black, white supremacist panic over miscegenation. Referring to Othello synecdochically as "thick-lips" (66), Roderigo and Iago clamorously storm upon Brabantio's house, a storm that is nothing if not supplied by white supremacist racism: "[Zounds,] sir, y'are robb'd! . . . / Even now, now, very now, an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe" (86, 88-89), Iago rails to Brabantio in Roderigo's stead.<sup>37</sup> Such vulgar sex and anti-black panic continues to be expressed until Brabantio comes to understand that, in fact, Desdemona has eloped with Othello, at which point Brabantio ingenuously exclaims his own racist horror: "O treason of the blood!" (169). Blood, an essential quality of family and, by extension, of race, literally in the primary early modern

sense and figuratively in the secondary early modern sense that became the primary sense of race in the nineteenth century, has been violated by other, essentially inferior blood in the sexual exchange that characterizes the matrimonial union between the white Venetian and the black Moor.<sup>38</sup> Without a white supremacist interpretive capacity, such would be incomprehensible, certainly unsensational. The Africanist presence here implies a white subjectivity to recognize it, and a racist white supremacist subjectivity to abhor it as essentially other and threatening.

Titillating royalist supremacist doctrine from the start, Shakespeare brings the action next to the council chambers for the Duke's adjudication. Othello's actions in this scene are often felt to be ennobling, and they are much admired.<sup>39</sup> It is a powerful show, but its power derives from the fact that Othello is always a white supremacist's object in this charged scene and that object status accentuates the actor's black appearance, further intensified by his cosmetically rendered blackface, which increases the anti-black racist associations of character with body so integral to racist white supremacy.

The racist assumptions permeate the scene even to the point of having Othello express them. Brabantio, a "gentle signior" (1.3.50), who had already expressed his racism in his ingenuous response to hearing of the elopement, continues to press racist feelings in this scene. Pointing to Othello as the miscreant who has bewitched his daughter into marriage, Brabantio's locution rhythmically focuses on Othello's racial difference: "here is the man—the Moor" (1.3.71). Othello then attempts to explain the situation. Beginning with "most potent, grave, and reverend signiors, / My very noble and approv'd good masters" (1.3.76-77), Othello demonstrates that, like James's "Dames of worthie fame" in his "A Satire against Woemen," he thoroughly accepts and participates in the hierarchical discourses of embodied difference. Throughout his explanations, he voices evidence of his inferiority save for his assimilation of and into white Venetian society, an assimilation that provides him his distinction as it simultaneously confirms his supposed natural inferiority. In asserting "as truly as to heaven / I do confess the vices of my blood" (1.3.122-123), Othello gratifies the Duke and senators as the characterization also gratifies James. The noble sounding lines expressed by a valiant, warrior character appear to ennoble this black character, but what he says, in context of the white superiors in the play and audience, makes him a dramatically if not empirically objective testimony to the supposed naturalness of royalist fantasies of the body and socio-political value. From the vantage point of racist white supremacy, Othello here is, again like James's "Dames of worthie fame," admirable for overcoming his embodied inferiority to the degree that he has, mostly through rationally internalizing, as the scene makes clear, the racist white supremacist ethic.

Exactly what Shakespeare is doing in addressing the white gaze of James I remains uncertain – that is, whether Shakespeare approvingly produces gratifying images for a white supremacist gaze or sardonically produces the images for the contemptible gaze remains indeterminate – but what is less unclear is that Shakespeare is, in fact, addressing a white gaze and that he is cognizant and purposeful in doing so.<sup>40</sup> Shakespeare gives his audience what it wants to recognize, and in doing so as he does in *Othello*, Shakespeare exposes his understanding of the artificiality of what is represented. Blackness is created in the play through the insistently obvious property of blackface so as to create white supremacist whiteness through the implied other of the action and the expressions of the blackfaced character – James is encouraged to think of himself as not black but white, somatically as well as morally, inasmuch as he is encouraged to feel above being manipulated by any human, a man servant or an extremely pale, even whitefaced wife, as Anne sometimes might have been in imitation of Elizabeth I who famously often was, and as Desdemona was presented.<sup>41</sup> Unlike *Titus Andronicus*, which found no receptive audience with James, certainly nothing like that which *Othello* found,<sup>42</sup> *Othello* works to evoke sympathy and

identification with its blackfaced character. The identification, though, becomes an instrument of fearful horror since the blackface relentlessly presents itself by its exaggerated form – one does not forget or not notice blackface on stage the way one may forget or not notice less accentuated faces, whatever the complexion. The horror is the sort expressed centuries later by *The Heart of Darkness*. Like *The Heart of Darkness*, “The horror! The horror!” of *Othello* is not so much the speaker’s as that of who hears and sees the speaker.<sup>43</sup> That is to say that the horror is not so much Kurtz’s or Othello’s as it is Marlowe’s and James’s and, depending upon the spectatorial or exegetical perspective, ours. An essential difference between Shakespeare’s expression and Conrad’s is that while the effect and the meaning of the appeal to multiple perspectives in Conrad are inseparable, in Shakespeare they may be quite separate. Shakespeare crafts a horrifying effect for a specific, white supremacist gaze, but whether or not he does so purposefully to communicate a critique to perspectives that are superior – spectatorially as well as morally – to that primary, Marlowe-like gaze is open to argument. Purposeful or not in his historical moment, by becoming historical, Shakespeare does potentially communicate with an exegetically superior gaze, that is, one which incorporates multiple perspectives into interpretations, if one such gaze be available.

Cultivating multiple perspectives is crucial in analyzing the white gaze and how it is addressed since it is only through paradoxical understanding that the white gaze can be thoroughly transformed. Both Roy and Shakespeare understand the power of time and space, materialist values, and objectifying subjectivities to the modern hermeneutist, and so both address themselves to these factors. The employment of a thoroughgoing *in medias res* – both the novel and the play not only open in the middle of things, they proceed and even close in the middle of things – challenges the confident, objective interpreter to understand differently, and when he or she does not, the mode implicitly mocks him for his limitations and, sometimes, condemns him for his incorrigibly anti-humanist gaze. Modernity, in its materiality and singularity, notable in the modern technique in art known as perspective, but permeating all the modern arts and sciences, is the mode out of which whiteness and white supremacy descends. Early on, Shakespeare reveals the artificiality of modern forms of cultural valuation, such as somatically racial economies, as distinct from earlier economies based on clan or religion, while later on, Roy draws on the artificiality of the forms to transform them. Both point to the white desire to value bodies and persons in hierarchical fashion, to insist that the valuation of the bodies and persons be objective, to imply that such objectivity is less of a subjective creation than any other form of perception, and to make joys and horrors accordingly. Roy goes on to also engage that white perspective with other, less singular perspectives in order to generate an expanding, multitudinous perspective borne of a pathos-filled yet ephemeral and paradoxical state of knowing. Understanding Roy in this manner at this time – that is, at this moment of late if not entirely post modernity – can help us make hermeneutical white supremacy the object of analysis as it can also help us understand Shakespeare, paradoxically, in a more accurate historical sense.

University of Northern Iowa

### Acknowledgements

Although I might like to acknowledge many, many people for even more kindnesses, I limit myself here to thanking Akwasi B. Assensoh and AnaLouise Keating for their lovely contributions to me in the course of writing this essay.

## Notes

1. Bell hooks, *Killing Rage Ending Racism* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995) p. 188.
2. In her "Epilogue: On 'Race,' Black Feminism, and White Supremacy," Kim F. Hall most cogently addresses this favoring of analyzing race instead of white supremacy as she shows that the understanding of "race as an interactive category," and so not properly divorced from other analytical categories, such as white supremacy, is requisite of a criticism that intends to comprehend "the intersection of categories without disregarding our differences and that moves beyond racial guilt – but not beyond justice" (*Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* [Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995], quotes from pp. 260, 268). Also see Margo Hendricks, "Obscured by dreams": Race, Empire, and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47 (1996): 37-60; and Walter S. H. Lim, *The Arts of Empire: The Poetics of Colonialism from Raleigh to Milton* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1998).
3. Such a paradoxical knower is elaborately described by Michel Foucault as "the medical personage" or "the doctor" (*Madness & Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, tr. Richard Howard [New York: Random House, 1971] pp. 269-78) as well as "that empirico-transcendental being . . . that being whose thought is constantly interwoven with the unthought . . . that being always cut off from an origin which is promised to him in the immediacy of the return" (*The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [New York: Random House, 1973], quote from p. 350).
4. Quote from Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992) p. 11. Cornel West, *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America* (New York: Routledge, 1993) and *Race Matters* (New York: Random House, 1994); George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1998); Mike Hill, *Whiteness: A Critical Reader* (New York: New York UP, 1997); Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998); Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989); Kim F. Hall (see note 2); Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Othello: A Contextual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994); Jyotsna G. Singh, *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: 'Discoveries' of India in the Language of Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1996).
5. As with madness, post-classical and post-biblical race is generated in the asylum of modernity by a caretaking other, crucially "in a non-reciprocal relation" (Foucault, *Madness* p. 247). Modernity organizes madness and race "for the man of reason as an awareness of the Other" (247) in contrast to classical objectification. "In classical confinement," Foucault explains, "the madman was also vulnerable to observation, but such observation did not, basically, involve him; it involved only his monstrous surface, his visible animality; and it included at least one form of reciprocity, since the sane man could read in the madman, as in a mirror, the imminent movement of his downfall" (248). This mirror, it might be important to note well, is the pre-modern glass, as in George Gascoigne's *The Steele Glas* (1576), more than the psychoanalytical mirror, as in Jacques Lacan's "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience" (16<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Psychoanalysis; Zurich: 17 July 1949).
6. Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997); and William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, Rpt. in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., G. Blakemore Evans, gen. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997) pp. 1251-1296. All further references are to these editions and, when necessary, parenthetical documentation appears in the text.
7. By using the word "playwright," I hope to emphasize Shakespeare's role as a material craftsman of the stage, a role akin to that of the architect, as the activities of Shakespeare's contemporary, Inigo Jones, make clear. Roy, as the description of the author published in the novel reveals, "was trained as an architect." On Renaissance/early modern effectuation of linear perspective as "real," see Samuel Y. Edgerton, Jr., *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective* (New York: Basic Books, 1975). On perspective, also see S. K. Heninger, Jr., "Alberti's Window: The Rhetoric of Perspective," in his *The Subtext of Form in the English Renaissance: Proportion Poetical* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1994) pp. 153-195. The way of being implied in linear perspective is that of Foucault's doctor, and the form of knowledge implied in it is that of mathematics after "the retreat of the mathesis" (*Order of*

150 *The Upstart Crow*

*Things* 350).

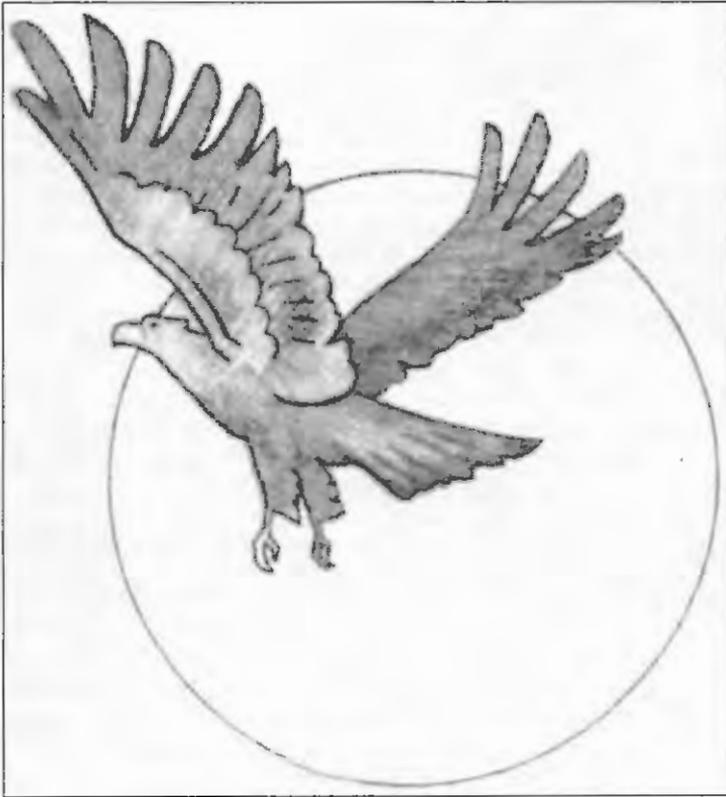
8. Foucault, *Madness*, p. 219. Foucault concludes his partially facetious description of modernity's view of the malefic effects of the novel form – “gentle laws of nature,” for instance, are neither derived from nature nor are they gentle – with a telling quote from mid-eighteenth-century ephemera exposing the creation and regulation of subjects it means to control through the diagnosis of disorders it creates with its unmarked gaze: “The existence of so many authors has produced a host of readers, and continued reading generates every nervous complaint; perhaps of all the causes that have harmed women's health, the principal one has been the infinite multiplication of novels in the last hundred years . . . a girl who at ten reads instead of running will, at twenty, be a woman with the vapors and not a good nurse” (219).
9. Roy speaks of the multiplicity she achieves in an interview with Taisha Abraham, “An Interview with Arundhati Roy,” *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 29 (1998): 89-92. Roy says that the novel “is a book about human nature. . . . It's really a way of seeing” (91).
10. For early modern royalist patriarchy, see Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha and Other Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991). For the term “race,” see note 38.
11. John Berger, “Stories,” *Another Way of Telling*, ed. John Berger and Jean Mohr (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982) p. 280.
12. A very different interpretation, one which “lends a circulating and mythic ambience to the structure of the text” by a seamstress-like memory, is offered by R. Hema Nair, “Remembrance of Things Past: A Reading of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*,” *CIEFL Bulletin* 9.2 (1998): 49-56.
13. I capitalize “Standard” in the expression “Standard English” to indicate, somewhat like Roy indicates throughout the novel, the authority of a phenomenon quite recognizable, palpable, and effecting that nonetheless has no empirically or rationally knowable existence, like “Big God” or “Small God” (20), for instance.
14. Outlining some of the feminist, historiographical, and intertextual features of the novel in an effort to indicate how the novel “is about hope, empowerment and rebirth” (43), Tirthankar Chanda explains some possible “Sexual/Textual Strategies in *The God of Small Things*,” *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* 20 (1997): 38-44. Exploring some postcolonial features of the novel is Cecile Oumhani's essay, “Hybridity and Transgression in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*,” *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* 22 (2000): 85-91, while Brinda Bose's essay, “In Desire and in Death: Eroticism as Politics in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*,” *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 29 (1998): 59-72, explains how the choices in the novel are deliberate and how these are produced through erotic relations, forming the political existence of the novel. Calling us not to objectify difference, and cogently worrying about the exoticization of Roy, Elleke Boehmer compellingly suggests how “In paragraph after paragraph of Roy's dense experimental writing, we see the English language – the language bequeathed by the British colonizer, as she has recognized – expanded, distorted, excavated, disconcerted” (67) in “East Is East and South Is South: The Cases of Sarojini Naidu and Arundhati Roy,” *Women: A Cultural Review* 11 (2000): 61-70.
15. Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Othello: A Contextual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), notably in the chapter “Racial discourse: black and white” (pp. 51-70), is especially adept at interpreting the play from Othello's viewpoint as well as the (many different) spectators' viewpoints. It is this talent that Michael Neill, in “Mulattos, 'Blacks,' and 'Indian Moors': *Othello* and Early Modern Constructions of Human Difference” (*Shakespeare Quarterly* 49 (1998): 361-374), misapprehends as the typically “perplexed response to *Othello*” (361). Neill avoids and even cures perplexity by insisting upon seeing the play as an object, an object that, like the madman, perhaps, “refuses to align itself with [a single] narrative, retreating instead into the obliquity of the taunting pleonasm with which Iago at once challenges and disables judgment: ‘What you know, you know. / From this time forth I never will speak word’ (II.300-301)” (374).
16. Carol Thomas Neely suggests that Othello must be fooled because he is a man (p. 77), “Women and Men in *Othello*,” in *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Carolyn Lenz, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1980) pp. 211-39. Also see *The New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., ed. Horace Howard Furness (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1886), vol. 6, p. 241, note on line 118 (“vnbookish”), for a discussion of earlier views of why Othello, unlike another, more competent character, who, being more competent would not be fooled, fools himself, as it were, in this scene.

17. Helping us see that the dramatic action does not mean in itself but depends upon the narrative features of the play, Thorell Porter Tsomondo explains this scene similarly, but concentrated on Othello rather than the audience of *Othello*: "Because of the difference in their narrative trajectories, Iago is able to make Othello into the audience of a play in which the latter is unwittingly the main actor; he makes Othello spectator to Othello's own life" (15). "Stage-Managing 'Otherness': The Function of Narrative in *Othello*," *Mosaic* 32 (1999): 1-25.
18. Carol Thomas Neely proposes two such general types of critical respondents to Othello. Neely calls them "Othello critics" and "Iago critics," respectively ("Women and Men").
19. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, p. 51.
20. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, p. 52.
21. See Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997).
22. Dymrna Callaghan, "'Othello was a white man': properties of race on Shakespeare's stage," *Alternative Shakespeares* 2, ed. Terence Hawkes (New York: Routledge, 1996) pp. 192-215, describes the cosmetics used in the period to render black and white faces as she explores some of the possible implications. Significantly, Callaghan stresses the mechanisms and functions of "representation" as distinct and separate from anything that might be taken to be actual. Ania Loomba, in "'Local-manufacture made-in-India Othello fellows' Issues of race, hybridity and location in post-colonial Shakespeares" in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, ed. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (New York: Routledge, 1998) pp. 143-63, describes the requirements and preferences for flaunted impersonation in Kathakali, specifically in relation to a male actor portraying Desdemona. Loomba's description and explanation of contemporary Kathakali productions of *Othello* suggest some unhabituated and perhaps neglected ways of thinking of Jacobean court productions of *The Moor of Venice*, productions that would have been, of course, alongside elaborate masque productions, which bear even more similarity with what Loomba describes than plays. Loomba explains: "In the *Othello* production, a woman actor only occasionally played Desdemona. Female roles require special training, and according to Sadanam Srinathan, the man whom I saw play Desdemona, real women do not have the 'energy' to enact true femininity. Some of my students, who saw both Srinathan and a woman actor as Desdemona, preferred him for exactly these reasons. The elaborate non-realistic, exaggerated style of Kathakali privileges obvious impersonation rather than any form of naturalistic identification—its mask-like make-up, intensive massages administered to dancers through their training, heaving costumes and formalized gestural codes literally remould the stage body, privilege cross-dressing and establish a theatrical code where impersonation is flaunted" (159). Perhaps something like this explains the reaction of the men of Oxford in 1610, as reported by a member of Corpus Christi College, Henry Jackson: "They also had tragedies . . . they moved (the audience) to tears. But truly the celebrated Desdemona, slain in our presence by her husband, although she pleaded her case very effectively throughout, yet moved (us) more after she was dead, when, lying on her bed, she entreated the pity of the spectators by her very countenance" (*Riverside Shakespeare*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 1978).
23. Morrison, *Playing*; Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
24. Michael D. Bristol, "Charivari and the Comedy of Abjection in *Othello*," *Renaissance Drama* 21 (1990): 3-21, suggest some of the ways he feels Shakespeare's audience would have interpreted the effect of blackface as a property of Othello's character. On how eighteenth century writers, including, instructively, Olauda Equiano and Ignatius Sancho (pp. 61-63), drew on Othello's black Africanist presence, see Virginia Mason Vaughan, "Race Mattered: *Othello* in Late Eighteenth-Century England." *Shakespeare Survey* 51 (1998): 57-66.
25. Another way of saying this is to say that in a culture of late modern racism qualified by liberalism, blackface and whiteface can only burlesque, while in a culture of inchoate modern racism, blackface and whiteface can demarcate. On liberal racism and supremacism, see Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield, "White Philosophy," *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1994): 737-757. Among other features of how liberal whiteness maintains its mastery, Gordon and Newfield point to the function of supremacist values vis a vis madness: "Supremacism is maintained not by affirming the supremacy of one's own values but by defining contestations of the existing rules as irrational" (756). Also see Joyce Green MacDonald, "Acting Black: *Othello*, *Othello* Burlesques, and the Performance of Blackness," *Theatre Journal* 46 (1994): 231-49. Kris Collins, "White-Washing the Black-a-Moor:*Othello*, Negro Minstrelsy and Parodies of Blackness," *Journal of American Culture* 19 (1996): 87-101.
26. The play is still being referred to as *The Moor of Venice* in 1629. See E. K. Chambers, *William*

152 *The Upstart Crow*

- Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1930), vol. II, p. 348. John Astington, *English Court Theatre 1558-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), modernizes and abbreviates play titles in his table, and so renders *Othello*, but affirms the play's status as first of the season. Chambers, in his court calendar (*The Elizabethan Stage* [Oxford: Clarendon P, 1923], vol. 4, p. 119), also abbreviates, in the modern form, the title.
27. *Ben Jonson*, eds. C. H. Hereford and Percy Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925-63), vol. 2, p. 265, n.4.
  28. Chambers, *Facts and Problems*, 2: 332.
  29. *Basilicon Doron, King James VI and I Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) p. 12.
  30. *King James VI and I*, ed. Sommerville, p. 12.
  31. *A Counterblaste To Tobacco, Minor Prose Works of King James VI and I*, ed. James Craigie, prepared for the press by Alexander Law (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1982) p. 87.
  32. *Minor Prose Works of King James*, ed. Craigie, pp. 88, 87, 95, 87.
  33. "A Satire Against Woemen," *New Poems by James I of England*, ed. Allan F. Westcott (New York: Columbia UP, 1911) pp. 19-21. Lines quoted: 43 and 49.
  34. "A Satire Against Woemen," ll. 55-60.
  35. Sometimes unappreciated in performance, part of the sensation of Iago's vulgar expressions to Brabantio in Roderigo's stead is the fact that a character of his status is speaking directly, albeit under cover of the night's darkness, to a character of Brabantio's status. Courtly protocol, of course, prohibits direct address to one's royal or noble superiors without express permission.
  36. For the play's appeal to James, also see the introduction by Norman J. Sanders to his New Cambridge Edition of *Othello*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984. P 2.
  37. James is well known for his foul mouth. A commonwealth satire describes James as "the greatest blasphemmer in the world; swear faster than speak, and curse the people by the clock" (*A Cat May Look upon a King*, 1652. *A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Walter Scott (London: 1815; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1965), vol. 13, p. 514); while a more sympathetic observer, Sir John Oglander, noted that James "had many witty jests and also, in his passion, many profane" (*A Royalist's Notebook: The Commonplace Book of Sir John Oglander*, ed. Francis Bamford [London: Constable, 1936] p. 193).
  38. The OED reflects movement in the sense of "race" from "The offspring or posterity of a person; set of children or descendants" (1.I) to "A group of several tribes or peoples, forming a distinct ethnical stock" (2.C) and "One of the great divisions of mankind, having certain peculiarities in common" (2.D); that is, the OED reflects the movement in the sense of "race" from the microcosmic association based on generation, to the macrocosmic sense based on apparent physical features. The illustrations of the former sense start in 1570, while those of the latter sense can start only as early as 1774. It might also be instructive to note that the sense of "ethnic" in definition 2.C, that is, the sense of "Pertaining to race; peculiar to a race or nation; ethnological" (2) has the earliest instance only in 1851, earlier senses being religious, not biological (e.g., "Pertaining to nations not Christian or Jewish; Gentile, heathen, pagan" (1)).
  39. See, for instance, Emily C. Bartels, "Making More of the Moor: Aaron, Othello, and Renaissance Refashioning of Race," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41 (1990): 433-54.
  40. Believing that we can "read Shakespeare in ways which produce resistant readings, ways which contest the hegemonic forces the plays at the same time affirm," because believing that hegemonic forces are in the plays and, at least potentially, not in the act of reading, Karen Newman, 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: Methuen, 1987] pp. 143-62; quote from p. 159) concludes, in an anacoluthon that begins by promising a declaration about Shakespeare, that "Shakespeare's play [*Othello*] stands in a contestatory relation to the hegemonic ideologies of race and gender in early modern England," since *Othello* is "represented as heroic and tragic at a historical moment when the only role blacks played on stage was that of a villain of low status," and despite the fact that the "case of Desdemona is more complex" (158-59). I am suggesting, contrary to these assumptions, that, among many other factors including those Newman treats, venue, with each venue's specific audience, and spectator or reader capacities integrally contribute to a text's effects.
  41. On Elizabeth's style of "self-presentation," see Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993).

42. Chambers finds no performances of *Titus Andronicus* for James (*William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*); neither does Astington (*English Court Theatre*).
43. Quote from p. 71 of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Robert Kimbrough (New York: Norton, 1971).



*Detail from "Time's Fickle Glass" by R. L. Gifford, The Upstart Crow, Volume IV, 1982*

## Shakespeare's Shylock, Rushdie's Abraham Zogoiby, and the Jewish Pepper Merchants of Precolonial India<sup>1</sup>

by Bindu Malieckal

In the course of intercontinental trade in the sixteenth-century, Christian merchants from Europe came in contact with Jews based in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Many of these eastern Jews,<sup>2</sup> who were Mizrachim, Sephardim, Ashkenazim, and others,<sup>3</sup> were important businessmen and businesswomen with whom western traders had dealings.<sup>4</sup> Some of the Jews worked as "dragomen" or translators for government officials and powerful merchants and therefore possessed a certain amount of political and commercial clout that their counterparts in the West could only dream about.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, in some Muslim countries, Jews were given protected status and termed *ahl al-dhimma* or *dhimmis*.<sup>6</sup> The Jews' prestige and freedom in the East aroused anger, envy, and even reluctant admiration in many Christian merchants, who, tempered by European antisemitism, treated eastern Jews with a combination of disdain and sometimes violence.<sup>7</sup> We have been able to discern Christian merchants' antisemitism because their narratives contain unflattering references to eastern Jews. Portuguese, Venetian, and even Dutch encounters with the East mention the various Jewish communities met along the way. Since the English entered the international commercial foray in the 1550s, which was quite late in the game—the Portuguese, Venetians, and Dutch had established trade with Africa, Asia, and the Middle East in the early part of the century—English mariners relied on European narratives to become oriented with eastern destinations and peoples.<sup>8</sup> An example of a European work which influenced the English and even contributed to the formation of the English East India Company in 1600 is Cesare Federici's *The Voyage and Travaile into the East India*. Federici's work, fascinatingly subtitled "The Merchant of Venice," was translated into English and published in London in 1588. Ensuing English narratives of India, such as those of Thomas Roe and John Fryer, mention Federici and other European predecessors like Duarte Barbosa.<sup>9</sup> European guides were also popular with those Englishmen who were simply interested in learning about the wider world. We know that William Shakespeare probably never left the shores of England but read John Pory's translation of Johannes Leo Africanus's *A Geographical History of Africa* (1600), which influenced *Othello* (1603).<sup>10</sup> Soon, of course, English writers were able to read their own countrymen's accounts of the "Old Worlds," to borrow a term that John Michael Archer, in his new book, uses to describe Africa and Asia, as well as Europe.<sup>11</sup>

Early modern playwrights from the British Isles read European as well as English accounts of the "Old Worlds," which contained descriptions of eastern Jews, and the dramatists used these descriptions, in part, to create Jewish characters. Although there are no Indian Jews in early modern drama, it is the premise of this article that the Jews of India, along with other eastern Jews, added shading to Jews in English drama, above all William Shakespeare's Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596). Critical studies pertaining to Jews in early modern literature suggest that the figures stem from negative stereotypes associated with Marranos, Conversos, and New Christians.<sup>12</sup> Shylock's acquisition of eastern goods, his connections to foreign trade, and his considerable economic power suggest that while Shakespeare's primary source for Shylock was the European Jew, he also utilized images of Indian Jews to color the character. Indian Jews' contacts and contracts with Christians revolved around religious conflict as well

as the sale and purchase of black pepper, the lifeblood of the spice trade.

Just as the Indian Jew influenced the makeup of Shylock, Shylock assists in the formation of Abraham Zogoiby, a postcolonial Indian Jew in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995). Anglophone Indian authors whose work focuses on India after British colonialism acknowledge that their fiction combines colonial influences with issues pertaining to postcolonial and diasporic India.<sup>13</sup> Thus, contemporary literature from or about India, like that of Rushdie, depicts both the eastern and western worlds. In *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), Rushdie describes India as "a rich mixture of traditions"<sup>14</sup> and creates a layered literary India in *The Moor's Last Sigh*.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, one of the main characters of *The Moor's Last Sigh*, an Indian artist named Aurora da Gama-Zogoiby, paints superimposing images of the Occident and the Orient in order to recreate India's history of cultural clashes and its ethnic diversity. The protagonist of the novel, Moraes Zogoiby, is black and white; physically deformed yet of brute force; Christian, Muslim, and Jew; as well as henchman for a Hindu fundamentalist. Moraes or "Moor," as he is called, is a sampling of the racial and religious admixture that defines "Indianness." Moor's father, Abraham Zogoiby, is a representative Indian as well. Abraham is a member of the *Paradesi* Jewish community of Cochin, in the state of Kerala<sup>16</sup>, which formed after the Sephardim were expelled from Spain in 1492, but Abraham's ancestry also suggests that he could be a descendant of a Spanish Jewess and Boabdil, the last Sultan of Granada. Abraham is as typical an Indian as his son: a Jew by religion; Semitic and Moorish by ethnicity; and Indian by citizenship. The blurring of Abraham's background and identity make him a tantalizing progeny of Shylock, who also reveals traces of both the western and eastern Jew.

The purpose of finding Abraham's source in Shylock and Shylock's shading in the Indian Jew is to debunk the notion of the early modern and postmodern Jewish character as mostly "white" and western and to prove that the precolonial and postcolonial Jew formed from various diasporic and transnational templates that traverse time. The abundant travel and trade narratives of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries condemn Jews but assert that diasporic Jews possess disparate customs, costumes, and complexions, thereby negating the Medieval image of the Jew.<sup>17</sup> In *Travel and Ethnology in The Renaissance: South India Through European Eyes, 1250-1625* (2000), Joan-Pau Rubies argues that travelogues about the East affected European culture, politics, theology, and philosophy and transformed scholastic notions of "exposition, induction, and comparison."<sup>18</sup> Rubies writes, "The powerful cultural transformation of the Latin Christian world from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries was therefore not simply the origin of a new western way of looking and dominating: it was also a genuine, if often twisted, response to the challenge of cultural differences experienced abroad and re-evaluated in Europe."<sup>19</sup> Hence, while most, if not all Jewish characters in English literature experience antisemitism in some form,<sup>20</sup> the antisemitism that Shylock suffers might be tied to Christian characters' attempts to link Shylock with the eastern Jew.

Likewise, postcolonial fiction's general view of all Jews as either Israelis or Ashkenazim overlooks the rich population of diasporic Jews whom Rushdie recovers through *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Hugo Baumgartner, of Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988) and the most "popular" Jewish character of Indian literature, is a German Jew who finds refuge in India during World War II. Rushdie's depiction of Abraham Zogoiby and the Cochin Jewish community stresses that Jews in India are not twentieth-century immigrants from Germany, as Desai suggests, but a diverse community with a lengthy, prosperous, and peaceful history in India. For many millennia, India's Jews have been important players in the international pepper trade, so they possessed economic and political authority that went unchallenged for centuries.<sup>21</sup> In addition, through Abraham Zogoiby, Rushdie appropriates both Shylock,

156 *The Upstart Crow*

and through *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Rushdie explicates and recontextualizes Shakespeare's presentation of religious discrimination in *The Merchant of Venice*.

### “AMONGST THEM ARE SOME JEWES, BUT NOT BELOVED”

Abraham Zogoiby is a Jew from the port city of Cochin (Kochi), in the state of Kerala, on the southwest coast of India. Kerala Jews are one of three Jewish communities in India who have disparate origins, histories, and professions. The Baghdadi Jews of Bombay (Mumbai) and Calcutta (Kolkata) are the most recent arrivals in India. They immigrated from Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Iran, and Yemen in the eighteenth-century and quickly became wealthy industrialists who conducted trade between India and the Middle East during the British Raj, from 1858 to 1947.<sup>22</sup> The Bene Israel, who live in and around Bombay, have a longer history in India than the Baghdadis. While the precise origins of the Bene Israel are unknown, they are probably descendants of Palestinian Jews who traveled to India in 175 AD.<sup>23</sup> Precolonial Bene Israel practiced carpentry, agriculture, and oil-pressing.<sup>24</sup> The monetary might of the Baghdadis, compared to the Bene Israel's impoverished finances, resulted in conflicts between the two communities. Once the Baghdadis and the Bene Israel began to collaborate with British colonialists, the fortunes of both improved.<sup>25</sup>

Such was not the case with the third group of Jews in India: Kerala Jews were, for the most part, loyal to the kings or *Rajahs* of Kerala, not to western traders or British colonizers. Since the Baghdadis were not present in India during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries, and since the Bene Israel were not heavily involved in commerce, it is more likely that European and English travelers to India met the Jews of Kerala, who have been merchants and dragomen in India for more than 3,000 years.<sup>26</sup> Before India gained independence from British colonialism in 1947, there were approximately 25,000 Jews in India, of which the Kerala Jews, 2,000 individuals strong, formed the smallest community.<sup>27</sup> Despite their small numbers, Kerala Jews were historically more prestigious than their northern neighbors. Jews first arrived in Kerala in 1000 BC with King Solomon's fleet and continued to disembark with successive Roman traders.<sup>28</sup> A large group of Jews immigrated to Kerala after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.<sup>29</sup> In 1020 AD, seventy Jewish families, lead by one Joseph Rabban, were welcomed by Bhaskira Ravivarma, the *Rajah* of Cranganore (Kodungallur), who held the honorific title of *Cheruman Perumal*. Ravivarma granted the Jews land, in addition to trade and social privileges, and had the concessions inscribed on copper plates which can be viewed today at the *Paradesi Synagogue* in Cochin.<sup>30</sup>

Cranganore, which the Jews called “Shingly” and which became the capital of Kerala Jewry, was a thriving port that saw a great deal of traffic from the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, from Ancient times to the Medieval period. The Jewish population of Shingly was a large one—80,000 in 1524, according to Ken Blady.<sup>31</sup> Some historians, like J. B. Segal, believe that Shingly was actually a Jewish kingdom that flourished till 1400.<sup>32</sup> Whatever the lore, the Jews of Shingly, as well as Cranganore's other immigrant communities, such as the Nestorians, the Saint Thomas Christians, and later, the *Mapillas* or Kerala Muslims, had excellent trade relations with the Islamic and pre-Islamic societies of Africa and the Middle East. Prior to the arrival of Vasco da Gama, free and unrestricted trade was the norm in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, and merchant ships were unarmed, indicating a level of security and trust that were eradicated when the Portuguese later instituted strict commercial controls.<sup>33</sup> Kerala Jews traded in spices: pepper, ginger, cinnamon, turmeric, and coriander.<sup>34</sup> Gems, porcelain, and incense were also exported.<sup>35</sup> In 1341, a flood destroyed Shingly's port but created a new harbor in Cochin, twenty miles south of Shingly. Many Jews emigrated

to Cochin, where they continued to engage in foreign trade.<sup>36</sup>

While many immigrant Jews remained endogamous, others married native Keralites, so precolonial Kerala Jews were divided into groups based on their complexion and heritage. The "black" and "brown" *Malabari* Jews were either Middle Eastern Jews, Indian converts to Judaism, or offspring of Jews and Indian slaves (Meshuchrarim). "White" *Paradesi* Jews were Europeans who had fled persecution in their home countries. Iberian Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella's infamous edict of 1492 comprised a large number of *Paradesi* Jews. As per the caste system of India, which divided society into privileged and unprivileged groups according to inherited professions—for example, Indians who studied the ancient Vedic texts were high caste *Brahmans*, while those who did menial jobs were "untouchables"—immigrant Jews had to acquire occupations that would permit them to fit into the caste system. Some Kerala Jews opted to become farmers, but most became merchants—regarded as the *Vaishya* caste in other parts of India—thereby elevating themselves above a number of poorer castes and providing for themselves a degree of respect associated with pre-existing merchant classes in Kerala, like the *Chettis*. It helped, of course, that when the first waves of Jews arrived in Kerala, the Hindu kings who greeted them were so impressed that the merchant caste was allotted to the Jews.<sup>37</sup> Barbara Johnson, the authority on the Jews of Cochin, notes, "The Jews were thoroughly incorporated into this respected stratum of Kerala social structure, but unlike the Jews of Europe, they were not singled out from other groups or stigmatized because of their 'middlemen' role."<sup>38</sup>

The status and power of Kerala Jews was challenged in 1497, after Vasco da Gama discovered a sea route to India. While the sea route allowed Europeans to conduct trade with Kerala more effectively, it also brought those Christian traders who inflicted antisemitism upon Kerala's Jews. Historians describe India as perhaps the only country in the world where Jews, prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, lived in peace and prosperity and were not harassed because of their faith.<sup>39</sup> Hinduism's religious syncretism and tolerance may be the reason for the absence of antisemitism in India.<sup>40</sup> Even Pietro della Valle, a Venetian who was in India from 1623 to 1626, commented on India's acceptance of foreigners. In Kerala, della Valle met Cicco, a young Portuguese man in the service of the monarch of Calicut. Although Cicco was dressed in Indian clothes, he had not become a Hindu. Della Valle explains Cicco's position in Indian society: "[ . . . ] the Indian *Gentiles* admit not nor care to admit other strangers to their Religion, as I have elsewhere noted; for, (conjoyning so inseparately, so to speak, as they do, their Religion to the Races of Men) as a Man can never be of other Race than what he was born of, so they also think that he neither can, nor ought to, be of any other Religion, although in Habit, Language and Customs he accommodate himself to the people with whom he lives."<sup>41</sup> Jews formed one of the many multi-national refugees who settled in India without incident. Newly arriving Portuguese traders, however, treated Indian Jews with disgust and violence and spread antisemitic attitudes among non-Jewish Indians. In 1513, the Portuguese introduced the Inquisition to India. In a letter to King Manuel I, Alphonso de Albuquerque, the viceroy of Portugal in India, inquired whether he might "exterminate" India's Sephardim "one by one."<sup>42</sup> Thankfully, his request was denied.

In the sixteenth-century, Portuguese antisemitism was such that the *Rajah* of Cochin was forced to intervene on behalf of his Jewish subjects. The *Rajah* wanted to promote trade with Portugal, since it fattened his treasury, but he relied on Kerala's Jews to act as advisors, moneylenders, diplomats, and intermediaries. Since many were refugees from the Occident, Kerala Jews could speak Malayalam, the official language of Kerala, as well as Portuguese, Spanish, Polish, French, Italian, and other western languages. They were also valuable soldiers in the *Rajah's* army.<sup>43</sup> The influence of

the Kerala Jews with the *Rajah* of Cochin was so great that he created a safe haven for the Jews to live and work and where they would be safe from harassment. The refuge consisted of a strip of land adjacent to the royal palace. Jews built houses and synagogues on the land, and the *Rajah* appointed a special official or *mudaliar* from among the community to act as its leader. Under the direct protection of the *Rajah*, the Jews were safe from Portuguese persecution. In fact, Portuguese historians who write about the *Rajah* of Cochin's arbitration describe him as the "King of the Jews."<sup>44</sup>

Although the *Rajah* of Cochin forced western merchants to tolerate Kerala Jews, traders still regarded them with the same derision reserved for European Jewry. Europeans were particularly irked that Kerala Jews could control the ebb and flow of the trade in black pepper. Black pepper or *piper nigrum*, the "black gold" of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries, is indigenous to India's southwest region. Ralph Fitch, an Englishman in India between 1583 and 1591, describes the abundance of pepper in Cochin: "The pepper groweth in many parts of India, especially about Cochin; and much of it doeth grow in the fields among the bushes without any labour, and when it is ripe they go and gather it. The shrubbe is like unto our ivy tree; and if it did not run about some tree or pole, it would fall downe and rot. When they first gather it, it is greene; and then they lay it in the sun, and it becommeth black."<sup>45</sup> The international trade in pepper and spices was so successful that the economy of India was more productive than the economy of Europe during the early modern period.<sup>46</sup> One could say that the need to acquire black pepper instigated the voyages to the East, since black pepper was a valuable condiment, a cure-all,<sup>47</sup> and a form of currency. Lisa Jardine posits that black pepper, along with sugar, was "an index of commercial power over the international markets in the sixteenth century."<sup>48</sup> Apparently, in the 1530s, the Portuguese King João III promised to pay in pepper for a set of Flemish tapestries which he had ordered.<sup>49</sup> It is no wonder, then, that Vasco da Gama offered "Christians and spices" as the reason for his arrival in India.<sup>50</sup> In the sixteenth-century, a number of Lisbon-based syndicates, among them the Casa da Índia and the Estado da Índia<sup>51</sup>, were responsible for Portugal being the primary western recipient of pepper from Kerala and also the main distributor of pepper in the rest of Europe.<sup>52</sup>

Westerners who arrived in India were surprised to find that Kerala Jews were ensconced in the pepper trade. Om Prakash writes, intriguingly, that "The *pardesi* merchants dominated the trade to the west, while the coastal trade and the high-seas trade to the east was controlled by the local Mappila merchants."<sup>53</sup> Nestorians and *Mapillas* traveled to interior Kerala, where spices were grown, and arranged for their transportation and sale in Cochin.<sup>54</sup> Jews did the same. As mentioned earlier, Jews supported the *Rajah* of Cochin, but some, like "Gaspar da Gama," a Polish refugee from Posen, acted as Vasco da Gama's agent and dragoman in the acquisition of pepper.<sup>55</sup> Gaspar da Gama was not the only Jew operating as a middleman for western merchants.<sup>56</sup> In the eighteenth-century, Ezekiel Rahabi, a Cochin Jew, purchased pepper for both the Dutch East India Company and the *Rajah* of Cochin.<sup>57</sup> Jews' involvement in the pepper business made them wealthy and influential. Mosseh Pereyra De Paiva, an Amsterdam Jew who visited Cochin in the mid-seventeenth-century, compliments Cochin Jews in his *Notisias Dos Judeos De Cochim* (1687): "All these people are of very good disposition, docile by nature, and very prominent Jews. They are learned in the Law and are equally clever as traders."<sup>58</sup>

Despite the important role that Kerala Jews played in the pepper trade, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century westerners generally had poor relations with the Jews. In Calicut, just north of Cochin, the Portuguese had a falling out with the *Paradesi* merchants as well as the king, resulting in a two-day bombardment of the city in 1501.<sup>59</sup> Western resentment over Kerala Jews' commercial success is present in travelogues and trade narratives. Early modern descriptions of India reveal religious, racial, and

## Shakespeare's Shylock, Rushdie's Zogoiby 159

mercantile antagonisms toward the Indian Jew. The Portuguese, who were the first Europeans to write about Kerala Jews,<sup>60</sup> have the most to say about the subject. Father Alvaro Penteado, in a 1516 letter to King Manuel I, explains that the Jewish community of Cranganore arrived during the time of "Titus and Vespesian" and complains about their intimacy with the *Rajah* of Cochin. According to Penteado, the Jews advise the *Rajah* to alienate Kerala's ancient Christian communities:

The Jews . . . expelled from the land not only the adversaries but also those who called them. And till today they hold its possession and income for which they serve the King of Cochin to him remains only the honour and title . . . I do not say what happens between the Jews and the Christians due to the favor of Cochin, for that reason the Christians were scattered, as it happened for the Christians of Quilon in their homes without sacraments.<sup>61</sup>

Duarte Barbosa, another Portuguese traveler who arrived in Kerala around the same time as Penteado, comments on the abundance of Jews in Kerala in his *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century* (1516), which was translated to Spanish and Italian and was a source for Abraham Ortelius's *Atlas* of 1570.<sup>62</sup> Of Cranganore, Barbosa records, "There live in it Gentiles, Moors, Indians, and Jews, and Christians of the doctrine of Saint Thomas."<sup>63</sup> In a town called Marave, Barbosa encountered more Jews: "Marave, very ancient and well off, in which live Moors and Gentiles and Jews: these Jews are of the language of the country, it is a long time since they have dwelt in this place."<sup>64</sup> Regarding Cochin, Barbosa implies the Jewish connection to the international trade in pepper: "towards the south extends the kingdom of Cochin, in which also there is much pepper. It possesses a very fine large river where many and great ships enter, both Portuguese and Moorish. And within it is a large city inhabited by Moors and Gentiles, who are Chetis and Guzaratys, and Jews natives of the country."<sup>65</sup>

John Huighen Van Linschoten, a Dutchman employed by the Portuguese in Goa, arrived in Cochin in 1589 and commented extensively on the Jews. David Mandelbaum writes of Linschoten's assessment, "He relates that among the people of Cochin there live the 'nations' of Muslims, Brahmins, and in the words of the English translation of 1598: 'many Jewes, that are very rich, and there live freely without being hindered or impeached for their religion.'<sup>66</sup> Indeed, Linschoten's narrative uncovers many elements in the life of Indian Jewry:

There are great numbers of *Moors* and *Jewes* in all places of *India*, as at *Goa*, *Cochin*, and within the Land. In their Houses and Apparell they follow the manner of the Land wherein they are resident: amongst the *Indians* they haue their Churches, Sinagogues, and *Mesquitas*, wherein they vse all Ceremonies according to their Law: but in the places where the *Portugals* inhabite and gouerne, it is not permitted vnto them to vse them openly, neither to any *Indian*, although they haue their Families and dwelling Houses and get their liuings, and deale one with the other: but secretly in their Houses they may doe what they will, so that no man take offence thereat: without the Townes and where the *Portugals* haue no commandment, they may freely vse and exercise their Ceremonies and Superstitions, euery one as liketh him best, without any man to let or denie them: but if they bee found openly doing it in the *Portugals* Townes and Jurisdictions, or that they haue any point of Christian

160 *The Upstart Crow*

ceremonies mingled among theirs, both men and women die for it, vnlesse they turne vnto the *Christian Faith*: they are most white of colour, like men of Europe, and have many faire Women. There are many of them that came out of the Countrey of Palestina and Ierusalem thither, and speake ouer all the Exchange verie perfect and good Spanish.<sup>67</sup>

As Linschoten tells it, Jews were integrated into Indian society, but with the arrival of the Portuguese, they are alienated and unable to practice their faith freely. The segregation of Jews indicates that Iberian antisemitism was alive and well. Early modern readers of Linschoten's narrative might have noted the similarities between European Jews and Spanish-speaking Jewish businessmen in India. Certainly, when Linschoten describes conversion to Christianity as a form of punishment for Jews in Portuguese areas of India, one cannot help but think of Shylock and his fate in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Like the Portuguese, English traders desired Kerala's black pepper, and in the course of transactions, met Kerala Jews. Prakash points out that European and English traders possessed a similar eagerness for the pepper trade: "Like other Europeans, the principal interest of the English in the East, initially at least, was the procurement of pepper and other spices for the European market."<sup>68</sup> Since the Portuguese and then the Dutch monopolized the pepper trade from 1498 to 1809, the English had limited commercial opportunities in Cochin. Two English merchants in India, Thomas Roe and John Fryer—Roe was King James I's ambassador to the Mughal Emperor Jahangir from 1615 to 1618—were unable to obtain pepper directly from Kerala: "Keeping our Course we left Cochin to the Southward, once famous Mart of the Portugals, since wrested from them, and made impregnable by the Dutch . . . so that here neither being any pepper . . ."<sup>69</sup> The English bought Kerala's black pepper from markets in Madras, on the eastern coast of the Indian peninsula, and gained direct access to Cochin for pepper procurement only in 1670, after which they were able to ship 500-1,000 tons of pepper to England annually.<sup>70</sup>

English merchants' and travelers' reports on Jews in India identify the Jews as one of India's many international communities. Christopher Farewell, who went to Gujarat between 1613 and 1617, describes the city of "Amadauaz" as a global meeting place with a sizeable population of Jews and foreigners: "Amadauaz, that great and populous Citie, the Metropolis of all those parts of Gujzerat; famous for Nobility and gentry, as also for rich trade in variety, Indicoes especially, by meanes of a generall confluence of most Nations in the world English, Dutch, Portugals, Jewes, Armenians, Arabians, Medes and Persians, Turkes and Tartarians."<sup>71</sup> Edward Terry traveled in India from 1616 to 1619 and describes India in a similar manner, but he singles out the Indian Jew for censure:

Now, for the inhabitants of Indostan, they were anciently Gentiles, or notorious idolators, called in generall Hindoos; but ever since they were subdued by Tamberlaine, have been mixed with Mahometans. There are besides many Persians and Tartars, many Abissines and Arme-nians, and some few almost of every people in Asia, if not of Europe, that have residence here. Amongst them are some Jewes, but not beloved, for their very name is a proverbe or word of reproach.<sup>72</sup>

Given the Jew's positive status in India, Terry's conclusion—that Indian Jews are "not beloved"—is an expression of English antisemitism.

Uncomplimentary pictures of Kerala Jews appear in other English narratives. Roe and Fryer write that Kerala possesses many "Forreiners, which come thither in trading."

<sup>73</sup> Of these foreigners, Roe and Fryer criticize the Jews in particular: "There are also many lewes which haue almost lost their Iudaisme, minding more their merchandize then superstition."<sup>74</sup> The observation that Kerala Jews' creed is commerce appears again in Fryer's categorization of the Hindu castes or *jatis*. Fryer compares the Banian or merchant caste (which usually falls between the warrior caste and the untouchables) to Jews: "Follows the Soldier, though as contrary in Humour, as the Antipodes in the same Meridian are opposite one to another: These have forgot if ever they were Jews, or no, but if any of these People are such, these are most likely; and by a double Right of Jew and Gentile, are a Compound of the greatest Cheat in the World, the fittest therefore to make Brokers and Merchants of."<sup>75</sup> Fryer's comment, which reveals the hatred, jealousy, and outrage that he feels toward Jews, represents the attitude and behavior of the typical Christian trader in India, as well as that of Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice*. In the play, Shylock testifies that Antonio "call [ed] me misbeliever, cut-throat dog, / And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine" (1.3.103-104).<sup>76</sup> As I contend below, Shylock faces antisemitism, an experience he shares with the Jews of India, especially Abraham Zogoiby.

### "MY MERCHANDISE MAKES ME NOT SAD"

Similar to precolonial Cochin, the world trade center of the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, early modern Venice in *The Merchant of Venice* thrives on international traffic and encourages foreign merchants to conduct business in the city-state. In Act Four, scene one, Antonio emphasizes the value Venice accords overseas commerce: "The Duke cannot deny the course of law; / For the commodity that strangers have / With us in Venice, if it be denied, / Will much impeach the justice of the state, / Since that the trade and profit of the city / Consisteth of all nations" (3.3.26-31). The Jewish merchants of Venice, who were from the Ottoman Empire, Spain, North Africa, and other places, were part of the "strangers" and "all nations" which Antonio references in his speech, but Jews were exempt from the privileges accorded by law.<sup>77</sup> Thus, at the end of the play, Shylock is punished because he is "an alien" (4.1.345) whose crime is the attempted murder of Antonio, a Venetian citizen. In *Shakespeare and The Jews* (1996), James Shapiro offers sharp commentary on Shylock's divestiture: "Venetian society is able to have it both ways: while the city's charter guarantees equality before the law, a feature that has attracted foreigners to Venice, it retains legislation that renders this equality provisional, if not fictional . . . . As much as it might want to, given its charter, Venetian society cannot punish Shylock simply because he is a Jew. But in the terms of the play it can convict him as a threatening alien."<sup>78</sup>

Although Shylock's position in Venice is in contrast to the status of Kerala Jews, India is mentioned in the play with reference to Shylock, suggesting the links between India's offerings and Jews. Shakespeare has made the correlation elsewhere in his canon: in *The First Part of King Henry The Fourth* (1597), Falstaff asserts, when relating the truth of his involvement in a robbery, "I am a Jew / else, an Hebrew Jew" (2.4.145-146).<sup>79</sup> Later in the play, Falstaff compares his old and "withered" self to a "peppercorn" (3.2.6). In *The Merchant of Venice*, Antonio's ships, which foray into India, Tripoli, Mexico, and England (1.3.15-17), carry "spices" (1.1.33) and "silks" (1.1.34), typically eastern goods. Shylock's anticipates the return of Antonio's ships so that he will be repaid the 3,000 ducats he loaned to Antonio, but Shylock's interest in Antonio's fortunes shows that he is a problematic intercessor between the West and the East. When Bassanio states, "Thus ornament is but the guilèd shore / To a most dangerous sea, the beauteous scarf / Veiling an Indian beauty" (3.2.97-99), he connects the gold casket and the ducat-wielding Shylock to a dark and therefore, in Bassanio's mind, deceptive

162 *The Upstart Crow*

complexion, reiterated when Salarino distinguishes Shylock's "flesh" from Jessica's: "There is more difference between thy flesh and hers than / between jet and ivory" (3.1.31-32). Shylock can either veil or expose Venetian commercial visions of the East and echoes Barabas in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1592). At one point in the play, Barabas, surrounded by Greek wine, Arabian gold, and a vast array of other commodities, has connections in India. "Give me the merchants of the Indian mines" (1.1.19), he proclaims.<sup>80</sup> As the only Maltese resident with access to India's riches, Barabas is the gatekeeper to the wealth of the East, much like Shylock and the Kerala Jew, though for Shylock, the riches include spices and presumably, pepper.

In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Salman Rushdie associates Shylock with the Jewish pepper merchants of Cochin and creates a postcolonial Shylock in the form of Abraham Zogoiby, a descendant of the very Jewish traders who met the likes of Antonio and other Christians from Europe and England in the early modern period. From the start of the novel, Rushdie's narrator, Moraes "Moor" Zogoiby, singles out pepper as a key ingredient of the transoceanic spice trade:

I repeat: the pepper, if you please; for if it had not been for peppercorns, then what is ending now in East and West might never have begun. Pepper it was that brought Vasco da Gama's tall ships across the ocean, from Lisbon's Tower of Belém to the Malabar Coast: first to Calicut and later, for its lagoony harbour, to Cochin . . . .

Not only pepper, but also cardamoms, cashews, cinnamon, ginger, pistachios, cloves; and as well as spice'n'nuts there were coffee beans, and the mighty tea leaf itself. But the fact remains that, in Aurora's words, 'it was pepper first and onemost—yes, yes, onemost, because why say foremost? Why come forth if you can come first?' What was true of history in general was true of our family's fortunes in particular—pepper, the coveted Black Gold of Malabar, was the original stock-in-trade of my filthy-rich folks, the wealthiest spice, nut, bean and leaf merchants in Cochin . . . .<sup>81</sup>

Moor's mother, Aurora da Gama, who alleges "wrong-side-of-the-blanket descent from great Vasco da Gama himself" (6), articulates the allure of Kerala's pepper: "we were 'not so much sub-continent as sub-condiment,' as my distinguished mother had it. 'From the beginning, what the world wanted from bloody mother India was daylight-clear,' she'd say. 'They came for the hot stuff, just like any man calling on a tart'" (5). The marriage of Abraham and Aurora, which symbolizes the uneasy affiliation between the Jewish pepper merchants and Christian traders, is consummated over sacks of pepper ready for export. Moor comments, "Pepper love: that's how I think of it. Abraham and Aurora fell in pepper love, up there on the Malabar Gold" (90). When Abraham informs his mother, the fiery Flory Zogoiby, of his intention to marry Aurora, Flory uses the news to recall the history of the Kerala Jews:

. . . the White Jews of India, Sephardim from Palestine, arriving in numbers (ten thousand approx.) in Year 72 of the Christian Era, fleeing from Roman persecution. Settling in Cranganore, they hired themselves out as soldiers to local princes. Once upon a time a battle between Cochin's ruler and his enemy the Zamorin of Calicut, the Lord of the Sea, had to be postponed because the Jewish soldiers would not fight on the Sabbath day.

O prosperous community! Verily, it flourished. And in the year 379

CE, King Bhaskara Ravi Varman I granted to Joseph Rabban the little kingdom of Anjuvannam near Cranganore. (70-71)

Flory contemplates the past glory of the Jews in the spice trade, "the basis of the community's prosperity" (71). Since Flory's memory is selective, Abraham reminds his mother of the "Black Jews" who fled Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the Mizrachim immigration of 490-518 CE, and the Spanish Jews who arrived in the sixteenth-century, of which his father, Solomon Castile, was a successor (71-72). Flory is further reminded that she is descended from an anonymous Marrana and Boabdil, the last Sultan of Granada, both expelled from Spain in 1492 (80).

In addition to recounting the story of the Kerala Jews, for which Rushdie appears to have done research, Rushdie incorporates various elements of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* to define Abraham, Flory, and Aurora. When Flory refuses to accept Aurora as a daughter-in-law, Abraham rejects his Jewish heritage and embraces Aurora's community. In other words, while Shylock was forced to convert to Christianity in *The Merchant of Venice*, Abraham is willing to adopt Roman Catholicism. Moor remarks, "That for this favour, He presently become a Christian, the Merchant of Venice insisted in his moment of victory over Shylock, showing only a limited understanding of the quality of mercy; and the Duke agreed, *He shall do this, or else I do recant The pardon that I late pronounced here . . .* What was forced upon Shylock would have been freely chosen by Abraham, who preferred my mother's love to God's" (89-90). Abraham promises to take care of his wife's family business, but when many an "argosy" (112) sinks near the Cape of Good Hope, Abraham asks his mother for a loan. Flory agrees to lend Abraham money on the condition that Abraham give her his firstborn son. A desperate Abraham agrees, and a jubilant Flory gloats, very much like Shylock in the court scene of *The Merchant of Venice*, "An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven . . . I stay here on my bond. And for these promised pounds of unborn flesh she delivered Abraham her wealth; and, paid and bribed by jewels, his last-chance argosy set sail" (112). When Abraham tries to renege on the contract, Flory accuses, "I crave the law, the penalty and forfeit of my bond" (113). Flory never gets the opportunity to take possession of her grandson because Aurora, whom Rushdie compares and contrasts with Portia, refuses to have children until Flory is dead: "Her [Aurora's] husband was—as Portia's could never have been—a Jew. But, as the maid of Belmont denied Shylock his bloody pound, so my mother found a way, with justice, of denying Flory her child" (115).

Rushdie evokes *The Merchant of Venice* in *The Moor's Last Sigh* to use Shakespeare as a tier in the novel's palimpsest and more significantly, to replicate Shakespeare's critique of communalism. In *The Moor's Last Sigh*, India's minorities are advanced to defy the dangerous political dogmas of Bal Thackeray, a Hindu politician, represented in the novel through the character Raman "Mainduck" Fielding. Fielding calls non-Hindus "un-Indian types" (231) and strives for their disenfranchisement. The canker of discrimination is not limited to Fielding. Certain individuals in minority groups are rabid about their own supposed supremacy. Flory Zogoiby believes that the Kerala Jews have more heritage and more legitimacy than Aurora's Christian ancestors, whom she terms "unclean" (70), "come-latelies" (71), and "bastards" (71). Fielding and Flory's attitudes threaten India's secularity. In a 1996 interview on the novel, Rushdie explains, "I feel pluralist values to be under threat, and not just in India. It is a strange moment in the history of the world in which people seem to be dividing into smaller and smaller nationalist groupings and becoming more and more hostile toward diversity. And yet the experience of anybody, especially anybody that has been born in a big city in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is that diversity is the inextricable fact of everyday life."<sup>82</sup> Similar forces are at work in *The Merchant of Venice*. Shylock's forced conversion to Christianity and the

164 *The Upstart Crow*

stripping of his wealth are made disturbing. Undoubtedly, Shylock's famous speech on the essential humanity of Jews and his desire for equal rights under law indicate Shakespeare's possible suspicion of religious hegemony. Avraham Oz terms Shylock's actions "legal terrorism": Oz writes, "he consciously subverts the soul of Venetian order, namely its book of laws, and turns it upon itself . . . . Shylock manages to bring forth the very target of political terrorism, exposing the moral fragility of the dominant ideology."<sup>83</sup>

Ultimately, both Shakespeare and Rushdie depict Jews in their works to fictionalize Jewish merchants, both precolonial and postcolonial. The fictionalization functions to allow the discussion of Jewish involvement in religious and commercial life and shows that a country's treatment of its minorities can be measured by the condition of its Jews. The formation of Israel in 1948, however, permits the assessment of the Jewish diaspora only in terms of the past, for Jewish populations in Asia, Africa, and the Arab Middle East are dwindling. In India today, there are fewer than a dozen Jews left in Cochin. The lanes of Jew Town in Cochin are empty of *Malabaris* and *Paradises* but full of foreign tourists and traders seeking spices, pepper, and antiques at bargain prices, reminiscent of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century visitors. In the five hundred years since Vasco da Gama first set foot in Kerala, there has been uninterrupted interaction between India's Jews and the West. With this article, I hope to continue interest in this fascinating people and perhaps the even more fascinating perspective they provided the early moderns and the postmoderns, from Shakespeare to Rushdie.

St. Anselm College

### Notes

1. I am indebted to Father Peter Guerin, Academic Dean of Saint Anselm College, for awarding me a Faculty Summer Research Grant, which made possible the collection of data from the Cochin State Archives, India, and from the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York. I thank Paul Manuel, Anne Foster, and Lorie Cochran for providing a quiet place to write in the Center for the Study of International Affairs at the New Hampshire Institute of Politics. I also thank my father, Joseph Malieckal, who functioned as my research assistant in Cochin.
2. I use the term "eastern Jew" throughout the essay to distinguish Jews living in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East from Jews living in England and Europe. The term "eastern Jew," however, does not appear in the *Encyclopedia Judaica Yearbook*, *The Encyclopedia of Judaism*, or any other reference book, but the phrase suits the purposes of the essay because it encompasses the various cultures and nationalities of Jews in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.
3. The Jews of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East follow various rites. While most are Mizrahim or Oriental Jews, others are Sephardim who had been expelled from the Iberian peninsula in 1492 as per the decree of the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella. A few Ashkenazim from east Europe found their way to Turkey and India, but they were few and far between. Diasporic Jews of Africa and Asia also consist of ancient communities whose precise origins are unknown, such as the Beta Israel or Falasha of Ethiopia, the Bene Israel of India's Konkan coast, the Kai-Feng Jews of China, and several Jewish communities along the Silk Road, such as the Jews of Afghanistan. Ken Blady, *Jewish Communities in Exotic Places* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2000).
4. It should be noted that not all Jews were merchants and traders. Diasporic Jews followed a number of diverse professions. Yemenite Jews were carpenters, metal workers, potters, tailors, and weavers (Blady 13). Persian Jews were tenant farmers (Blady 61). Ethiopian Jews were farmers as well, but some were artisans and masons (Blady 359). Chinese Jews were often silk breeders (Blady 267).
5. In Turkey, for instance, Jewish dragomen ("dragoman" comes from the Arabic "turjuman" or translator) were prominent people in the Ottoman Empire's commercial centers, such as

- Aleppo (Masters 47). Bruce Masters, "Aleppo: The Ottoman Empire's Caravan City," *The Ottoman City Between East and West*, ed. Ethem Eldem and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 17-78. Jews of sixteenth-century Tunisia, who were both Oriental Jews and immigrant Italian Jews, were a prosperous community (Mendelssohn 97, 88). Sidney Mendelssohn, *The Jews of Africa, Especially in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920).
6. Nicholas de Lange, *Atlas of the Jewish World* (New York: Facts on File, 1984) 38.
  7. For example, Masters explains the hostility that Aleppo's Jews faced from English businessmen: "The English merchants bitterly resented Jewish involvement in the Levant trade and factors were often warned to avoid commercial dealings with Jews. This was, in large part, due to their fear that the Jews who had their own trading links to Europe, as did the Armenians, might be able to best the English factors in the Levant trade" (Masters 60).
  8. For a study of early European and English travelers to the East, see Boies Penrose, *Travel and Discovery in the Renaissance, 1420-1620* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1955).
  9. Roe and Fryer mention "Cesar Fredericke" (Wheeler 133) and "Barbosa" (Wheeler 129). J. Talboys Wheeler, ed., *Early Travels in India (16th & 17th Centuries)* (Delhi: Deep, 1974).
  10. Emily Bartels, "Making More of the Moor: Aaron, Othello, and Renaissance Refashionings of Race," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41 (1990): 433-454. For more on the influence of non-English narratives on British playwrights, see John Gilles and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Playing the Globe: Genre and Geography in English Renaissance Drama* (Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1998).
  11. John Michael Archer, *Old Worlds: Egypt, Southwest Asia, India, and Russia in Early Modern English Writing* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002). Thomas Stephens, a Jesuit, was the first Englishman to reach India and the first to write about India. He landed in Goa in 1579. Stephens' letters to his father, of which only two survive—a letter written on November 10, 1579, and another dated October 24, 1583—encourage Anglo-Indian trade. *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967) 702.
  12. See Peter Berek, "The Jew as Renaissance Man," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51.1 (1998): 128-162.
  13. To understand the position of postcolonial Indian literature in the English canon, see Fawzia Afzal-Khan, *Cultural Imperialism and The Indo-English Novel* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1993); Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1996). James Acheson offers a slightly different assessment of postcolonial literature, which he regards as more of a continuation and expansion of Modernism. Acheson sees Rushdie as part of the "new internationalism in British literature," which includes Shiva Naipaul, Buchi Emecheta, and Kazuo Ishiguro, authors who "write about their native lands or the immigrant experience from within the mainstream of British literature" (193). James Acheson, *The British and Irish Novel Since 1960* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).
  14. Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Viking, 1991) 2.
  15. J. M. Coetzee, *Stranger Shores: Literary Essays, 1986-1999* (New York: Viking, 2001) 171.
  16. In Malayalam, the language of Kerala, *Paradesi* simply means "foreigner."
  17. In Medieval English literature, as in *The Prioress's Tale* of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400) or in the Cycle plays of Medieval drama, Jews sacrifice Christian children or crucify Christ (Grebanier 23). Bernard Grebanier, *The Truth About Shylock* (New York: Random House, 1962).
  18. Joan-Pau Rubies, *Travel and Ethnology in The Renaissance: South India Through European Eyes, 1250-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) xi.
  19. Rubies x. To a lesser extent and from the perspective of the exchange of art, Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton make the same argument as Rubies. See Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000).
  20. Derek Cohen offers, I think, the most sensible method to identify antisemitism in early modern fiction: "I would define an anti-Semitic work of art as one that portrays Jews in a way that makes them objects of antipathy to readers and spectators—objects of scorn, hatred, laughter, or contempt. A careful balance is needed to advance this definition, since it might seem to preclude the possibility of an artist's presenting any Jewish character in negative terms without incurring the charge of anti-Semitism. Obviously, Jews must be allowed to have their faults in art as they do in life. In my view, a work of art becomes anti-Semitic not by virtue

166 *The Upstart Crow*

if its portrayal of an individual Jew in uncomplimentary terms but solely by its association of negative racial characteristics with the term Jewish or with Jewish characters generally" (105). Of *The Merchant of Venice*, Cohen writes, "*The Merchant of Venice* seems to me a profoundly and crudely anti-Semitic play" (104). Derek Cohen, *Shakespearean Motives* (New York: St. Martin's, 1988).

21. For a different approach to the use of spices in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, see Celia M. Wallhead, "The Subversive Sub-Text of Spices in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*," *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* 35 (1997): 61-76.
22. Isaac S. Abraham, *The Origin and History of the Calcutta Jews* (Calcutta: Daw Sen, 1969) 66; Barbara C. Johnson, "Baghdadi Jews of India," *Reader's Guide to Judaism*, ed. Michael Terry (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000) 62.
23. Shalva Weil, "An Overview of Research on the Bene Israel," *Jews in India*, ed. Thomas A. Timberg (New York: Advent Books, 1986) 13; Joan G. Roland, "Indian-Jewish Identity of the Bene Israel During the British Raj," *Studies of Indian Jewish Identity*, ed. Nathan Katz. New Delhi: Manohar, 1995) 117.
24. Shirley Berry Isenberg, "The Bene Israel Villagers of Kolaba District: Generations, Culture Change, Changing Identities," *Studies of Indian Jewish Identity*, ed. Nathan Katz (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995) 88-89; Barbara C. Johnson, "Bene Israel of India," *Reader's Guide to Judaism*, ed. Michael Terry (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000) 67.
25. Johnson, "Baghdadi Jews of India" 62; "Bene Israel of India" 67.
26. Barbara C. Johnson, "Cochin Jews," *Reader's Guide to Judaism*, ed. Michael Terry (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000) 117.
27. de Lange 215.
28. Barbara C. Johnson, "Our Community' in Two Worlds: The Cochin Paradesi Jews in India and Israel." Diss. University of Massachusetts, 1985. 40; Blady 234.
29. David G. Mandelbaum, "The Jewish Way of Life in Cochin," *Jewish Social Studies* 1.4 (1939): 424.
30. Mandelbaum, "The Jewish Way of Life" 425.
31. Blady 240.
32. J. B. Segal, *A History of the Jews of Cochin* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1993) 15. There are opposing opinions as to whether Jews occupied a separate kingdom in Kerala. Bhaskira Ravivarman gave Joseph Rabban the principality of Anjuvannam, but it is not clear whether Rabban was an appointed prince or simply the leader of the Jewish community (Blady 233).
33. Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984).
34. Mavis Hyman, *Jews of the Raj* (London: Longdunn, 1995) 41.
35. Penrose 49; Blady 231.
36. Mandelbaum, "The Jewish Way of Life" 428.
37. There was, nonetheless, an unfortunate repercussion in the adoption of caste by the Kerala Jewish community. Caste designations are identified by profession and maintained by lineage. To retain the purity of the caste, intercaste marriages are strictly forbidden. White *Paradesi* Jews who practiced endogamy claimed racial purity over the black and brown *Malabari* Jews, who were crossbreeds and converted slaves. As a result, the *Paradesi* Jews discriminated against the *Malabari* Jews. *Malabaris* and *Paradesis* worshipped in different synagogues and were buried in separate cemeteries. Some *Malabaris* were even forbidden to engage in trade and could only become farmers or shopkeepers (Blady 236-238). The tensions between the *Paradesis* and the *Malabaris* escalated after the arrival of the Portuguese in 1497. Segal argues, "The conflict between White and Black, deeply rooted as it was in Indian tradition, was further exacerbated by the presence of the Portuguese in South India. Among them distinctions of color assumed a special dimension" (22).
38. Johnson, "Our Community" 44.
39. Renu Mehra, *India Nurtured Jewish Heritage Without Prejudice* (New York: India Worldwide, 1988).
40. de Lange 42.
41. Edward Grey, ed., *The Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1991) 364.
42. Blady 240.
43. Blady 235.
44. Blady 240.
45. Ralph Fitch, *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*, ed. William Foster (New York: Oxford UP, 1921)

- 46.
46. Curtin 149.
47. M. N. Pearson, "Introduction," *Spices in the Indian Ocean World*, ed. M. N. Pearson (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996) i.
48. Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (New York: Doubleday, 1996) 54.
49. Jardine 55.
50. Ian W. Mabbett, *A Short History of India* (New York: Praeger, 1968) 121.
51. Om Prakash, *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) 26.
52. Prakash 42, 28.
53. Prakash 18.
54. Curtin 147.
55. Mandelbaum "The Jewish Way of Life" 428. Gaspar da Gama wrote three letters to King Manuel I of Portugal. The letters, dated 1505 and 1507, still exist.
56. In the sixteenth-century, the Portuguese coined the term "Banian," adapted from Bengali, for those Indian merchants who acted as their brokers or partners (Curtin 175). It would seem logical that the Portuguese would refer to Jews as Banians, but the Portuguese so hated the Jews that all references are simply "Jew" or "Jews."
57. Brian Weinstein, "Jewish Pepper Traders of the Malabar Coast: The Rahabis," Forthcoming in *The Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies*, 2002.
58. S. S. Koder, "Saga of the Jews of Cochin," *Jews in India*, ed. Thomas A. Timberg (New York: Advent, 1986) 125.
59. Prakash 43.
60. Other than the excerpts listed here, other Portuguese visitors to Kerala include Pedro da Covilhan (1488-1489), the first Portuguese citizen to step foot in India, and Pedro Teixeira (1588). Please note that European narratives are not the first to record the presence of Jews in India. Arabian, Egyptian, and other Jewish merchants and travelers wrote about Kerala Jews. A few of these early chroniclers are Ibn Wahab in the ninth-century, Benjamin of Tuleda in the twelfth-century, and Ibn Batuta in the fourteenth-century. In addition, there exist a number of Malayalam records, written by Kerala Jews themselves, on their community and on their encounters with Europeans. See A. I. Simon, *The Songs of the Jews of Cochin and Their Historical Significance* (Cochin: Pangal Press, 1947); Eliya Ben Eliavoo, *Cochin Jewish Records From State Archives* (Cochin: Kiryat Moskin, 1971).
61. Fr. Jacob Vellian, ed., *The Syrian Churches Series: Symposium on Knanites* (Kottayam, India: Jyothi Book House, 1986) 1. Vellian's translation of Penteado's account is rough, but I have quoted it verbatim.
62. Henry E. J. Stanley, "Translator's Preface," *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar In the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century*, Duarte Barbosa (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1995) i, iv.
63. Barbosa 154.
64. Barbosa 149.
65. Barbosa 156.
66. David G. Mandelbaum, "Social Stratification Among the Jews of Cochin in India and in Israel," *Jews in India*, ed. Thomas A. Timberg (New York: Advent, 1986) 73.
67. Wheeler 213-214.
68. Prakash 105.
69. Thomas Roe and John Fryer, *Travels in India in The Seventeenth Century* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1993) 213.
70. John Bastin, "The Changing Balance of the Southeast Pepper Trade," *Spices in the Indian Ocean World*, ed. M. N. Pearson (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1996) 291.
71. Christopher Farewell, *An East-India Colation* (1633; Amsterdam: Da Capo, 1971) 60.
72. Edward Terry, *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*, ed. William Foster (New York: Oxford UP, 1921) 307-308.
73. Wheeler 133.
74. Wheeler 133.
75. Roe and Fryer 445.
76. All quotes are from William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. M. M. Mahood (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987).

168 *The Upstart Crow*

77. For more on Venetian multiculturalism, see Bindu Malieckal, "Bondslaves and Pagans Shall Our Statesmen Be": Moors, Turks, and Venetians in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Yearbook* 10 (1999): 162-189.
78. James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and The Jews* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996) 188-189.
79. William Shakespeare, *The First Part of King Henry the Fourth*, ed. Barbara Hodgdon (New York: Bedford Books, 1997).
80. Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, ed. David Bevington (New York: Manchester UP, 1997).
81. Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh* (New York: Pantheon, 1995) 4, 5-6.
82. Alvaro Vargas Llosa, "The Last Sigh of Diversity," *Salman Rushdie Interviews: A Sourcebook of His Ideas*, ed. Pradyumna Chauhan (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001) 210.
83. Avraham Oz, "Transformations of Authenticity: *The Merchant of Venice* in Israel," *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. Martin Coyle (New York: St. Martin's, 1998) 230.

## Works Cited

- Abraham, Isaac S. *The Origin and History of the Calcutta Jews*. Calcutta: Daw Sen, 1969.
- Acheson, James. *The British and Irish Novel Since 1960*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991.
- Afzal-Khan, Fawzia. *Cultural Imperialism and The Indo-English Novel*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1993.
- Archer, John Michael. *Old Worlds: Egypt, Southwest Asia, India, and Russia in Early Modern English Writing*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002.
- Barbosa, Duarte. *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar In the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century*. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1995.
- Bartels, Emily. "Making More of the Moor: Aaron, Othello, and Renaissance Refashionings of Race." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41 (1990): 433-454.
- Bastin, John. "The Changing Balance of the Southeast Pepper Trade." *Spices in the Indian Ocean World*. Ed. M. N. Pearson. Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1996. 283-316.
- Ben Eliavoo, Eliya. *Cochin Jewish Records From State Archives*. Cochin: Kiryat Moskin, 1971.
- Berek, Peter. "The Jew as Renaissance Man." *Renaissance Quarterly* 51.1 (1998): 128-162.
- Blady, Ken. *Jewish Communities in Exotic Places*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2000.
- Coetzee, J. M. *Stranger Shores: Literary Essays, 1986-1999*. New York: Viking, 2001.
- Cohen, Derek. *Shakespearean Motives*. New York: St. Martin's, 1988.
- Curtin, Philip D. *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984.
- de Lange, Nicholas. *Atlas of the Jewish World*. New York: Facts on File, 1984.
- Farewell, Christopher. *An East-India Colation*. 1633. Amsterdam: Da Capo, 1971.
- Fitch, Ralph. *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*. Ed. William Foster. New York: Oxford UP, 1921. 1-47.
- George, Rosemary Marangoly. *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1996.
- Gilles, John and Virginia Mason Vaughan, eds. *Playing the Globe: Genre and Geography in English Renaissance Drama*. Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1998.
- Grebanier, Bernard. *The Truth About Shylock*. New York: Random House, 1962.
- Grey, Edward, ed. *The Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India*. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1991.
- Hyman, Mavis. *Jews of the Raj*. London: Longdunn, 1995.
- Isenberg, Shirley Berry. "The Bene Israel Villagers of Kolaba District: Generations, Culture Change, Changing Identities." *Studies of Indian Jewish Identity*. Ed. Nathan Katz. New Delhi: Manohar, 1995. 85-115.
- Jardine, Lisa. *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance*. New York: Doubleday, 1996.
- Jardine, Lisa and Jerry Brotton. *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000.
- Johnson, Barbara C. "Baghdadi Jews of India." *Reader's Guide to Judaism*. Ed. Michael Terry. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000. 62-63.
- . "Bene Israel of India." *Reader's Guide to Judaism*. Ed. Michael Terry. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000. 67-68.
- . "Cochin Jews." *Reader's Guide to Judaism*. Ed. Michael Terry. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000. 117-118.

- . "'Social Community' in Two Worlds: The Cochin Paradesi Jews in India and Israel." Diss. University of Massachusetts, 1985.
- Koder, S. S. "Saga of the Jews of Cochin." *Jews in India*. Ed. Thomas A. Timberg. New York: Advent, 1986. 121-142.
- Llosa, Alvaro Vargas. "The Last Sigh of Diversity." *Salman Rushdie Interviews: A Sourcebook of His Ideas*. Ed. Pradyumna Chauhan. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001. 209-212.
- Mabbett, Ian W. *A Short History of India*. New York: Praeger, 1968.
- Malieckal, Bindu. "Bondslaves and Pagans Shall Our Statesmen Be': Moors, Turks, and Venetians in *Othello*." *Shakespeare Yearbook* 10 (1999): 162-189.
- Mandelbaum, David G. "The Jewish Way of Life in Cochin." *Jewish Social Studies* 1.4 (1939): 423-460.
- . "Social Stratification Among the Jews of Cochin in India and in Israel." *Jews in India*. Ed. Thomas A. Timberg. Np.: Advent Books, 1986.
- Marlowe, Christopher. *The Jew of Malta*. Ed. David Bevington. New York: Manchester UP, 1997.
- Masters, Bruce. "Aleppo: The Ottoman Empire's Caravan City." *The Ottoman City Between East and West*. Ed. Edhem Eldem and Daniel Goffman. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. 17-78.
- Mehra, Renu. *India Nurtured Jewish Heritage Without Prejudice*. New York: India Worldwide, 1988.
- Mendelssohn, Sidney. *The Jews of Africa, Especially in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920.
- New Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967.
- Oz, Avraham. "Transformations of Authenticity: *The Merchant of Venice* in Israel." *The Merchant of Venice*. Ed. Martin Coyle. New York: St. Martin's, 1998.
- Pearson, M. N. "Introduction." *Spices in the Indian Ocean World*. Ed. M. N. Pearson. Aldershot: Variorum, 1996. i-xxxvii.
- Penrose, Boies. *Travel and Discovery in the Renaissance, 1420-1620*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1955.
- Prakash, Om. *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India*. Cambridge: Cambridge P, 1998.
- Roe, Thomas and John Fryer. *Travels in India in The Seventeenth Century*. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1993.
- Roland, Joan G. "Indian-Jewish Identity of the Bene Israel During the British Raj." *Studies of Indian Jewish Identity*. Ed. Nathan Katz. New Delhi: Manohar, 1995. 117-131.
- Rubies, Joan-Pau. *Travel and Ethnology in The Renaissance: South India Through European Eyes, 1250-1625*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Viking, 1991.
- . *The Moor's Last Sigh*. New York: Pantheon, 1995.
- Segal, J. B. *A History of the Jews of Cochin*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1993.
- Shakespeare, William. *The First Part of King Henry the Fourth*. Ed. Barbara Hodgdon. New York: Bedford Books, 1997.
- . *The Merchant of Venice*. Ed. M. M. Mahood. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987.
- Shapiro, James. *Shakespeare and The Jews*. New York: Columbia UP, 1996.
- Simon, A. I. *The Songs of the Jews of Cochin and Their Historical Significance*. Cochin: Pangal Press, 1947.
- Stanley, Henry E. J. "Translator's Preface." *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar In the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century*. Duarte Barbosa. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1995. i-xi.
- Terry, Edward. *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*. Ed. William Foster. New York: Oxford UP, 1921. 288-332.
- Vellian, Fr. Jacob, ed. *The Syrian Churches Series: Symposium on Krانيتes*. Kottayam, India: Jyothi Book House, 1986.
- Wallhead, Celia M. "The Subversive Sub-Text of Spices in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*." *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* 35 (1997): 61-76.
- Weil, Shaiva. "An Overview of Research on the Bene Israel." *Jews in India*. Ed. Thomas A. Timberg. New York: Advent Books, 1986. 12-27.
- Weinstein, Brian. "Jewish Pepper Traders of the Malabar Coast: The Rahabis." Forthcoming in *The Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies*, 2002.
- Wheeler, J. Talboys, ed. *Early Travels in India (16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries)*. Delhi: Deep, 1974.

# A N N O U N C I N G

---

## **Clemson Shakespeare Festival XII (2003): Greed, Power, Corruption: The Political Shakespeare Thursday, March 6–Wednesday March 12**

"The devil knew not what he did when he made man politic." (*Timon of Athens* 3.3.27-8)

### **Plays**

Brooks Center for the Performing Arts

Sunday, March 9, 8 p.m.

*The Tempest*, Shenandoah Shakespeare Express

\$15 adults/\$13.50 senior citizens/\$8 students

Monday, March 10, 8 p.m.

*The Taming of the Shrew*, Shenandoah Shakespeare Express

\$15 adults/\$13.50 senior citizens/\$8 students

Tuesday, March 11, 8 p.m.

*Coriolanus*, Shenandoah Shakespeare Express

\$15 adults/\$13.50 senior citizens/\$8 students

Wednesday, March 12, 8 p.m.

*Measure for Measure*, Warehouse Theatre

\$15 adults/\$13.50 senior citizens/\$8 students

### **Albert Hamilton Holt Colloquium**

Shakespeare scholars explore Shakespeare as a player of politics

Bellamy Theatre, Brooks Center

Monday, March 10, 2:30 p.m.

Jonathan Gil Harris, Ithaca College

Monday, March 10, 4 p.m.

Natasha Korda, Wesleyan University

Tuesday, March 11, 2 p.m.

"Greed, Power, Corruption: The Political Shakespeare"

Panel discussion with Professors Harris, Korda, Juana Green, and Clifton Egan

### **Workshops**

Free interactive workshops led by Shenandoah Shakespeare actors

Monday, March 10, 10:10 a.m., Bellamy Theatre, Brooks Center

Monday, March 10, 11:15 a.m., Bellamy Theatre, Brooks Center

Monday, March 10, 1:25 p.m., Bellamy Theatre, Brooks Center

Monday, March 11, 12:30 p.m., Charles Paz Memorial Workshop, Brooks Theatre

### **Films**

Free screenings of recent and vintage Shakespeare films

McKissick Theatre, Hendrix Student Center

Screenings begin at 8 p.m.

Thursday, March 6

Friday, March 7

Saturday, March 8

All CSF XII events, except professional performances, are free of charge. Programming is subject to change. For ticket information, call: 864/656-RSVP (7787); M-F, 1-5 p.m.

## Teaching Shakespeare's India, Then and Now, Here and There

by Mark Houlahan

### THE CONVERSATIONS

The course called "Shakespeare Wallahs" which is the central focus of this essay began with a corridor conversation mid-way through 1997. My own status as a "Shakespeare Wallah", however, had been evident to me since June of 1996, when I "took part" in an earlier conversation which went as follows: "Be still Big Baas." It was a bright warm day in downtown Johannesburg when this instruction was issued. My instructor spoke softly: his voice carried no emotion. Yet the command brooked no disobedience. He held before me, about a metre from my chest, a long curved knife—the kind you might open up a wild pig with; and each of my shoulders was gently, gently held by each of two assistants. At first I thought they were beggars, since the streets of downtown Johannesburg were full of them. But then I realised: "I'm being mugged. I've never been mugged before. So this is what a mugging looks like." I was unpractised at being a "muggee" as Martin Amis might put it. But I had the theory of mugging down cold: just give them what they want, and you might be safe. Accordingly, I was stiller than I can ever remember having been, and looked into the eyes of the man holding the knife, while his assistants softly removed my bag from my shoulder and my watch from my arm.

Their haul was not bountiful. The watch was perfectly functional, but inexpensive; my bag, which would have seemed to bulge with, say, expensive camera equipment, contained instead the bricolage of the intellectual tourist: *The Faber Book of Movie Verse*; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*; Marlowe's *Complete Poems and Translations*; my address books and notebooks as well as the abstracts and programme for the *Shakespeare: Johannesburg: Postcoloniality* Conference, which had brought me to Johannesburg in the first place. When I returned to the University of the Witwatersrand (the conference venue) the ironies of the mugging were instantly perceived: "That's a great story: you should put that in your paper." My fellow conferees, dedicated teachers of early modern literatures, were especially taken with the iambic cadence of "be still big baas." Most of them would not have been aware of the local ironies in the term "baas," an honorific previously used by black South Africans for their white masters.<sup>2</sup> In a neat piece of street-wise post-colonialism, as it were, the valency of the term had been reversed. I was bigger than any of my "instructors"; and surely richer. *Baas* I was not, outnumbered, and physically, clearly inferior. And yet, physicality aside, I was a "baas." My cultural history had more in common with South Africa's ruling class than any black mugger in the markets. Like all the contributors to this special issue, I had chosen to explore that cultural history by becoming a professional academic. Further, like all the delegates to the Shakespeare-Postcoloniality conference I had become a "shakespeare wallah" a "person concerned with or in charge of a...specified thing [i.e Shakespeare] who was also "a bureaucrat."<sup>3</sup> The passionate, informed scholarship which that conference produced showed a range of scholars working out their relationship to the discourses of power and empire which had in part produced them as shakespeare wallahs in the first place.<sup>4</sup>

## THE COURSE

The course we devised aimed to build on and widen our original dialogues, with student insights enriching ours. We wanted to interlace the discourses of Indian fiction and Shakespearean post-coloniality, drawing on the sources of both our specialist fields in order to show how that conversation was developing around the world. Further, this intrinsic dialogism would be reproduced in our teaching: as far as possible we would attend every class and mark every piece of work together. This way, we could spark and enlighten each other, for though generally aware of each other's knowledge and expertise, we could not hope to have covered all the discourses the course aimed to survey.

This dialogism extended to the structure of the course, wherein modern writers might "speak with the dead" as Greenblatt notoriously frames it.<sup>7</sup> The conversation was spiced by arranging our materials not in strict chronological order but in a kind of synchronous counterpoint. We thus began with the resonant images from J.G. Farrell's *Siege of Krishnapur*, and explored so inventively in Julie Newman's energetic survey of post-colonial appropriations, *The Ballistic Bard*<sup>8</sup>. For, as Farrell depicts it, as the English defenders of Krishnapur strive to fend off the sepoy cannons, they are forced to improvise ammunition. They put statues depicting the gods of European culture to excellent use:

And of the heads, perhaps not surprisingly, the most effective of all had been Shakespeare's; it had scythed its way through a whole astonished platoon of sepoys advancing in single file through the jungle. The Collector suspected that the Bard's success in this respect might have a great deal to do with the ballistic advantages stemming from his baldness.<sup>9</sup>

Farrell thus comically explores the explosive force of English culture in India, while, from his own post-Empire perspective, showing that English culture imploding. In our terms, Farrell indicates a double oscillation; for if Shakespeare affected India, then India would surely affect Shakespeare.

That was also the theme of the film *Shakespeare Wallah*, from which the course took its name and which we also used to frame the themes of our course. An early collaboration between James Merchant, Ismail Ivory and Ruth Praver Jhabvala, the film portrays a thinly fictional version of the fortunes of Geoffrey Kendall's Shakespeariana company in post-Independence India. The troupe's declining fortunes serve as "a metaphor for the end of the British Raj."<sup>10</sup> Their story is framed within a late imperial romance, with Lizzie the ingenue vying for the affections of Sanju "a rich young Indian"<sup>11</sup> with Manjula, a Bollywood screen idol, famed for her portrayals of Hindu mythological figures. The film pits Shakespeare against "Indian" culture, live theatre against the movies. Its gentle ironies insist that, though Shakespeare may have faded in post-1947 India, Shakespeare and India must still relate to each other, though the film leaves the nature of that relationship problematic and open.

If those connections were evident in modern texts, could they also be traced back to Shakespeare's lifetime? Directly, no, for none of Shakespeare's works were set in India. Yet Renaissance constructs of India are crucial to several of his plays. From the "Indian boy" over whom Titania and Oberon struggle in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to the veiled "Indian beauty"<sup>12</sup> with whom Portia is associated in *A Merchant of Venice*, India

emerges as a bejewelled, perfumed site of erotic adventure and economic opportunity, a place, as Margo Hendricks puts it, "fit for exploration and exploitation."<sup>13</sup>

As she shows, reports from proto-exploiters clearly provide the background against which Shakespeare's allusive India's might be understood. A comprehensive reading of Indian narratives in Hakluyt and Purchas was not possible for the course. So we chose two key accounts, "The voyage of Master Ralph Fitch . . . to Ormuz, and so to Goa in the East India" and Thomas Coryat's *Greetings from the Court of the Great Mogul* (1616). Fitch's depiction of the utility of pepper which "groweth in many parts of India, especially about Cochin"<sup>14</sup> anticipates the "pepper love" which drives *The Moor's Last Sigh*, whilst Coryat confirms the economic interest to be gained from the trade with the Mogul Empire the East India Company was established to profit from.<sup>15</sup> The striking image from Coryat of a doublet and hose clad Englishman astride an elephant, incidentally provided us with an apt image for the straddling of India and Shakespeare we were attempting. Those texts also provided students with the non-fictional discourse of empire; these then gave extra resonance to our readings of *The Tempest*, which followed them. It would of course be impossible to teach "Shakespeare" and "Empire" without invoking the "master-slave" dialogues of Prospero and Caliban, and which have been studied with such passion by English, indigenous and settler scholars over the last hundred years, but which, in this context of these essays, surely requires no more comment.<sup>16</sup>

In its first year, the course then turned back from Shakespeare's *Tempest* to India via Chandra's *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, where Shakespeare had seemed such a puzzling presence in the first instance. In the wake of *The Tempest*, Chandra's Shakespeare strategies were clearer. In the third book of his epic, Sanjay learns typesetting from Ashutash Sorkar, the "printing master at the Markline Oriental Press." Both master and apprentice learn their English letters from a "thick book bound in leather and embossed in gold,"<sup>17</sup> a volume familiar throughout all the former territories of the British Empire as *The Collected Works of William Shakespeare*. To Sanjay, Shakespeare's words seem like a wilderness: as strange to him as a tropical jungle would to the English. He is overwhelmed by the "hanging, entangling creepers of this foreign grammar"<sup>18</sup> In response, Sanjay dreams Calibanic dreams of physically destroying the textual heart of English power ("burn but his books" *Tempest* 3.2.96): "he was slitting open Markline's throat from side to side as if it were paper, the black blood gushing like thick printer's ink."<sup>19</sup> He ingests the type, which then becomes a weapon at the siege of Lucknow, so "that little fragments of English whistled into the English camps and killed them...clergymen, district collectors, wives....Language crashed down on roofs and crushed babies undemeath."<sup>20</sup> The ballistic bard is returned to sender with a vengeance; here Chandra clearly borrows from Farrell's bullet bard, for Farrell's Krishnapur is consciously modelled on the famous siege of Lucknow.<sup>21</sup> With lyrical vehemence Chandra invokes the destruction of the bard as a path to freeing Sanjay as a poet in his own tongue.

For our course, however, this section of *Red Earth* risked simply repeating the metaphors from Farrell's *Siege*. Moreover, Chandra's synoptic gathering up of Indian legend, philosophy and history presented much that was beyond even the generous reach of our seminar. Accordingly, in the second year of the course, we switched to the *Tempest*-tost cityscape of Leslie Forbes' *Bombay Ice*. Here the vectors connecting colonial city and metropolitan "master" text run deep. Forbes' hyperreal blend of thriller plots and art-movie lushness twines itself about *The Tempest*. The heroine, Rosalind, part-Scottish and part-Indian, flies to Bombay to investigate the life of her half-sister, Miranda, married to and pregnant by Prosper Sharma, Bombay movie-mogul. Prosper is an all-powerful Prospero character, attempting to climax his film career with a film of *The Tempest*, set on the Bombay coast during the monsoon. As Prospero plays out his famous fifth act fantasy of compassion and revenge, behind him will flicker:

174 *The Upstart Crow*

stage clouds, deliberately mimicking those used in Jacobean masques and in the decorated frames of Renaissance maps, and dreams of Shah Jahan's youth, the high point of Mogul glory. Here, the shimmering, pearl-grey domes of the Moti Masjid at Agra, and the Red Fort of his City of the Ruler of the World with its golden letters on the ceiling proclaiming, 'If there is a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this.'<sup>22</sup>

Yet Prosper the filmmaker is embroiled in murder, incest, and smuggling: a classic noir villain/father figure. His murky career has been assisted by a powerful Caliban figure, Caleb Mistry, determined to make films which project his own lower class, racial identity. Prosper's mogul *Tempest* was first staged in London and when, as Forbes well knows, the East India Company began trading. Prosper's vividly evoked Mogul fantasy film rewinds the Shakespeare/India nexus back to Shakespeare's lifetime. The three hundred subsequent years of Anglo-Indian history Forbes depicts as a kind of poison, slow-acting yet finally fatal. She draws on Shakespeare because she knows, as readers of and contributors to this issue know, his works are deeply imbricated in those processes.<sup>23</sup>

Forbes artfully underlines the interconnection between art and Empire, commerce and romance. From the time of Ralph Fitch onwards these underpinned the English discourse of India, the expansive foreground of the early modern and postmodern romance fictions which were the main ground of our course. I have indicated at length the Shakespeare dimensions of texts which would be less familiar to readers of this journal; thus I will pass quickly over the final Indian and Shakespearean texts, since they are studied in detail in the essays here by Jesse G. Swan and Bindu Malieckal. Their essays remind us that criticism over the last twenty years has made a strong case of *Othello* being a central Shakespearean meditation on the complexities of race and empire. *Othello* in place, as it were, we moved inevitably to Rushdie's extraordinary meditation on the force of story, the inescapability of using Shakespeare to tell his own "Moor's tale, complete with sound and fury"<sup>24</sup> and the inextricable destinies of West and East. As Malieckal describes in detail, Rushdie fuses the *Othello* plot with *The Merchant of Venice*, Venice in Shakespeare's Renaissance being a prime site of mercantile, amorous adventures and ambiguous sexualities. Like Forbes, Rushdie is clearly aware of what modern critics have had to say on these matters. In some ways his novel is a comic burlesque on themes in 1990's criticism. He draws out deeply what it means for Bassanio to disclose his fears of approaching, at Belmont "the guiled shore/To a most dangerous sea, the beautiful scarf/Veiling an Indian beauty" (*Merchant* 3.2.97-99). And on those shores, our survey of Shakespeare's India/India's Shakespeare came to rest.

## THE CONSEQUENCES

The previous section outlined the resonances we hoped our course would generate, with insights drawn from the fruitful tension between the various texts we had put into play. Surveys of courses, such as those in the long-running *MLA Approaches to Teaching . . .* series, frequently assume a kind of utopian triumphalism. Designed to inspire, they frequently exhaust readers with indefatigable displays of teaching energy and inventiveness. In those terms, I hope readers find our *Shakespeare Wallahs* inventory of some use, being warned that our course was prey to the usual forms of student excellence, surrounded by forms of inattention and cupidity.

However the course has generated more long-term, local benefits. First, most

students had some knowledge of Shakespeare and some knew Rushdie and some other Indian English writers. Few knew much about post-colonial discourse, and really none the discursive field within which Shakespeare produced his "empire" plays. The richness of all these fields, of course in an ideal scholastic world, not be hampered by semester deadlines, would merit far more than the cursory, preliminary examination our course afforded. The triangulation of these areas nevertheless provided a frame which was genuinely enlightening, at least for those who paid attention. One student who heard the first seminar I gave on "Shakespeare and *The Moor's Last Sigh*" is beginning a doctorate this fall, on the relation between fiction and history in post-colonial texts. Another is investigating post-colonial and post-imperial appropriations of Shakespeare's body. A third has stuck with Farrell, moving from India to the Ireland of Farrell's *Troubles*, staying within the paradigm of the issues surrounding canonical appropriations. The path of all three emergent scholars lay through our course, though it would be rather too imperialist to claim this as the sole catalyst.

For its instructors, the course was predicated upon a necessary irony. My colleague Ralph Crane is a white Englishman whose academic career has taken him from one settler colony to another. He studied in Canada and Australia before coming to teach in New Zealand. His speciality has remained Indian English fiction. He has been to India many times but yet is not, nor ever could be Indian. Likewise, I am a white New Zealander, and studied also in the larger, richer settler colony of Canada before returning to New Zealand. Our academic lives, then, have both been articulated along imperial routes of trade, sympathy and culture. Our travels have not been those of the writers and travellers we were studying, yet as we read, we could not help but be aware of the relationship between, say, our academic voyages and those of Ralph Fitch and Thomas Coryat, hence the aptness of his elephant emblem as our class icon.

To this extent the course became a reflection on the general conditions of diaspora and post-coloniality, and the place of former white colonies within post-colonial debates.<sup>25</sup> Here an unresolved issue was that our selection of material replicated our white settler bias; this of course was exacerbated by the replacement of Chandra's *Red Earth* with Forbes' *Bombay Ice* (to some extent alleviated by the contrast with Namjoshi's *Snapshots of Caliban*). The cultural specificity of Indian texts was not glossed over; and our readings were hopefully marked by an awareness of Rajan's salutary warning that:

India and the West are enormous simplifications, and one cannot be deaf to the irony of using the homogenizing language of imperialism to mark out a terrain for a distinctive postimperial gathering of voices.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless through engaging with them our own place (or dis-placement) was illuminated, by forms, as it were, of post-imperial transference. As planned, we taught the course for two years, and have now moved to other areas of interest, fertilised by our journeys in Shakespeare's India. The course's preoccupation with race has led Ralph to a seminar engaging texts and theories of whiteness. The theme of dialogue across the Empire has been continued, since the course is being staged simultaneously in Cardiff, and the students as well as staff exchange insights regularly. By a further irony linking post-colonial travel routes with the post-modern education market, the Cardiff colleague is Radhika Mohanram, a theorist of race, culture and displacement, whose career has taken her from India to the former colonies of Texas, New Zealand, and now, Wales. Shakespeare's presence in New Zealand continues to haunt. As he does in the India of *Shakespeare Wallah*, he seems a necessary stranger in this land. How does *King Lear* echo in the Pacific? How does Janet Frame one of our few great writers,

176 *The Upstart Crow*

for example, frame her Shakespeare? These questions are as urgent as those asked by Ania Loomba of Bombay Othellos, or of Rushdie's pluri-Shakespeare throughout his *Moor*. Antipodean answers cannot be precisely the same as theirs; yet the path to answering them clearly lies through considering those issues as analogies and metaphors for the New Zealand situation.

In a provocative essay, Ian Wedde likewise considers the relationship of *The Tempest* to the New Zealand project:

What's interesting to me, now, is that if you bring *The Tempest* to production over here, in territory that's a version of its source of allegory, its resonance as an historical model, its relevance as a critique and its argumentative life will probably be ignored in favour of a direction that treats it like an atavism, sealed-off, immutable. Its performance will involve preservation, not reactivation. It will be a garrison production. It will be 'an anthology piece.' This is 'culture' in the improving classicist sense; we are primitive in the provincial sense. We do not have the 'right' ... to talk back. The result, especially poignant given the buried life of this particular drama, will be parodic.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, that productions and readings of *The Tempest* will simply mimic those of the metropolis. As the readings in this issue show, it is both possible and necessary to read otherwise. In his valuable survey of antipodean approaches to Shakespeare, Michael Neill suggests that Shakespeare has " become (among other things) a New Zealand dramatist",<sup>28</sup> that Shakespeare has been so intrinsic to the cultural project of a European New Zealand that they cannot be told apart. In a sense this strikes me as being too benign, as it would be to claim Shakespeare as a Bombay, Madras or Calcutta dramatist, however inventive restagings of Shakespeare have been in those places. Rather I think we should see Shakespeare as a necessary foreign body, a cultural parasite on host communities and nations. The figure can easily be reversed of course, to say that all Shakespeare critics, no matter their locale, are parasitic upon the all-giving host of Shakespeare's ubiquitous body, which in this sense I would see as a body like the remorselessly replicating mother creature in the *Aliens* saga. Readers, performers and audience members then behave at points like Sigourney Weaver's Ripley. Both host and parasite depend upon each other: at certain points they are indistinguishable. In their symbiotic world, survival depends on humans and cyborgs tolerating and understanding the intolerable other.

As I write this pestilential conclusion, our news media flood with reports of the new plague of foot and mouth now general, it seems throughout the British Isles. An open, island, agricultural economy, New Zealand fears such another English plague. And this, in symbolic terms, I suggest, is how, for now, we should treat, or read Shakespeare: suspiciously. Not for the first time, then as Wedde, Forbes, Chandra, Namjoshi and Rushdie, all understand, we would become Calibans: "The red plague rid you /for learning me your language" (1.2.366-367). As the essays in this volume further suggest, we will not be rid of the "red plague" of Shakespeare's language any time soon; and so we had best understand those words better, that, like Kate in the song from *The Tempest* "[we] might scratch wh'er [we] did itch" (2.2.52). Or as Wedde more decorously puts it:

... you have to rearrange everything, rewrite it and rewrite it, until you are anywhere at once, at sea again, but not home.<sup>29</sup>

Only when we do so can we hope to continue, as my title promises, connecting the far-flung here and now where re-readings and re-writings are produced with the labile there and then of Shakespeare's texts.

University of Waikato

### Notes

1. My involvement in this area would not have been possible without the support, insight, and energy of my colleague Ralph Crane. The insights generated by our course are his as much as mine. Thanks to Catherine Silverstone and Neil Young for their helpful readings of the piece.
2. The warders, now white and overwhelmingly Afrikaans-speaking, demanded a master-servant relationship. They ordered us to call them *baas*, which we refused to do." Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: the Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (London: Abacus, 1996), 413.
3. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, Eighth Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1381.
4. See, in particular, the essays in Martin Orkin and Ania Loomba's collection *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* (London: Routledge, 1998). For an eloquent consideration of what it has meant to have been, as it were, a distinguished "Milton Wallah" see Balachandra Rajan's *Under Western Eyes: India from Milton to Macaulay* (Durham: Duke UP, 1999).
5. See my essays on "Shakespeare in New Zealand" in *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature* in English, eds. Roger Robinson and Nelson Wattie (Melbourne: Oxford UP), 489-491, and in the forthcoming *Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Michael Dobson.
6. At the University of Waikato, the first degree takes three years of study. Graduate students may thus be in their fourth or fifth year of tertiary study in English when they take our seminars. In North American terms, thus, the level aimed at was somewhere between a fourth year undergraduate seminar and a Masters/PhD seminar.
7. In his *Shakespearean Negotiations: the Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988), 1.
8. Julie Newma, *The Ballistic Bard: Postcolonial Fictions* (London: Arnold, 1995), 1-2.
9. J. G. Farrell, *The Siege of Krishnapur* (London: Phoenix, 1996 (1973), 304.
10. James Ivory, "Introduction," to *Shakespeare Wallah*, in *Savages/Shakespeare Wallah: Two Films by James Ivory* (New York: Grove Press, 1973), 87.
11. *Shakespeare Wallah*, 91.
12. *Merchant of Venice* 3.2.99. All Shakespeare references are from *The Complete Works*, eds. Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor et al (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986).
13. See her "Obscured by dreams": Race, Empire, and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47 (Spring 1996), 51. Hendricks' lucid summary of the wealth of Renaissance material bearing on India was a very useful addition to our *Shakespeare Wallah's* course reader.
14. Ralph Fitch in *Hakluyt's Voyages*, ed. Richard David (London: Chatto & Windus, 1981), 181.
15. Richard Hall's lively *Empires of the Monsoon: A History of the Indian Ocean and Its Invaders* (London: Harper Collins, 1996) usefully places the East India Company within the much longer history, from the time of Alexander the Great, of European and American efforts to profit from the Indian Ocean. See also Ram Chandra Prasad's *Early English Travellers in India: A Study in the Travel Literature of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Periods with Particular Reference to India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsi Dass, 1965). Prasad's approach is largely descriptive. For a fertile exploration of how such accounts might now be read, see Jyostna Singh's *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: Discoveries of India in the Language of Colonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
16. In the introduction to their Third Arden edition of *The Tempest* (Walton-on-Thames, Surrey: Thomas Nelson, 1999). Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan comprehensively survey the history of the play's interpretation. See especially the section, "Perspectives on Imperialism" 98-108.
17. Vikram Chandram, *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (London: Faber, 1995) 310, 314.
18. Chandra, 317.
19. Chandra, 342.

178 *The Upstart Crow*

20. Chandra, 540.
21. For a summary of these connections, see Ralph Crane and Jennifer Levitt's *Troubled Paradise: The Fiction of J. G. Farrell* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997) 85.
22. Leslie Forbes, *Bombay Ice* (London: Phoenix, 1998) 386.
23. In her latest novel, *Fish, Blood, and Bone* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2000) Forbes has yet again used a thriller/quest motif to evoke interracial, imperial, English-Indian identities, but bases the plot in the late nineteenth century and Shakespeare has disappeared from her frame of reference. The intertwining of nations, peoples, and trade yet again emerges as poisonous and murder-laden.
24. Salman Rushdie. *The Moor's Last Sigh* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995). 4.
25. For an examination of such issues from the New Zealand perspective, see Michael Neill's "Post-colonial Shakespeare? Writing Away from the Centre" in Orkin and Loomba, 164-186. Neill connects antipodean anxieties with wider currents in this field. For the places of settler colonies in post-colonial discussions, see, for example, Alan Lawson's "Postcolonial Theory and the Settler Subject," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 56 (Fall 1995), 20-37.
26. Rajan, 210.
27. Ian Wedde, *How to be Nowhere: Essays and Texts 1971-1994* (Wellington: Victoria UP, 1995), 59.
28. Michael Neill, "Shakespeare Upside Down," in *World and Stage: Essays for Colin Gibson*, eds. Greg Waite, Jocelyn Harris, Heather Murray, and John Hale (Department of English, University of Otago, 1998), 147.
29. Wedde, *How to be Nowhere*, 229.

**Jyotsna G. Singh. Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: "Discoveries" of India in the Language of Colonialism. New York and London: Routledge, 1996. Pp.vii + 196.**

*Reviewed by Jonathan Gil Harris*

The cover of Jyotsna Singh's *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues* contains an arresting detail from an early nineteenth-century Indian painting. In it, a group of nautch girls (high-class courtesans) dance for an exclusively male audience that includes an Indian maharajah and two British officers. Though the painting ostensibly records a scene of colonial authority in which Indian women and even an Indian potentate are subjected to the imperial gaze of male European spectators, its theatrical image of power resists easy decoding. The British officers are every bit as much a spectacle as the nautch, seated on a stage-like carpet upon which they succumb to the delights of the entertainment as they smoke a hookah. Power circulates in the image, then, but ambivalently. Is this a complacent image of British authority, or a critical portrait of its dissipation? The painting beautifully underscores Singh's abiding preoccupations in *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues*: the ambivalent politics and poetics of India's "discovery," and the dialogic theatre of colonial and postcolonial power.

Singh asserts in her introduction that "the 'discovery' of India serves as a framing trope of the book" (1). As this remark suggests, she regards this "discovery" not as an unmediated encounter with an essential India, but as a constitutive rhetorical figure in the shifting discursive fields of colonialism and postcolonialism. In chapter one, she examines "discoveries" of India in the travel narratives of Sir Thomas Roe, the first English ambassador to the Mogul emperor Jehangir's court, and Thomas Coryate, that eccentric *touriste de lettres*. Although the two Thomases' narratives are not colonialist as such, they pave the way for later colonial interventions in India through "a series of spectacles that both exoticize and demonize the natives" (31). In chapter two, Singh turns to the emergent orientalist discourses of the late eighteenth century that accompanied English critiques of the East India Company's practices, and the concomitant "discovery" of a past Hindu golden age allegedly eclipsed by the fallen present. The cultural production of "Decadent India" helped London's politicians, poets and playwrights to attribute the misbehavior of English "nabobs" (merchant potentates who modelled themselves on Indian nawabs) to the corrupting influence of the orient; it also justified the subsequent "civilizing mission" of nineteenth-century reformers who, despite their liberal sympathy for the natives' welfare, consolidated the claims of British rule. Chapter three examines the crucial role of gender in English nineteenth-century colonial narratives about India. Making good use of Joan Scott's structural analysis of gender, Singh shows how the project of bringing India into modernity was fantasized by English writers as a rescue of Indian women from a rigid Hindu tradition, but also as a rescue of Englishmen from the threat of miscegenation. Chapter four looks at the particular role played by Shakespeare in the "civilizing mission"; Singh here supplements Ania Loomba's earlier work on the history of Indian adaptations of Shakespeare by focusing on the Bengal Renaissance, in which Shakespeare "became an important context for the Bengalis' rediscovery of their own cultural identity as well as of a burgeoning nationalism" (140). In doing so, Singh signals a large debt to Mary Louise Pratt's notion of "transculturation," which she employs to explain how Bengali appropriations of

180 *The Upstart Crow*

Shakespeare did not simply consolidate British colonial hegemony, but also transformed the latter from within. Chapter five develops the theme of transculturation with respect to post-independence writing. Starting with an analysis of Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India*, which adapts the colonial vocabulary of tradition and modernity to articulate a utopian brand of nationalism, Singh moves to critiques of the India "discovered" by different genres of literature - the social realist novel, typified by Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (faulted by Singh for its mystification of communal and class conflicts); the magical realist novel, exemplified by Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*; and the epic (in both traditional and Brechtian senses), instanced by Dharamvir Bharati's *Andha Yug*.

While "discovery" may be the explicit framing trope of the book, Singh's argument repeatedly relies on another constitutive metaphor: theatre as a figure for power. It's not surprising, given Singh's background as a scholar of Shakespeare and drama, that theatrical performance should figure prominently in each of her chapters. On offer here are insightful analyses of Roe's and Coryate's accounts of Mogul court spectacles; Coryate's quixotic quest for the fabled Tamburlaine; Samuel Foote's eighteenth-century play *The Nabob*; the performances of nautch girls; productions of Shakespeare in Rājera Calcutta; and Bharati's subversive drama. But the language of theatre also pervades the book's critical lexicon. Singh remarks of Coryate and Roe that "we can read their picturesque scripts as part of the production of the 'real' and imagined 'India/Indies'" (47); she analyzes the "eighteenth-century scene of colonial self-examination" (56); she casts the native widow as "the mute, yet central 'character' in a theatrical spectacle that seemed to both fascinate and repel the European agents of surveillance" (99); and she draws an analogy between "the stage and a kingdom" (174-5). These theatrical analyses of colonial "scenes" may seem to hark back to the classic new historicist model of power in early modern England, according to which royal authority produced itself through rituals of theatrical display. But the beauty of Singh's book lies in how much it complicates the paradigm. There is no one, univocal arrangement of theatrical power on the stage of India's "discovery," as indeed the book's cover suggests: the dramas of colonialism, even as they appear to rehearse the power of the colonizer, are riddled with the instabilities and faultlines engendered by these dramas' multiple voices. Nor are the dramas scripted by the colonizers alone. As Singh notes in her introduction, critics such as Homi Bhabha "have noted the dialogic strains within colonial narratives and called for anti-essentialist revisions of a previously monolithic history - ones in which colonial/postcolonial identity is always overwritten by the differential play of colonial ambivalence" (6). Hence the (perhaps unwieldy) title of Singh's book: colonial narratives are always destabilized by traces of cultural dialogues, and so seemingly univocal accounts of history can be effectively displaced by the polyvocality of the theatrical. "Theatre" thus serves for Singh less as a trope for figuring the locus of a centralized power, as it has in historicist analyses of early modern royal spectacle, than as a means for interrogating it.

"Discovery" is likewise a dialogic practice, and does not always entail a straightforwardly hierarchical configuration of epistemological, political, or economic power. This much is made clear by the recent "Bollywood" movie, *Lagaan* (2001), produced by its star, Aamir Khan. If Singh makes her "entry into the field of colonial and post-colonial studies" at the "intersection between the 'real' and an imagined India" (3), Khan's film stages the "discovery" of India in a rather different, if equally factitious, field - an imaginary cricket field from the time of the Raj. Set in the 1890s, *Lagaan* (the Hindi term for "revenue") depicts the skirmish between a village of unspecified location and the local British Collector, who has doubled the already steep rate of taxation. Severe drought has crippled the villagers' ability to pay; the Collector agrees to waive the tax on one seemingly impossible condition - that the Indian villagers, who have never even heard

of cricket, beat the local colonial English team. Against the odds, Aamir Khan's character, Bhuvan, assembles a rag-tag eleven, all the while learning from the Collector's sympathetic sister the rudiments of the game. The lessons are put to good use; in a thrilling contest, Bhuvan's team defeat the English in the very last ball of the match. Though representing a small village, Bhuvan's team is meant to be pan-Indian, a synecdoche for "India-At-Large" (the subtitle of the film is "Once Upon A Time in India"); hence the eleven includes a Sikh (Deva), a Muslim (Ismail), and an untouchable (Kachra). In its studied diversity, then, the team resembles less the modern Indian cricket side than Nehru's first cabinet. To this extent, the film's "Indian" team may recall the "British" army of *Henry V*; like the latter, the Indian cricketers are a "multicultural" body whose seeming diversity still privileges a cultural centre (Hindu and decidedly male in this case). Yet if *Lagaan* has a Shakespearean analogue, it is *The Tempest*. Bhuvan's team illustrates Caliban's dilemma, i.e. that his declarations of resistance to colonial authority, and his "discovery" of a de-colonized identity, have to be articulated within the language of the colonizer. Bhuvan in effect adapts Caliban's famous riposte to Prospero, so that the film's message seems to be: "you taught me cricket, and my profit on't is I know how to sweep your yorkers over the long-on boundary."

In the process, the film's fantasy of nationhood not only discloses how the trope of discovery still informs the production of "India" in post-independence popular culture; it also underlines how dialogic the rhetorical practices of discovery are, inflected by multiple cultural voices that destabilize myths of singular national origin or essence. The transnationalized cricket pitch of *Lagaan*, much like the argument of Singh's wonderful book, dramatically models India as a "palimpsest, continually being 'discovered' and 're-discovered' (inscribed and reinscribed) by colonialist and later nationalist forces" (14). *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues'* palimpsested India performs an important intervention in the history of Anglo-Indian cultural relations - not least because this very "performance" models a new, theatrical lexicon that complicates familiar colonial and postcolonial narratives of India.

**Ithaca College**

**Imtiaz Habib. *Shakespeare and Race: Praxis in the Early Modern Period*. New York: University Press of America, 1999. Pp. 314.**

*by Rachana Sachdev*

Essays are beginning to appear in greater number in journals and in anthologies on the issue of race within early modern texts, ever since Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker published *Women, "Race" and Writing in Early Modern England* in 1994. The number of race-related essays on *Othello* and *Titus Andronicus*, in particular, have multiplied significantly over the last ten years, testifying to a strong and enduring interest in exploring the ramifications of this charged issue in a time-period usually considered to be pre-slavery and pre-colonial. There are also recent book-length studies: Joyce MacDonald's *Race, Ethnicity, and Power in the Renaissance* (1997), Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin's *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* (1998) and Tom Cartelli's *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations* (1999). Habib's study distinguishes itself from this increasing tide of essays and books by its simultaneous use of the insights offered by cultural and post-colonialist studies, and this indeed is both its greatest strength and its potential stumbling block. *Shakespeare and Race* offers an important bridge between what are essentially complementary ways of looking at texts; however, more controversially, it locates race as a by-product of colonialism. Habib contends, "Elizabethan constructions of race, as in Shakespeare, are a product of the global early modern European colonial enterprise," in opposition to critics who have tended to see "racial formations" as "anterior to early modern European colonialism." (3) Indeed, Habib, drawing on the theories of contemporary cultural anthropologists, identifies the "crucial cultural event of early modern European history" as the "colonial project" (5) and this is the second major controversial proposition offered by this book, and one that would have benefited from further explication. If, as Habib grants, the Elizabethan era is traditionally regarded as pre-colonial, any claim about the centrality of the colonial enterprise to this time period and the use of post-colonialist methodology necessitates systematic and careful argumentation. However, if Habib is deliberately employing the "violence of critical anachronism to force some visibility on to the obliterated black subject in the dawning moments of the English colonial experience," (9-10) as he later contends, then his project becomes that much more easily acceptable. In either case, his main argument about the unrepresentability or "unwritability" of the black subaltern subject remains of interest and compels the reader onward to his analyses of Shakespeare's texts.

Melding the scholarship on race with that on post-colonialism and gender studies requires an encyclopedic understanding of a great variety of texts. Habib demonstrates a good working knowledge of the essential texts for all the methodologies—he has an extensive reading list covering the required areas. His own research and writing seem to be well informed by the theoretical bases. Thanks to some sustained thinking along several lines, Habib has arrived at solid and illuminating readings of the Shakespearean texts.

The strength of Habib's critical praxis is particularly evident in his reading of the sonnets. Following the path-breaking work of Margreta deGrazia and Lynda Boose, Habib provides a comprehensive reading detailing the "racial argument" that he claims is evolving within the sequence. He demonstrates at length how "the struggle to contain

the black female subject becomes Shakespeare's containment by the subject" (31). The psychological hold of the black subject over the author function then causes an erasure of black female presence within the rest of the canon. Habib also offers another compelling reading of the absence of black women within Shakespeare's plays: "Since in the logic of colonial exchange colonial discourse will always ally itself with patriarchy, for Shakespeare, the color question was best approached through a patriarchal gender preference: black males were an acceptable oddity...." (87-8) As in the rest of the study, Habib looks at this phenomenon of the vanishing black woman both through the lens of cultural studies as well as post-colonialist psychology, and the intersection of both sets of exegesis provides a rich ground for further conclusions.

The disappearance of the black female from the Shakespearean canon does not in itself privilege black male subjects; the acceptance of the black subaltern male is also limited, Habib argues, and functions primarily to make the "colonial metropolis visible, not himself" (95). Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* is "doubly the subaltern" because he is "an African with a Jewish/Semitic name," (113) and his resistance to white patriarchy is visible both in his appropriation of colonial language and learning and in his "compensatory control" over Tamora. Habib also traces in the history of Aaron's illegitimate child the erasure and invisibility of the larger black community with the city. His reading of *Othello* starts with Othello as the symbolic black child of Aaron, and goes on to invoke "the contexts of black military service in Tudor armies and generally, of the unacknowledged blacks of sixteenth century England." (128). In his analysis of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra appears as the resurgent black woman whose presence could not be fully contained in the sonnets, but as Habib is at pains to make clear, this is "not to assume a simplistic relationship between discourse, author and work" (159). In his post-colonial emphasis on the debate about Cleopatra's skin color and her representation as the unpredictable monarch, Habib locates the "struggle between a revisionist collective and personal memory working through the playwright" (159). *Shakespeare and Race* ends with that much-analyzed post-colonial figure: Caliban. In examining the interpretive possibilities of Caliban's psychological, physical and symbolic crouching, Habib is able to pull together the threads of earlier subaltern moments and behaviors within Shakespeare's texts: "The contained antagonism of the black subject's slouched psychological profile creates the sly mimicry and hybridity of Aaron's seditious career in *Titus Andronicus*, and it feeds Othello's obdurate unknowability in *Othello*. The black subject's scrunched, unintelligible posture underwrites the continuous unpredictability and the repressed oppositionalism of the black female subject in *Antony and Cleopatra*." (246)

The readings of the plays and sonnets are thorough and well grounded, as I have outlined; however, they sometimes suffer from a need to position themselves too securely within scholarship. While acknowledging influences is a necessary and valuable exercise, Habib sometimes cites from as many as four or five sources at once, making this study somewhat slow paced and dense. For instance, he introduces the concept of tragedy with five different quotations one after the other, from as varied sources as "Columbia University philosopher, Richard Kuhns," Aristotle, Naomi Liebler, Edith Hall and John Gillies (88-9). The critical reevaluation of tragedy and of the importance of the metropolis to the genre could be more successfully achieved without this dense layering.

There are moments in this study, however, where the multiplicity of secondary and primary sources allows Habib to piece together slim bits of material history of blacks in early modern England: "The unwritten history of the Tudor black woman which is the material context of the black woman of the *Sonnets*, is an intuitive text woven by the solitary municipal entry, stray items of household accounts, and incidental personal memory. They include the records of All Hallows parish in Elizabethan London showing

some African women living there that Eldred Jones, citing earlier research, had reminded scholars of more than two decades ago, . . . two of whom Peter Fryer has subsequently documented as Clare and Maria." (28) To establish the materiality of race issues within early modern England is vital to such a study as Habib's, though sometimes it does seem that the project has undertaken a large enough territory as it is. In addition, the necessity to rely on historical speculation undercuts the validity of some important theoretical conclusions reached in this study. The possibility of Shakespeare's acquaintance with a particular black woman in London (in the chapter on the *Sonnets*) does not seem to me to be the question worth pursuing in *this* inquiry, though the answer is of obvious interest to Shakespeare scholars. *Shakespeare and Race* seems to call for a separate study of the material presence of blacks in Elizabethan England, and I hope that Habib's next academic venture will bring us the fruits of this inquiry.

Susquehanna University

## CALL FOR PAPERS

Shakespeare and the Market  
*The Upstart Crow*, Volume XXII (2002)



In addition to submissions addressing any aspect of Shakespeare's works, we are requesting submissions for a theme-based issue, "Shakespeare and the Market." Essays, notes, and poems may address the theme from diverse perspectives and approaches. All submissions should adhere to the standard requirements for submission of manuscripts. Submissions will be read as received; for "Shakespeare and the Market" submissions, priority will be given to those received before December 15, 2002.

**“There is an upstart crow beautified with our feathers that, with his ‘tiger’s heart wrapped in a player’s hide,’ supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; being an absolute Johannes Factotum, in his conceit the only shake-scene in a country.”**

— Robert Greene, *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592)



**F**or those persons who have become Friends of *The Upstart Crow* and helped sponsor this commemorative issue, I want to extend to you my personal thanks. I know I speak for the journal’s editors, staff, and advisory board. Your help makes a real difference as the Center for Electronic and Digital Publishing (CEDP) endeavors to maintain high standards and strives to do new things with this publication for Clemson University Digital Press (CUDP). The two shoulders of our publishing house are *The South Carolina Review* and *The Upstart Crow*. The first has achieved “Top 20” status as one of the best “College, Literary, and ‘Little’ Magazines” in the nation, according to the *New York Quarterly*. The second, one reason Clemson is associated with the good name of William Shakespeare, is being transfigured to mark its twenty-first birthday, to acknowledge the new millennium, and to honor the memory of Jim Andreas, late editor of *The Upstart Crow* and co-founding director of the annual Clemson Shakespeare Festival. Subscriptions and sales are only part of the story of running a successful journal without a subsidy. That’s why your help is so very much appreciated. Tell your friends about us, have them visit us on our web site, and watch the journal links grow at <http://www.clemson.edu/caah/cedp>.

Wayne K. Chapman,  
CEDP Director / CUDP Executive Editor



### **Submission of Manuscripts:**

*The Upstart Crow* accepts essays, notes, and poems concerning Shakespeare’s works. Three hard copies of the manuscript are required; please do not send a computer diskette initially. To maintain anonymity for “blind readings,” the author’s name, address, phone and fax numbers, and email address should be included on a separate sheet, but the author’s name should not appear on the title page or on other pages of the manuscript. Manuscripts should not exceed twenty-five pages double-spaced, including notes; they should be typed or printed on letter quality printers. Manuscripts should be double-spaced including inset quotations, endnotes, and bibliography. Photocopies of illustrations are acceptable at the stage. Send submissions to:

The Editor, *The Upstart Crow*  
Department of English  
Strode Tower, Box 340523  
Clemson University  
Clemson, SC 29634-0523