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THE SUBTEXT OF W.S.'S *FUNERALL ELEGYE*

by Penny McCarthy

My love to Thee; which I could not set forth
In any other habit of disguise." (*Elegye*, lines 207-8)

On the publication in 1989 of Donald Foster's book arguing for Shakespeare's authorship of the *Funerall Elegye by W.S.* (1612), critics divided into two factions—for and against Shakespeare as the *Elegye's* author.¹ Recently Gilles Monsarrat has published an article and Brian Vickers a book, both attributing the work to John Ford, Shakespeare's younger contemporary.² But in their concentration on the authorship question, these two have, I believe, skirted round some important aspects of the *Elegye's* meaning, as I believe the earlier disputants did. This article reverses those priorities. The question of authorship is subsidiary, the goal being an understanding of the *Elegye's* themes and of their inter-weaving.

The *Elegye*, 578 lines of iambic pentameter, mostly in quatrains with the occasional couplet, celebrates the life and deploras the murder of a young Exeter man, William Peter, whose kinsman Edward Drew ran his sword through William's head as they rode home after a quarrelsome drinking spree. Critics have primarily puzzled over the autobiographical hints given by the author W.S., wondering what prompted him to launch into print to mourn young William. Was he a close friend? A lover? Was he someone more distant who hardly knew the circumstances of death or much about the life of the youth? Was he commissioned by the family? Where close readings have been attempted of passages which do not bear directly on those questions, the critics have found the thought compressed, the imagery convoluted and its motivation hard to discern, the logic odd, the diction abstract and strained. They have in most cases concluded the poet lacks skill, and his extravagantly expressed sentiments are not worth sustained study.

My strategy for interpretation will be to imagine a workshop of students engaging in a close reading of the *Elegye*, and producing varied, even conflicting, readings of many lines and longer passages. Some of these readings will raise the possibility that the poet was of necessity writing in a "habit of disguise" (line 208), that the stylistic difficulties signal the presence of a subtext—a kind of shadow-poem containing what the poet could not openly state, but meant his audience to hear. Drawing on the findings of the imaginary workshop, I shall pursue the leads which give rise to that suspicion, trying to find a schema in which they might cohere to make an intelligible picture. Two particularly dense passages will be examined in detail and in their contexts, and given novel readings. A new thesis will emerge concerning the craft (in two senses) with which the poem is written, with implications for the reasons for the murder, the standing of the poet in relationship to the dead man and his family, and (in a final speculative section) the identity of W.S. A brief survey will help to establish what current criticism of the *Elegye* has concluded on these points, and in what ways it remains divided.

The critical history

We do not know how the *Elegye* was received when published, and there is no evidence of critical interest in it until 1989, when Donald Foster published *Elegy by W.S.: A Study in Attribution*. His interest had been aroused by the elegy's epistle, which comprises a short address by W.S. to John Peter, brother of the murdered William. Foster thought the epistle was remarkably similar in style to Shakespeare's dedication of his narrative poem *Lucrece*. That resemblance, together with the coincidence of the initials, the fact that the *Elegye* seems to anticipate some of the diction of two Shakespeare plays not published by 1612, and Foster's sense that the poem, though oddly obscure, had certain literary strengths, led him to a careful analysis of its linguistic properties. He charted the small quirks of diction, grammar, syntax and prosody that make up the poem's idiolect. He also compared the incidence of rare words and images, and collocations of (sometimes commonplace) words and images with those of Shakespeare's works. On both counts, he found much correlation.

Setting the tone for many responses to Foster's *Study*, Richard Proudfoot rejected the attribution to Shakespeare on the grounds of quality, suggesting the poem was "the pious labour of an amateur academic or clerical poet."³ He took Foster to task for citing "only the seventeen most favourable results" of his correlation of W.S.'s linguistic indices with those of Shakespeare. Proudfoot thought the poem warranted some deductions concerning W.S.'s life which seem incompatible with the known facts of Shakespeare's life—that W.S. was young at the time of writing (Shakespeare was forty-seven when the poem was written), and knew William Peter for nine years at Oxford.

These three aspects—literary merit, the statistical significance of quirks of idiolect, and the biographical information—featured strongly in the "second phase" of criticism. The details of the poem's publication (remarkably soon after the murder itself, and by Thomas Thorpe, the publisher of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* in 1609) also received attention.

Richard Abrams championed Foster and the Shakespearean attribution at the 1994 meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America; and Foster represented his case in a strengthened version at the conference of the Shakespeare Association and then the MLA conference in 1995. This led directly to media interest in the question of whether the "love" of the poet for the dead young man (see epigraph) was sexual; and on a more scholarly note, to a spate of responses of which a series in the *TLS* of 1996 can be taken as fairly representative.

Stanley Wells, Brian Vickers and Katherine Duncan-Jones lodged objections to attributing the *Elegye* to Shakespeare mainly on the grounds of the poem's quality.⁴ The cast of mind and some of the attitudes in the poem were also cited, and categorized as un-Shakespearean. Duncan-Jones, for example, held that the disdain for "mimics" and passion apparently expressed in the poem could not have been held by Shakespeare the actor; that the language indicated a Puritan author; and that the Peter family (whom she took to be Puritan sympathizers) had commissioned the poem from a Puritan cleric, to mitigate the scandal of William's sordid death. Vickers thought that "the syntax, rhetoric and procedure of argument are quite unlike that of Shakespeare." He failed to consider whether a novel purpose might give a different cast to a piece of writing: the *Elegye* is not a play, a love-sonnet, or narrative poem.

Opposing these critics, Richard Abrams questioned their readings of lines which contain autobiographical clues; of those which concern W.S.'s attitudes; and of those which touch on his degree of closeness to William Peter.⁵ He questioned whether the text of the *Elegye* supported the conclusion that the poet regarded himself as young, and rejected the theory of the "pious cleric," pointing out that W.S.

appears to refer without a hint of disapproval to a woman companion of the dead William Peter of nine years' standing. Since William had been married for only three years, it must be another whose love for the murdered man is celebrated in the *Elegye*, claimed Abrams. He questioned further whether the poem could have been commissioned, as it evinces genuine grief and must have been written, as its author claims, out of a personal sense of loss.

Wells responded to the point about the lover of nine years. He denied that there was such a person, on the grounds that the poet launches into what appears to be an encomium of conjugal love immediately after the lines which mention the "fellow to his counsels and his bed."⁶ (Subsequent critics hostile to the Shakespearean thesis felt that either "nine years" is a typographical or editorial mistake for "three years," or the poet wrote "three years" because he hardly knew William Peter or his circumstances.)

Two articles appearing elsewhere extended the range of the discussion. William Honan traced the history of the debate so far, and came down on the side of Shakespeare's authorship.⁷ Joseph Sobran questioned the logistics of writing and publication.⁸ Could William Shakespeare, living quietly at Stratford, have heard of the murder of an obscure youth in Devonshire, gathered his thoughts and written a dense poem, arranged for it to be sent to Thomas Thorpe in London and entered in the Stationers' Register, all in the space of nineteen days?⁹ Yet Sobran implicitly accepted the likeness of the *Elegye* to Shakespeare's works by assigning the poem to the earl of Oxford, whom he believes to be Shakespeare.

The "third phase" was initiated by Leeds Barroll, who, as editor of *Shakespeare Studies*, asked certain scholars for their views, and published them in successive volumes (1997 and 1998). Foster restated his case, enlarging on the history.¹⁰ There were some converts to the Shakespearean side. Leah Marcus had found connections between the Peter family and Philip Sidney's friend, Fulke Greville, who had interests in Stratford.¹¹ This gave a potential chain of connection to Shakespeare. Stephen Booth was swayed by Foster's marked success with other attributions. He allowed the attribution to Shakespeare, but thought the poem uncharacteristically bad.¹² Ian Lancashire offered an explanation of the "semi-blind" collocations of words produced by every author from his or her "procedural" memory.¹³ He thought that some of the "verbal clusters" identified by Foster as common to W.S. and to Shakespeare provided good evidence for the poets' common identity. Abrams tried to rebut some arguments of the opposition, asking pertinently what is implied by the poet's having made a "constant and irrefragable vow" to the dead man (not, surely, the sentiments of a commissioned cleric who hardly knew the facts of the victim's life).¹⁴

In the next issue Lancashire showed the significance of subconsciously controlled "markers" in syntax and diction.¹⁵ He thought Foster had chosen W.S.'s markers well, and the correlation with Shakespeare was therefore significant. Foster's short piece in the same edition rebutted Duncan-Jones's and Marcus's supposition that the immediate Peter family were Puritan.¹⁶ Abrams brought arguments to bear against Duncan-Jones's main candidate for authorship, the Puritan William Sclater.¹⁷ He repeated a plea made in all his contributions to the debate—a plea for better readers of the poem. He felt there were mysteries in the text which would be solved only by a more attentive reading than the poem had yet received.

Foster had in fact started to probe those mysteries in 1996, in an introduction to a French translation of the *Elegye*.¹⁸ He pointed to some ambiguities of phrasing and tone which cast doubt on the praise accorded to William Peter. Perhaps the "little ordered common-wealth" (294) of Peter's domestic circle was in truth "little-ordered," or disorderly—illegitimate. If Peter was not "addicted wholly" to "unbeseeming blusshesse vanities" (93-4), was he *partly* addicted to them? Foster elaborated on his sus-

picion that the poem was inspired by the poet's love (a sexual love) for the murder victim.

The discussion continued on the world wide web, without resolution. With the new interventions of Monsarrat and Vickers, it may be poised to change course, for these two offer substantial stylistic evidence in favor of John Ford's authorship. I think their evidence can be countered by good arguments: but a separate study will be required to demonstrate this. This paper aims to be simply that "better reading" of the *Elegye* for which Abrams pleaded.

The workshop

Our putative workshop participants are presented with the text in the original format. It is heavily punctuated, which obscures the syntax for a modern reader; and a large number of words and phrases (not only abstract nouns) are capitalized and italicized. They find: a title page with the title "A Funerall Elegye." There follows on the same page: "*In memory of the late Vertuous Maister William Peeter of Whipton neere Excester. By W.S. Imprinted at London by G. Eld. 1612.*" They then find an Epistle, addressed to the dead man's brother: "To Maister *John Peter of Boohaye in Devon. Esq.*" It too is signed by W.S. He explains that his "love" for the young William and "the last duty of a friend" are what activate his poem: though "[e]xercise in this kind I will little affect, and am lesse adicted to," he has written the poem "to him," i.e. to William, "and to him onely." "For whom, and whose sake," concludes the poet, "I will not forget to remember any friendly respects to you, or to any of those that have lov'd him for himselfe, and himselfe for his deserts."

On this first reading, the investigators confine themselves to merely wondering what relationship prompted W.S. to write for William; what kind of "exercise" (writing in general? poetry? funeral elegies?) he claims to be reluctant to undertake; and why the poet stresses that he does not do so for the sake of any but the dead man. It crosses their minds that he is somewhat brusque with the grieving brother, not only because he addresses him with no honorifics or favorable adjectives, but also because the sympathy is so emphatically made dependent on the dead man's worth, not the grief of the family, who are given the merest acknowledgement in the words "any of those that have loved him" Perhaps the poem itself will throw light on these things.

The students proceed to the poem, where they find that the theme of virtue heralded on the title page is indeed largely the theme of the poem. But not the sole theme. Their impression of the poem is roughly as follows.

The poet deplores the cutting short of such a promising life, but believes William's worth will constitute the building blocks of his "monument"—his continued remembrance in the minds of men who will recall the deserts of "*One truly good.*" He was truly good firstly on the grounds of his "harmless conversation," a quality to "commend/ A life free from such staines, as follyes are" (18-19). This slightly convoluted phrase the students take to mean that William engaged in social relationships which should attract no censure, inasmuch as they would be accounted not stains but (at the worst) "follies." They take these words to be nicely judged. They would be surprised to hear that no critic has lingered over them.

They find next that William was particularly noted for his "steddy faith," a motif which recurs throughout the poem, and which here is characterized as "constant temper" holding the perfect balance between "*thankfulness, and kindness*" (24-6). Later it is called "constant faith/ Never untrue, where once he love profest" (183-4); and later still they will come across a passage extolling his "*Faith*" as that "which did persever,/ Where once it was protested always sound" (331-2). The last two passages will need to be considered in their context; but already the readers are inclined to think that

"faith" is equivalent to constancy, possibly to constancy in love, as the second instance implies. Because they allow the poem to prescribe its own lexicon, they do not rush to invest this "faith" with a religious connotation.

From line 30, they read that William's life was almost spotless, apart from the odd "faulty error." And yet, strangely, it seems to have been subject to malice. Conversely, a short passage on William's defamers ends with the paradoxical statement that he lived "free from detraction."¹⁹

Not that he was above the spleenfull sence And spight of malice; but for that he had Warrant enough in his owne innocence,	35
Against the sting of some in nature bad. Yet who is hee so absolutely blest, That lives incompast in a mortall frame[?] Some-time in reputation not opprest[?]	40
By some in nothing famous but defame? Such in the <i>By-path</i> and the <i>Ridg-way</i> lurke That leads to ruine; in a smooth pretence Of what they doe, to be a speciall worke[.] Of singlenesse, not tending to offence.	45
Whose very vertues are not to detract, While hope remaines of gaine (base fee of slaves) Despising chiefly[.] men in fortunes wrackt, But death to such gives unremembred graves. Now therein liv'd he happy, if to bee	50
Free from detraction, happinesse it bee.	

The statement that Will Peter had "warrant enough in his own innocence" (35) leads our readers to suppose that he was alive when defamed—in other words, that the scandal did not attach solely to the manner of his death. And the allusion to those who will not "detract / Whiles hope remaines of gaine" (45-6) adds to their suspicion. Those scoundrels only famous in defaming others seem to have hoped to get something from Will by their detraction—money from blackmail, perhaps?

As they read on, the workshop students find more references to scandal. These references next occur in the context of the superstition, which the poet deploras, of believing that a sordid death—"this sudden end"—implies a sordid life: that "[s]uch as is the end, the life proves so" (366). (From the first two lines of the poem, the readers know that Will's "hope-full dayes" were "abridg'd." By the time they come to read (lines 333-8) of the "rage which wrought his end" and of "wraths unhappy sinne" which brought wounds and death, they are sure that he was cut off by murder.) W.S. is much concerned to rebut the ignorant belief in the significance of a sorry end, instancing the "bad" death of the supremely good Christ, of the murdered but innocent Abel, and the martyrdom of the Christian Saints (359-98). But the way in which he deals with the third instance serves to reintroduce the notion of suffering *during* life. The Saints (like Will, it is implied) "tasted of the sower-bitter scourge, / Of torture and affliction, ere they gained, / Those blessings" (395-7).

The workshop members are now inclined to keep their ears open for a hint of what exactly Will suffered in the way of "detraction" in his life, and why; and to work out, if possible, whether the poet's purpose might be just as much to gloss the young man's *life* favorably, as to wipe away the stain of his death. A further hint occurs, they find, in W.S.'s declaration that if he were to give a fuller account of William's life, he could "force the common voyce" (81-2) to warrant what he said. It does sound as

though the common voice would need some persuading. They are about to move on, when some readers call for more reflection on the second biblical comparison, that of Cain and Abel (383-390).

The second brother, who was next begot, Of all that ever were begotten yet[;] Was by a hand in vengeance rude and hot[.]	385
Sent innocent to be in heaven set. Whose fame the Angels in melodious quiers[.] Still witnesse to the world; then why should hee, Well-profitd in excellent desires, Bee more rebuk'd, who had like destiny?	390

When asked what they see worth comment in these lines, they come up with different answers. Some think the proliferation of biblical analogies proves W.S.'s piety: perhaps he was a cleric or a Puritan well versed in his Scripture from daily reading. Others ask why the poet mentions Will Peter's *desires* (389) at this point in the poem. Surely what required stressing was the comparable innocence of Will's life and the biblical Abel's? Desire had nothing to do with the latter's tale. A third group is most struck by the tactlessness of choosing to allude to fratricide when addressing the brother of a dead man. Is it deliberate? they ask. Is W.S. claiming that Will suffered *exactly* the same fate as Abel? The workshop tutor has so far with-held all historical information from the readers. She now volunteers a few material facts about the Peter family, and the murder.²⁰

Will was the younger son: John, the addressee of the *Elegye*, was the older. (So Will was, like Abel, a "second brother.") Will had attended Oxford for nine years, from 1599 to 1608, with some absences. He had gained two degrees (deducible from the poem: "hee was double honor'd in degree" (302)). He had "retir'd home" (305), and three years before his death had married a woman ten years younger than himself. He had by her one daughter, and another was born after his death. Will's and John's father Otho was dead, another fact stated in the poem (68): he had died in 1607. They had an uncle called Thomas Ridgway: he was fiercely Protestant. But both the immediate Peter family, and the more distantly related Drew brothers, Edward and John, Will's murderers, were anti-Puritan, either high Anglican or Catholic. Will was twenty-nine when he died.

On the fateful day of Will's death, January 25, 1612, Edward and John Drew had ridden to Exeter. At an inn by the East Gate, where they had stopped for a drink, the host offered to sell Edward a pony. Edward took the pony for a ride, saying he was off to Will Peter's with the declared intention of "mak[ing] a quarrel with him about the buying of a horse."²¹ Perhaps innocently, perhaps with sinister intent, John Drew meanwhile had ridden into Exeter and among other business, had tried to exchange his sword for a rapier, but had not agreed a price. Will Peter had meanwhile set out with Edward for Exeter.

The three joined company again at the original inn. Their subsequent drinking spree appears to have involved intermittent argument about whether Will would sell his horse to Edward Drew, and Will's repeated remonstrations with Edward about the latter's increasingly rowdy behaviour. Bystanders noticed "discontentment" between the two at the last inn at which they drank. On the way home, Edward ran his sword through Will Peter's skull from behind, in the dark. The road on which this happened was called The Ridgway.

Armed with these facts, the students of the poem become aware that they may have missed a pun in the passage on the malice Will endured (page above). Surprised

though they are to find such things in an elegiac (and possibly deeply pious) poem, they now surmise that the italicized and capitalized "*Ridg-way*" in the line "Such in the *By-path* and the *Ridg-way* lurke" (line 41) may refer to the road, or the uncle, or both. Support comes from later lines, where they find quite unmistakable nominal puns. The first is on the surname "Peter:" "he was *Friendships Rock: A Rock of Friendship* figured in his name" (321-2). This is the pun used by Christ when founding his Church on Peter or "Petros" the Rock, so it is not after all inappropriate in a solemn elegy. The second is only twenty lines later at 341. Speaking of Will's killing, W.S. deplors the murderous wrath of the killer, that "choller, which untimely *Drew / Destruction* on itself." This is clearly a flagging of the murderer's name, "Drew." As a workaday verb, not an abstract noun, it is not the sort of word that would normally attract a capital first letter or italics.

"And who was *By-path*?" asks one student. "It is in the very same line as *Ridg-way*, likewise capitalized and italicized. How can it fail to be a pun also?" They shelve the conundrum for the moment.

The workshop faction who suspected devious intent in the use of the Cain and Abel story feel that the italicizing of "*Ridg-way*" and "*Drew*" goes some way to vindicating their claim, in that both Drews and Ridgway were related to the Peters. Perhaps, say some, W.S. means to implicate "family" in general in the murder, not John Peter specifically. Yet, say others, if the plot extended to Uncle Ridgway, who is placed among the defamers and lurking plotters, where might it have ended?

Half the class denies any reference to historical persons, claiming that "*Ridgway*" could be merely the road from Exeter or even a common noun, and that the Cain and Abel story might signify nothing more than the fact of a murder, any kind of murder. That is precisely the point, counters the detective group. The poem had to be so constructed that an innocent meaning would be gleaned by an innocent reader, and the writer, if challenged with slanderous accusation, could take refuge in the overt meanings. But all the while, there could be lurking a subtextual meaning, easy enough for those in the know to decipher, harder for those at a distance, who would have had to exercise exactly those skills of readership that they are now trying to exercise. The obscurity of expression of so many of the sentiments and passages argues such a covert intent, they claim.

They agree to postpone discussion, and read once right through the poem to see what other topics are included. They find the presence of the following themes.

Will Peter's virtues are enlarged on at intervals through the poem, less by biographical details than by indications of his qualities of mind, couched in fairly abstract language.²² His learning, wit and modesty (and as already noted, his constancy) are praised. He does not seem to have been a prig, for in the middle of the most straightforward list of his qualities (117-24) are the appealing "[t]rue friendship; active grace; perswasion sweete, / Delightfull love, innated from his birth." He was clearly attractive, and could win people over. His virtues are those of a private man, as the poet stresses later, going on to approve the choice of a life lived away from courts (431-74). However, he would have been a staff to the "public use" (502), if he had been able to prove himself.

The poet frequently harps on the theme of lost promise, from the first two lines "Since Time, and his predestinated end, / Abridg'd the circuit of his hope-full dayes," to late mention of his potential as a beacon in public life. Had Will been allowed full length of days "the times that should succeed / Had been best-speaking witnesses with mee" (85-6) of virtues the poet enumerates.

A long passage (273-335) on more of Will's characteristics begins with some particularly difficult lines and ends with some particularly startling ones. It begins by describing how Will could not feign a passion "as some loose Mimicks can," but in

what circumstances the next lines leave unclear. They have something to do with "base and sensuall aptnesse" and "heate"—sexual relations? Further analysis will be needed.

At the end of this passage, which trumpets Will's *Faith* as something which "did persever, / Where once it was protested always sound," the poet continues thus: "Hence sprung the deadly fuell that reviv'd / The rage which wrought his end; for had he been / Slacker in love, he had beene longer liv'd" (333-5). The cause alleged here for his murder sounds worlds away from the quarrel over horse-trading debts which recourse to the historical documents had suggested. But it is repeated emphatically: "His unfain'd friendship where it least was sought, / Him to a fatall time-lesse ruine brought" (357-8). One student is prompted by this to suggest a sinister implication lurking in "his predestinated end" in the very first line: could "predestinated" have meant "premeditated?" Having consulted the dictionary, he finds no parallel—but it is not impossible, he thinks, that the poet used it to suggest such a thing. Another points out that Edward Drew, according to the historical record, did have the stated intention of "making a quarrel." And, says a third, the terms "faith," "love" and "friendship" are clearly used interchangeably in the lines giving the reason for Will Peter's end. According to W.S., Will died as a result of too much loyalty in love. The workshop readers are aware that at that period "love" had a broader meaning than it does today. Among the possible meanings were "friendship," or (if directed to a patron) "respectful sense of duty." Nevertheless, the possible meanings included the sexual, and the readers think the word's meaning here should be left an open question.

W.S.'s own reasons for writing are the next theme to occupy their attention. An amalgam of "love," a vow made to the dead man, a wish to commemorate his virtues, and genuine grief seem at first glance to be the motives.

Commemoration is one of the earliest themes to emerge, with W.S.'s assertion that Will's "*Short-liv'd deserts*" must "in the hearts and memories of men, / Claime fit Respect; that they in every lim, / Remembring what he was, with comfort then / May patterne out, *One truly good* by him" (13-16). It recurs in the thought that all we can leave behind us is a "name" (195), that the youth's "pleading best perfections" shall not be entombed, but "in succeeding yeeres / Shall speake for him" (426-7), and lastly that Will "dies but once, but doubly lives, / Once in his proper *selfe*, then in his *name*" (495-6).

The other three themes are inter-woven with the first and intricately with each other, sometimes in puzzling ways. The elegist admits he did not show his love to the youth in the latter's life-time, but kept silent, being hindered from "enlarging his thoughts" (213-24); for as we have heard, the love was one which the poet "could not set forth / In any other habit of disguise" (207-8). This last phrase encourages the students who argued for a hidden subtext: it is surely an admission that this text itself is in a habit of disguise? But was the "love" a friendship, a formal relationship, or something much warmer? Was it sexual?

The workshop turns to passages in which Will Peter is directly addressed by the poet (197-254; 538-78). Apostrophes such as "precious man" (242), "faire marke of sorrow" (248), "fast friend" (574) argue a certain warmth. Yet surely a sentiment which has not been expressed to its object during the latter's life could hardly be a passionate love. "I did not love thee least" (540) is quite cool. "Not onely ready / In telling I was thine; but being so, / By some effect to shew it" (217-18) sounds at first like an admission of love. But when one examines how the poet proposed to show, rather than announce, his feeling, one finds that he conceived it as this very "task" of writing, as "duties" owed to the youth's "desert." W.S. finds it necessary to proclaim in this context (224-32) that he was not "hired" to write, but does so in response to a "constant and irrefragable vow" made to Peter. The vow consists, the readers discover, in "enrol-

ing the name" of the dead man, and is one which Peter could have performed for W.S. "had it chanc't." It seems to have been a mutual vow to vindicate whichever of the scandal-oppressed men died first. Indeed, the passage mentioning the vow leads into overt defence of Peter's life and character. And later passages show that the poet feels he himself has been maligned.

The second passage of direct address (538-78) to Will seems to the students likewise oddly entangled with the poet's concern for his own reputation. Hoping that he has now fulfilled his vow, that is, "levelled his account" with Will Peter, W.S. moves to his peroration. He will from now on "[i]mmure those imputations I sustaine,/ Learning my dayes of youth so to prevent, / As not to be cast down by them againe" (557-9). The word "again" suggests to some students that the original casting-down occurred long ago, and that the poet is past his youth. Others opine that W.S. is being cast down now, and resolves not to be so in the future. What is meant by "preventing days" is admitted to be somewhat baffling.

Earlier in the poem, W.S. had spoken at greater length of an attack on his reputation: he had felt "a sadder taste of knowing shame" through "my countries misconstruction[;] cast / Upon my name and credit," when some had "sifted to imbane my reputation, with a witlesse sinne" (137-44). But he had hoped that "Time, the Father of unblushing Truth" would one day vindicate him and "right the hopes of my indangered youth, / Purchasing credit in the place I lost it" (145-8). The point of time at which this shame is supposed to have come upon him is not unambiguously clarified by the verb "lost." It sounds more like a reference to a time long past, but it could refer to the time of writing, seen from some future vantage point. The "place," however, is further enlarged on, if not exactly clarified. It was the very place where Will Peter "had education and new beeing" and won the repute of all who lived "there."

Some of workshop members are now inclined to think that a mere feeling of empathy with the maligned man could have sparked W.S.'s composition, aimed perhaps at this circle (whichever it was) in which both men once had "new being." (The latter seems to be distinguished from education: could it mean their social promotion, in a patronage circle?) Some feel, however, that an intense personal grief emanates from those passages which describe the sorrow of those Will Peter leaves behind. The heart-felt grief of parents (in general) and children (without qualification) seems indeed excessive, as does the picture of the tale being passed on to the children's posterity and of "all" going weeping to their beds on hearing it (161-70). In the course of a second hyperbolic description of Will's posthumous reputation "sealed up" in every heart, "discoursed" by every tongue, W.S. uses that same obscure conjunction of "day" and "prevent" observed above. Here the phrase is "no day prevented, / That pitties not thy sad and suddaine wrong" (202-3). It prompts some readers to wonder whether the hyperbole is some kind of disguise for hidden meaning, and the "prevented days" some kind of code.

Another group of readers, pursuing the same theme of the degree of grief felt by Will Peter's friends and relations, find something so startling in a later passage (507-14) that it draws their attention from the previous two. Speaking in more moderate tones than before, W.S. allows that while the general loss is sad, Will's friends feel "the greatest losse they could have had." Among these "friends" is "she who those nine of yeares / Liv'd fellow to his counsailes, and his bed." It is she who "hath the most share in losse." Surprising as this is, considering that Will had been married for only three years, it is the next words that galvanize the readers: ". . . for I in hers, / Feele what distemperature this chance hath bred." W.S. is made aware of the extent of the loss, it seems, because of the grief of this woman: he is close to the woman who is distraught (see "distemperature") over Will Peter. Perhaps it is *this* that will explain his involvement in Will's tragedy? Could this woman be young Will's lover, and could

her existence account also for the malice and detraction which dogged Will? Was it his constancy to *her* that caused his downfall?

Meanwhile, a splinter group has been reading the lines which immediately follow, and are disinclined to believe in the existence of a lover. "Nine years" must be an error for "three years," they say, because the poet launches straight into "the chaste imbracements of coniugall love," mentioning "mutuall harmony" and Will's role as "husband" and "father." They do not believe such a matrimonial passage could be set right beside mention of a lover; and besides, W.S. would have concealed the fact of an illegitimate union in a eulogy. Their opponents adduce W.S.'s failure even to mention Will's wife in the Epistle, let alone his failure to address it to her. How could he be close enough to her to experience Will's loss through her grief? They determine to examine the "conjugal" passage minutely. It may use matrimonial terms, they say, but we have to find out what work those terms are doing—as we did with the term "faith," which turned out to have a particular meaning in the poet's lexicon.

The workshop has splintered into factions similar to those in the world of criticism. Now that we have heard the students' discussion, which has left much undecided, it is time to contrast the provisional findings with those of previous scholarship; and to work at the obscure passages held over for further examination. I shall concentrate on the hypotheses entertained by the workshop that have *not* been anticipated, for these are most likely to provide new ways of reading the poem.

Novel hypotheses and a new thesis

The hypothesis that Will Peter lost his life because of too much fidelity *in love* is a new one. Vickers ("Whose Thumbprints?") and Marcus ("A Plea") thought the fidelity lay in keeping promises to unreliable drinking companions who might murder you on the way home. Other critics have either assumed that the quarrel with the Drews was an unpremeditated event fuelled by drink; or that the quarrel was over a sum owed for a horse by the elder Drew brother, a debt which Will's mother had asked him to call in. It was his compliance with her request that cost Will Peter his life, thinks Foster. That is not what the poet says.

No previous critic has supposed that W.S. holds Will's immediate family to be implicated in Will's murder. The possible reverberations of the Cain and Abel story have fallen on deaf ears. None commented on the lack of any expression of sympathy for Margaret Peter, Will's wife, nor the coldness of respects offered "to any of those that have lov'd him for himselfe." Foster did notice the hostility of the reference to Ridgway, but speculated that it was on account of Uncle Ridgway's fierce Protestantism.²³ I think it unlikely that W.S. would have dragged that sentiment (if he held it) into the poem apropos of nothing.

No one interpreted the lines on the "distemperature" of Will's female companion as giving the grounds of W.S.'s sense of loss ("I *in* hers / Feele . . ."). Foster did examine these lines in his French Introduction (58-9), but his conclusion was very different: that W.S. was here revealing a loss of his own, a sad longing for the bed and companionship of the young man. Foster's honesty constrains him to admit that in that case, the poem is extraordinarily cold. Yet he speculates further (61-9) that the situation is not only similar to, but the very situation of, the protagonists in Shakespeare's Sonnets—a three-cornered affair between Shakespeare, a young man, and a woman.

Hardly anyone supposed that Will Peter's life, rather than the manner of his death, needed defending. Abrams did identify the existence of "another woman," but has not considered the whole poem as an apologia for a "double" life, or indeed for any kind of guilty secret. Foster, we have seen, has queried the wording of W.S.'s descriptions of Will's apparent virtues. He too accepted that Will had a nine-year-long

sexual relationship with a woman who cannot have been Will's wife Margaret Brewton, for she would have been a young girl of eleven at the start of the nine years. Yet Foster thought that the scandal with which the poet mostly concerns himself is the (supposed) scandal of a homosexual affair between W.S. himself and Will. Neither critic, and this is the point, took the sexual scandal(s) to be integrally connected to all the themes in the poem. Neither wondered whether the "detractors" pursued Will on account of his liaison(s); or whether he was killed because of his fidelity in conducting it (or them).

Into these lacunae in previous interpretations of the poem, we can infuse a distillation of the workshop findings. The aim is to find an overall interpretation that does no injustice to any part of the text, and combines allowable readings into the most comprehensive and coherent picture. But first we should tackle the two problematic passages left unexamined by the workshop. They are prime examples of passages condemned by most critics for obscurity, but rich in subtextual meaning. One appears to concern passion, the other, marriage. The first runs from line 273-93. ("Unhelpful" punctuation is bracketed, as before.)

True 'tis, this man (whiles yet he was a man)	
Sooth'd not the current of besotted fashion[:]	
Nor could disgest as some loose Mimicks can,	275
An empty sound of over-weening passion[:]	
So much to be made servant to the base[.]	
And sensuall aptnesse of dis-union'd vices:	
To purchase commendation by disgrace,	
Whereto the world and heate of sinne intices.	280
But in a safer contemplation,	
Secure in what he knew, he ever chose	
The ready way to commendation,	
By shunning all invitements strang, of those	
Whose illnesse is the necessary praise[.]	285
Must waite upon their actions: only rare	
In being rare in shame, which strives to raise	
Their name by dooing what they do not care.	
As if the free commission of their ill,	
Were even as boundlesse as their prompt desires:	290
Only like Lords, like subjects to their will,	
Which their fond dotage ever-more admires.	
He was not so . . .	

The passage starts with the simple fact (uncontested by critics) that Will could not mimic a passion he did not feel. (To "disgest" means to "stomach" or to "bring slowly to a state of perfection." The former seems only marginally more appropriate here. To "disgest" a "sound of passion" sounds as though it might mean to "emit" a noise which fakes passion.)²⁴ From that point, I paraphrase as follows, adding explanation as I do so.

Lines 277-8: ". . . which would have made him a slave to base sensual desire in a marriage which was not one." "Aptness" can have a sexual sense.²⁵ "Dis-unioned" suggests a union which does not unite its partners, or ties them unhappily. As for "vices," perhaps it is proleptic: the activity (sex, we presume) will become "vicious," even if practiced within marriage, if performed in such loveless circumstances.

Lines 279-80: ". . . and he would have won praise for something which is actually disgraceful, something to which the (wicked) world and the sinful heat (of our

libidos) entice us." How it is possible, indeed normal, to win commendation for such behavior is explained a few lines later; but meanwhile, we come to the contrasting behavior of Will (281-6). "Thinking along surer lines, confident in his own sense of right, he always chose the route that really should lead to commendation, by shunning the prompting of others who have this moral flaw—they have to be certain they will be praised for it before they will perform any action."

Lines 286-8 contain the crux: "Such people are utterly undistinguished, distinguishable only by their near shamelessness, which leads them to try to continue their line, in the sense of 'progeny' ('raise their name'), by doing something that in fact disgusts them." "Name" can mean reputation, of course; but its polysemy is useful to W.S. Since the context is undeniably that of sex (attested by a reference to "prompt desires" in the very next sentence), we have to look for a sense of "name" which is connected to sex. "Descendants" is precisely the required sense: one cannot get them without having "begotten" children. Normally, one is commended for practicing sex within a marriage. In this case, it would have been disgraceful because of the absence of love, W.S. implies.

The next lines keep to the topic of marital sex: "As if they [husbands] were at liberty to match their (evil) actions to the limitless scope of their quickly aroused lust. They are just like lords . . ." (the power enjoyed by husbands in early seventeenth-century marriage is well-known) " . . . and their victims are like vassals ('subject to their will'), who become more and more amazed at the lords' ridiculous attitude;" or perhaps the victims are subject to their husbands' will, to which the husbands themselves become more and more foolishly addicted.

"He was not so," concludes the poet. That is, Will refused to do his marital "duty" because it would have been merely an exercise in lust. W.S. goes on to describe how Will ruled the "little ordered common-wealth / Of his *owne selfe*" (294-5), and, within five lines, how he joyed in "[a] Monarchy of comfort's government" (299). Anyone who can joy in both a common-wealth and a monarchy simultaneously is possibly living in two "states" at once—marriage (in which the sixteenth-century husband was legally supreme) and a common-law partnership.

It is not possible to prove that the poet intended such a subtext in the foregoing lines. But no one has yet made any sense of them at all; and I would argue that the difficulty and abstraction are meant to act as a smoke-screen. Some strenuous searching has to be done to draw out something self-consistent over the whole passage.

The other passage held in reserve is in some ways the mirror-image of the one just studied. It appears to be about marriage, but may contain a subtext that concerns Will's adulterous relationship.

The chaste imbracements of coniugall love[.]	515
Who in a mutuall harmony consent[;]	
Are so impatient of a strange remove[.]	
As meager Death it selfe seemes to lament[.]	
And weep upon those cheeks, which nature fram'd	
To be delightfull orbes, in whom the force	520
Of lively sweetnesse playes, so that asham'd	
<i>Death</i> often pitties his unkind divorce.	
Such was the separation here constrained,	
(Well-worthy to be termed a <i>rudenesse</i> rather)	
For in his life his love was so unfain'd	525
As hee was both an husband and a father[.]	
The one in firme affection, and the other	

In carefull providence, which ever strove
 With ioynt assistance to grace one another,
 With every helpful furtherance of love.

530

A rough précis might help as an initial guide: "It is so hard for those who live in the mutual harmony of conjugal bliss to be torn apart that Death is often ashamed of making such a divorce, and weeps. This is what has happened here; for he was deeply in love, as a husband and a father, loving in one role, provident in the other." The peculiarity of the pronouns in the first half hinder comprehension. But it does appear that the subject of "are so impatient" is those who consent in harmony, and that these are in apposition to "the chast imbracements." An aura of marital bliss hangs over the passage. Yet the idyllic picture conveyed by a surface reading is undermined if we approach the lines skeptically *in their context*, for they follow immediately from the lines on the fellow to Will's counsels and his bed (511-14). Stanley Wells's conviction that the "fellow" must be Will's wife seems to rest on the following reasoning: if the lead-in lines on the "fellow" refer to a lover, while the follow-on passage describes marriage, the juxtaposition of the two passages is dreadfully jarring; and therefore the lead-in passage cannot refer to a lover. But one could as well parrot the protases but reject the conclusion. If the lead-in passage describes Will's lover, while the follow-on passage describes his marriage, the result would be dreadfully jarring; *and therefore the follow-on does not refer to marriage.*

Let us sketch a reading that does not force the words beyond their potential range, but yields a subversive sense, bearing in mind that W.S. could not shout what he meant from the roof-tops if he was indeed indicating an illicit relationship. Death divorced the married couple—but those who knew the situation would read in the lines the "divorce" enforced on the unmarried couple during their lives. The "strange remove" of line 517 could likewise refer to estrangement in life rather than through death. "Such was the separation here" (523) could refer to the enforced separation of Will Peter and his lover. He would have lived with her for nine years, during his studies, and then have had to live apart from her when he returned home and married another woman. If that is indeed what readers were meant to read between the lines of the surface text, then they were meant also to understand that the opening words of the passage constitute a *re-definition* of "conjugal love": it is the relationship of those "who in a mutuall harmony consent." It is the opposite of "dis-union," regardless of whether such as disunion is sanctified in a formal marriage.

Skeptics will say: "You have given only one possible interpretation of the difficult passages. You cannot rule out others." That is true, I reply, but my readings are more likely to be correct because they match so well the continual hints about (and over-emphasis on) Will Peter's love and constancy. Remember his "harmless" conversation which might have been construed as a stain (one meaning of "conversation" being "sexual intercourse");²⁶ his "excellent desires" (like or rather unlike Abel); his "delightfull love" and "perswasion sweete." His love was indifferently described, we discovered, as friendship, constancy and faith. But the "constant faith" of the young man who was "never untrue, where once he love profest" (183-4) is described in the poem as "a miracle," and it is hardly a miracle of constancy to love a young wife for a mere three years. The miracle consists in holding on to a love "*in times of change*" (186-8): it sounds more like fidelity to an old love after a new one has come on the scene.

How well the story coheres! A premarital sexual relationship continued during young Peter's marriage to another leads his own family to kill him. The man who knows the mistress well, and had accordingly become fond of her young partner, is an

accomplished poet, and rushes into print a cleverly duplicitous elegy to defend Will's conduct and his own, and to draw attention to the perpetrators' identity.²⁷

As to his own identity, we are in the realm of speculation. Here are some considerations based not on comparing W.S.'s and either Shakespeare's or Ford's idiolect, but on Shakespeare's family history, on symbols, on coded expressions and puns.

William Shakespeare had a daughter, Susanna, born in 1583. In 1607, she married John Hall, a physician, respectable enough, but lacking a doctoral degree. It appears that the marriage settlement included a promise that Susanna and John Hall would inherit the land Shakespeare had bought from his neighbors the Combes—a substantial bonus.²⁸

Susanna was touched by scandal in 1613. A Stratford man, John Lane, accused her of having "been naught with Rafe Smith at [or and] John Palmer."²⁹ In other words, he accused her of one or more adulterous affairs. Susanna began proceedings to sue Lane in the consistory court (ecclesiastical court) at Worcester Cathedral. In the event, Lane did not appear at the hearing in July 1613, so Susanna won her case by default.

What is there to connect all this with the Will Peter story? A pun, and a good match, in another sense besides the marital: the personalities in the Susanna story match those in the Peter story.

We left unsolved the matter of the historical referent of the slanderous "*By-path*," assuming justifiably that the word's italics and capital letter placed it in the same category as "*Ridg-way*" in the same line. A *Lane* is a *By-path*.³⁰ Perhaps *Lane* pursued Will Peter during his life with the threat of revelation of his affair with Susanna Shakespeare; and continued to threaten Susanna after Peter's death.

A father, a daughter, and her lover, of whom the father, an accomplished poet, had become fond: this could well be the situation of the *Elegye* . . . and of the Shakespeares. What degree of affection towards Will Peter was felt by the poet W.S. has been a matter of debate, and justifiably so. Foster's speculation that W.S. was also the lover of the woman who was "fellow" to Will is not justified by anything in the poem. But to suppose that he was her father not only fits the degree of distress W.S. seems to feel over the whole event, and the degree of his grief for the murdered man, but also may have a prop, a slender one, in the presence of a particular symbol in the poem. It is that of Truth, a recurrent motif.

In the Epistle, W.S. admitted to being merely "a second to the priviledge of *Truth*." "Time, the Father of unblushing Truth" makes his appearance in one of the passages concerning W.S.'s own lost reputation (145). Truth is often (not always) endowed with italics and a capital initial letter in the *Elegye*. Emblematically, Truth was often shown as a shrouded woman revealed by a sickle-wielding Father Time. Alternatively, she is shown as the figure of Susanna among the elders who maligned her. Susanna is easily conflated with Truth. So (it may be) W.S., the father of an unblushing Susanna, has put pen to paper to exculpate her and her lover. His own reputation is touched because Susanna's name is his: but he seizes the chance to clear himself of other imputations. In spite of the note of defiance, it is understandable that Shakespeare (if it was he) might have wanted semi-anonymity under the initials W.S., to protect his daughter's name, and his own. Perhaps he turned to Thorpe for publication because Thorpe had proved discreet with similarly embarrassing material—the *Sonnets*.

It is an interesting thought that W.S.'s view of marriage as the relationship of those "who in a mutuall harmony consent" (whether or not they have undergone the ceremony of marriage) is also that of the Shakespeare of the *Sonnets*, especially of Sonnet 116, with its "marriage of true minds."³¹ It is the *Sonnets*, again, to which we

could turn to settle a dispute about the presence of a potentially revealing pun. Though scholars have wrangled over whether "a ready will" in the text of the *Elegye* (246) is a pun on the author's first name,³² they have not noticed a pun with a better claim to existence in the Epistle. "Exercise in this kind I will little affect, and am lesse adicted to," the poet averred. Why did he use a future tense for the first verb? Surely "I little affect" would better represent an ingrained habit. We should understand "I, Will, little affect"—a typically Shakespearean punning on his first name, such as occurs in Sonnets 134-6, and 143.

It must be granted that the scenario here suggested is a possible one. There are no contra-indications that I can see, though future critics will no doubt canvas some. In addition to its other benefits, I hope that the foregoing might solve some difficulties caused by the poem's abstract language and extreme peculiarities of expression. Here is a suggestion as to one further important topic that may lie embedded in the opaque lines of poetry.

We supposed that the "irrefragable vow" made by W.S. was to "enrol" a "name" in the sense of "vindicate a reputation." But later we realized that "to raise a *name*" (italicized as if encoding a secret) could mean "to beget children." Now let us carry that sense of "name" back into the former expression. W.S. promises to enrol Will Peter's children . . . how, where? *In his own house-hold*. As he puts it later, to "immure" ("bring within his walls") those "imputations" (blots on an escutcheon) he "sustains" (financially supports). He does so because he is their grandfather: that is insinuated in the statement that Will had a "well-abled quill / Whereby t'enrole my name" (238-9). (A quill is a pen is a penis.³³ Will enrolls Shakespeare's name by begetting his grand-children.)

Once this suspicion has taken root (as it should, given a nine-year affair and the lack of control over fertility in the early seventeenth century), it alters our myopic reading habits. Take the italicized "*Short-liv'd deserts*" (12) or the "deserts" to which W.S. owed duties (226); take the absurd generality of *all* children going weeping to their beds: it may be that recognizing these as coded expressions for Will's and Susanna's children, we shall absolve them from the charge of bad taste or poetic incompetence to which they have been subjected. The most execrated line "*Hee dy'de in life, yet in his death hee lives*" (536) may come to be seen as a cunningly expressed and defiant cry. Will Peter "died" (a term for the act of sex) to procreate that by which he lives on after his literal death. As for the puzzling "days of youth," they too could be offspring—Shakespeare's own daughters. He will watch over them protectively, to avoid any repetition of scandals such as that which Susanna has undergone. (He failed: in 1616, his daughter Judith married Thomas Quiney as Margaret Wheeler was about to give birth to Quiney's illegitimate child. Quiney was convicted of fornication by the ecclesiastical court in Stratford.)

If the problematic words and phrases are interpreted in this way, the *Elegye* will leap into focus, as the guarded effusion of a father shocked by his daughter's grief at Will Peter's murder, grieved at the loss of his attractive quasi son-in-law, angered by attacks on the reputation of his daughter and himself, and determined to accuse the murderers publicly and protect his own posterity from future harm.

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Notes

1. Donald Foster, *Elegy by W.S.: A Study in Attribution* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1989). W.S., *A Funerall Elegye* (London: G. Eld [for T. Thorpe], 1612).

2. Gilles Monsarrat, "A Funeral Elegy: Ford, W.S., and Shakespeare," *RES*, n. s. 53, no. 210 (May 2002): 186-203. Brian Vickers, "Counterfeiting" *Shakespeare: Evidence, Authorship, and John Ford's "Funerall Elegye"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). 3
3. Richard Proudfoot, "An Unlikely Candidate," *TLS*, June 8-14 (1990), 619-20.
4. Stanley Wells, "In Memory of Master William Peter," *TLS*, January 26 (1996), 28. Brian Vickers, "Whose Thumbprints?: A More Plausible Author for 'A Funeral Elegy,'" *TLS*, March 8 (1996), 16-18. Katherine Duncan-Jones, Letter, *TLS*, March 29 (1996), 17; Letter, *TLS*, June 14 (1996), 17.
5. Richard Abrams, "In Defence of W.S.," *TLS*, February 9 (1996), 25-6.5
6. Stanley Wells, Letter, *TLS*, February 16 (1996), 17.
7. William Honan, "A Sleuth Gets his Man: It's Shakespeare," *New York Times*, January 14 (1996), 1 etc.
8. Joseph Sobran, "The Problem of 'The Funeral Elegy,'" Online. World Wide Web. July 11 (1996). Available at www.everreader.com.
9. The answer is "Yes," if we accept the evidence cited by Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth Maclean, in *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 206, note 12. A journey made by one messenger riding at speed in 1595 took 31 hours for 180 miles; and by another, 36 hours from Plymouth to the court outside London. A rider carrying urgent news from Exeter to Stratford could have completed the journey in less than three days. Transport of the finished *Elegye* from Stratford to the presses in London would have required scarcely two days. An elegist living near Exeter would have had to send his poem to London. He could have gained at most two days' advantage over the time hypothetically available to Shakespeare.
10. Donald Foster, "'A Funeral Elegy': W[illiam] S[hakespeare's] 'Best-Speaking Witnesses,'" *Shakespeare Studies*, 25 (1997), 115-40.
11. Leah Marcus, "Who Was Will Peter? Or, A Plea for Literary History," *Shakespeare Studies*, 25 (1997), 211-28.
12. Stephen Booth, "A Long Dull Poem by William Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Studies*, 25 (1997), 229-37.
13. Ian Lancashire, "Empirically Determining Shakespeare's Authorship," *Shakespeare Studies*, 25 (1997), 171-85.
14. Richard Abrams, "'Exercise in This Kind': Shakespeare and 'The Funeral Elegy' for William Peter," *Shakespeare Studies*, 26 (1998), 141-70. Also in this issue, on the opposite side, are Katherine Duncan-Jones's "Who Wrote 'A Funeral Elegie'?" 192-210; and Stanley Wells's "'A Funeral Elegy': Obstacles to Belief," 186-91.
15. Ian Lancashire, "Paradigms of Authorship," *Shakespeare Studies*, 26 (1998), 296-301.
16. Donald Foster, "Shakespeare and the Peters in History," *Shakespeare Studies*, 26 (1998), 291-5.
17. See note 4 above.
18. Donald Foster, Introduction, *Élégie Funèbre par W[illiam] S[hakespeare]*, trans. Lucien Carrive (Paris: Stock, 1996), pp. 11-75.
19. *Elegye*, 33-50. I reproduce the original text, but where the punctuation detracts from the sense, I bracket it, rather than substitute a modern equivalent.
20. See Foster, *Study*, pp. 11-16, 182-96; "Best-Speaking Witnesses," pp. 115-6; "Shakespeare and the Peters in History," *passim*.
21. Foster draws from the historical records facts about the quarrel concerning the buying of a horse that I find hard to build into a single narrative. In his book, he tells the story as above. In "Shakespeare and the Peters" (293), he says that Will Peter had been asked to call in a debt incurred by Edward Drew on the buying of (presumably) a different horse on an earlier date. Even if the quarrel started on January 25, we are left wondering whether the quarrel chiefly concerned the pony Edward was thinking of buying, or the reluctance of Will to sell his own horse to Drew. Perhaps there was a complicated bargain under consideration, which would draw in the question of the previous debt. How the purchase by Edward of two new animals would resolve the debt it is hard to see.
22. Lines 51-78, 87-132, 179-84, 273-335.
23. Donald Foster, "The Text of 'A Funeral Elegy,'" *Shakespeare Studies*, 25 (1997), 95-114, p. 110. See also his "Shakespeare and the Peters in History," p. 293.
24. I owe this point to Richard A. Levin, whose criticism of previous drafts of this paper has been invaluable.

25. The context alone is enough to fix the sexual tone of "sensual aptness," and the contemporary understanding of language would have allowed the poet to bend the words to his particular meaning in any case. But parallels do in fact exist. Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (London: Routledge, 1968) gives "voluptuous; carnal, licentious desires and actions" s.v. "sensual"; "apt for love, nubile, and love-desirous" s.v. "apt," citing Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*, l. i. 135.
26. *OED*, s.v. "conversation" 3. I am not suggesting that W.S. intended the sexual meaning to be primary. He would hardly have openly commended a "harmless adultery." Rather, he meant the sexual overtone to hover ambiguously over the word.
27. To include a rebuttal of one's own past guilt is not normal elegiac practice, as Foster points out (*Study*, p. 174). It proves not only W.S.'s independence from any supposed patrons who might have commissioned the poem (a point made by Abrams in "In Defence"), but also his confident independence in matters poetic.
28. Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), pp. 354-6. In Honan's opinion, Susanna could have made a better marriage, and the marriage settlement is unusual. If true, that would match my story even better: there was some difficulty in getting Susanna respectably married.
29. BL Harleian MS 4064, f.189. See Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life* (New York and Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977, rpt. 1987), p. 290.
30. The *OED* gives "bye-way" as a synonym for "lane" (l.1). If I were trying to find a cryptogram for "Lane," and had already used "way" in "Ridg-way" in the same line, I think "by-path" would naturally occur to me.
31. Another suggestion made by Richard A. Levin.
32. Foster ("The Text," p. 110) and Abrams ("Exercise in This Kind," p. 157) suggest a pun is present. Wells ("Obstacles," p. 188) objects: "You can't show that lines were written by someone named Will merely by observing that they would include a pun on his name if they were."
33. Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, 3 vols. (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone Press, 1994), s.v. "quill," 3.1129. His earliest quotation showing "quill" in the sense of "penis" is from c. 1650, but it seems likely it was in oral use before that.

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**OTHER CAPITAL: INVESTMENT, RETURN, ALTERITY
AND *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE***

by Geoff Baker

One can exchange everything between beings, except existing.

—Levinas, *Time and the Other*

Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* is a critical battlefield.¹ As Kiernan Ryan, among others, has pointed out, earlier criticism invested itself largely in the debate over whether, in writing *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare was in the moral right or wrong, in the guise of timeless humanitarian or myopic anti-Semite. Such concerns are problematic in different ways, either precariously perched on constantly shifting platitudes of right and wrong, or nostalgic for unrecoverable moments of the author's deepest intentions—but insoluble at any rate, and ultimately not very useful. Newer readings, however, have abandoned these quagmires in favor of other, perhaps more immanent, questions; berating the earlier criticism, and rather than merely attempting either to save or indict Shakespeare, Ryan writes, "*The Merchant of Venice* operates at a level beyond the simplistic polarities of such sentimental moralism. . . . The point lies not in the vindication of the Jew at the expense of the Christian, or of the Christians at the expense of the Jew, but in the critique of the structural social forces which have made both what they are, for better and for worse" (21). Ryan dutifully isolates the societal hands that have shaped the characters in Shakespeare's play, but still subtler energies claim a commensurate role in the organization of *The Merchant of Venice*, structures of knowledge that were founded long before Shakespeare's Venice and that cannot be said to have disappeared today.

The ethical thought of Emmanuel Levinas has not yet been brought to bear on *The Merchant of Venice*, and this ought to surprise for several reasons. First, Levinas's work—like that of many in his generation, a "critique of the totality"—was born of frustration with a very historically real anti-Semitism that culminated in the Holocaust, this "political experience that we have not yet forgotten" (*Ethics and Infinity* [hereafter *EI*], 78-79). Second, *The Merchant of Venice* has long been viewed as an interrogation of the construction and mistreatment of cultural others and categories of cultural otherness, and certainly Levinas has articulated well and at length at least one version of this problematic, and could even be said to have initiated some levels of the discussion. This paper will attempt just such a Levinasian reading, but with qualifications, for, while Levinasian ethics can obviously be profitably applied to *The Merchant of Venice*, my discussion hopes in turn to employ Shakespeare's play to open Levinas's thought in spots hitherto ignored.² The intrusion of other thinkers—such as Jacques Derrida, Michael Walzer, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno—will likewise serve these compatible dual ends, hopefully further enriching one of Shakespeare's most consistently troubling plays by navigating a series of perhaps facile binary oppositions comfortably ensconced for ages in criticism of the play, the "simplistic polarities" derided by Ryan above.

James Shapiro has also gestured toward these handy contrasts, and to reading strategies that rely "upon an unshaken belief in differences—of one suitor; of gold

and silver from lead; of one form of venture capital from another; of Shylock from Antonio; of Belmont from Venice" ("Which is *The Merchant* here?", 270). These structures should not be ignored at all, but rather placed in sharper focus; as integral as they are to the play, and to the extent that the text insists on them, to dismiss them as "simplistic," as Ryan has done, says more about our prevailing modes of reading them, in my opinion, than about the play or its willful deployment of discourses oppositional to each other. The production, circulation and negotiation of several binaries—including Judaism and Christianity, justice and mercy, outbound and homeward journeys, investments returned and lost, giving and taking—speak eloquently to the very "structural social forces" (Ryan's words) that enable *The Merchant of Venice*. A Levinas-based reading of these structures and their prominent role in Shakespeare's play will demonstrate to what great extent they are all interwoven and invested in each other, and in what manner rampant venture capital, simultaneously the pride and fall of Venice, is implicated at every step.



"Violence and Metaphysics," Derrida's infamous critique of Levinas, will introduce what will become the organizational motif of this discussion of *The Merchant of Venice*. Derrida provides a conceptual genealogy for dichotomizing Hebraism and Hellenism that begins with Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), wends its way briefly through James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and is touched off again by Levinas's *Totality and Infinity* (1961). Derrida's parting shot in the essay, cited at length here, will serve as an opening:

Are we Jews? Are we Greeks? We live in the difference between the Jew and the Greek, which is perhaps the unity of what is called history. . . . And does this strange dialogue between the Jew and the Greek, peace itself, have the form of the absolute, speculative logic of Hegel, the living logic which *reconciles* formal tautology and empirical heterology after having *thought* prophetic discourse in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Mind*? Or, on the contrary, does this peace have the form of infinite separation and of the unthinkable, unsayable transcendence of the other? To what horizon of peace [*A l'horizon de quelle paix*?] does the language which asks this question belong? From whence does it draw the energy of its question? Can it account for the historical *coupling* of Judaism and Hellenism? And what is the legitimacy, what is the meaning of the *copula* in this proposition from perhaps the most Hegelian of modern novelists: "Jewgreek is Greekjew. Extremes meet?" (153)⁴

This is Derrida's response to Levinas's alleged attempt to resuscitate metaphysics by dispensing with ontology from within the tradition of ontology. Derrida (insinuates that Levinas) equates metaphysics with Hebraism, and destructive ontology with the Hellenic philosophers and thus with western philosophy, built in its totalizing entirety on their foundations. I want to approach the Hebraism/Hellenism schema from a slightly different but certainly related direction, though, in terms that Levinas would doubtless appreciate, according to Derrida: Exodus and Odyssey (153 n92).⁵ The explication and complication of these two categories and how they could enrich a reading of *The Merchant of Venice* will basically give shape to this paper's argument.

Jonathan Boyarin, in a chapter on "Reading Exodus into History," builds off of Nicholas Howe's *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England*, indicating the Exodus narrative's possible presence at the very cultural and mythic foundations of Shakespeare's England: "Howe's general thesis is that 'the Anglo-Saxons . . . envisioned their migration from continent to island as a reenactment of the biblical exodus.' Howe thus anchors the identification of the English with the Chosen People, and of the Emerald Isle⁶ with the Promised Land, much further back than the sole emphasis on the Protestant intimacy with the Old Testament would suggest" (53).⁶ Drifting closer to Shakespeare's own days, James Shapiro recalls that a "much repeated story, verified by court records and especially popular among sixteenth-century historians, describes how English sailors duped Jewish refugees into drowning in the Thames" during the thirteenth century Expulsion (*Shakespeare and the Jews* [hereafter *SJ*], 47). In this twisting of the Exodus story, which comprises most of Holinshed's—Shakespeare's own admired historian—account of the Expulsion, the familiar events are "ironically reversed in a narrative that turns exiled Jews into drowning Egyptians. Presumably," Shapiro speculates, "the English have now supplanted the Jews as God's chosen people." Lorenzo, in *The Merchant of Venice*, similarly appropriates the Exodus story for himself and his merchant friends when he says to Portia and Nerissa, "Fair ladies, you drop manna in the way / Of starved people" (5.1.294-295).

Boyarin refers bluntly to "a dichotomy between primitive, mythological, cyclical conception, and closeness to nature on one hand, and Israelite, historical linearism, and hostility to nature on the other" (43). One should protest here that the Odyssean hero's relationship to nature can hardly be described as a "closeness"—it often assumes a far more destructive form—but an interrogation of the Odyssey narrative must wait until later, until Levinas's thoughts on it have been introduced. Boyarin's reading of the Exodus/Odyssey dichotomy adjusts Michael Walzer's *Exodus and Revolution*, in which Walzer quite plainly offers the Exodus as "the crucial alternative" to narratives of circulation (one now sees in sharper relief the inroads to the capital of *The Merchant*), of going and returning, such as the *Odyssey*, such as the Christian notion of man's return to God. "The Exodus," Walzer affirms, "bears no resemblance to those ancient tales of voyages and journeys that, whatever the adventure they include, begin and end at home . . . nor can it be called an odyssey, a long wandering such as Homer recounted, at the end of which wait wife and child (and ancient servant and faithful dog)" (11).⁷ But to shove this biblical schema forcibly into Levinasian terms, the Exodus can be seen as a movement from the space of the familiar or the same out into the uncharted and foreign territory of the other, an outward journey in which even the mere mention of return is unacceptable. It is curious that, while Levinas perhaps optimistically situates the Bible at the "confluence of different literatures" which all veer "toward the same essential content" (*EI*, 115), Horkheimer and Adorno see Homer's *Odyssey* as "the basic text of European civilization" (46). Homer's epic is a dangerous text for Horkheimer and Adorno, representative of an Enlightenment epistemology very much at work in *The Merchant of Venice*, one that prizes unity, the comfort of the cultural same, and the return of what is sent out into circulation—including and especially invested capital.

The Odyssey, too, is present in *The Merchant of Venice*, if only faintly, invoked by Launcelot Gobbo in conversation with Jessica: "Truly then I fear you are damn'd both by father and mother: thus when I shun Scylla (your father), I fall into Charybdis (your mother); well, you are gone both ways" (3.5.14-17). Shylock, in this telling, is reduced to an othered, heroic impediment (Scylla) to be avoided or overcome. Unlike the outbound movement of Exodus, the *Odyssey* operates as if in a closed economy in obedience to the call of the same and in repudiation of the call of the other. Such a subjectivity, Levinas assures us, "comes from the home and returns to it, a movement

of *Odyssey* where the adventure pursued in the world is but the accident of a return" (*Totality and Infinity* [hereafter *TI*], 176). This axiologically primary (if all else is its accident) homeward aspiration stands in clear contrast to Levinas's usual emphasis on "an 'exit' [*sortie*] toward the world" (*EI*, 57); indeed, the same-directed, Odyssean paradigm opposes by its very nature Levinas's other-directed metaphysical desire, the originary point of his ethics. "The metaphysical desire does not long to return," he writes, but rather "tends toward *something else entirely* [*tout autre chose*], toward the *absolutely other*" (*TI*, 33). The subtitle of *Totality and Infinity* is, appropriately, *An Essay on Exteriority*, and this encapsulates Levinas's equation of ethical, other-oriented interpersonal relations, "where the same, gathered up in its ipseity as an 'I,' as a particular existent unique and autochthonous, *leaves itself*" (39, emphasis mine). Levinas's emphasis on the journey of departure that does not seek its own origin again is given dubious voice in *The Merchant of Venice* by Gratiano, of all people:

Where is the horse that doth untread again
 His tedious measures with the unbated fire
 That he did pace them first?—all things that are
 Are with more spirit chased than enjoy'd.
 How like a younger or a prodigal
 The scarfed bark puts from her native bay—
 Hugg'd and embraced by the strumpet wind!
 How like the prodigal she doth return
 With over-weathered ribs and ragged sails—
 Lean, rent, and beggar'd by the strumpet wind! (2.6.10-19)

Keeping in mind that Gratiano is discredited almost before the play has begun—"Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing" (1.1.114)—and repeatedly disparaged during the play, one still politely allows him and his associates in Shakespeare's Venice this unflattering portrait of the homeward journey, for the play's merchant class has successfully displaced its role in either outbound or returning leg of the commercial voyage. Shylock first calls our attention to this, vividly, when he catalogues the perils of mercantile shipping: "[S]hips are but boards, sailors but men, there be land-rats, and water-rats, water-thieves, and land-thieves, (I mean pirates), and then there is the peril of waters, winds, and rocks," but there are no merchants (1.3.21-24). In the Odyssean world of Venice's outgoing and returning investments, the central role has been restricted to that of impotent spectator, like Marlowe's Barabas, comfortably ensconced in his counting house, and glad when even only a third of his ships return (*The Jew of Malta*, 1.1.1-3).

Horkheimer and Adorno, in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, have rightly implicated Odyssean thinking in bourgeois separation from the labor of production. They share Levinas's more basically ethical reservations, denigrating "the promise of the happy return" characteristic of *Odyssey* narrative, and reiterating that under the aegis of this return "the adventures of Odysseus are all dangerous temptations [*Lockungen*] removing the self from its logical course" (33, 47). Moving further, however, Horkheimer and Adorno pigeonhole Odysseus as a "proprietor" and read *The Odyssey* as an "entanglement of myth, domination, and labor": "Odysseus is represented in labor. Just as he cannot yield to the temptation of self-abandonment, so, as proprietor, he finally renounces even participation in labor, and ultimately even its management, whereas his men—despite their closeness to things—cannot enjoy their labor because it is performed under pressure, in desperation, with senses stopped by force" (32, 35). Unlike the collective, communal effort of the Exodus, the *Odyssey* narrative invests itself entirely in the fate of one proprietor and, in so doing, confirms "that

the title of hero is only gained at the price of an abasement and mortification of the instinct for complete, universal, and undivided happiness" (57). In this, Horkheimer and Adorno conclude, Odysseus embodies "the principle of capitalist economy," the new instinct for competition that necessarily evolves into the zero-sum game depicted in *The Merchant of Venice* (61).⁸ "Were [Antonio] out of Venice," Shylock speculates, "I can make what merchandise I will" (3.1.119-120), an implication that one man's fall will engineer another's instant rise. Following his ruination at the end of the fourth act, he begs the Duke:

Nay, take my life and all, pardon not that,—
 You take my house, when you do take the prop
 That doth sustain my house: you take my life
 When you do take the means whereby I live. (4.1.372-375)

Recalling that Shylock has earlier spoken of his house as if it were his own flesh—"stop my house's ears" (2.5.34)—strengthens the appeal of this plea, which emphasizes one's painful inability to survive any capital hindrance in the competitive marketplace of Venice. Shylock's language, though, his use of the word "house," may broaden his petition to include all Jews, when we remember Joshua's use of the word ("me and my house" [Joshua 24:15], at the ending of the Biblical Exodus, no less) to denominate himself and all of his people, and the phrase "the house of Israel," which first appears in Jeremiah 3:18.

It is hardly surprising that Levinas, in *Totality and Infinity*, equates war with commerce (222). The cockfight mentality of the marketplace evoked in *The Merchant of Venice* signals the onset of a new anti-heroic ontology—business as battle, but completely outside the older mythical conception of battle. The characters' nostalgia for uncomplicated, pre-market epic heroism is rampant in the play, at several moments sentimental and melodramatic, as in the constant referring to Portia as the "golden fleece" of the Argonauts (1.1.170, for example), and at other moments so wrong-headed that one is certainly in the presence of irony, as in the loving exchange between Jessica and Lorenzo that references perhaps every famously failed romance in the literature of antiquity.⁹ The text alludes clearly to its own awareness of disempowered notions of heroism. Some twenty lines after cheering Bassanio on with a rowdy "go Hercules!" (3.2.60), Portia devalues the allusion itself:

How many cowards whose hearts are all as false
 As stairs of sand, wear yet upon their chins
 The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars,
 Who inward search'd, have livers white as milk? (3.2.83-86)

Gratiano reinvigorates the *Argonautica* imagery—calling us to Appolonius of Rhodes' very quest-oriented, Odyssean mythography—following Bassanio's successful suit at Belmont: "We are the Jasons, we have won the fleece!" (3.2.240). In the decidedly unheroic realm of Venetian commerce, however, there are no Jasons. Shapiro is correct to assert that heroic "hazarding has taken on a new meaning" in "the world of Belmont," but incorrect to stop at Belmont, for this new and feeble hazarding is precisely the same sort practiced by the merchants of Venice and other centers of nascent capitalism ("Which is *The Merchant?*", 273). Indeed, Jacques Rancière has made similar intimations in his treatment of the "*loterie industrielle*" of late-capitalist France (46). Morocco's reflections on the random character of Portia's Belmont "lott'ry" (1.2.29) can be as readily adduced with regard to the climate of Venetian mercantile competition:

If Hercules and Lichas play at dice
 Which is the better man, the greater throw
 May turn by fortune from the weaker hand:
 So is Alcides beaten by his rage,
 And so may I, blind Fortune leading me,
 Miss that which one unworthier may attain,
 And die with grieving. (2.1.32-38)

Risk is the rule, the new and anemic heroism that is more hazardous than heroic and no respecter of persons or "worth."

The risk of hazarding consolidates, for Horkheimer and Adorno, the sacredness of capitalism and competition, and originates in *The Odyssey*. The justice of Odysseus's rewards "was to be confirmed later on by bourgeois economics in the form of the concept of risk: the possibility of failure becomes the postulate of a moral excuse for profit" (62). If the danger involved (the uncertainty of the gambit or gamble) justifies the process and the profit, risk plays no smaller role in the definition of capital investment in *The Merchant of Venice*, so much so that the notion itself in the play is imbued with fear and distrust. The merchants of Venice are well apprised of the risks their capital runs in transit, and this anxiety is articulated from the outset of the work, as Salerio and Solanio interrogate Antonio on the grounds for his bourgeois malaise and ultimately conclude that his investments are the cause. Solanio:

Your mind is tossing on the ocean,
 There where your argosies with portly sail
 Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,
 Or as it were the pageants of the sea,
 Do over peer the petty traffickers
 That cur'sy to them (do them reverence)
 As they fly by them with their woven wings. (1.1.8-14)

Antonio's response offers insight into the wide casting of bets in the mercantile game, a vivid acknowledgement of the risk involved:

Believe me no, I thank my fortune for it—
 My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,
 Not to one place; nor is my whole estate
 Upon the fortune of this present year:
 Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad. (1.1.41-45)

It is wrong to limit the discussion here to Antonio, however, for Shylock's capital is equally as spread; just as Antonio must go to Shylock in order to assist Bassanio, Shylock, whose "present store" is deficient, presumably because it is invested elsewhere, must go to Tubal. The chain of borrowings widens the net of risk and investment, until it is stretched thinly indeed. As enthusiastic as the characters of *The Merchant of Venice* are in their capital pursuits and far-flung investments, the displaced risks involved are not unnoticed, and perhaps most disconcerting is the manner in which the danger is factored in, counted on as any other variable of business performance.

The question of how well-informed, studied or calculated the gambles are figures curiously in Bassanio's rhetoricized attempts to secure operating capital from Antonio for his pursuit of Portia. The best analogy to which Bassanio can direct his friend and investor highlights the caprice of the gambit:

In my school-days, when I had lost one shaft,
 I shot his fellow of the self-same flight
 The self-same way, with more advised watch
 To find the other forth, and by adventuring both,
 I oft found both. (1.1.140-144)

This characterization contributes to the larger, often dubious, portrayal of the play's slingers of investment capital; a more subtle stab at them unfolds itself in a careful imagistic repetition of Solario's that knocks Antonio, *The Merchant of Venice* himself, from any pedestal to which he may have pretended. I drew attention earlier to Solario's first lines, where he compliments Antonio's fleet as against the "petty traffickers" that do Antonio's argosies reverence while flying by "with their woven wings" (1.1.12, 1.1.14). This alone casts aspersions on those involved in the burgeoning trading scene around Venice, all emphasis on the supreme artificiality of the wings. However, Solario returns to this motif later when, answering Shylock's accusations of having aided and abetted the forces that enabled Jessica's flight, he glibly retorts, "That's certain,—I (for my part) knew the tailor that made the wings she flew withal" (3.1.24-25). The fabricated wings of the "petty traffickers" from the play's first scene are thus linked directly to Antonio's band of associates, and to the role Antonio himself plays in the flight of Jessica and Lorenzo as described by Venice's chief gossips, Salerio and Solanio (see 2.8). *The Merchant of Venice* runs cool on the notion of investment and the company it has engendered, the company that Jessica joins and that readily accepts her. "And true she is," marvels Lorenzo, "as she hath prov'd herself" (2.6.55); true to her new companions, perhaps, but their confidence is purchased with the betrayal of her own father, to whom she shows less respect than does Launcelot Gobbo, the clown. Gobbo at the very least agonizes over his decision to leave Shylock, takes advice from a "conscience" who "counsel[s] well," while Shylock's own flesh and blood brings quick closure to an apparent bout of culturally—other self-loathing by flying the coop (2.2.19-20).

Levinas is in many ways an theorist of investment, or rather—perhaps more precisely—a theorist against investment and the demands of economy.¹⁰ The commercial relation is a faceless one, leaving it outside of ethical interaction with the other and positioning it within the field of what Levinas terms "rhetoric," speech which "approaches the other not to face him, but obliquely [*pas de face, mais de biais*]" (TI, 70). The practice of commerce stands within the Levinasian notion of rhetoric, as against ethical, non-rhetorical discourse: "Across the gold that buys him or the steel that kills him the Other is not approached face to face; even though they traverse the interval of a transcendence commerce aims at the anonymous market, war is waged against a mass" (228-29). This understanding of the impersonality of commercial exchange can be traced directly to one of the most famous theorizations of the marketplace, and to its perhaps most acknowledged theorist; Marx, several times in *Capital*, alludes to the destruction, in the circulation of commodities, of "personal barriers imposed by the direct exchange of products" (209):

Here the persons exist for one another merely as representatives [*Repräsentanten*]¹¹ and hence owners, of commodities. As we proceed to develop our investigation, we shall find, in general, that the characters who appear on the economic stage [*die ökonomischen Charaktermasken der Personen*] are merely personifications of economic relations; it is as the bearers of these economic relations that they come into contact with each other. (179/51)

Furthermore, commercial relations, in their symmetry and economy as closed systems of *quid pro quo* exchange, fall far short of Levinas's formulation of the truly ethical relation properly realized. From one of his interviews with Philippe Nemo:

Ph.N.: But is not the Other also responsible in my regard?

E.L.: Perhaps, but that is his affair. One of the fundamental themes of *Totality and Infinity* about which we have not yet spoken is that the intersubjective relation is a non-symmetrical relation. In this sense, I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity, were I to die for it [*dût-il m'en coûter la vie*]. (*EI*, 98)

Readers and reviewers of Levinas have not remained silent on the perceived "Christianity" of this Jewish thinker's openly-giving, non-reciprocal relationships which must be maintained, even *were it to cost one one's life*, as the original phrases it. Such readings have been abetted by Levinas's notion of "subjectivity as such" as "initially hostage; it answers to the point of expiating for others" (*EI*, 100).¹² The Levinasian call for justice can never be a call for justice for oneself, but only for other others who are in need of protection from another. The inter-subjective relation as prescribed by Levinas, though, is clearly not one that can in any way be categorized as investment; there is no economics of ethical discourse, no Odyssean return from the other that one can or should expect. The idea is to give without receiving, and to keep giving without receiving, even unto death, the point at which one can give no more. Derrida has framed this concept with explicit recourse to the language of the market (and of the church) in his most sustained engagement with ethics, *The Gift of Death*, when he writes that "absolute duty (towards God and in the singularity of faith) implies a sort of gift or sacrifice that functions beyond both debt and duty, beyond duty as a form of debt" (63). The subjects in Shakespeare's *Venice* become immediately subjects in deep interpersonal trouble, for the obsession with investment return and with debt lurks in every aspect of Venetian relationships.

Much has been written on the manner in which *The Merchant of Venice* appears to corroborate claims made by Lévi-Strauss in his *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, and on the use of women as items of exchange that reify relationships between the men of Venice, within the context of Elizabethan norms for marriage. Karen Newman has more broadly elaborated on "the exchange between the erotic and the economic that characterizes the play's representation of human relations," but there are a couple of textual moments that have thus far escaped examination in the context of gifts, given in love, as pure investments (123).¹³ These moments also declaim passionately against the Levinasian notion of the subject that gives and expects no return for his or her gift. It is already made clear early in the play that Bassanio's suit for Portia is at least as fiscally as amorously motivated, and the suitor concretizes his demand for return on his (Antonio's) investment when he tells Portia, "I come by note to give, and to receive" (3.2.140). Not to be outdone, Portia returns the favor thirty lines later with the giving of her ring as bond; the ring, she declares, stands for all she has, including her servants and house, and she

give[s] them with this ring,
Which when you part from, lose, or give away,
Let it presage the ruin of your love,
And be my vantage to exclaim on you. (3.2.171-174)

Portia's "gift" is a clear investment into a power stake in the future of her relations with Bassanio, a loan which, if defaulted on, will give her cause and moral authority to assume control of the marriage and "exclaim" on her husband (one can hardly ignore the palpable, metrically weighted presence of the word "claim" in the phrase). Portia's investiture works wonders; although it is Gratiano who speaks the final timorous words, one can just as easily hear them as from the mouth of Bassanio: "Well, while I live, I'll fear no other thing / So sore, as keeping safe Nerissa's [or perhaps Portia's] ring" (5.1.306-307). The romantic relationship that takes center stage in Venice is managed not by giving subjects, but by subjects anticipating circulative return. This is amply expressed in strikingly Levinasian terms when Bassanio says to his love, "I swear to thee, even by thine own fair eyes / Wherein I see myself—" (5.1.242-243). He is immediately interrupted by Portia, but the truth is out-the other in Shakespeare's Venice (even the significant other) is at best a mirror that returns the own invested gaze of the same to its origin, to its home, back on its narcissistic self. The Lévi-Straussian framework, positing the gift as a ploy for social status within the community, works well, but can just as adequately (and perhaps more properly) be labeled investment in order to ground its position in the market.

Even the homosocial space in *The Merchant of Venice* is tainted by the ubiquity of investment thinking. In the Karen Newman essay that I have already drawn from, Newman points out that feminist critics have often had trouble with the homosocial bond between Antonio and Bassanio, and have shared concerns that such a (male) space is posited by the play as a safe haven from the circulation and vocabulary of capital that ravages the other relations in Venice and Belmont. Newman herself, again with recourse to Lévi-Strauss, holds that, "In giving more than can be reciprocated, Portia short-circuits the system of exchange and the male bonds it creates, winning her husband away from the arms of Antonio" (125). I think that Newman's language here tends more toward an assumed profile in homosexuality than homosociality, though, and places perhaps too much confidence in the bond itself between Antonio and Bassanio. Clearly, throughout the play, Antonio clings desperately to a notion of the homosocial space as a locus of pure giving, freed from discussion of duty and debt, but this utopia is dissolved by the play's conclusion. At the outset, Bassanio admits, "To you Antonio / I owe the most in money and in love" (1.1.130-131), and Antonio is incensed and offended:

You know me well, and herein spend but time
 To wind about my love with circumstance,
 And out of doubt you do me now more wrong
 In making question of my uttermost
 Than if you had made waste of all I have. (1.1.153-157)

Antonio evidently intends to give, despite no return from Bassanio for gifts already given; he later, in conversation with Shylock, explicitly opposes the spaces of friendship and business:

If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
 As to thy friends, for when did friendship take
 A breed for barren metal of his friend? (1.3.130-132)

This passage is usually read as a critique of usury and thus of Shylock's business practices, but it is no less a defense of the homosocial space as outside of business and the swirling circulation of capital. Finally, though, in his hour of need, Antonio dismantles the haven of the homosocial, and introduces into it the language of the mar-

ketplace when he writes, in a letter to Bassanio, "all debts are clear'd between you and I, if I might but see you at my death" (3.2.317-318). The other-directed free giving of the structure of male friendship in *The Merchant of Venice* is, it seems, yet another casualty of capital relations.

There are two more areas that I want to examine in light of their complication by the market politics of *The Merchant of Venice*, and they are both handy dichotomies passed down by centuries of work on the play: justice versus mercy, and Jew versus Christian. I would like to treat these two sets together because I think that they are intimately related to each other, more so than everything else I have looked at is related by the terms of capital that have invaded it. The relation between the justice/mercy binary and the Jew/Christian one is captured nicely in Marion Perret's passing reference to the play of "Old Law/New Law" problems in Venice; the Old Law clearly points to the Jewish, justice-oriented ethics of the Old Testament, while the New Law gestures toward the Christian, mercy-extending ethics of the New Testament, the Biblical appendage that scripturally separates Christian from Jew (Perret 264). In the interest of reintroducing and complicating attention to the conflict between Odyssean and Exodus thought above, this difference is also one of linguistic and cultural tradition, the Hebraism of the Old Testament as against the Greekness of the New Testament. The complication is this: Whereas outward-bound subjectivity and Exodus thinking becomes, in Levinas and Walzer, synonymous with other-directed (read: merciful) endeavor, and whereas homeward-bound and same-directed Odyssean thinking becomes for Levinas, Horkheimer, and Adorno the very antithesis of ethical thought, the Old Law/New Law dichotomy clearly reverses the polarities. The Jews (of the Exodus heritage) become the obsessors over justice, and the Odyssean Greeks (now New Testament Christians) become the bearers of mercy. These associations are concretized in *The Merchant of Venice*, as Shylock is repeatedly implicated, by his own words, in the bloodthirsty quest for justice, for restitution, for a circulative return of offense on the head of the offender. "Tell me not of mercy," he says famously, "The Duke shall grant me justice" (3.3.1, 3.3.8). The Duke, once the balance of legal power has been shifted by Portia from Shylock to the State, chooses not to grant Shylock justice, of course, but rather to set an example of which all Christendom will be proud: "That thou shalt see the difference of our spirit / I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it" (4.1.366-367). The identification of Christianity with mercy, though, is undoubtedly nullified by Portia's own hard-handed rendering of letter-of-the-law justice against Shylock, and ethical allegiances become muddled. I cannot help but invoke the Said/Walzer debate again here, where justice and mercy are likewise curiously redistributed¹⁴; in the "Exchange" between Said and Walzer from *Grand Street*, Said waxes positively and self-consciously Christian in his demands on Israel: "Instead of pressing hectoring demands on a people [Palestinians] that Walzer's favorite state [Israel] and movement [Zionism] have already persecuted mercilessly, he should express compassion and atonement. Yes, compassion and atonement" (Said and Walzer 259). From the other side of the debate, Mark Walhout prescribes an abandonment of justice politics as a strategy for, not the Jews, but the Palestinians: "Perhaps all we can say is that the Palestinians will be making a courageous sacrifice in giving up their claim to strict justice in order to pursue a peace that holds the promise of greater justice in the future" (217). In a debate over Exodus thinking, both sides look to mercy on the part of the other side as a potential solution (if not as *the* cure-all for the conflict), showing perhaps that the quality of mercy is indeed communal property, even if treated as a hot potato always best in someone else's hands, or graciously extended by someone else.

At the very least, it is clear that no one owns mercy in *The Merchant of Venice*, for it, like all else in the play, has collapsed into the market, become dubiously embed-

ded in the realm of investment, the realm of its very impossibility. The Duke first broaches this notion in the play when he asks Shylock, "How shalt thou hope for mercy rend'ring none?" (4.1.88). The Duke's question perfectly frames mercy within an Odyssean model of return on what is sent out; Shylock is being persuaded (ineffectively, as it happens) that forgiveness is a good investment, and that one gets no return on the capital of mercy without first putting it into circulation. Portia attempts to rescue mercy from the market in her often quoted (and often out of context) expounding on its qualities, a speech certainly worth another look:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
 It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
 Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest,
 It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes,
 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest, it becomes
 The throned monarch better than his crown.
 His sceptre shows the force of temporal power
 The attribute to awe and majesty,
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings:
 But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
 It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
 It is an attribute to God himself. (4.1.182-193)

Mercy is, in Portia's (Balthazar's) reading of it, an unequivocal good, one that hurts no one and helps everyone, both the person extending it and the person accepting it. She splits mercy from the play of worldly power and makes it instead property of the Christian God, but cannot help reinserting it later into the economy of investment, where it properly belongs in the play:

We do pray for mercy,
 And that same prayer, doth teach us all to render
 The deeds of mercy. (4.1.198-200)

Despite the histrionics of the role-playing young judge, Shakespeare's text ultimately returns mercy to the *quid pro quo* economy of the marketplace, where one is taught to offer something only because one prays for it oneself.

The New Law of mercy portrayed in *The Merchant of Venice* is supposed to supplant the Old Law, the Jewish Old Testament predilection for justice (as expounded during the Israelites' desert years, in Leviticus), but the play itself, ushered along by its characters, troubles such a univocal conception of human ethical and moral progression. It is here that alterity meets the market, that Shylock's Jewishness confronts the Hellenic, Odyssean narrative of capitalist return and poses profound questions. "The Jews were not the sole owners of the circulation sector," write Horkheimer and Adorno, "but they had been active in it for so long that they mirrored in their own ways the hatred they had always borne" (174). Stephen Greenblatt offers instead the contrary statement that "if Shakespeare subtly suggests obscure links between Gentile and Jew, he compels the audience to transform its disturbing perception of sameness into a reassuring perception of difference"—contrary to Horkheimer and Adorno in that Greenblatt fails to recognize to what great extent the Jews and Christians of *The Merchant of Venice* are in fact made similar by the market politics that transform everyone involved into a pure other-denying investor ("Marlowe, Marx, and Anti-Semitism," 43). Greenblatt does repeat in slightly different terms, though, the claim of Horkheimer and Adorno that the Jew has come to mirror his or her other, the Christian

cultural same: "It is important to grasp the great extent to which the Jew is *brought into being* by the Christian society around him." (47). Shylock himself makes the same argument—essentially, that it is the fault of Christian society itself that the Jew is as he is, that Christianity has created its own other in its own image—following the "Hath not a Jew?" speech:

Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is?—if you prick us do we not bleed? if you tickle us do we not laugh? if you poison us do we not die? and if you wrong us shall we not revenge?—if we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? revenge! If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example?—why revenge! The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction. (3.1.61-67)

Shylock is interrogating Elizabethan England's very conception of Jewishness, tethering it in principle to Christianity itself. He also crucially adds the notion of revenge to the realm of economic circulation in the play. And if he makes his defensive claim to humanity by appeal to the power to possess capital—"Hath a dog money? is it possible / A cur can lend three thousand ducats?" (2.1.119-120)—he does so because it is the only defense that the Christian merchant might understand. Shylock calls into question his own otherness by obliterating the conceptual space between the dominant Christian culture and the liminal Jewish culture, which have become so like each other that Portia, dressed as Balthazar, must recalibrate her own notions of alterity, must demand, when she enters the scene of Antonio's judgment, "Which is the merchant here? and which the Jew?" (4.1.172).¹⁵



Admitting that "None of us likes to think that our Shakespeare, Shakespeare of the comprehensive humanity, could be prejudiced," Perret has argued that "What keeps *The Merchant of Venice* onstage today seems to be less its greatness than the challenge of presenting it in ways that diminish what can be perceived as bias in the text" (265-266). I have returned to this play here partially in order to salvage it for myself, much as my turning *The Merchant* toward Levinas's thought belies an effort to rescue the latter from the ether of abstraction in which one often faults him for hovering. Derrida has certainly raised such accusations; Levinas is a vociferous critic of the ontological abstractions of Heideggerian *Dasein*, a general, fundamental category in which all individual *existents* become lost or at least unaccounted for, but the highly conceptualized Levinasian other (*autre* or *autrui*) hardly seems more concrete. Derrida makes clear his position in "Violence and Metaphysics," his critique of Levinas: "Despite all appearances, there is no concept of the Other"; "Nor is *autrui* a proper noun, even though its anonymity signifies but the unnamable source [*ressource*] of every proper noun" (104, 105). Having himself often borne criticism for a tendency to abstraction, Derrida defends himself thus: "I will simply add that it is not necessary to point to a flesh-and-blood example, or to write moralizing pamphlets . . . in order to speak an ethical-political language or . . . to reproduce in a discourse said to be theoretical the founding categories of all ethical-political statements" (*Limited Inc*, 96-97).

Derrida, however, is not constrained in this context, as is Levinas, by a self-determined agenda that explicitly scripts itself as against abstraction and over-theorization—whence comes one's occasional unease with the latter. Luce Irigaray's essay on Levinas, "The Fecundity of the Caress," is admirable because it usefully tethers his highly theorized ethics to a corporeality that is at best muffled in *Totality and Infinity*.¹⁶ Whereas Irigaray saves Levinas from abstraction by luring him back into the body, though, *The Merchant of Venice* coaxes his thought into the marketplace.

Greenblatt has spoken of Shakespeare's works as "sites of institutional and ideological contestation" (*Shakespearean Negotiations*, 3). This doubtless holds true for a great many of his plays, but certainly any ideological contestation in *The Merchant of Venice* is rendered moot before the theatre is even underway, undercut by the overriding and domineering (and same-making) epistemology of return. In the context of the thought of Levinas, Walzer, Horkheimer and Adorno, it is clear that any epistemological duel between the narratives of outbound Exodus and of home-fixated Odyssey is ended before the opponents confront each other. The open market with its closed Odyssean circulatory obsession, in *The Merchant of Venice*, is nothing if not a great ethical leveler, reducing both Christians and Jews to the same baseness. The strength of bloodthirsty justice and the paucity of bloodless mercy can be directly related to the fact that even mercy has become implicated in the same economy of returns as justice, drawing its water from the same tainted source. Where justice seeks the circling of the offense back around to the offender, mercy must open to the other, in the very ways that Levinas has articulated (what David Steiner has recently called an "ethical interruption of reciprocity"); mercy expects no return, is not an investment but a freely given gift, departs from the subject Exodus-like, with no thought of a homeward leg to the journey—an impossibility in the moral world of Shakespeare's Venice. Where the governing epistemological model is the cyclical investment and return of the Homeric Odyssey, thoughts turn back to the subject, to the same. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare exposes a cosmos of self-interest in which any overture made toward the other, any acknowledgement of Exodus-thinking in the vein of the metaphysical tradition to which Levinas's thought aspires, is always already trampled under the Odyssean mode upon whose foundations the market of Venice is built: teleocentric, with others as roadside impediments; and yet simultaneously archécentric, where the telos is the arché and others remain outside this point of origin and of the same. Shakespeare and Levinas thus unearth, in the logical and conceptual heritage of mercantile Venice, a stake in the birth of capitalism and the death of ethics.

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Notes

1. The author wishes to thank Josephine Diamond for her helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
2. To those familiar with literary applications of Levinas's writings, my approach will appear somewhat "back-door." A fairly straightforward use of Levinasian ethics would isolate ethical (interpersonal) relations within a text and proceed from there, as does my "The Predication of Violence, the Violence of Predication: Reconstructing Hiroshima with Duras and Resnais" (*Dialectical Anthropology* 24 [1999], 387-406). The project here will, against this, take bits of *Totality and Infinity* that have been ignored as mere operational metaphors or exhausted tropes (Odyssey/circulation, Exodus/departure) and raise them to the status of central motif.

3. Where I have supplemented translations in brackets, from original editions cited at the end of the paper, I have done so in the interest of either restoring untranslatable valences or maintaining fidelity to the original.
4. Derrida revisits this, at Richard Kearney's prodding, in Kearney's *States of Mind: Dialogues With Contemporary Thinkers* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 156-176. See especially 157-158.
5. Related (the metaphysics/ontology and Exodus/Odyssey dyads) because metaphysics, Exodus-like, fixes on an other-worldly object, while the ruminations of ontology return in Odyssean form to reflect the this-worldly subject.
6. Here, Boyarin appears to confuse the Emerald Isle, Ireland, with a larger of the British Isles, the island of England, Wales and Scotland, a terminological (or is it cartographical?) mistake that Howe does not make. An earlier version of the chapter can be found as "Reading Exodus into History," *New Literary History* 23 (1992), 523-554.
7. Walzer's larger assertion is that the Old Testament Exodus story has furnished a useful and often positively-valued narrative framework for revolutionary politics, one that is still in use today (in, for example, liberation theology in Latin America) and that figured importantly in the Civil Rights and Anti-Apartheid movements in the United States and South Africa, respectively. A vitriolic debate erupted between Walzer and Edward Said, whose review, "Michael Walzer's *Exodus and Revolution: A Canaanite Reading*," points out that the promised land was not vacant when the Israelites arrived and that a divinely sanctioned genocide ensued. Said blames the prevalence of such "Exodus politics" (Walzer's term) for the difficulties accompanying "the Jewish presence in Palestine" (Said 98). I give a bit more context to this exchange in "Nietzsche, Artaud, and Tragic Politics," *Comparative Literature* 55 (forthcoming), note 23.
8. And, ultimately, evolves into the sort of dangerous "affirmative culture" that provides the fertile soil for political formations such as National Socialism. See Jay 263-265.
9. It is tempting to see in this nostalgia for passé fictions of romance and chivalry an anticipation of what Max Weber will later call *Entzauberung* or rationalization and its hangover effects on literature as described by John McClure in *Late Imperial Romance* (London: Verso, 1994).
10. David Steiner amplifies this point persuasively.
11. Remarkable here is Marx's assertion, in almost Levinasian terms, that the interpersonal relationship, when relocated to the sphere of commercial circulation, is degraded to one in which the subjects merely represent, rather than "express themselves," as required by Levinas's depiction of the ethical relation in *Totality and Infinity* (51). Note also Marx's use of the vocabulary of the theatre, stage.
12. See also *Otherwise than Being*: "Here the Same, in its bearing as Same, is more and more extended with regard to the other, extended up to substitution as hostage, in an expiation" (146).
13. Critics have often noted reciprocity or mutuality in Shakespeare's comedies, usually with recourse to kinship rather than capital: for example, Camille Slight's "The Principle of Recompense in 'Twelfth Night,'" *Modern Language Review* 77 (3), 537-546; and Marianne L. Novy's "'And You Smile Not, He's Gagged': Mutuality in Shakespearean Comedy," *PQ* 55 (1976), 178-94. Contrast these with Sitta Von Reden's description of symbolic investment and return in Menander-a foundational figure, of course, in European comedy-in "The Commodification of Symbols: Reciprocity and its Perversions in Menander," in Christopher Gill, Norman Postlethwaite and Richard Seaford eds., *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 255-78.
14. Of course, the context here is quite different, no longer an issue of Christianity versus Judaism, but of Zionism versus Palestinian liberation, a shift that only further dramatizes both sides' recourse to mercy politics.
15. James Shapiro has also discussed the slippery notion of Jewishness in Shakespeare's England. One of the most interesting revelations of his *Shakespeare and the Jews*, one which sheds light on several passages of *The Merchant of Venice*, relates "how Jews after the Expulsion from England had migrated to Scotland, which was thought to explain why Scots were so cheap and hated pork" (2). The results of this Exodus of England's Jews are detailed by Shapiro in his chapter on "False Jews and Counterfeit Christians," but I would turn the quick equation of Jews and Scots immediately back to the *Merchant of Venice*, where it further muddles the play's notion of otherness. Solanio first brings Scots into the

play in the opening scene, when he refers in passing to laughing at bagpipers (1.1.53). Portia speaks of a Scottish suitor who scuffled with an English one, setting the tone of dan gerous Celticness, but, most significantly, it is Shylock who mentions bagpipes twice in one speech during the climactic fourth act, and in a manner that recalls Shapiro's phrases on pork-hating Scots:

Some men there are love not a gaping pig!
Some that are mad if they behold a cat!
And others when the bagpipe sings i'th' nose,
Cannot contain their urine. (4.1.47-50)

Shapiro's chapter points out that Elizabethan England also saw affinities between the Jews and the Irish (*Shakespeare*, 42). Clearly, several cultural others were elided in a medley of fear and ignorance, but with money always an issue, for the perceived cheapness of the Jews and the Scots appears to have been, as Shapiro insinuates, the strongest evidence in support of the conflation.

16. "The Fecundity of the Caress: A Reading of Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* section IV, B, "The Phenomenology of Eros," in *Face to Face with Levinas*, ed. Richard A. Cohen (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986, 231-256). See also Irigaray's "Questions à Emmanuel Lévinas" (*Critique* 46, November 1990, 911-920) and the chapter on Levinas in Tina Chanter's *Ethics of Eros: Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

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THE BARD AS GREAT BOX OFFICE: MICHAEL KAHN AND THE SHAKESPEARE THEATRE

by Mark Charney

The Shakespeare Theatre. *The Economist* calls it "one of the world's three great Shakespearean theatres." *The Wall Street Journal* claims that it's "the nation's foremost Shakespeare companies." London's *Time Literary Dispatch* defines it as "one of the great successes of American Theatre."

Audiences in Washington, D.C., where the theatre is housed, seem to agree, having awarded The Shakespeare Theatre forty-three Helen Hayes awards, the Capitol City's answer to Broadway's prestigious Tony in the last fifteen years.

The secret to its startling success?

Artistic director Michael Kahn, the most recent recipient of the Distinguished Career Award at the 54th Annual Southeastern Theatre Conference in Arlington, Virginia.

Brooklyn born Kahn confessed in his Keynote Question and Answer Address to a packed audience that he fell in love with Shakespeare at an early age, listening to his mother read the Bard to him (cutting out the dirty parts) in lieu of the traditional bed-time story. A student of New York's High School for the Performing Arts, Kahn holds a Bachelor of Arts from Columbia College of Columbia University and an Honorary D.D.L. from Kean College. He has directed shows both Off and On-Broadway (nominated for the Tony for *Showboat*), and he has served as Artistic Director of the American Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford, Connecticut; as Producing Director of the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, New Jersey; and as Head of the Chautauqua Conservatory and Acting Company before moving to Washington, D.C. in 1986.

In addition to serving as the Artistic Director of The Shakespeare Theatre, he has directed the acting program at Julliard since 1968, and he currently spends much of his time traveling back and forth from D.C. to New York, maintaining both positions. Along with the Distinguished Career Award, Kahn recently joined past luminaries Ralph Fiennes, Anthony Hopkins, and Dame Maggie Smith as a recipient of the 2002 Will Award.

When he agreed in 1986 to take on the challenge of "saving" the then failing but very well respected Folger Shakespeare Theatre, he accepted under one condition (as reported by *The Essential Washington*): "I said I was quite interested in taking the job, but only if I could create the very best classical theatre." As he admitted to the *The Washington Post Magazine*, he was quite nervous: "The theatre didn't have financial resources, it really didn't have any staff, it didn't have a great deal of energy. It was seriously in trouble."

Among his goals, Kahn wanted to make the theatre a not-for-profit organization, increase rehearsal time, increase the subscription holders, and find a more appropriate venue. And in a little more than 15 years, he's been responsible not only for increasing the season ticket holders from 3,000 to over 17,000 and the budget ten-fold, but also for enlivening the downtown area surrounding the new space for The Shakespeare Theatre—the 451-seat theatre in the Lansburgh building—by encouraging the growth of restaurants and bookstores in this once abandoned Seventh Street

area. The theatre annually produces five plays in its 451-seat theatre in D.C.'s, Pennsylvania Quarter and one free play in Rock Creek Park's 3000-seat Carter Barron Amphitheatre. This "Free For All" has presented Shakespeare under the stars to more than 360,000 area residents, and its unique contribution to the community was recognized with *The Washington Post* Distinguished Service Award in 1992 and the 1997 Public Humanities Award presented by The Humanities Council of Washington, D.C.

Responding to the question of how he built the Shakespeare Theatre into one of the foremost Shakespeare companies in the world, Kahn pulled no punches: "Through a lot of hard work. I arrived at The Shakespeare Theatre when it was at the Folger, and I told the board that the resources to create a fantastic theatre needed to be found. I needed the rehearsal time, the resources to pay actors and major directors, to have a voice/text coach." His work at Julliard and the respect he had garnered worldwide as a director certainly help him achieve this goal. Bringing to Washington recognizable names such as Patrick Stewart, Dixie Carter, Hal Holbrook, Kelly McGillis, and Elizabeth Ashley, and directors from London, New York, and Europe, Kahn assembled an entourage of professionals who had both affection for and experience with classical acting, training Kahn feels is necessary for students and professionals of classical theatre in this country.

Such a need inspired Kahn to begin the Academy for Classical Acting in 2000, training mature actors who have professional experience to understand the complexities and challenges of classical performance. As he said to Meryn Rosenberg in *The Washington Post Magazine*, "My personal agenda for this school is to have more and more American actors who will make a real contribution to acting Shakespeare." His students in this one-year program are not fresh from earning undergraduate degrees in theatre. "An interesting group," Kahn assesses in an interview with *The Washington Post*. "On balance a bit older, more professional, experienced, and more diverse ethnically...exactly what we were looking for." As he explained in Arlington, the Academy looks for actors in the profession who need classical training, people who have been working in the field who would like a year of intense training: "I think Americans do Shakespeare very well. We have the energy. We have the emotional commitment. We have the physical freedom; we have the lack of tradition that makes this fresh for us. What we need are the tools."

To help American actors develop those tools, The Academy, now an M.F.A. granting program in conjunction with George Washington University, trains actors in Master Classes eight hours a day and more, five days week, for a year. Such an emphasis on education, including out-reach programs and other teaching initiatives, is not an oddity once you know Kahn. In fact, he explained to SETC members that he believes theatre and education are almost always synonymous. Refusing to pin point an exact directorial aesthetic, Kahn explains that his is always evolving, depending on those with whom he works. But he did confess that, when he temporarily gave up directing Shakespeare several years ago believing that he had nothing more to bring to the Bard, it was teaching that re-enlivened his interest. He even admitted to Questioner Jere Hodgkin from Mill Mountain Theatre that, for him, education and directing feed each other, and that achieving either aesthetic almost always necessitates blending both skills.

To facilitate this blend, Kahn looks carefully at the actor. He sympathetically explains that the temperament so often attributed to ego often comes from fear. "To expose yourself night after night to people you don't know," he says, "is a generous act, not an egocentric one." In stories he shared about directing everything from *Henry V* to *Timon of Athens*, Kahn never strayed far from the centrality of the actor and the importance of good classical training. In fact, when one audience member asked just

how important it is for college actors to understand the complexities of iambic pentameter, Kahn answered with a question: "How important is it for a pianist to know how to play?" He clearly stated that directors who don't want to teach the complexities of verse should simply choose a straight play: "If the actor doesn't understand the verse, the audience will be confused." *The Washington Post Magazine* quotes him as saying, "Acting Shakespeare is like competing in the Olympics; it's the ultimate test of ability, and everyone is excited to have the chance to train for it."

Part of Kahn's success at The Shakespeare Theatre can be directly attributed to this nurturing attitude and concern for the actor, but not in stereotypical Hollywood terms. In fact, actors who work for The Shakespeare Theatre understand that they will receive no star treatment. Five dressing rooms usually serve over 30 actors, and as Kahn told *The Essential Washington*, "The available space really breaks down into who smokes and who doesn't." No, Kahn's form of nurturing is related to close readings of Shakespeare, especially what the actor takes from the text and brings to the audience. The examples he provided SETC members, most culled from Shakespeare (such as Hamlet's famous soliloquy), always emphasized the importance of making certain that an actor understands what is literally being said, and that an audience understands what they are seeing.

According to Kahn, the responsibility lies with the actor and director to make intention and motivation absolutely clear: "We've done something that gets in the way of comprehension. Actors need to look at the structure of the line, how it is written, to discover exactly what it means. The job of an actor is to get to the point emotionally, physically, and contextually. 'To be or not to be' means just that—to be or not. . . to. . . be." Kahn explained in Arlington that Shakespeare was such a brilliant writer that the words as written are rich and complex; there is no need for actors to look for or play subtext. Understanding the text alone is challenge enough.

In spite of the importance he places on text, he only spends about a week of rehearsal at the table, always sensitive to the fact that, when actors begin moving about, gravitating to other actors in scenes, they are expressing a need to free themselves from the table. Kahn also doesn't emphasize blocking in the rehearsal process, once again trusting his actors and their intuition: "If the actor is well-prepared, he or she often knows what works best in terms of movement, and the director clarifies the inevitable traffic jams. Less experienced actors, of course, represent a different challenge, but the well-trained actor can trust impulses, and that helps as well to keep an audience member knowledgeable."

Education and training then, according to Kahn, ultimately lead to satisfied audiences, and satisfied audiences translate into theatrical success: "We work very hard to educate and connect with our audience. I think they trust us and are willing to go to less familiar plays not only of Shakespeare, but also of his contemporaries. We built a trust and a relationship with our audiences that have permitted us to take chances, to go out on limbs artistically. We also worked hard to create a subscription audience, which allowed us to take chances, too. All of these have contributed to the quality of the body of our work." As he said in *Variety*, he remains heartened that "William Shakespeare is great box office."

Kahn takes his audiences very seriously, leading him to create initiatives that involve them more directly in the rehearsal process than many regional and professional theatres. "You have to make them part of what you do," he says. "We've had open rehearsals. We do a lot of talks with the audiences about the plays. We have a very good publication. We have many ways in which we make the audience feel like they are a part of our family." Although he attributes some of the successful relationship between theatre and audience to the excellent development and public relations

department, he explains, "One of our successes according to people who subscribe with us, who donate to us, is that they feel they're actually part of our family."

In an effort to foster this familial relationship, Kahn personally answers pretty much every letter that comes to him, even from irate writers: "I feel that our audiences—along with our artists—are our lifeblood. In order to go forward and take chances, I have to explain to them why I'm doing what I'm doing, and I'm very grateful that in all of these years, they've come along with me." In the Q & A session in Arlington, he recounted the story of an audience member, who wrote a very angry letter, accusing the director of using a production of *Timon of Athens* to influence an upcoming election. Although he replied that he was very sorry to alienate her, he thanked her for proving that a 400-year-old play could mean that much to her, that theatre will ultimately always hold that power.

In spite of the idealistic relationship Kahn encourages between audience and theatre, he always remains cognizant about these times of economic hardship: "You have to be very, very responsible to what your vision is, and not compromise that. At the same time, you have to be very, very responsible to economic realities. So in difficult times, perhaps, you use a different kind of imagination to achieve what you believe in. I'm very grateful that our supporters have continued to support us in difficult times. We certainly are dealing with the same economic issues as any other theatre, and we continually endeavor to find new ways to support our mission."

Kahn recognizes that Washington, itself, is partially responsible for his theatre's success. He considers himself fortunate to direct Shakespeare in a city that forges connections between theatre and the political arena. To SETC members, Kahn explained that The Shakespeare Theatre was running a condensed version of the *Oedipus* trilogy during the 9/11 crisis: "Of course the house was dark on the 11th and 12th, but when we reopened again on the 13th, we did so to sold out houses. Audiences obviously believed that it was important to be a part of a community, and this 3,000 year old tale of suffering and redemption spoke to them." To encourage such a community, Kahn directs more than just Shakespeare. He includes in each season those plays that influenced the Bard, and others influenced by the Bard, from Ibsen to Hellman. He recently directed a very successful D.C. premiere of *The Silent Woman* by Ben Jonson, for example, to sold out houses.

Although Kahn, would probably not define himself as an idealist, his advice for other theatre companies proves that he is both an idealist and a humanist: "One thing I would say is that one must stick to one's beliefs, in good times and in bad, and not compromise. The compromising of one's artistic vision may solve a problem at a given moment—let's say the economic problem—but in the long run, it will weaken you. Eventually, people support the vision of the artists—of the theatre—and you need to identify, explain, and follow that. I also think theatres should continue to challenge themselves and not rely on past successes. That's sometimes hard, but it's important because theatre must stay alive."

Ultimately, according to Kahn, remaining true to a vision, in spite of practical and financial roadblocks, is the only way for a director and a theatre to offer spiritual sustenance. He points out that theatre must celebrate that which makes it unique, especially the idea of community, of family, all existing, breathing within the same space. "I'm grateful," he says referring to the "family" that he has created, "that I can contribute in some way to something that is necessary. It gives me a reason to get up in the morning."

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**"YET YOU CAN QUOTE SHAKESPEARE, AT THE DROP OF A PIN": THE
FUNCTION OF SHAKESPEAREAN RIFFS IN LEON FORREST'S *DIVINE DAYS***

by Peter Erickson

As a market phenomenon, Shakespeare is distributed through two principal networks—first, performance institutions consisting of individual theater productions, established theater festivals, and other visual media such as film and video; and, second, educational institutions spanning elementary and secondary school, college, graduate study, and formal programs in continuing education and distance learning. The success of the massive dissemination through these channels comes from the continuous updating performed by these institutions, an updating made possible because the extraordinary range and adaptability of Shakespeare's work seem to give it the capacity for endless generativity and contemporary currency. From a market standpoint, this built-in revisability makes Shakespeare the resource that keeps on producing new audiences. Even when applied to a global context, Shakespeare's reach—his market penetration—appears unlimited. Unlike Phebe in *As You Like It*, Shakespeare is "for all markets."

Although the overall system of distribution contains enormous variation in format, venue, and specific interpretation, the economic product at the franchise level is the name Shakespeare. At its most compact, this brand name is conveyed through Shakespeare's quotability: commodification of Shakespeare thus takes the form of recirculating a select group of familiar quotations. Since this is exactly the method of advertising Shakespeare that Leon Forrest employs in *Divine Days*, Forrest's work may be incorrectly understood as supporting the argument that this use of Shakespeare's marketing appeal constantly reaffirms Shakespeare's primacy and therefore reproduces a circularity from which there is no escape. But the ultimate effect of the novel is to demonstrate the possibility of going through this Shakespeare-quoting process and coming out on the other side.

Forrest disrupts the idea of Shakespeare's permanent, dominant market share in two ways. First, he takes Shakespeare out of the normal circuit of performance and educational institutions and relocates him in the alternative sites of African American popular culture such as the barbershop. The figure of the Shakespearean Galloway Wheeler, for example, represents this shift from school to shop. Of course the barbershop itself is a traditional institution that may become just another forum for dispensing conventional wisdom, including Shakespearean epigrams. Hence the decisive contribution of the second part of Forrest's challenge—the use of the novelistic medium to put an ironic spin on the custom of Shakespeare recitation. This irony gradually decreases Shakespeare's authority and releases its grip.

I.

Shakespeare's presence is felt from the very beginning in Leon Forrest's first novel, whose narrator concludes the opening paragraph with the announcement that his father "steeled me with Frederick Douglass and Shakespeare" (4). The Shakespearean strand continues through all his novels to the very end, where in the

final pages of *Meteor in the Madhouse*, completed as Forrest was dying of cancer (Onishi obituary), he turns once again to the model of Hamlet: "But then I was drowning and gasping for breath now out of the man from Hamlet's last dying plateaus of righteous reaching-grieving riffs" (253).

Particularly striking is the gradually accelerating increase in Shakespeare allusions over the course of Forrest's first four novels. Shakespeare's role steadily progresses from the modest reference in *There Is a Tree More Ancient than Eden*, where Ralph Ellison's Foreword praises the author for "having rejected the stance of cultural self-segregation," to the culmination in the extraordinary density and profusion of Shakespearean language in *Divine Days*. Focusing on *Divine Days*, this essay pursues the questions: Why is Shakespeare there? How do we explain the frequency and intensity of Shakespeare quotation we encounter in the novel? What, beyond simple identification of each quotation, are we meant to recognize?

The solid core of critical material now available consists of seven interviews, all but one occurring after the publication of *Divine Days* (Byerman, Carroll, Dubey, McQuade, Mootry, Rowell, and Warren); three major reviews (Birkerts, Crouch, and Fox); and two introductory studies (Cawelti, "Leon Forrest: The Labyrinth of Luminosity," with a section on *Divine Days* [56-70], and "Earthly Thoughts on *Divine Days*" [233-54]). The main tendency in this body of work has been to concentrate on Forrest's points of connection with the great tradition of novelists—Dostoevsky, Joyce, Faulker, and Ellison. Although Forrest's writing career as a whole includes interests in poetry and in drama, two genres that are represented in *Divine Days*, Forrest's primary commitment is unquestionably to the novel and therefore emphasis on his antecedents in the novel form is entirely understandable. As a result, however, consideration of Forrest's response to Shakespeare has been minimal in proportion to the overall amount of Shakespearean citation, especially in *Divine Days*. Critics' mention of Shakespeare is limited to generalized approval of the comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of Forrest's range of cultural reference, but this observation is made only in passing and left undeveloped.

One of the most interesting instances is Stanley Crouch's two commentaries, both of which contain routine, glancing references to Shakespeare. What makes Crouch's approach compelling is the tacit link to an earlier essay in *The All-American Skin Game*, in which he offers a personal statement about his own connection to Shakespeare through his mother:

Though my mother was a domestic worker who earned sometimes no more than \$11 a day and often worked six days a week, she ... wasn't above forcing me against my will to watch Laurence Olivier's *Richard III* when it came on or doing the same thing when Orson Welles's *Macbeth* was shown. . . . My mother knew that Olivier was a great actor and that Shakespeare was a great dramatist. She wanted me to know and experience those facts. (24).

Crouch's testimony brings us into close contact with the spirit of Leon Forrest's similar dedication to "experiencing those facts."

African Americans' access to Shakespeare and to education as the means of access is a central, vital theme in *Divine Days*. However, important as access is, the concept of access is only a first step—we cannot be content to note Shakespeare's presence and stop there. In order to develop an adequately complex formulation of Forrest's constant appeal to Shakespeare, we must proceed to a second level involving more detailed inquiry into precisely what Forrest does with this access. Aiming for a higher degree of specificity, my goal is to establish a critical framework capable of

taking this further step of distinguishing among different ways of using one's access to Shakespeare and among particular effects produced by these different ways. One consequence of my analysis will be to show that Forrest's use of Shakespeare amounts to more than the ordinary cultural reflex of quoting Shakespeare for the purpose of mere adornment or of exhibiting one's credentials.

II.

My starting point is an examination of Leon Forrest's engagement with the two contrasting touchstones in twentieth-century African American responses to Shakespeare (Erickson, 87-88, 92-94). The first is W. E. B. Du Bois' confident claim of association with Shakespeare in *The Souls of Black Folk* at the beginning of the century: "I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not" (Blight and Gooding-Williams, 102). The second, from the start of the second half of the century, is James Baldwin's explosive expression of alienation from Shakespeare in "The Stranger in the Village": "The most illiterate among them [white Europeans] is related, in a way that I am not, to Dante, Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Aeschylus, Da Vinci, Rembrandt, and Racine; the cathedral at Chartres says something to them which it cannot say to me" (148). Evidence of Forrest's inheritance of both Du Bois and Baldwin as key figures is woven into *Divine Days* through the incorporation of two titles—"the souls of black folk" and "no name in the street"—as unmarked phrases. Nothing is needed to signal their status as titles; the echo is automatically assumed and assimilated as common parlance.

The question of how Forrest is situated with respect to these two reference points is interestingly complicated. Given Forrest's devotion to Shakespeare, one might reasonably predict that he would gravitate toward Du Bois' positive version of relations with Shakespeare. Yet, contrary to this expectation, Forrest is far more strongly drawn to Baldwin. Although he does not by any means accept Baldwin's stance uncritically, Forrest negotiates his own response to Shakespeare primarily through interaction with Baldwin's position. The force of Forrest's attraction to Baldwin is anticipated in "Evidences of Jimmy Baldwin" from 1986, in which Forrest's reservations are clearly on view but his admiration is even more powerfully displayed.

The contrast between Du Bois' and Baldwin's comments on Shakespeare hinges on the issue of access. For the former, access is seen as unimpeded. For the latter, access is both blocked and rejected—"no honorable access" as Baldwin puts it in *No Name in the Street* (47). The principal use of Du Bois as a resource in *Divine Days* involves Forrest's ringing endorsement of Du Bois' perspective in the conflict between Booker T. Washington and Du Bois over competing conceptions of appropriate education for blacks (Blight, 362-64; Blight and Gooding-Williams, 16-17; Gates and Oliver, xxiii-xxv). *Divine Days* unequivocally supports Du Bois' expansive view of unrestricted educational access for African Americans to the full range of culture, as shown in the novel's extended drama of Sugar-Groove's selection of a college (317-20). Initially steered toward Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, Sugar-Groove eventually rejects this option as too narrow:

Particularly unsettling to the young man was a certain "scripture" from the creator of the trade school that read, as a prescription and declaration of faith: "The Negro will advance when he learns that there is as much honor in tilling a field as there is in writing a poem." That was when he decided to hesitate a moment, to pause in flight, realizing this vision would keep him from ever flying very high. (318)

The alternative that Sugar-Groove ultimately chooses is a liberal arts education explicitly linked to Du Bois:

So the young man took Latin, integral calculus, differential calculus, some Greek, the Greek tragedies, and Shakespeare—particularly the tragedies. . . Here he also came into contact with the writings of W. E. B. DuBois, whose thinking about Washington supported the young man's misgivings and his early notion that the life of the mind was being ignored at Tuskegee in the name of the trades (320).

However, this positive acknowledgment of Du Bois is undercut by two other elements in *Divine Days*. First, a sustained critique of Du Bois over the course of the novel tilts the balance toward an overall negative assessment. Even the celebration of Du Bois in the passage cited above is not allowed to stand but instead is immediately qualified by sharp divergence: "On the other hand, the young man found himself in disagreement with DuBois over the idea of the talented tenth and particularly his concept of the twoness of the Negro consciousness as too confining, too split off" (320). Throughout, Forrest is insistently critical of Du Bois' concept of "double-consciousness," with the fullest statement of Forrest's objection occurring late in the novel: "'That will to synthesize was what Du Bois never understood . . . to absorb and re-invent; to take it all in and to masticate it, and process it, and spew it back out, as lyrical and soaring as a riff by Father Louie . . . Du Bois never understood that with his double-consciousness theories'" (1062).

Second, despite the implied link between Shakespeare and Du Bois in this passage (320), Forrest conspicuously avoids any reference to Du Bois' famous statement about Shakespeare in *The Souls of Black Folk*. In my view, the parallel with Forrest's own devotion to Shakespeare is so obvious that Forrest's avoidance of Du Bois here can only be seen as a deliberate, conscious choice. I shall argue that these two restraints in Forrest's response to Du Bois are interrelated and, when combined, suggest an explanation for this avoidance.

In Du Bois' account, the African American male's experience of "double-consciousness" produces "this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self" (Blight and Gooding-Williams, 38-39). This opening moment in *The Souls of Black Folk* can be directly linked to the concluding paragraph of Chapter VI, "Of the Training of Black Men," because the union with Shakespeare creates a transcendent place where "longing" can be satisfied: "So, wed with Truth, I dwell above the Veil" (102). From Forrest's standpoint, Du Bois' image of rarified refuge is problematic. The tone is completely wrong; reverence and solemnity do not at all suit Forrest's boisterous comic style. Forrest finds "twoness" reductive because it denies what he sees as abundantly available, creatively proliferating identities. Rather than proceed from anguished doubleness to the serene stasis of a single, unified self, Forrest delights in the mobility and multiplicity of constantly changing identity. Forrest is at once too down-to-earth and too protean for Du Bois, and this is why their attitudes toward Shakespeare are fundamentally incompatible.

Forrest's encounter with Baldwin emerges in a long, driving paragraph that begins, "What a time it was" (658). Oddly, Forrest cites not the 1953 essay "The Stranger in the Village" but rather *No Name in the Street* (48), which was not published until 1972 and which, as the book's Epilogue notes, was written in the period 1967-1971. Hence Forrest's use of the later book produces a glaring inconsistency by breaking *Divine Day's* fictional timeframe of March 1966. The ostensible distinction between Joubert Jones as narrator and Leon Forrest as author seems particularly thin and transparent here. It is as though Forrest is speaking in his own voice and as if his

need to address Baldwin's statement is so strong that he inserts it anachronistically in the year 1966.

Here is the passage:

Leap of faith in the disbelief of thought and mission impossible—epistle from Jimmy winging, sandblasting all of the old in the name of the new witness-bearing ethos. Yet the vaulting sound of music of his rhetoric imposed upon my mind grieving for truth, justice (not quite the American way) a fuel for the imagination; stirringly soured-splendor and fire-charged canons. 'The cultural pretensions of history are revealed as nothing less than a mask for power, and thus it happens that, in order to be rid of Shell, Texaco, Coca-Cola, the Sixth Fleet, and the friendly American soldier whose mission it is to protect those investments, one also throws Balzac and Shakespeare—and Faulker and Camus—out with them. Later, of course, one may welcome them back, but on one's own terms, and absolutely, on one's own land.' Carried that statement around for days; even had it emblazoned on a clip-board, for a plaque The wonder of Jimmy's forging and soldering of systems and powers. Amid the eloquence, the holes in his history. Read breathlessly as a tract of biblical eloquence, I felt drugged. Would that the nightmare of history from which I'm trying to awaken would be that easily soldered. (658)

Part of the energy comes from Forrest's stylistic affinity with Baldwin. While standing back and apart from the exclusionary implications of "the vaulting new militance," Forrest does respond to "the vaulting sound of music of his rhetoric"—as the last sentence of the page-long paragraph sardonically observes, "Apparently Jimmy had not thrown [Henry] James away stylistically." Forrest's own writing adopts and reproduces Baldwin's propulsive verbal rhythms, and this stylistic identification allows Forrest to enter Baldwin's text in a deeply emotional way. The Baldwin passage that Forrest chooses to highlight posits a two-stage process in which "throwing Shakespeare out" is only the first step. Forrest is especially fascinated by Baldwin's rendering of the second step, in the culminating sentence of the excerpt, of "welcoming Shakespeare back, but on one's own terms."

In the immediate context, Forrest's skepticism casts sharp doubt on this prospect: "Welcomed back, but later. But too late then" (658). Though Forrest decisively dissociates himself from Baldwin's approach, there is nonetheless a significant overlap—the shared desire to shape the use of Shakespeare "on one's own terms." Forrest's "own terms" are not the same as Baldwin's, and Forrest can fashion his terms without ever going through the stage of rejecting Shakespeare, yet Baldwin's resonant assertion of "one's own terms" provides crucial guidance and sustenance for Forrest's individual efforts. In seeking his own way of approaching Shakespeare, Forrest is critical, for different reasons, of both Du Bois and Baldwin. In the end, however, Baldwin, by going further out in uncharted waters, helps Forrest more.

III.

In an interview with Keith Byerman, Forrest succinctly articulates his equivalent to Baldwin's two-part treatment of Shakespeare: "You constantly need to make contacts with whatever it is that's perceived as the classical mode Engage it, first of all, and then refine it and change it in terms of your own needs They're [exemplary black artists] willing to engage the broadest spectrum of our cultures and then combine it with what we have to make the new" (446). The word "then" signals a distinct second phase that is crucial to a full understanding of the complete process.

Taken together, both steps—the first step of engagement followed by the second step of refinement, change, combination—lead to an unpredictable outcome that goes beyond already familiar Shakespeare quotations to "making the new."

The first step, which produces the initial familiarity, is indispensable. For Forrest, engagement means education, and his opposition to the denial of educational access is uncompromising. The biting sarcasm in Forrest's story of the elimination of Galloway Wheeler's Shakespeare course from the curriculum at the black high school is finely honed:

Then a new white principal came to the school—trying to out-black his own shadow, from Jump Street—and gave Wheeler, of all people, a direct order to stop teaching his Shakespeare. Got the colored teachers to 'sign a deposition,' that was how Wheeler called it, stating his 'teaching of Shakespeare was not relevant to the educational needs of Black students.' And because Wheeler is a barber, the principal and his black assistant said Wheeler should set up a course in the trades, specifically teaching a class on barbering in place of his Shakespeare. (111)

Nor does Forrest let the subject drop. Relentless in his satirical exposure, he drives the point home by characterizing the anti-Shakespeare phenomenon as a return to the self-imposed limits on black education promulgated by Booker T. Washington: "Apparently they were trying to recreate a Tuskegee model of trades to turn Mister Galloway into Mr. Tom Thumb Booker T. Wheeler-Wright, so help them God, and all in the name of the new Platitudinous power shuffle of Black Militancy" (608); "It sounded as if Booker T. Washington had been re-born again. . . . What Barbering, 101? Could they use the classroom where Galloway Wheeler taught his Shakespeare?" (626).

Countering the suppression of Shakespeare, Forrest establishes a positive alternative in which knowledge of Shakespeare is linked to an educational source. Sugar-Groove studies Shakespeare—"particularly the tragedies"—in college (320). Similarly, Joubert Jones prepares to take a university course on Shakespeare's Tragedies (607, 629). Even the mystery of a street child's sonnet—"Where had this little urchin-angel-chile learn to write, nay to compose, as well, a sonnet?" (680)—is explained in part by the tutoring on Shakespeare's sonnets given by her social worker, De Loretto/Imani (689-90, 712), whose education is substantial (823). The one wild-card exception to the emphasis on standard educational venues is the elusive Ford, who picks up Shakespeare when working as stage manager for a traveling theater company (955). Nonetheless, the dominant motif of academic sites as the origin of Shakespearean knowledge is reinforced by the biographical information about Leon Forrest's own decision, after returning from military service, to take courses with Marvin Mirsky at the University of Chicago, including on Shakespeare (Cawelti, 13, 282).

Having established the novel's commitment to black access to Shakespeare through education, we must turn to consideration of the second step: once access to Shakespeare is activated, in what ways and for what purpose is access used? Humor, one of the main driving principles of *Divine Days* overall, applies specifically to Forrest's deployment of Shakespeare. The humorous, mischievous style creates a subtly irreverent, corrosive ambience that frees Forrest from mere homage and releases a revisionary potential. Forrest's operating procedure makes us aware that humor is not simply a mood—a good laugh—but also a force, a "volcanic power" (Rowell, 356).

When Forrest's use of Shakespearean allusion is examined at the level of micro-

analysis, two patterns emerge. First, although the quotations are drawn from a wide range of Shakespeare's oeuvre, there is an overwhelming concentration on four major tragedies—*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Lear*, and *Macbeth*. These are the plays to which Forrest is constantly circling back. Second, within this group of four plays, there is a further concentration on a small number of key speeches or lines to which Forrest returns over and over. For example, he gains maximum mileage from Macbeth's climactic ten-line speech beginning "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" and ending with "full of sound and fury / Signifying nothing" because he disassembles it into smaller phrases and then rings many variations on these bits and pieces.

These two strategies contribute to the effect of change that Forrest indicates should follow the initial step of access and engagement. The generic paradox that Forrest's comic sensibility is directed in large part toward Shakespearean tragedy results in a volatile mix that virtually guarantees transformation. Taken from their original location in the tragedies and resituated with a wry comic twist in *Divine Days*, the Shakespearean language no longer sounds quite the same. This impact is increased by the repetition of short taglines and fragments. Sheer repetition can in and of itself make familiar Shakespeare phrases seem slightly funny. But, at a deeper level, this device serves as an improvisational technique of the kind described by James A. Snead: "Without an organizing principle of repetition, true improvisation would be impossible, since an improviser relies upon the ongoing recurrence of the beat" (68). From this vantage point, Shakespearean traces in *Divine Days* constitute the background beat from which Forrest's performance rises in solo flight. As Joubert Jones puts it, "For me, rambling was akin to riffing in a jazz solo" (843).

IV.

In the posthumously published *Meteor in the Madhouse*, the reflective mood at the end includes a significant Shakespearean element: "Captured essence of Falstaff's raw belly-laughter of a crack-up call. Brooding Hamlet's royal eloquence. Trapped between those two in a final sprocket of life-span-time" (224). This last phrase—"final sprocket of life-span-time"—applies directly to Forrest himself; as Merle Drown, one of the editors makes clear, Forrest's final efforts on the manuscript coincided with his final days (xix). Forrest's interweaving Shakespeare into the texture of this moment provides a measure of Shakespeare's ultimate importance to him.

Yet, at the same time, we cannot help but notice that Forrest is not passively consoling himself by holding on to Shakespeare's greatness. Rather, staging a wonderful role-reversal, he talks back to Shakespeare by bequeathing each to Falstaff and to Hamlet large doses of Louis Armstrong he thinks they could use. This enactment of exchange and intermixing fulfills Forrest's vision of the black artist as "willing to engage the broadest spectrum of our cultures and then combine it with what we have to make the new" (Byerman, 446).

The Falstaff-Hamlet pair in *The Meteor in the Madhouse* retroactively illuminates the formal structure of *Divine Days'* ending with its similar pairing of McGovern McNabb and Sugar-Groove. At the very moment that Forrest is pulling out all the Shakespearean stops at the conclusion of *Divine Days*—so much so that Joubert Jones has to apologize that "now I'm beginning to sound like Galloway Wheeler" (1132)—Forrest takes a stark stand: "What saved them from the dead was that some remnant, some streak was still there of Negro, not African, and not European, but Negro—with that fabulous impulse to reinvent, to make a way out of noway. The Negro-American's will to transform, reinvent, and stylize until Hell freezes over" (1127-18). In a context where Shakespeare is suddenly bracketed as European, Forrest demonstrates the "will to transform, reinvent, and stylize" through his hilariously exag-

gerated extrapolations of the prototypes of Falstaff and Hamlet into the new figures of McNabb and Sugar-Groove.

McGovern McNabb corresponds to Falstaff not only because of his corpulence and infinite alcoholic consumption, which have earned him the name "terrible tonnage," but also because of his comic capacity for resurrection. For the latter, there are two pertinent Shakespeare sources: act 5, scene 4 in *Henry IV, Part 1* where Falstaff rises from feigned death in battle (the phrase "food for worms" early in *Divine Days* [12] comes from this scene), and the narration of Falstaff's actual death in act 2, scene 3 of *Henry V*, where lack of life is confirmed when Mistress Quickly, feeling his body from his feet to his knees "and so upward, and upward," and finds him "as cold as any stone." In this upward movement, the next step is Falstaff's genitals, as the pun on "stones" as testicles intimates.

In a demonstration of his outrageously comic spirit, Forrest outdoes Shakespeare by making the coldness of McNabb's testicles the means of his miraculous revival. At great length, Forrest narrates the story of how the application of a dozen ice cubes to his genitals brings the comatose McNabb back to life by causing an erection and prolonged orgasm (230-58). This event illustrates in microcosm Forrest's method of managing his Shakespearean sources: his exuberant elaborations so far exceed the original as to be undeniably unique.

The surprising reprise of the McNabb legend at the novel's end (1106, including a reference to Falstaff, and 1122) can be explained by the interrelation of McNabb and Sugar-Groove as mutually reinforcing, low and high versions of the same spirit of resilience and renewal. In Sugar-Groove's case, renewal takes the religious form of a new life in heaven. But, even here the comic element prevails, because *Divine Days* begins (97-109) and ends (1134-35) with a detailed rendition of Sugar-Groove's spectacular flight with angel wings that can only be read as Forrest's extraordinary amplification of a single line from *Hamlet*: "And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."

At a more serious level evoked by the adjective in the novel's title, Sugar-Groove's religious vision of "sublime radiance" (1110) can also be seen in part as Forrest's taking, and running with, the meager, cryptic hints of Hamlet's potential as a religious figure: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will"; "There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow". A logical extension of this development occurs in *The Meteor in the Madhouse* where the recourse to *Hamlet* (253) serves as a catalyst for the expression of Forrest's own religious aspiration in terms similar to Sugar-Groove's: "and then I could feel a swoop of angelic voices beneath my gown as I sailed out to other voices and other democratic chambers and other spheres into the distances of time" (254).

Forrest's acts of "reinvention" in *Divine Days* perform two distinct moves. On the one hand, he pays tribute to his roots in a Shakespearean inheritance; on the other hand, he transforms this inheritance into something so different that the original source is at times almost unrecognizable. Forrest's final vision—"New bards will find new dazzling search lights, even lighthouses within the spirit of the forever shape-shifting Sugar-Groove" (1134)—applies not only to the future but to the present as well. On the evidence of Forrest's linguistic "job" (1135) in *Divine Days*, he himself has earned the title of "new bard."

Forrest's relentless participation in the custom of quoting Shakespeare taps into Shakespeare's power as a market force, but the novel puts this quotability through a complex filtering system that transforms rather than reinforces it. One has to know Shakespeare to read Forrest; yet, because Shakespeare is invoked for the purpose of riffing rather than recitation, reading Forrest changes one's sense of Shakespeare's status in our symbolic economy.

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Hamlet from Alabama Shakespeare Festival 2002.

LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ: SHAKESPEARE AND BLAKE

by Chantelle MacPhee

The French Revolution, a fragment written in 1791, addresses the revolutionary theme Blake explored further in *A Song of Liberty, America, and Europe*. The fragment attracted no attention when it was first published and has not attracted a great deal since.¹ In *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, David Erdman annotates the poem by comparing its events with the historical events that they adumbrate and the response to those events of English radicals,² concluding that the Assembly is portrayed as more decisive and powerful than it was at the time.³ For Erdman, Blake's poem works to collapse the differences between the French revolutionary ideal and English parliamentary government, and in doing so it echoes one important aspect of the English interpretation of events in France, although he risks eliding the distinction between fact and fiction, or between journalism and poetry.⁴ Jon Mee modifies Erdman's approach in his discussion of *The Book of Urizen*, interpreting the absence of history and politics from this work as signifying "either a retreat from the political domain or some kind of shadowing of history by an allegorical mythopoesis" (2). According to Mee, Erdman is an allegorist who believes his task is to "seek out the encoded politics of Blake's rhetoric" (3). Mee's approach is more literary. In particular, he highlights Blake's use of the Bible and his attempt to release the Bible from its role as a text that served to reinforce "the maintenance of the social order" (2). In *The French Revolution*, according to him, Blake shared a common project with other lower-class radicals who sought to construct their own voice, by using the rhetorical resources available to them and, in particular, Biblical rhetoric.⁵ My own approach extends Mee's by calling attention to another rhetorical resource that Blake utilises in *The French Revolution*, the rhetoric of Shakespeare's plays.⁶

The Shakespearean allusions in Blake's poem, both direct and indirect, liberate Blake's text from hermetic symbolic methodology. They function to place the poem within the rhetorical discourse that by 1791 worked to define English responses to kingship more powerfully than any other, the discourse, that is, of Shakespeare's plays. Hence the importance of the dramatic structure that William Halloran excavates. As Halloran points out, *The French Revolution* may be divided into scenes as follows: the Louvre, scene one, lines 1-15; the Bastille, scene two, lines 16-54; the Commons, scene three, lines 54-58; the Louvre, scene four, lines 59-254; the Commons, scene five, lines 255-69; the Army, scene six, lines 270-92; and the Louvre, scene seven, lines 293-306. My own account of the poem retains Halloran's sevenfold division. For Halloran, the number seven functions as the structural principle of the poem and exposes its dependence on *The Book of Revelation*. For me, the dramatic structure is of first importance, because its presence sanctions my argument that Blake's representation of Louis and of the forces that threaten him are mediated for the English reader by a sequence of implicit allusions to a discourse about kingship that has its origin in Shakespeare.

While Ian Small argues that "the course of the Revolution in British eyes was always determined by human agency and seen in terms of criminality and error" (xiv),

history, in this view of things, becomes a morality play, the forces of good against the forces of evil. Hence, the horrors of the Bastille, or, a few years later, the execution of the King and of Marie Antoinette, might each be represented as pure expressions of the evil of a tyrannical ruler or of an inhumanly savage revolutionary government. Blake's use of Shakespeare might seem to license exactly this kind of historical understanding. In *Richard III*, Shakespeare had, after all, offered one of the two most powerful examples of how a savage dynastic squabble might be transformed into an ennobling narrative in which the forces of evil are ousted by the forces of good, and the second example, *Macbeth*, is also by Shakespeare. My purpose in this article, then, is not simply to point out those moments in Blake's poem in which he seems to present events in France mediated through Shakespeare, but to question what the effects of this mediation might be.

It is best to begin with the one direct allusion to Shakespeare in the poem. The Abbe de Seyes demands in the name of the National Assembly and the people of France that the National Guard be withdrawn from Paris and the Bastille overthrown. He is answered by the Duke of Burgundy:

Seest thou yonder dark castle, that moated around, keeps this city
of Paris in awe.
Go command yonder tower saying, Bastile depart, and take thy
shadowy course.
Overstep the dark river, thou terrible tower, and get thee up into the
country ten miles.
And thou black southern prison, move along the dusky road to
Versailles; there
Frown on the gardens, and if it obey and depart, then the King will
disband
This war-breathing army; but if it refuse, let the Nation's Assembly
thence learn,
That this army of terrors, that prison of horrors, are the bands of the
murmuring kingdom. (246-54)

The allusion has often enough been identified, but little has been made of it. Erdman, for example, describes these lines simply as a "dramatic sarcasm, suggested perhaps by Macduff's Birnam Wood Maneuver and designed to set the stage for the drama of July 14" (*Blake: Prophet*, 171). But in 1791, allusions to *Macbeth* were heavily weighted with political resonance. As Jonathan Bate points out, from 1760 to 1830, perhaps no Shakespeare tragedy was more important politically than *Macbeth* (*Shakespearean*, 88), and the outbreak of the French Revolution served only to underline its pre-eminence. In the 1790s, verbal and visual allusions to the play are marked by the "repeated use of threefold repetition," the significance of which "derives not only from the threefold figurations in *Macbeth*, traditional to witchcraft, but also from the fact that threes were central to the iconography of the French Revolution, with its tricolour, its *liberté, égalité, fraternité* and its triple symbols of liberty cap, liberty tree, and citizen's pike" (Bate *Shakespearean*, 90). Various artists, including Gillray in a famous print, drew on *Macbeth* to sharpen their commentary on the politics of the day. William Dent helped establish a model for other caricaturists in his *Revolution Anniversary or Patriotic Incantations* in July 1791. Using *Macbeth* as his model, he associates the witches and the cauldron scene with contemporary political figures: Fox, Sheridan, Priestley, Dr. Joseph Towers. In Dent's work, the radicals prepare an infernal broth, which they will drink at the second anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. (Bate *Shakespearean*, 89).⁷

Blake was himself to borrow this iconography in his design of *Hecate*. From one point of view, then, it is entirely unsurprising that Blake should allude to *Macbeth* in his poem. But that is to ignore a fact to which Jonathan Bate calls attention. The practice of drawing parallels between *Macbeth* and events in France was common not amongst those like Blake, who sympathised with the Revolution, but amongst their most violent opponents. As Jonathan Bate makes clear, in the 1790s *Macbeth* was invoked almost always by those individuals who wished to portray the events in France as demonic.⁸ As Bate points out, the practice had its origin in the first and greatest of all the anti-Revolutionary tracts, Burke's *Reflections*:

History will record, that on the morning of the 6th October, 1789, the King and Queen of France, after a day of confusion, alarm, dismay, and slaughter, lay down, under the pledged security of public faith, to indulge nature in a few hours of respite, and troubled, melancholy repose. (Bate *Shakespearean*, 88)

This allusion, when coupled with *Macbeth*'s "balm of hurt minds" (2.2.36), couches sleeplessness with regicide, Duncan's assassination with Louis' in 1793. In effect, the allusion becomes a prophecy in Blake's poem and functions in much the same manner as *Macbeth*'s witches.

The execution of Louis in 1793 was widely understood in England as a striking confirmation of Burke's prophetic power, and it gave fresh impetus to parallels between the dead King and the murdered Duncan, his "silver skin lac'd with his golden blood" (2.3.112). *Macbeth*, in its representation of a legitimate King murdered by a man driven to crime by his ambition, and the moral trajectory of the play's hero, tracing the path by which a man, once noble, could degenerate into a panic-stricken, indiscriminately murderous savage, was to provide the most serviceable lens through which English spectators watched events in France unfold as the execution of Louis was followed by the Revolutionary Terror. (See Figure 1.) But already in 1791, as Burke's invocation of the play demonstrates, it was a play that has been appropriated by Blake's political enemies, and hence, on the face of it, an inappropriate play for Blake to allude to.

Blake's tactic is, of course, not difficult to explain. *Macbeth* was by 1791 simply too important a text, too strong a lens through which to view contemporary politics, to be left in the hands of his political opponents. But any invocation of the play was fraught with difficulties. Most obviously, *Macbeth* is a play about the evils of tyrannical rule, not about the evils of absolute rule, a moral that would scarcely have commended itself to James VI and I, who seems to have been very much in Shakespeare's mind when he wrote it. Indeed *Macbeth* pays homage to the sacredness of legitimate kingship, in the person of Duncan, and ends with a strong image of the virtue of benevolent kingship in the person of Malcolm. Indeed the speech by Malcolm that closes the play has a particular but not wholly appropriate resonance:

What's more to do,
 Which would be planted newly with the time,
 As calling home our exil'd friends abroad
 That fled the snares of watchful tyranny. (5.9.30-33)

Necker's dismissal, and his retreat into exile, is a key moment in Blake's poem, but it is far from his purpose to suggest that a change of heart on the part of the King, and the recall of Necker might redeem Louis' rule.

MR. GARRICK in the Character of **MACBETH**



For some the Devil... didst thou not lower in a Voice?

Figure 1: from *Dramatic Character Plates for Bell's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays 1775-1776*. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969.

Blake's solution is ingenious. Put briefly, he transfers the distinctive characteristics of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* from the King to one of his officers, from Louis to the Governor of the Bastille, Bernard-René de Launay. This device relies heavily on the symbolic value that had been attached to the Bastille throughout the eighteenth century, a character most apparent, perhaps, in the legend of the man in the iron mask. The legend rather than the reality made the prison the first target of the revolutionaries in 1789, and the fall of the Bastille served only to intensify the sinister glamour attached to the prison.⁹ The Bastille was composed of eight round towers: *Tour du Coin, de la Chapelle, du Puits, de la Bertaudière, du Trésor, de la Comté, and de la Liberté*. In *The French Revolution*, Blake reconstructs the historical landmark by reducing the number of towers, converting some into dens, and renaming them. Blake's erasure of the Liberty tower, then, is especially significant. Historically, the Liberty Tower "contained those prisoners who were free to walk about the courtyards of the prison" (Godechot 90). However, Blake omits it, so that the prison can become a complete and compact embodiment of the nation as a whole, which is definitively characterised by its failure to allow liberty to its citizens.

Blake re-names the towers and dens: Darkness, Bloody, Order, God, Horror, Religion, and Destiny. Each is represented as sunk in a state of darkness and decay as a means of figuring the physical and mental degeneration that pervades all levels of French society. The same tactic is at work in Blake's representation of the Bastille's prisoners. Blake would almost certainly have known the somewhat humdrum reality that was revealed when the Bastille fell on July 14, 1789, securing the liberation of only seven prisoners. The conditions in which prisoners were kept did not correspond to the legend of the prison's horrors in earlier times. But for Blake, as for most of his contemporaries, the legend of the Bastille was far more important than in its reality, and in its legend, the prison becomes the embodiment of the nation, and its prisoners the true representatives of the people of France in their suffering under a despotic ruler. As one might expect of Blake, foremost amongst these prisoners is the writer, condemned for his composition of a prophetic work. He lies in chains, a serpent "coil'd round in his heart, hid from the light" (28). There is the woman who refused to be "whore to the Minister" (37), and is now bound to a bed of straw and whore to the "seven diseases of the earth" (36). The strong man has been maimed, "His feet and hands cut off, and his eyes blinded" (44). All of these figures are representative, and between them they represent all the people of France. This allows Blake to establish the governor of the prison, Bernard-René de Launay as, in some sense, the nation's true monarch, the man in whom the imaginative reality of Louis' kingship is fully revealed.

Ironically, de Launay had himself actually been born in the Bastille, but when he was made governor of the prison, he came to represent "the entire integrity of royal authority in Paris" (Schama *Citizens*, 399). Forced to defend the Bastille and its contents—250 barrels of powder—with little manpower and food and no water supply, the Governor had a difficult task. He negotiated with two delegates, but refused their demand that he surrender the prison's guns and stock of powder, on the grounds that he was unable to do so without the King's express warrant. Rumors contributed to the people's unrest. They believed the army was approaching to crush the Paris uprising. His unwillingness to comply with the delegates' demands quickly heightened the situation. The assault on the Bastille began, and after the prison fell, its unfortunate Governor was killed.

After the storming of the Bastille, the people took the governor and the commandant of the prison to be executed publicly. They were beheaded, their heads placed on tent poles and carried to the Palais Royal through the streets of Paris

(Paulson *Representations*, 42). The end of Macbeth—his head placed on a pike and displayed—was reproduced:

Then yield thee, coward,
 And live to be the show and gaze o' the time!
 We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,
 Painted upon a pole, and underwrit,
 'Here may you see the tyrant.' (5.8.23-26)

It is perhaps the crucial coincidence that prompted Blake to transfer to the Governor of the Bastille the distinctive characteristics of Shakespeare's tyrant king.

The effects of the device are far-reaching. For one thing, it enabled Blake to overcome the limitation in the British understanding of the Revolution that, as Ian Small notes, insisted on understanding all events as "determined by human agency" and explicable "in terms of criminality" (xiv). The Governor of the Bastille is demonic and tyrannical not by virtue of his personality but by virtue of his office. Evil is located not in an individual but in the institutions of a state governed by an arbitrary and absolute ruler, by a king who had the power to incarcerate anyone in the Bastille indefinitely with a "*lettre de cachet*" (Bindman 36). It had another crucial advantage. It freed Blake from the difficult task of attempting to locate Macbeth-like qualities in the mild, ineffectual, hapless character of Louis XVI. In his representation of Louis, Blake turns to a quite different kind of Shakespearean monarch, the type represented by Shakespeare's Henry VI, and still more crucially by his Richard II. Like Richard II, Louis is a weak king, at the mercy of events, trusting bad advisers and dismissing his one trustworthy adviser, Necker.

Several critics, amongst them Eileen Allman, have drawn attention to the importance in Shakespeare's history plays of the figure of the player-king. For Allman, "the Player-King, in his generic form, is the complete player-actor, producer, and poet-playwright" (5). The player-king creates his own role, acts it out and controls the scene. Unfortunately, this power is rarely maintained: "he is instead created, seemingly self-created, within the drama by an educational process performed before the audience. Because he is a character who can lead his society—both within and outside his formal drama—toward communal harmony, his two audiences must share his learning experience" (5). In this definition the supreme Shakespearean instance of the Player-King is Henry V, whose education into the role is traced in the two parts of *Henry IV*. The dark version of the type is Richard III, who has supreme theatrical skills, but finds, because he misuses them, that in the end they desert him. For Shakespeare, then, kingship is a kind of performance, and the best King is the supreme performer. It was a notion that to an actor-dramatist such as Shakespeare would have been entirely congenial.

Related to but in contrast with the Player-King is a character that Sandra Billington has named the "mock king." The mock king may be someone engaged in acting a king or a real king who simply cannot fulfil that role adequately (Billington 87). Hal and Falstaff are mock kings when they each in turn assume the character of Henry IV. But it is the second type that is significant to my argument, the king who is unable to act out the role of kingship that his birth has given him, and the supreme Shakespearean example of this type is Richard II. Much like the player-king, the mock king creates himself from established patterns, which Billington limits in her study to the winter and spring festivals. But he finds himself unable to give the performance that is demanded of him. Ironically, in Act one, scene one, Richard tells Mowbray and Bolingbroke that kings "were not born to sue but to command" (Billington 196), but Richard, though he has been born to command, is unable to do so. He fails to resolve the conflict between Mowbray and Bolingbroke, authorizes the trial by combat that the

two men demand, and then intervenes to prevent the conflict from taking place. His judgement is that both men be exiled, Bolingbroke for ten years and Mowbray for life, but he has scarcely announced his judgement before he reduces the sentence on Bolingbroke from ten years to six. These decisions lead him to a still more dangerous one—the seizure of Gaunt's property upon Gaunt's death. Throughout the early acts of the play, Richard flaunts the trappings of kingship, but fails to display its substance: he commands the rhetoric of kingship but never succeeds in translating the rhetoric into action, with the result that in him kingship becomes a shadow of itself. He remains at the mercy of untrustworthy advisers and of his own capricious whims.

Blake draws on Shakespeare's *Richard II* for his representation of Louis. Louis's exile of Necker, obedient to the advice of the Duke of Burgundy, is represented in a manner that recalls not only Richard II's exile of Bolingbroke, but his vindictive treatment of his one trustworthy adviser, John of Gaunt:

Necker rise, leave the kingdom, thy life is surrounded with snares;
 We have call'd an Assembly, but not to destroy; we have given gifts,
 not to the weak;
 I hear rushing of muskets, and bright'ning of swords, and visages
 redd'ning with war,
 Frowning and looking up from brooding villages and every dark'ning
 city;
 Ancient wonders frown over the kingdom, and cries of women and
 babes are heard,
 And tempests of doubt roll around me, and fierce sorrows, because
 of the Nobles of France;
 Depart, answer not, for the tempest must fall, as in years that are
 passed away. . . .
 Dropping a tear the old man his place left, and when he was gone
 out
 He set his face toward Geneva to flee, and the women and children
 of the city
 Kneel'd round him and kissed his garments and wept; he stood a
 short space in the street,
 Then fled; and the whole city knew he was fled to Geneva, and the
 Senate heard it. (109-115, 121-124)

Richard II is first usurped and then killed by Bolingbroke, who, in Sandra Billington's terms, is neither a 'Player-King', nor a 'mock-king,' but simply a 'false king,' since his reign lacks legitimacy. But he is the king who will be succeeded by his son, Henry V, represented by Shakespeare as the supreme exemplar of English kingship.

Richard II is so important a model for Blake, surely, because the play comes close to allowing the possibility that the right of kings is not innate but earned, and that Richard II has forfeited his right to rule by his inadequacy to the task. Indeed, Richard II fulfils himself not in his reign but in his deposition. He proves in the end the most ironical of all Shakespeare's versions of the Player-King, because the one role that he can play perfectly is the role of the deposed king. *Richard II*, then, offered Blake more than a means to characterise Louis. It offered him a means to represent the overthrow of a legitimate king as possessed of its own, quite different kind of legitimacy, and offered him the possibility, had he continued the poem, as representing Louis' deposition as the event that at last allowed the king the one role that he was adequate to perform.

In Act two, scene one, Richard queries what he will eventually do: "Can sick men play so nicely with their names?" (84). Richard will "play" with his identity throughout the drama just as he will play with Henry when he must surrender the crown. Prior to his deposition, Richard displays his reliance upon others. He requests his followers to leave him because "time hath set a blot upon my pride" (3.2.80-81). Aumerle responds, "Remember who you are" (3.2.82). Thereafter, when Richard is deposed, his query into his identity begins, and his acting assumes a power that he lacks as king. His first query begins,

Am I not king?

Awake, thou coward majesty, thou sleepest!

Is not the king's name twenty thousand names?

Arm, arm my name! (3.2.83-86)

Richard establishes a synecdoche that defines him. He possesses the title *King*, but that is all. He attempts to personify *majesty* but it sleeps, much as Louis's does in *The French Revolution*. Richard will act and, as York tells us, look like a king (3.3.68), but only when he is king no longer.

In Act 4, scene 1, Richard finally becomes the consummate actor in public in the midst of Henry and his supporters. His queries in 3.3.144-175 are prompted by his relinquishing the throne to Henry. His responses display a willingness to relinquish the title *King* in exchange for a new role, as the usurped ruler. By 4.1, Richard possesses the power to sway emotion. When he enters the scene, Richard captures our sympathy because he metaphorically and literally effaces himself from the scene. Richard will now act out Henry's usurpation publicly: "Give me the crown. Here, cousin, seize the crown" (4.1.182). His verbal utterance publicly announces what Henry has done and provides the audience with a visual depiction of what has transpired. As Eileen Allman recognises, Richard "has extended his personal paralysis as king outward to his community in the form of a repressive tyranny over action" (22). He will be replaced by someone more capable of action.

Richard publicly surrenders his throne and even announces to his audience, both within the play and without, that he is going to "undo myself" (4.1.203). He publicly dissects himself, removes the symbols of kingship, and surrenders them to Henry. All Richard maintains is his birth name. He relinquishes the first three attributes—his crown, his sceptre and his pride—and then he emphasises the personal nature of the act. He denies his existence as king in a public arena. In Blake's poem, Louis's sceptre lacks regal power and is now "too heavy for mortal grasp" (4)—symbolic of his enfeebled state. The first time that Blake introduces the reader to the king, the character is described as "Sick, sick: the Prince on his couch" (2). The sceptre, the regal symbol of power Blake designates as a type of powerful wand, is "too heavy for mortal grasp" (4); it can no longer "be swayed by visible hand, nor in cruelty bruise the mild flourishing mountains" (5).

The king no longer possesses the necessary strength to rule. Instead, Louis XVI's soul is preoccupied with dreams and, troubled, he resorts to "leaning on Necker" (8, 10). Physical and intellectual dependence causes Louis's downfall. Blake's description in scene two of the den of Horror complements the king's position. This den "held a man / Chain'd hand and foot, round his neck an iron band, bound to the impregnable wall. / In his soul was the serpent coil'd round in his heart, hid from the light, as in a cleft rock;" (26-28). King Louis is not only bound to his couch and requires the aid of his satellite, Necker, but he writhes "in dim and appalling mist" (2-3). Such symbolic inner turmoil complements the position of King Louis XVI as he slowly disintegrates

from active participation in the discussions amongst his supporters to a passive automaton that merely fulfils the wishes of his counsel.

The sceptre Louis finds a burden is "unwieldy" (*Richard II* 4.1.205). When Richard resigns his throne, he tells Henry, "I give this heavy weight from off my head, / And this unwieldy sceptre from my hand" (4.1.204-205). Richard finds the symbols of kingship cumbersome. In Blake's poem, Louis, like Richard, dismisses his most trusted adviser and opens himself to advisers who place their needs above the state's.

There is another scene in *The French Revolution* that would have impressed contemporary readers with its Shakespearean resonance, the confrontation between Louis and his great ancestor Henri IV.¹⁰ Henri IV is presented by Blake as the French counterpart to England's Henry V. By the eighteenth century, the prestige of Henry V as the supreme English monarch, the great people's King and the great warrior King, largely rested on Shakespeare's play, which, during that century, probably because of the recurrent wars with France, dominated the Shakespearean stage. When the shadow of Henri IV appears, he listens to the deliberations of the King and his nobles, and then "indignant departed on horses of heav'n" (201). It is a symbolic moment because it betokens the departure from France of the ideal of kingship. On his departure, the first to speak eloquently is not the King, nor any of his nobles, but the Abbe de Seyes, and he speaks in the voice of a new authority, "like the voice of God following a storm" (202):

Hear, O Heavens of France, the voice of the people, arising from
 valley and hill,
 O'erclouded with power. Hear the voice of vallies, the voice of meek
 cities,
 Mourning oppressed on village and field, till the village and field is a
 waste.
 For the husbandman weeps at blights of the fife, and blasting of
 trumpets consume
 The souls of mild France; the pale mother nourishes her child to the
 deadly slaughter (206-210).

The authoritative voice is no longer the voice of kingly authority, but "the voice of the people." Blake's point may be this. In the great arc of Shakespeare's second tetralogy, the deposition of Richard II is justified retrospectively by the reign of Henry V. But in France the possibility of true kingship is positioned not in the future but in the distant past, and that possibility is represented by Blake as abandoning the nation in indignant despair.

A confrontation with the ghost of a great ancestor is a common event in the radical poems of this period. In Southey's *Joan of Arc*, the maid descends to the Underworld and meets the shade of dead Kings. In Landor's *Gebir* (1798), Gebir confronts the shade of his dead father, as does Ivar in Cottle's *Alfred* (1800). In a late use of the topos, the Turkish ruler, Mahmud, is confronted by the ghost of his great ancestor, Mahomet II, in Shelley's *Hellas* (1821). It is a device through which the radical poets offer their own baleful transformation of Burke's vision of a society bound to its own past. The "encouragement to look forward rather than backward," says George Woodcock, distinguishes "the influence of the French Revolution from that of the American Revolution in Britain" (5), though it might be truer to say that it distinguished its influence on those who viewed events in France sympathetically. But the appearance of a ghost would also inevitably have reminded Blake's readers of the several plays by Shakespeare in which ghosts appear.

Most often, as in *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth*, the ghost of the victim confronts his murderer. Henri IV may have been assassinated, but Louis clearly bore no responsibility for his death. He appears, it seems, to remind his successor, Louis, and the nobles of France of their duty. His military appearance and the fear that he inspires both serve to associate him with the most famous of all Shakespeare's ghosts, the ghost of old King Hamlet:

The Abbe de Sj[i]eyes from the Nation's Assembly. O Princes and
Generals of France,
Unquestioned, unhindered, awe-struck are the soldiers; a dark
shadowy man in the form
Of King Henry the Fourth walks before him in fires, the captains like
men bound in chains
Stood still as he pass'd, he is come to the Louvre, O King, with a
message to thee;
The strong soldiers tremble, the horses their manes bow, and the
guards of thy palace are fled (163-7).

Old King Hamlet appears to instruct his son on his duty to avenge his father's murder, but the appearance of the ghost of Henri IV is understood by the nobles as signifying that the chivalric values that once ruled France have had their day. He appears as a way of intimating that the ideal of kingship that he best represented is dead.

Shakespeare's presence in Blake's *The French Revolution* is far from intrusive. Indeed, only in a single passage that echoes the journey of Birnam Wood to Dunsinane is it anything like direct. Nevertheless, it is important, because by 1791 Shakespeare's plays had come to function as the most powerful discourse through which the English refracted their political understanding. As the cartoons of the day so amply illustrate, political events were repeatedly understood by locating them in the terms of a Shakespearean original. Most often, and perhaps most easily, this Shakespearean typology underwrote a conservative ideology, as in almost all the cartoons that depicted contemporary politicians in the guises of the witches in *Macbeth*. One of Blake's impulses is to free himself from the mythology of the past, to create his own system for fear that he be enslaved by somebody else's, but his other impulse is to take a past mythology to wrest it to his own purposes, and this tactic operates in the muted Shakespearean borrowings detectable in *The French Revolution*.

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Notes

1. One possible reason for *The French Revolution's* incompleteness is the political climate of the day. In February 1791, Joseph Johnson published the first volume of Paine's *The Rights of Man* but cautiously declined to print the second. When Paine turned to Jordan, both author and printer were indicted. After 1791 government censorship was imposed with rapidly increasing strictness on writing sympathetic to the French Revolution. Johnson published the first book of Blake's poem in 1791, but the increasingly repressive monitoring of publications may explain why Blake never completed his work.
2. A radical may be defined as someone who followed the principles of what Robert Palmer terms the "democratic revolution" (Lottes 79). In England, the Glorious Revolution removed any questions regarding sovereignty, while in France sovereignty was the central issue dur-

- ing the French Revolution. The sovereign was an absolute monarch; however, the Abbe de Sieyès's questioning of the Third Estate created a new form of sovereignty—legal titles became civil rights (Lottes 86).
3. Jacob Bronowski, in his book *William Blake and the Age of Revolution* provides a Marxist interpretation of the poem, while Ronald Paulson (*Representations of Revolution*), James Heffernan (*Representing the French Revolution*), E.P. Thompson (*The Making of the English Working Class*), and Alison Yarrington (*Reflections of Revolution*) provide interesting studies of the French Revolution itself, Blake's poem, and how events were represented in the literature and art of the day.
 4. Blake, Erdman suggests, articulates in *The French Revolution*, the conventional English response to the Fall of the Bastille, symbolising the overthrow of tyrannical absolutism, and the proceedings of the National Assembly are dignified so that it might appear to be the legitimate child of the Mother of Parliaments, the British. Blake's use of the Shakespearean discourse that I shall explore in this article might be thought to function similarly. Its purpose, it might be argued, is again to anglicize French history by suggesting that it was available to be understood within the terms of the discourse that more powerfully than any other shaped English notions of kingship and right government.
 5. Ib Johansen also examines the rhetoric inherent in the discourse of the French Revolution but focuses upon the antagonism inherent in *The French Revolution*. The poem "attempts to bring about a reconciliation between its antagonistic 'order' or classes" (56) through imagery and the "phantasmatic" (59). This reconciliation, however, is one in which all members are silenced: The tyrannous *ancien régime* and the people.
 6. I am indebted to William Halloran for pointing out the dramatic character of Blake's poem. He offers a reading of *The French Revolution* as an apocalyptic text based upon the *Book of Revelation*. For him, the poem is a visual and dramatic prophecy that imposes the narrative and dramatic features of the epic upon contemporary events and "presents those events as prophetic of a regenerate world" (31). Halloran identifies these characteristics as displacement, juxtaposition, repetition, "movement within a tri-part division of space, and manipulation of time to imply timelessness" (33-34). But Halloran also points out that Blake's poem has a dramatic structure. His division of the poem into seven scenes exposes a dramatic structure that underlies the poem's narrative.
 7. Caricaturists also used *Henry IV* and *Henry V* as the basis for their work because Hal symbolised the prodigal son who metamorphoses into the soldier and people's king when he is needed most. The Prince of Wales's private life and conduct was continuously scrutinised by George III and under constant ridicule by caricaturists. His life complemented Shakespeare's Prince Hal; only caricaturists focused upon the Prince's mischievous ways and his lack of desire to transform into the Prince the people desired. Blake must have been aware of this connection, since he also alludes to the Henriad plays in *The French Revolution*. He will use the French Henry and his association with war and hubris to invoke images of Shakespeare's Hal.
 8. One such person was Cruikshank, as is evident in his print entitled, *False Liberty Rejected*.
 9. De Launay, unlike the King, is a very active figure in the poem. Throughout *The French Revolution*, the *ancien régime* is defined as breathing "power and dominion" (21) over the prisoners, and the Governor becomes consumed with the "purple plague" (24)—the indecision and passivity of the King. His indecision to respond to the people suggests that the "purple plague" tugs at his "iron manacles" (25), and he becomes a prisoner of the garrison he operates.
 10. In order to distinguish between the French and English Kings of the same name, I have used the French spelling of the name that corresponds to how it would have been spelled at the time.

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HERO AND LEANDER: SOME SENSE OF AN ENDING

by *Peter Cummings*

And as she wept, her tears to pearl he turned,
And wound them on his arm, and for her mourned.

—Christopher Marlowe, *Hero and Leander*

To the Memory of Christopher Marlowe, Master of Arts, Scholar, and Poet

We who wait on Muses' help, or bend above old histories, are most deeply bound to those who on the same path went before. The love we carry in our hearts for your high and early art, is like a muse of fire; it lights the way of those who come after, struggling to figure busy thought in verse. The learning and the music that are married in your numbers stand in double ceremony beside the wit and energy of your voice. What you have done in your beginning is greater than any ill-favored lines a mere apprentice might conceive, but so that we may have some sense of an ending, we ask that you forgive and accept this mere scion of your everlasting tree of fame.

Your living honor's in all duty,
William Shakespeare

Continuat opus

So looking where he lay, in rising light,
The shapely hills and downy valleys white
Of her young body came to view for him,
And made it harder then to move a limb
Than stone, but not so breathless. "Ah," he sighed,
And "Ah," again, and thought with swelling pride,
"Here is a paradise within my grasp
Where I have been the whole night that we passed,
And now must leave for fear of danger near.
I have possessed her, may possess my dear,
And still I need yet something more from her.
What fever is the heat I feel, and where
Does it ache most: in head, or breast, or thigh?
I burn, I freeze; desire to stay, must hie;
I split myself in such contrary wills
That through my heart a searing shudder thrills."

Thus feeling in his breast love's nettling pains,
 That wake a keener sense, and deeper strains
 To find the height of love's corporeal joy
 And soul's best bliss, the overanxious boy
 Pulled on his clothes, and shoes, and cap, and coat,
 And made his stealthy way to find a boat.
 Just as the locking hatch fell into place,
 He sensed her arms, and back, and saw her face,
 And only then recalled, through fumes of bliss,
 That he'd forgot to give a final kiss.
 Along the quay a dozen vessels lie,
 And soon as someone likely he can spy,
 He counts his coins, invents an alibi,
 And then he's bound across the wind-blown strait
 In full broad reach toward his raveling fate.

Now ancient Time, as if he had been bid,
 Looms into view to see what might lie hid
 In his own future works and coming days,
 And look in on just how the drama plays.
 He strokes his sere and unkempt beard, and looks
 Into his hourglass, as some read books,
 To see what wise old weeping eyes might see,
 Of this young loving couple's destiny.
 He finds two storms abrewing in the tale,
 The one a wind of sighs, the one a gale.
 So while Leander sighs and pities fate
 That keeps him from her by a tidal strait
 Which ebbs and flows in currents dangerous
 No swimmer should be fool enough to trust,
 There billows up, like sheepfolds in the sky,
 A fleecy density of clouds so high
 That eagles stooped in awe. For days it built,
 But held; and heat came on that wax would wilt,
 Just as the lover and the loved would burn,
 Or thinking shadows real, would stop, and turn,
 Expecting both to see, and hear, or touch,
 That perfect otherness that meant so much.
 Thus both their hearts, and heavens overhead,
 Were gathering troubles, or dark thunderheads.
 So Hero doubted, and Leander prayed,
 And both rejoiced, and wept, for what was made
 Between them now.

The wind arose past noon,
 As did new doubt, desire, and the clouded moon.
 By night Leander knows he must return
 To love her in her turret's secret room,
 And races in the strong wind on the beach
 To seek the light that spoke love's urgent speech.
 Beneath low scudding clouds he sees the flame,
 That seems to spell out Hero's yearning name,

Or name his yearning for her magic spell,
 That nothing but her presence now could quell.
 In windy flickers and in stormy shades,
 Where else but night and louring sky pervades,
 He walks along the dark and sounding beach,
 And nurses hot desire now out of reach.

Say, who can tell, what works our wills to woe,
 Or why we go exactly where we go?
 If only we could see the road we take,
 Made daily by decisions that we make,
 Would then we turn and choose another way,
 If we but saw tomorrow as today?

Pressed more by love than fear, for what is fear
 For him who ever held but one thing dear,
 Leander stripped him to the ivory skin,
 And crying, "Love, I come again!" leapt in.
 He worked in practiced strokes through churning waves
 To get beyond the perilous rocks and caves
 Of Abydos's shore, and then he fell
 To pacing out the work of swimming well,
 Stroke after stroke, now pulling with the flow,
 And resting with the ebb, in come and go
 Of ocean currents. But now fate falls;
 The discord of the tempest Triton calls
 On his old horn across the echoing strait,
 Nor in the narrow way has long to wait.
 He blows his wreathed horn because he's part
 Of Nature's largest scheme and her great art
 Of joining forces, matter, energy,
 And forms of being into harmony.
 But harmony in nature may be harm
 If we fall out of living in the charm
 Of moving with her everlasting will,
 And learning how to keep the heartache still.

So happened it then Poseidon's son to roar
 With wind and waves, and rain on them to pour
 In funnel torrents, and to light the air
 With forking fire, like some fatal flare.
 Truth told, it was no night for swimming far,
 But other truth to tell, we mortals are
 A creature stranger than a wild beast,
 Who often most desires what he least
 Of all things needs: man never is indeed
 Without a deep and self-destructive need.
 And so, enlarged by his desire he swims,
 Buoyed up by all the love that lives in him,
 And fueled by the will to race the storm,
 He moves along in perfect swimmer's form.
 But sea gods are a jealous lot, in fact,

And took it ill that this mere mortal act
 Of derring-do could happen on their watch,
 And so swam up, to see what they could catch.
 The gods of Seaweeds, gods of Sands were there,
 And gods of Eddies, gods of Waves and Wear—
 Away of Coastlines, several others too,
 Who had a quick consult on what to do.
 It was resolved that since he was a lover,
 His end, for die he must, would be another
 Than common sailor, fisherman, or slave,
 Who slip to deep, unmarked, and monstrous graves.
 They came to him as arms of current, feet
 Of weeds, and wrapping ripples of the deep,
 Like extra fingers at the edge of sleep.
 And as they came he heard the music start,
 As though of flutes and some well-tempered harp.
 As he stroked them, in turn they too stroked him,
 And stroking paused, and pressed, and held a limb
 Too long for brave Leander's flagging strength,
 And tugged him softly up and down his length.
 Well used to mingling in their daily flow,
 They mingled now around him high, and low,
 And moved against him as his love might do—
 Though not her gender, they could do so too.

Through all this limbs and all his mortal sense
 There came a joy as deep and as intense
 As any joy he ever felt before,
 Or dreamed, or knew from myth, or anywhere.
 And there before him like a pure surprise
 Was Hero's face, and Hero's loving eyes.
 So like a dream of wanting, having too,
 He wished her, held her, every secret knew.
 And thus the peak of his desire increased
 Until he, in a dream of deeds, released
 His essence, and his, life, in one last breath,
 And gave his supple youth to hungry death.
 So passes, in the passing of an hour,
 The bloom of youth and all its latent power.
 What rises falls, what grows must age and die;
 The pity comes when youth is in Death's eye
 And innocence is robbed. The loss of youth
 Is like a deadly wound to tender Truth.
 Grim Death, who feeds on one, and feeds on all,
 Why must you take them long before their fall?

By this, the night was ending in a gloam
 That grayly lit the storm-tossed wrack and foam
 Along the line of Sestos's rocky coast.
 The wind chuffed out its failing final boast,
 And birds flew forth, at first as on a dare,
 To test the settling stillness of the air.

The lark need not awaken Hero now,
 For she is watching still, love shows her how,
 And sleepless walks in woe and wonderment
 At all the turbulence the gods have sent
 To wreck her holy peace. No virgin more,
 She weeps and calls along the gloomy shore.
 Her tears fall freely on the pebbled beach,
 And shine like pearls, dropping down each by each.
 She needs some word or solace from her love,
 Some sign or token of his life to prove
 That she was not a fool to leave her church
 To hope in love she'd find all love could teach.
 And then they came: hammers hitting the heart
 In sudden surging of the blood. The start
 Of hands to muffle mouth, or stop the scream
 For what she sees, but hopes is only dream.
 The trembling body of young Hero freezes
 While horror at her weary fancy teases
 Again with wicked thoughts: he's ill, he's slain;
 It is not he, he's with another lain.
 At last she breaks her static terror pose,
 And cries, and gathers up her trailing clothes
 To run to him, face down upon the shore,
 And be with him, both now and evermore.
 Her mind is hardly stout enough, or old,
 To bear the grief of what she there beholds:
 Leander, wrapped in seaweed for his clothes,
 And choked with sand in breathless mouth and nose,
 Lies white and bluish in the eastern light
 That chased away the terrors of the night
 Of storm to leave the quiet peace of death
 That settles over every final breath.
 "So still?" she cries. "Too still for one who moved
 With speed and skill." And then she wept, and proved
 His death with cries and kisses, kisses, cries,
 Embraces that she hoped would come alive
 In him, in warm return. Though all the time
 She knew that only death was their new theme.

An eagle flying overhead that hour
 Would see the scene as we, from somewhat higher:
 A woman trailing white in keening song,
 A man in her arms, with whom she'll go along,
 For nothing else can be; that much is clear.
 So then she dries her last embittered tear,
 And drapes his body with fresh garland weeds,
 As if he's laid to rest for noble deeds,
 And honor in the ranks of those who love,
 And in their yearnings all its power prove.
 With that she finds a stone, that lay nearby
 As if by fate, and wraps it round and ties
 It at the very middle of her clothes,

And prays the ocean drag her to her death.
 But zealous sea gods always interfere,
 Unless you've slipped out of their planisphere
 And lost your faith. I say the sea gods heard
 Her long laments, her oaths, her shapeless words
 Of grief, and came to offer her some ease
 Or lend a drowning hand, if she would please.
 She walked to fatal death off craggy shore,
 And sank, with no will left to fight life more,
 And as she sank she heard the music start,
 As though of flutes and some well-tempered harp,
 And felt her limbs embraced, and felt him there
 With her again, his arms, his lips, his hair.
 So like a dream of wanting, having too,
 She kissed him, held him, all his secrets knew.
 And down she went, in lovely dying swoon,
 And did for them what sea gods importune.
 She sank in oceanic pleasure bliss,
 And gave Leander one last ardent kiss,
 Before the curtain fell and changed her worth
 From living woman to the stuff of myth.

So passes, in the passing of an hour,
 The story of an amorous fatal pair
 For whom the bell may finally toll again,
 Now we have heard it to a fuller end.
 This much is told, but told as well in myth,
 Which some well say may be a form of truth,
 Is of a moral drawn, and meanings read
 In several signs, and smallest textual thread.
 Some spoke of tragedy of simple fate,
 Some character, and so began debate
 That went on in the schools. But most who heard
 The story told, without the glosser's word,
 Or wandering minstrel ballad of their woe,
 Felt there but for God's grace I too might go,
 And heard the tale for what tales really do:
 Create some wisdom that can carry through,
 For every story in the world is true,
 Just so it sheds some light on me and you.

Finit opus

Hobart and William Smith Colleges



Festival Reviews





Tyler Woods in the title role of the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express's production of *Macbeth*.

**PLAYING WITH WORDS AND DEEDS: THE CLEMSON PLAYERS AND
SHENANDOAH SHAKESPEARE PERFORM AT CLEMSON SHAKESPEARE
FESTIVAL XI**

by John R. Ford

The series of performances that defined Clemson Shakespeare Festival XI, dedicated to the late Jim Andreas "in admiration for all he did to promote the joys of Shakespeare,"¹ was, appropriately enough, a celebration of language: its pleasures, its dangers, its cruelties, its skittish volatility. But most of all, each of these four performances—the Clemson Players' production of *Much Ado About Nothing* and Shenandoah Shakespeare's productions of *Love's Labor's Lost*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Macbeth*—explored the appetitive excitement, at once joyful and dark, of collecting and consuming words.² Ralph Alan Cohen, at one of the festival's several scholarly exchanges, reminded us that "Shakespeare's audience came to the theatre, not in possession of the words they heard, but in search of them, . . . consumers,"³ Cohen went on to say, "at a language merchant bazaar."

When, early in *Much Ado About Nothing*,³ an earnest Claudio romantically protests Benedick's suggestion that the world might ever buy "such a jewel" as his Hero, Benedick's reply gets at the multiply coded world of Messina: "Yea, and a case to put it into. But speak you this with a sad brow? Or do you play the flouting Jack, to tell us Cupid is a good hare-finder and Vulcan a rare carpenter? Come, in what key shall a man take you to go in the song?" (1.1.169-73). Many of the funniest, and darkest, moments of *Much Ado* occur when characters, lost in a polysemous world of multiple languages and mixed conventions, nonetheless insist on reading those "double meanings" through the most limited and reductive of semiotic spectacles. It takes the linguistic virtuosity of a Beatrice or else the chaotic and promiscuous language of a Dogberry to expose the comic sins of such "mistakings" as Claudio's.

Under Chip Egan's direction, Messina became a world in awkward transition, from war to peace, from homosocial bonding to something more complex and sexualized; moreover, Messina had to negotiate these changes in terms of a confusion of codes and conventions or—as Benedick might put it—"keys." The Clemson Players' production revealed the strain of multiple social and psychological conventions in a number of ways. It might be in the volleyball bandying, against whose rhythmic play Beatrice paced out her scorn for Benedick. Or it might be Benedick himself, suddenly caught in the garden by the love gods, Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato. As Benedick discovered that his new lover's rhetoric had been overheard and mocked, this former soldier quickly reverted to the safer style of military commando tactics: he low-crawled and dived for cover, as if he might deploy the manly lessons of basic training in these stranger sexual wars. The set itself embodied a potentially rich but uneasy cultural mix. We were in a tropical, Caribbean setting with its odd blend of otherness and Great Spanish houses. The refashioned pop rhythms of indigenous music such as "The Banana Boat Song" defined the pace of leisure and the quiet anxieties of a whole community waiting for something to happen in this aristocratic fantasy of "unspoiled" natural beauty steeped in colonial local color.

Egan exploited the metatheatrical energies of this play—especially its attention to audiences—thereby creating a consistent, self-conscious awareness, for both on- and off-stage audiences, of conventionalized language and behavior as a kind of theatrical spectacle. For example, as Benedick joyfully abandoned his anti-romantic conventions to take up the language of a lover, Beatrice suddenly appeared on the balcony to summon him to dinner. The interplay between Benedick's awkward new love language and Beatrice's quick irony, sharp as a dagger's point, comically reminded the audience of another balcony scene with its somewhat, though not *entirely*, different romantic codes. At another moment, earlier in the play, when Beatrice and Benedick began their banter, the rest of the cast re-arranged itself as an audience enjoying the performance. A much darker version of that same blocking occurred at the wedding scene, when the congregation re-defined itself as an audience witnessing in silent horror the stunning rhetorical cruelty embedded in the words of Claudio, Don Pedro, and Leonato. This neither looked nor sounded like a nuptial.

With all these linguistic collisions, one of the strengths of the Clemson Players' production was the *clarity* of their performance. For the most part the actors not only *knew* what they were saying but made the audience believe that the actors were thinking the words as they said them, not just reciting poetry—even though reciting poetry was exactly what the *characters* were doing. As a result, for most of the cast but especially for Beatrice, Benedick, and Dogberry, the audience was required to listen to the characters' *particular* words and idioms, not just to respond to the *general* verbal confusion. In fact, some of the most powerful moments occurred when the audience *didn't* laugh at what might, in another production, come across as a routinely comic situation. But here we were entirely caught up in the moment-by-moment *key changes* that were occurring in a particular scene. So Beatrice's "kill Claudio" (4.1.288), for example, got a tentative, complex laugh at first. But immediately afterwards the audience was silenced, entirely absorbed, not only in Beatrice's anger, but also in Benedick's evolving process of *commitment*, of becoming *engaged*, in all senses of that word. In a later scene, Don Pedro and Claudio continued to tease Benedick, "the married man" (5.1.181), assuming that the old, manly banter was still in order. Suddenly the newly "engaged" Benedick, with a rage his former comrades utterly failed to comprehend, challenged and rebuked them. Such conventionally comic misunderstanding often provokes audience laughter, however uneasy. But this audience, unlike Don Pedro and Claudio, didn't even laugh nervously. We were right there with Benedick, thanks to a production that taught us how to listen to, and comprehend, the multiple languages of this play.

The three performances by Shenandoah Shakespeare, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Macbeth*, continued to explore worlds in which characters were simultaneously enamored of language and awkwardly caught in its conventions. It was interesting, for example, and surprisingly moving, to hear *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Love's Labor's Lost* in juxtaposition. It was not just that one could recognize in Berowne and Rosaline early versions of that uncertain alchemy of conventions we see in Benedick and Beatrice, where the rhetoric of wit and irony must negotiate with that of desire. It was also that, in both plays, the exuberant play and intelligence that marked the redemptive powers of language also marked its exclusionary powers. For all its pleasures, there was a hint of cruelty in the sharp game of words and wit. Even if everyone were invited to join in the game, *someone* was sure to be exposed as "a little o'erparted."

Both *Love's Labor's Lost*⁴ and *Much Ado About Nothing* involve us in the chaotic pursuits of language acquisition and its deployment, the "sweet smoke of rhetoric" Don Armado so enjoys. But there's an interesting difference. In *Much Ado* we are given more help negotiating our way through the sweet smoke. That is because



Clemson Players in *Much Ado About Nothing* at Clemson Shakespeare Festival XII.



Clemson Players in *Much Ado About Nothing* at Clemson Shakespeare Festival XII.

Beatrice and Benedick, whatever the limits of their wit and verbal dexterity, give us something of a model of verbal usage. As a result the play flatters us by allowing the illusion that we can distinguish between “good” speakers and “bad.” We laugh *with* those who master language and *at* those who don’t. Of course, our self confidence is misplaced, for we will be shown to be among those culpable for Hero’s public shame. And we will be found “too wise” to understand Dogberry’s redemptive and generous language. But for a while at least we find ourselves on the right side of irony.

In *Love’s Labor’s Lost*, however, *everyone* is in love with words, and *everyone* is delightfully entangled by them. Even poor Dull (Eric C. Bailey), who claims to understand not a word of the conversations swirling about him, has some taste of rhetoric. When Holofernes (Paul Fidalgo) gently reminded Dull that “thou hast spoken no word all this time,” Dull’s reply, “Nor understood none neither” was not without a sense of rhetorical balance (5.1.142). And the audience itself is not without Dull’s dullness, if the sheer bulk of textual annotation that attends the wordplay is any indication of our needs.

Nick Hutchison’s production gave us a world in love with the choreography of design and style. The production was set in the Kennedy years of the early ‘60s, when the culture, tired of Ike’s military-industrial vocabulary and the Nixons’ Republican cloth coats, was drawn to the chic and European stylishness it saw in Jacqueline Kennedy. Moreover, the costumes and blocking of this performance were elegantly mannered. In an homage to Branagh’s film of the play, all the outfits were arrayed in color co-ordinated schemes. And the blocking was so mannered and geometrical as to resemble a formal dance. But most of all there was the shared excitement of new words for this new world.

Shenandoah unabashedly, unashamedly, dived into the muck of words. That was especially true of Costard (Kevin Hauver). The pleasures of hearing the music of words like “remuneration” and “guerdon” were too rich for Costard not to share. He invited us to chant the words along with him. Even when the meanings of words were hardly salutary, the pleasures of the text were all that mattered. When listening to Don Armado’s formal charges against him, penned in an impenetrably rococo style, Costard was so pleased with his ability to understand even some of Armado’s words that he could not contain his pleasure at recognizing himself in language, interrupting the written charges with escalating glee: “Me?” Then, after “[t]hat unlettered, small—knowing soul,—” “Me?” And again, after “[t]hat shallow vessel”: “Still me?” Finally, Don Armado’s language became *almost* lucid: “Which, as I remember, high Costard.” At that, Costard’s tentative question marks straightened themselves into exclamation: “O, me!” (1.1.241–47). Others were no less exuberant. Nathaniel (Jessica Drizd) was enamored of Holofernes’s words, pleased even to take correction when the curate’s attempts to emulate his hero fell short. The king and his “academic” lords took self-conscious delight in the exotic vocabulary either of scholars or lovers. Even the Princess (Vanessa Mandeville Morosco) could not resist laughing at her own wit.

These are specifically thespian indulgences. *Love’s Labor’s Lost* is a play that invites both actors and audience to celebrate the pleasures of acting—and of listening, inviting us to submerge ourselves into a world of alien words, and then to make that language thoroughly our own. Not that we *understood* the words, but we played easily within their linguistic currents like Cleopatra’s Antony, showing our backs above the element we moved in. It’s what actors and audiences love to do, and this was a production that gave all of us the greatest license to do it. For that reason, there was a special awkwardness, at once aesthetic and emotional, when those pleasurable powers were found wanting, callow, even ridiculous, in the face of the simplest human vulnerabilities. At the height of our pleasant mockery of the woefully “o’erparted” Nine Worthies, no one, neither on- or off-stage audience, was prepared for Holofernes’s



Erika Sheffer and Kip Pierson in the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express's production of *Love's Labour's Lost*.



Frank Arrington as Sir John Falstaff with Vanessa Mandeville Morosco and Jessica Drizd in the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express's production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

simply worded reproach: "This is not generous, not gentle, not humble" (5.2.623). When Marcade suddenly appeared to announce the death of the French King, Navarre and his lords hurriedly and awkwardly crossed themselves, like so many altar boys caught fooling in church. Berowne's (Kip Pierson) "That's too long for a play" (5.2.866) got an uneasy, rueful laugh. At the end of this performance, so marked throughout by sprightly and dancing choreography, Moth (Joann Sacco) and Costard, two of the "Worthies" we had earlier ridiculed, sang their simple songs of summer and winter. The sophisticated audiences, on both sides of the stage, were moved by the simple lyrics sung by such tentative and isolated voices. Then Marcade (Joann Sacco) abruptly announced the end of the play: "[y]ou that way, we this way" (5.2.919). Silently, unceremoniously, the men and women of this play exited separately. And, after our applause, so did we.

*The Merry Wives of Windsor*⁶ comes as close to the city limits of city comedy as the good-natured Shakespeare allowed himself to go, about as close to the London of Jonson's *Epicoene* as, say, Windsor. We are certainly in a world of poseurs here—gallants, merchants, tricksters, rakes, outright frauds. But as usual with Shakespeare, while the play takes great delight in exposing these actors, this production seemed less interested in doling out Jonsonian censure than in reveling in the actorly delights of posing. Under the direction of Fred Nelson, Shenandoah Shakespeare especially celebrated the pleasures of impersonation, as each actor twisted his body and his voice to fit the mad, improbable dimensions of inspired caricature. This is the humor behind the comedy of humors. So Master Slender (Paul Fidalgo), terrified at even the *possibility* of physical contact with Anne, twisted and stretched his body into the very image of sexual repression and comic paralysis. With his arms straight down his sides, even in running, Slender would slink about the stage like an upright serpent, non-poisonous of course, as he continually bounced his way out of Anne's line of vision. Similarly, when Master Ford (Kevin Hauver) transformed himself into Brooke, he invited the audience to witness the ingenious metamorphosis. After looking furtively around the stage, convinced that no one save the nine hundred and ninety-seven of us would notice, he pulled out his "disguise," a pair of fake eyeglasses, and put them on triumphantly.

Often the wildness of these impersonations was heightened by metatheatrical parody as well as the self-conscious delights of doubling. Justice Shallow (Eric C. Bailey), with his worn, brown sport coat, bow tie, and light shirt, walked about officiously like Inspector Luger of *Barney Miller*. Whenever Bailey would double as Mistress Quickly's servant, he, like Ford, would transform himself before our eyes with the quickest of adjustments: he would whisk a felt hat from under his shirt and pull it over his eyes, hitch his trousers well above his waist, his whole body now stooped into the shape of a zany question mark. Perhaps the most interesting doubling involved the work of Vanessa Mandeville Morosco, who played Pistol as well as Mistress Ford, and Jessica Drizd, who played Nym as well as Mistress Page. As a result, they embodied both Falstaff's reluctant panders and the quick-witted women who resist Falstaff's inept seductions, wives who can be merry and yet honest too.

And Falstaff (Frank Arrington), too, proved a wonderful impersonator. It's not just that he so convinced himself in his performance of a rake, or that he carried off the old woman of Brainford, and all her load, with convincing skill. But Falstaff achieved a more notable acting distinction. He impersonated Falstaff. The first time we were introduced to Mistress Quickly's tavern, the customers were singing a rousing chorus from the theme song of *Cheers*. When Falstaff entered the tavern, all activity stopped as all of the patrons chanted in unison, "FALSTAFF!" *Everyone*, it would seem, knew *his* name. But the moment was more than a playful allusion to an icon of popular TV culture. It was also an allusion to high classical drama, a reference to

another tavern, where another fat Falstaff would tease his audiences into recognizing *his* name. "A goodly portly man i' faith, and a corpulent; of a cheerful look, a pleasing eye, and a most noble carriage; and, as I think, his age some fifty, or, by 'r Lady, inclining to threescore; and now I remember me, his name is Falstaff" (*1 Henry IV* 2.4.417-21).⁶

In this production, the combined effects of Falstaff impersonating his history-play self and Mistresses Ford and Page doubling as Pistol and Nym worked to achieve a sly, subversive re-thinking of genre. I don't mean merely to re-state the oft repeated criticism that the Falstaff we see in *Merry Wives* is a mere shadow of the Falstaff of the history plays. It's more that Mistresses Ford and Page, in the process of exposing the masculine bravura of Falstaff, are also comically destabilizing the manly world of the history play, where the presence of women merely frames the masculine codes of heroic victory, either in the battlefield or the bedroom. Here, however, that all-male world was delightfully compromised. The tavern "lewdsters" (5.5.22) Nym and the fiery Pistol turned out to be none other than virtuous wives. The mad, fat witch of Brainford, a feminine grotesque created by masculine sexual fears, was revealed to be nothing more than that grotesquely masculine leaky vessel, "that swollen parcel of dropsies," FALSTAFF! And Mistress Quickly (Kip Pierson), the embodiment of feminine chatter, both voluminous and malapropic, was played by, as Caius might put it, "*un garcon, a boy; un paysan; by gar, a boy*" (5.5.204-05).

That seductive pull of words and theatrical transformation was especially, even breathtakingly, evident in Shenandoah's production of *Macbeth*,⁷ a play that somehow lures an audience into a disturbingly comfortable empathy with a consciousness it abhors. From its opening moments this production, directed by Jim Warren and David "Pops" Doersch, caught us up in the physiology of possession. When the action began, we saw, not the weird sisters, but a group of men, King Duncan among them, sitting in a circle and holding long staffs that might have been cut from Birnam Wood. One figure drew a circle with his staff. Then the circle dissolved as the actors pulled away from the stage. And for the first time we saw the weird sisters standing motionless upstage center, each completely covered, head to foot, within a long, semi-transparent material that clung to their bodies. They looked like holy statues draped. Suddenly there was a shriek accompanied by a sudden, terrifying intake of breath. At the same time their arms rose at once straight into the air, then fell to their breasts, clasped together in an attitude of prayer. Then came the terrible opening lines of the play. Often this production allowed such an atmosphere of liturgical malevolence to linger by keeping the weird sisters on stage after what, in Shakespeare's text, would have been their exit. Sometimes they would freeze in attitudes of animation or struggle, trapped in their ectoplasm-like coverings, framing and infecting other scenes. They looked like humans caught in their winding cloths, or like spirits pushing up against mortal thoughts. Other times, they would twist their arms and bodies into trees or curl themselves into rocks. Nature itself seemed infected, as if, even at this early stage of the play, light had already thickened and the crow made wing to the rooky wood.

That sense of a world so easily transformed was evident throughout this production. When Lady Macbeth (Claire Christy) urged those spirits who tend on mortal thoughts to "unsex" her, the weird sisters appeared behind her, caressing her body in a highly sexualized laying on of hands as they stripped her of her feminine attire to reveal men's trousers. As they did so, Macbeth (Tyler Woods) entered, unseen, from behind his wife and replaced the weird sisters at their task, continuing their caresses, at once erotic and "unsexing," as the weird sisters fell back into the air and rocks and trees to wait on nature's mischief.

Moments of innocence were almost always framed by their malevolent parodies, or vice versa. When Macbeth, in response to his wife's promise that, though she had given birth, she would "dash the brains out" of "the babe that milks me," urged her to "bring forth men children only," Macbeth gently placed his hand on Lady Macbeth's belly, like a young father-to-be feeling the pulse of a new life.

Similarly, the theatrical excitements of impersonation as well as doubling took on terrifying dimensions here. The actor playing Duncan (Frank Arrington), for example, played two other roles: one of the murderers as well as the exemplary Old Siward. And Paul Fidalgo played both the Macduff child, who seemed to know so much about the ubiquitous presence of traitors, as well as Donalbain, who, immediately after his father's murder, runs off to Ireland, never to be seen or heard from again. When Macbeth re-visited the sisters in 4.1, much of the cast was enlisted to become a living cauldron. Squatting, they formed a circle, a dark parody of the communal circle the actors formed at the beginning of the play, their faces now looking outward, arms clasped to one another. One by one, each would become a voice: "Beware Macduff!"

Nor was the audience spared. We too were implicated. After the murder, when Macduff (Jim Kropa) implored the residents of the castle to "[s]hake off this drowsy sleep, death's counterfeit, / And look on Death itself," he looked directly at us (2.3.75-76). At the banquet scene, Macbeth, his composure temporarily recovered, quietly spoke the lines, "I am a man again" (3.4.107). Macbeth exchanged this confidence, however, not with Lady Macbeth, but with us. And when Banquo's ghost presented itself for the last time, Macbeth looked to us, now his fellows, and asked:

You make me strange
Even to the disposition that I owe,
When now I think you can behold such sights,
And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks,
When mine is blanch'd with fear. (3.4.111-15)

We too, it would seem, could "look like th' innocent flower, / But be the serpent under-'t" (1.5.65-66).

At the end of the play, when Malcolm and Old Siward entered to proclaim the new order, the weird sisters remained standing behind them, silent, as if protecting Macbeth's body, which they surrounded. As the rest of the actors left the stage, the weird sisters stayed behind and gently closed Macbeth's eyes. Then, standing behind Macbeth, they repeated the demonic prayer ritual that began this play.

Macbeth, no less than *Love's Labor's Lost*, is a great feast of language, but with a difference. The play glistens with bright and intoxicating words. Part of their forbidden appeal, both for those who use these words and for those who listen to them, is the vast moral distance between the pleasures of their sounds and the horror of their meanings. We think of Macbeth's speculation that his murder of Duncan will "[t]he multitudinous seas incarnadine" (2.2.61); or the violent beauty of Duncan's "silver skin lac'd with his golden blood" (2.3.110); or the report of Duncan's horses, "[b]eauteous and swift, the minions of their race, / Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out / Contending 'gainst obedience as they would make / War with mankind" (2.4.15-18); or the thrilling music of "restless ecstasy," "light thickens" (3.2.22, 49). We murder the meanings of words and then take delight in what remains: the incantatory ecstasy of their sounds. But in this production especially, the meanings of those words came back to haunt us with their ghostly presence. As a result, the playful power of words so celebrated in *Much Ado*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, and *Merry Wives*, now took on dark, metaphysical consequences. The delights of verbal ambiguity, Benedick's "double meanings," here became darkly equivocal. Shenandoah Shakespeare found the mal-

ice that both animated and infected the verbal music of *Macbeth*. The tetrameter rhythms of the opening lines drew us into the play's irregular heartbeat, requiring us to participate in the restless ecstasy of its sudden metrical changes, a rhythmic metamorphosis made even more effective by the presence of a drum on stage, which actors would beat at various paces throughout the play. That drum—and the audience's collective heartbeat which it modulated—was what the third witch heard as she recognized Macbeth by our heartbeat: "A drum! a drum! / Macbeth doth come" (1.3.30-31). Theater requires of us, in Prospero's terms, our "gentle breath." But in this production, from the opening moments of the weird sisters' violent gasp, it was not only words that were infected but breath itself.

Thus, in Shenandoah's production, all the pleasures, the freedoms, the exhilaration of words and theatrical action were turned inward. The twin notions of impersonation, the theatrical and the metaphysical, came together in Macbeth's final soliloquy with its references to "poor players" and "shadows" conflating into one horrific image of equivocation. The pulse of his speech, and his breath, once so dangerously exciting, had now become the dull, prison house of rhythm, locked in the numbed, monosyllabic repetition of its petty pace: "There would have been a time for such a word" (5.5.19). When Tyler Woods concluded that "[l]ife's but a walking shadow; a poor player, / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, / And then is heard no more" (5.5.24-26), he looked at himself in a moment of recognition. *Macbeth* was that "poor player," whose time on this stage in this production of, as Ralph Alan Cohen pointed out in one of the workshops, amounted to almost exactly one hour. Now this actor, who had so dominated and shaped the language of this play, found himself trapped within those same words, pushed by their prosody into annihilation, into "nothing." Moreover, this actor-hero-shadow must repeatedly re-enact this "failed" impersonation, one that must *always* "marshall'st [him] the way that [he] was going," that must *always* lead to the same "dismal and . . . fatal end" (2.1.54, 3.5.21.), not just in that evening's performance, but tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow.

Delta State University

Notes

1. Clemson Shakespeare Festival XI Program, no pagination.
2. *Much Ado About Nothing*, Clemson Players, directed by Chip Egan, Brooks Theatre, Clemson University, 23, 24 Feb. 2002; *Love's Labor's Lost*, Shenandoah Shakespeare, directed by Nick Hutchison, Brooks Theatre, Clemson University, 25 Feb. 2002; *Macbeth*, Shenandoah Shakespeare, directed by Jim Warren and David "Pops" Doersch, Brooks Theatre, Clemson University, 26 Feb. 2002; *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Shenandoah Shakespeare, directed by Fred Nelson, Brooks Theatre, Clemson University, 27 Feb. 2002.
3. William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. A. R. Humphreys (New York: Methuen 1981). All quotations are from this edition and cited parenthetically in the text.
4. William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, The Arden Shakespeare, third series, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen (Walton-on-Thames, Surrey: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1998). All quotations are from this edition and cited parenthetically in the text.
5. William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. H. J. Oliver (New York: Methuen 1971). All quotations are from this edition and cited parenthetically in the text.
6. William Shakespeare, *The First Part of King Henry IV*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. A. R. Humphreys (New York: Methuen 1960). All quotations are from this edition and cited parenthetically in the text.
7. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. Kenneth Muir (New York: Methuen 1971). All quotations are from this edition and cited parenthetically in the text.

A N N O U N C I N G

**Clemson Shakespeare Festival XIII (2004):
Shakespeare's Jests and Jesters
Monday, February 16–Tuesday, February 24**

Films

Monday, February 16

8:00 p.m.: Film TBA

McKissick Theatre, Hendrix Student Center

Tuesday, February 17

8:00 p.m.: Film TBA

McKissick Theatre, Hendrix Student Center

Performances

Brooks Center for the Performing Arts

Thursday, February 19 - Saturday, February 21

8:00 p.m.: Play, *Twelfth Night*, Clemson Players, Brooks Theatre

Sunday, February 22

3:00 p.m.: Play, *Twelfth Night*, Clemson Players, Brooks Theatre

Monday, February 23

8:00 p.m.: *Henry the Fourth*, Part I, Shenandoah Shakespeare, Brooks Theatre

Tuesday, February 24

8:00 p.m.: *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Shenandoah Shakespeare, Brooks Theatre

Albert Hamilton Holt Colloquium

Monday, February 23, 2:30 p.m., Bellamy Theatre

Professor Pamela Allen Brown

Monday, February 23, 4:00 p.m., Bellamy Theatre

Professor John R. Ford, Delta State University

Tuesday, February 24, 2:00 p.m., Bellamy Theatre

"Shakespeare's Jests and Jesters"

Panel discussion with Professors Brown and Ford

Workshops by Shenandoah Shakespeare

Monday, February 23

10:10 a.m.: Topic TBA, Bellamy Theatre

11:15 a.m.: Topic TBA, Bellamy Theatre

1:25 p.m.: Topic TBA, Bellamy Theatre

Tuesday, February 24

12:30 p.m.: Tri-ART Paz Memorial Workshop, Brooks Theatre

To purchase tickets, call the Brooks Center Box Office, Monday-Friday, 1-5 p.m. 864/656-RSVP (7787). All CSF XIII events-except the professional performances-are free of charge. All programming is subject to change.

OREGON SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
2002 SEASON

by Michael W. Shurgot

Perhaps to celebrate the opening of The New Theatre, a theatre-in-the-round that replaced the smaller Black Swan, the 2002 Festival produced five Shakespearean plays, as opposed to its usual four: *Macbeth* in The New Theatre, *Titus Andronicus* on the Elizabethan Stage, and *Julius Caesar* in the indoor Angus Bowman theatre; and *As You Like It* and *The Winter's Tale* on the Elizabethan stage. The five plays produced a wide range of interpretations, directors' concepts, and theatrical skill, ranging from a stunning *Julius Caesar* to a dismal *Macbeth*.¹

Libby Appel's *Macbeth* was the least convincing production of a Shakespearean play by a professional company I have ever seen. Assuming that Appel and scenic designer Richard Hay thought that this inaugural production in their new theatre would intrigue spectators with the theatre's technical possibilities, one wonders how they could have erred so badly. The heavily cut production, lasting less than two hours with no intermission, was plagued by silly performance choices; a set that became a liability and inept casting. One wonders where Appel's head was in all of this; did she want to produce *Macbeth*, or show how clever and "new" she could be?

The principal feature of the set was a pool of blood in the middle of the round stage, perhaps symbolizing one of the bloodier circles of Dante's hell. As the Macbeths waded further and deeper into their bloody world, and as murder spread among the characters of the play, from the fighting soldiers in 1.1 to the final combat between Macbeth and Macduff, this "blood" was spread around the stage; one character's murder of another was signaled by the killer's dipping his hands into the bloody pool and flipping the liquid onto his victim's clothing. As the Macbeths murdered their way through this minimalist staging, they wiped their hands on their initially white cloaks, thus signaling visually that their victims' blood was not only on their hands but also on their garments. While this image worked well to symbolize the stain of murder, the "blood" was a sticky substance the color and texture of raspberry jam. Therefore, as more blood was spilled on stage, the actors' leather boots, especially Macbeth's, squeaked as they pranced around the circle of blood, resulting in an annoying and finally ridiculous noise that generated giggling among spectators and detracted from any sense of seriousness the actors might have generated for their roles. As characters covered distances by running around in circles, the trail of blood expanded around the outer rim of the stage, so that by the end of the play no character could move anywhere on stage without walking in this raspberry blood. Eventually the sticking noise became so loud that one had trouble hearing the actors speak their lines, especially the three women playing multiple parts. While the symbolism here was effective—Scotland is soaked in blood—the noise became the principal audio feature of this production.

Unfortunately, these actors could generate little seriousness, and the play suffered terribly from indefensible casting decisions. Six actors played all roles, with G. Valmont Thomas as Macbeth, BW Gonzalez as Lady Macbeth, and Jeffrey King as Banquo, the only actors playing a single part. All the other roles were played by three

women, and herein lay one of the two major casting errors of the production. Gender-blind casting works only if the actor playing an opposite gender can be convincing in that role. But Appel cast Suzanne Irving, a slight, thin woman as Duncan, and on stage she was simply unconvincing as a male character. Further, Julie Oda, who stands at 4'8" tall, was perhaps acceptable as Fleance and Macduff's young son, but as Seyton and the "Old Man" she strained credibility. As Seyton she looked like Macbeth's kid trying to help her father put on his armor. While the Ashland Festival is to be commended for promoting gender-blind casting, Abbey's choices made this production silly, as evidenced by the spectators' obvious restlessness, inattentiveness, and lack of applause at the end.

The second major mistake was casting G. Valmont Thomas as Macbeth. Thomas is an energetic actor who has played several comic roles well, including Feste and a Mistress Quickly in drag. But as Macbeth he was ridiculous. He conveyed no inner tension or imaginative power in Macbeth's soliloquies, which became mere recitations of a string of unconnected images; he simply had no idea what he was saying. He in fact treated Macbeth as a comic role; he laughed at inappropriate times, and his principal reaction to bad news was to open his eyes wide and grin, as if he were playing an actor trying to make *Macbeth* into a farce, rather than an actor supposedly inhabiting a tragic role that he actually understands. Macbeth senses the absurdity of his existence in his final soliloquy, the "petty pace" of his few remaining moments, but the actor has to earn that insight by traveling through Macbeth's tortured imagination and steely determination to wade further across the river of blood. For Thomas, there was no such journey, only wide-eyed grinning at every step of this tedious production. In her note to the production, Appel states that she was "deeply interested in the mind of the murderer," especially after the violence of September 2001. If this statement is true, one must wonder why she cast an actor who could not convey to spectators any sense of how Macbeth's murderous mind might have worked.

For director James Edmondson, *Titus Andronicus* is a "waking nightmare" that is frighteningly contemporary: "If you kill our children, we will kill your children." In his director's note Edmondson quotes this statement from a father in the Middle East interviewed on ABC News in March 2002. Believing that Shakespeare's Rome is primarily a mythic rather than an historic place, Edmondson set the play in its "imagined antiquity" that served as "both a specific and universal setting for the play." The set was a set of huge iron grids that divided the stage into left and right "camps," suggesting the warring cultures and armies of the play. Down stage left sat a huge head, watching. Is this the bust of Titus? One of his sons? Aaron? Revenge? The ominous face of Death itself? Or likely, all of the above? Thus the specific and the universal coexisted in this historically based yet frighteningly current tale of revenge and death.

William Langan as Titus was poised and resolute in his decisions and actions. He buried or killed his own sons, killed Tamora's, and supported Saturninus's bid for power with equal dispassion, suggesting early his fanatical devotion to rule and custom in the Rome of his imagination. The Goths, wearing filthy rags, epitomized the barbarity that Titus's adherence to rule and formality had kept from the gates of Rome.

Aaron, Tamora, and her two surviving sons embodied the diseased sexual lust that also threatened Rome's civility. Demetrius and Chiron were tall, brawny thugs who tore holes in their mother's wedding shawl as they contemplated raping Lavinia, and Aaron and Tamora were simply all over each other's bodies as they plotted their return to power. Tamora stroked Aaron's crotch as he gave her the letter for Titus. The rape of Lavinia, played by diminutive Julie Oda, was physically horrifying, partly because Oda is so small and her attackers were so large. After hurling Bassanius violently into the pit, Chiron and Demetrius attacked and groped Lavinia savagely; Tamora aided her sons by cutting off Lavinia's dress, exposing to destruction the sexuality she had

moments ago used so effectively to seduce Aaron. Against such barbarity, Titus' reliance on reason and honor was helpless.

The sequence from 2.4 through 3.2 was chilling. After the rape, Lavinia reentered wrapped in white, blood-soaked rags, a brutal image of violated innocence. Mark Murphey as Marcus struggled desperately to make sense of what he saw while clearly articulating his long, uncut speech in 2.4, as if clear pronunciation and measured phrases could summon a verbal order onto the chaos he saw before him. When Lavinia gestured as if to speak, blood poured from her mouth. After Marcus's speech to Lavinia at the end of 2.4, he exited, but Lavinia remained on stage for the beginning of 3.1, a symbol of the terror created by the raw, pitiless pursuit of power now emerging. Wearing death masks, the Tribunes led Titus's bound sons across the stage, suggesting the rise to power of contemporary political terror. Then, as Titus cradled his bleeding daughter in his arms, Oda and Langan created a haunting *Pieta*, not so much an image of innocent suffering as of unimaginable horror. The presentation of his sons' heads to Titus was a horrible spectacle: Cradling his sons' heads with his mutilated, bleeding stump, Titus wept himself into madness. He fanatically attacked Marcus for killing the fly, attempting to hold it in his hands, as if its life were as precious as that of his murdered sons.

As Lavinia, dressed in a new white shawl, etched the names of her attackers with a stick she held between her stubs and in her mouth, soldiers carried behind her the bodies of her headless brothers, a visual image of her vision of the unmitigated terror that Tamora, Aaron, and ultimately Saturninus had unleashed. The emotional violence was also pronounced. After coolly killing the nurse who brought him his son, Derrick Lee Weeden as Aaron pleaded for his son's life as passionately as he pursued the death of others, and Ray Porter as Saturninus exhibited an insane anger at Titus's arrow attack. Langan played Titus as gleefully mad as he shot his arrows and letters over Saturninus's house and up to the gods, convincing Marcus to humor him as the only relief from an overwhelming insanity.

Tamora's "disguise" for Revenge was a grotesque, hideous bug, and Chiron as Rape sported a huge phallus. Titus's ritualistic cutting of the sons' throats, whose blood Lavinia carefully caught in a large pan held firmly between her wrapped limbs, emphasized the symbolic presentation of monstrous evil. Saturninus entered the final banquet scene wearing large horns, symbols of his own animal nature and his having been cuckolded by the murderous Tamora. Titus's killing of Tamora's sons, like his killing of his own daughter, became a cleverly planned, hideous exhibition of hatred and revenge cloaked in madness: "If you kill our children, we will kill your children." In the world of this play, there is no room for innocence.

The gem of this season was Laird Williamson's *Julius Caesar*. The production featured superb ensemble acting by Derrick Lee Weeden as Brutus, Mary Murphey as Cassius, and Dan Donohue's brilliant Mark Antony. Williamson's staging recalled pre-WWII Europe, perhaps Italy in the '30's, with the fascist uniforms of Mussolini and Hitler dominating the costumes. Equally compelling was the set, which featured several huge, movable rectangular blocks composed of crumbled iron machines and weapons, suggesting perhaps the recycled detritus and waste of previous civilizations and their wars. This suggestion was enhanced by the leather prostheses worn by many soldiers in the opening scene; while several wore fabricated arms and legs, one soldier wore a prosthesis over the right side of his face, an ugly reminder of battle amid randomly exploding weapons. Christine Williams doubled as the Soothsayer and the seductively-dressed—and in Act V barely dressed—Ate, who moved among the warriors on stage, collecting dog tags from fallen soldiers as souvenirs of her successful seduction of great men into hideous battle. Ate thus became the alter ego of Shake-

spere's soothsayer who warns of evil deeds, then gleefully collects name tags from the dead who testify to not only her truth-telling but also her deadly charm.

The politics of Caesar's rule were clearly evident in 1.2. Barricades marked the course that Antony ran to cheers from Caesar and Calphurnia, perhaps suggesting Hitler's 1930's Olympics in Berlin. Attendant soldiers and security men in heavy dark coats carried cameras and scrutinized Cassius and Brutus. After Caesar's exit, Cassius and Brutus clearly established their characters' relationship. Murphey, tall and slender, spoke quickly and gestured constantly, referring to notes he had written down during Caesar's initial appearance; Weeden, stately and muscular, moved slowly and seemed to absorb into his large frame, rather than hear, Cassius's pleading. Throughout the play, especially in acts IV and V, Cassius's realization that Brutus was essential to his enterprise was superbly realized not only by the obvious physical differences between them, but also in their speech patterns and movements.

The storm of 1.3 raged over a stage filled with broken barricades and red flyers bearing Caesar's picture and calling for his "election" as his supporters with megaphones exited after their rally. Ate, holding an umbrella, oversaw the developing conspiracy. In Brutus's soliloquy in 2.1, Weeden's superbly articulated diction and balanced phrasing evoked Brutus's dilemma; he moved seamlessly through his character's complex psychomachia to capture a noble and passionate mind torn between equally demanding convictions. Cassius brought to the conspirators' meeting a case of long-handled knives from which each conspirator drew a weapon. As Cassius urged the killing of Antony, the initial contest between him and Brutus deepened. Murphey's cat-like Cassius spoke and moved rapidly, cognizant that while he had orchestrated this conspiracy, Brutus was nonetheless vital to its success, and thus to Cassius's self esteem and status as its leader. From this moment on, Cassius spoke with a nervous energy that inhabited Murphey's bones, while Weeden spoke and moved with the assurance of a man who grasped his own necessity and knew that his arguments would always be superior to Cassius's. The interplay between these actors was thrilling throughout, indicating just how cogently Williamson had cast them for their respective roles. Portia, obviously pregnant, could not move Brutus from his conviction, though his anguished "O ye gods! / Render me worthy of this noble wife" (2.1.303-04), revealed his sense of the personal loss his convictions were apt to cause.

Casting Robynn Rodriguez as Decius Brutus made "his" persuasion of Caesar to come to the Senate visually complex. While Williamson may not have intended any sexual symbolism, Caesar's being persuaded by an attractive woman to attend the Senate suggested that his vanity was more than political, as if some sexual rivalry existed between Calphurnia and Decius. The murder itself was, as Brutus foretold, ritualistic, with each conspirator in succession stabbing Caesar as he clung to a central podium that dripped with blood when the killing was done. Led by Cassius, they raised their bloodied hands and cried "Freedom! Freedom!" to the spectators, who thus became the supposed benefactors of the murder. As Caesar fell, a spotlight shone on Ate standing behind the podium, as if she were to speak, surveying her growing bounty. As Antony, dressed formally in suit and tie, walked to the podium Cassius behind him raised his knife to kill him, to be stopped only by Brutus's strong hand; the rift between them had been opened. Before his speech on the "bleeding piece of earth," Antony walked among the conspirators, shaking their bloody hands until he shared symbolically and visually in Caesar's death. Antony did what he had to do at this moment simply to save his skin, but he certainly grasped the opportunity that Caesar's murder had presented to him. Donohue's performance of the funeral oration would reveal a shrewd and vicious politician so tragically misjudged by Brutus. Ate dipped

her hand in Caesar's body, and symbolically lifted his spirit as Antony watched, anticipating the chaos he was about to unleash.

After the intermission, Antony and Brutus entered to shouts coming from Plebians massed around the theatre's semi-circular auditorium; spectators thus demanded "satisfaction," and Williamson's staging and Donohue's performance of the funeral oration meshed brilliantly. Caesar's casket lay down center stage, surrounded by armed guards wearing shirts bearing Brutus's picture. As Brutus spoke, Antony stood behind him staring at the casket. Whereas Brutus spoke confidently and without pause, as might a preacher his sermon, Donohue's emotional range matched superbly his sense of his audience's growing unease. He began to choke on his words, sighing deeply and then stopping to compose himself; he actually teared as he spoke of Caesar's will, as one personally hurt by the killing of so gracious a man. Donohue reacted not only to the planted Plebians but also to the actual theatre audience; spectators' rapt attention to his acting skill, evident in his increasingly passionate oration and complete immersion in the role he was "playing," created the theatrical ideal: the illusion of "reality," the complete suspension of disbelief. Donohue the actor melded completely into his character as he achieved an astonishing level of naturalism; the pauses in his deliverance seemed not only scripted as part of his ploy to arouse the Plebians, but also as reactions to an inner awareness of his oratorical skill: an actor's reflections upon his art *even as he employed it*. To the Plebians' shouts of "Come Down," Antony walked from behind the podium and opened Caesar's casket, pointing to the grisly wounds as he held up the bloodied mantle at l.170: "You all do know the mantle." Donohue's pace and volume increased as he sensed victory; his "I am no orator, as Brutus is; / But (as you know me all), a plain blunt man / That love my friend For I have neither [wit], nor words, nor worth, / Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech / To stir men's blood" (3.2.217-19; 221-23) produced exactly the desired result. Spectators did not need the loud denials of the Plebians; their own muted laughter as they recognized Antony's ironic skill produced yet another pause and an obvious smirk on Donohue's face, as if recognizing instantaneously not only his character's skill at convincing the scripted Plebians, but also his own as an actor fulfilling brilliantly our sense of the Greek word for actor: hypocrite. For, as the remainder of the play revealed, Antony was here as hypocritical as any scheming politician could be.

Thugs wearing grotesque clown faces and jackets bearing Antony's image gleefully murdered Cinna, a slight, defenseless man. The rein of terror had begun. As Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus, dressed in fascist military garb, discussed "These many then shall die, their names are prick'd" (4.1.1), Antony casually knocked over numerous chess pieces. Body bags suddenly dropped from the ceiling all around the theatre; this triumvirate now ruled us, and some of the "prick'd" would symbolically come from among the spectators. Into the power vacuum created by Brutus and Cassius had stepped a man who crystallized the central tragedy of this play: Brutus's compound misjudgments of Antony, and Cassius's error in bowing to Brutus's leadership. In their tense meeting in 4.2, these character faults were again evident. Wearing British bomber jackets, they stood apart. Murphey paced constantly and argued fervently his war plan; sitting calmly at the edge of a small table, Weeden's resonant baritone voice crushed Cassius. Indeed, Weeden's physical stature and powerful voice magnified his ironic errors. During the final battle, which featured machine gun fire, soldiers in gas masks, and horrible noise, Ate, scantily dressed, watched men die and then darted on stage to grab their dog tags. Camera flashes recorded every hand-to-hand fight. Brutus sustained an injury to his eyes; he had failed to "see," and thus had misconstrued, everything. Antony knelt over his disfigured body to praise him, but

given his performance over Caesar's coffin, one wondered how much Donohue meant us to believe in his praise of this "most noble Roman."

Penny Metropulos set her *As You Like It* in early 20th Century Europe. Duke Frederick and his militaristic court wore expensive clothes and ordered people about sharply. These aristocrats wore their finery everywhere, even in Arden, where motley dressed—and brained—Touchstone lorded over the shepherds in a plaid coat, sporty hanky, baggy pants, and high boots, suggesting either a lost golfer looking for the 18th green or a comic equestrian; or both. Metropulos staged the exile of Duke Senior from this court, with a silent Rosalind watching, to stress the sense of loss wrecking Frederick's court. Charles, played by the muscular Adrian Roberts, proved no contest for Orlando, who slammed both Charles and his better dressed but less physical brother before leaving. Duke Frederick spied on Rosalind and Celia talking, perhaps suggesting why Celia decides to accompany Rosalind to Arden; she realizes clearly her father's tyranny and treachery. For the play's Adam, Metropulos substituted Dee Maaske, who became "Adda," an elderly female companion who returned in act V as Hymen, one of the less successful ideas in this generally satisfying production.

Except for a few exciting props, Metropulos wisely kept her stage mostly bare, relying on her actors to create the comedy from Shakespeare's words. Dan Donohue's theatrical versatility was evident in his hilarious Touchstone. In 3.2 he and Josiah Phillips as Corin lay around the forest, chewing cattails and debating the relative values of court vs. country. Every time Corin, in traditional shepherd attire, shifted his posture or gestured, Touchstone, outlandishly dressed and out of place, imitated him. What was natural and habitual to Phillips, Donohue turned into a clown's efforts to "keep up." The humor lay in Donohue's efforts to seem naturally "pastoral" while belittling Corin's lifestyle. Feeling superior, Touchstone pursued Audrey shamelessly, pushing her around stage in a wheelbarrow and delighting in her slutish ways and sloppy, revealing, dress; no virtue here, only his desire for multiple rolls in the hay. Touchstone dismissed William by threatening to kill him at least nine substantial ways: as William, hat in hand, stood stage left gazing incomprehensively at his adversary, Touchstone pantomimed various executions, including cutting his throat, strangling him, drowning him, kicking him into the audience, and attaching dynamite to him, unrolling the wire to center stage, and then pushing the plunger to blow him sky-high. As he finally got the message that he was banished by this courtly fool, William simply, and sadly, exited stage left, head down, hat still in hand. Touchstone gloated; spectators roared. It was one of the funniest sequences I have ever seen.

Kevin Kenerly as Orlando announced his devotion for Rosalind by tacking large sheets of love poems all over the stage facade, and then, not content with this effort, he unfurled from up stage left a long banner with "Rosalind" emblazoned in large red letters. Here was an ardent lover indeed! Deidrie Henry's Rosalind was quite worried about Orlando's exuberance, though her passionate swoon on "O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didn't know how many fathom deep I am in love!" (4.2.197-98) betrayed a woman desperate for the emotional and physical love of a man she wished she could trust. But getting to that trust was difficult, partly because she had seen the exile of her father, and she knew the treachery of the court she had fled. Metropulos's staging this unscripted scene grounded Rosalind's fear of the men from this court, regardless of their parentage.

Henry's and Kenerly's scenes together in Acts III and IV were humorous but also tense. Rosalind was furious as Orlando's lateness, chastised him deeply for lacking the signs of a true lover, and wanted Celia to confirm her fear that Orlando was not "really" in love. Orlando never lost his youthful excess and initially treated Ganymede's "instruction" as a game to pass the time, while Henry's Rosalind, deeply suspicious of men yet obviously in love, clearly communicated Rosalind's dilemma. Henry's per-

formance made sense of Rosalind's unseen visit to her father's camp; Orlando, like her father, is a political outcast living in a forest with no discernable future, and the court just outside this pastoral retreat is run by a fratricidal tyrant. Whence love in such a place and time? While this was certainly not a "dark" interpretation of this generally sunlit romantic comedy, Metropulos and Henry created a complex Rosalind trapped between her own passionate sexuality and a sense of "real politics."

In this context Richard Howard's Jaques assumed a more complex role also. His seven ages speech, addressed to his mates assembled in a circle, was a history lesson to Duke Senior's entourage and a sermon justifying their finding joy in exile from the "envious court." One sensed that this early 20th century Jaques had been reading Montaigne and was familiar with Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Timon*. Only in his encounters with Rosalind and Orlando did he falter, and in this production this structural feature of the play, his separate meetings with them in 3.2 (Orlando, watched by Rosalind and Celia), and 4.1 (briefly with Rosalind) emphasized that only love could overrule Jaques's dismissive melancholy. As distressed by her dilemma as she was, Rosalind emphatically preferred a dilemma with possibilities to being a post. Having dismissed Jaques, Rosalind embraced this dilemma passionately. She was wonderfully playful and erotic in the following scene, obviously punning on "too much of a good thing" (4.2.115-16), posing seductively to the bewildered Orlando, and sighing deeply when he uttered his "forever and a day" speeches, hearing again his youthful naiveté and realizing that she must still instruct him about women's moods, changeableness, and above all a woman's wit. After watching Phebe reject Silvius, hearing of Jaques's travels to seek out melancholy, and yet aware of her father's exile, Henry toyed with the submission that Rosalind desired. Her "Therefore beware my censure, and keep your promise" (4.2.187-88) was playful yet stern: Henry caught perfectly in her voice and gestures Rosalind's desperate wish to unleash her passions tempered by the memory of her father and Orlando's earlier perfidy.

As in most productions of this play, Metropulos played with Rosalind's disguise as long as she could; and, as in most productions, Oliver discovered Ganymede's "secret" identity in 4.3 during his narration of his peril and rescue by Orlando. As Oliver helped Rosalind up after her swoon on hearing of Orlando's brave, selfless act, Oliver grabbed Ganymede from behind on "Be of good cheer, youth. You a man? You lack a man's heart" (4.3.166). While often Oliver discovers Rosalind's breasts on "heart" and then immediately lets go, here Jos Viramontes held Henry's ample bosom for a few seconds as they both stood there stunned by his "discovery." Oliver thus grasped what Henry's male costume imperfectly disguised; the longer he held her breasts, the harder spectators laughed at the actors' mutual surprise and their own willing acceptance of what they knew all along was a theatrical game.

Donohue's hilarious presentation of the seven degrees of the lie, all rubber necked, armed, and legged, the last vestige of flamboyant pretension in this play, should have been an ironic prelude to Hymen's descent. But here was a falling off. Like its distant cousin *The Winter's Tale*, *As You Like It* demands the supernatural. Hymen's words are explicit: "Good Duke, receive thy daughter; Hymen from heaven brought her" (5.4.110-11). Hymen descends because love has wrought order: "things made even / Atone together" (108-09). Given her attention to so many details of this play, Metropulos's substituting Adda, Orlando's female servant, for Hymen unaccountably robbed this production of the scripted hint of supernatural blessing for the marriages. What should have been a potent symbolic moment was simply flat. Perhaps Metropulos judged that so strong a Rosalind did not need Hymen to bless her marriage, but surely one point of this play is that regardless of one's strength of character, love can wreck havoc in one's life; and if we are willing to trust another equally imperfect human being, as Rosalind finally trusts Orlando after he saves Oliver's life, then

the gods may bless our faith in one another. The scripted end of *As You Like It* presents its theatre audience with that image, and spectators should not be denied that vision, and that hope. Theatre, after all, is one place where such visions come alive.

Like *Julius Caesar*, *The Winter's Tale* was driven by a director's "concept" that was either loved or hated by spectators. (I heard both opinions strongly expressed when exiting both plays.) Part one, Sicilia, was a staid, elegant, wealthy late 19th century European court. The opening scene was lush and bounteous; a huge Christmas tree stood center stage on a large, bright red carpet surrounded by numerous gifts. Everyone wore fashionable attire, the men in tuxedos, the women in evening gowns adorned with furs and sparkling jewelry. Until Leontes's jealous rage, all was orderly and beautiful.

The bridge to Bohemia was fantastic: to The Byrds' sixtyish "For every thing, turn, turn, turn, there is a season, turn, turn, turn," a space capsule, ala the moon landing of 1969, descended to the lunar stage, and out stepped his highness Alfred Einstein in a space suit to recite Time's soliloquy about the passing thereof. Then, to the rocking lyrics of Sly and the Family Stone's "Groovin, on a Sunday afternoon," the curtain rose on a hippie commune in Bohemia, where Florizel, Perdita and the locals pranced around in bell-bottoms and tie-dyed shirts. Autolycus, a fantastic blend of Elvis, Liberace, and BB King, sporting a huge Afro, dark glasses, and outrageously motley garb (black and red striped pants, yellow coat, white boots) entered in a riotously painted Love-Bug convertible (top down, of course) and wowed the shepherds with 45's and LP's of ballads sung by 60's rock stars like Jimi Hendrix and The Rolling Stones. Pure, 100% high camp! Director Michael Donald Edwards stretched his spectators' tolerance and imagination mightily with this montage, and purists might protest that his "concept" made the play impossible to believe. However, given the overt theatricality of Shakespeare's last plays, the plasticity of time, and the generational conflict that Shakespeare examines intensely in this play for probably the final, well, time (assuming *Winter's Tale* was his penultimate play), Edwards' approach worked remarkably well. He reminded spectators that they were, after all, in a theatre, and testing their ability to accept Einstein's heavenly descent and the sudden explosion of 60's hippie culture from the back of the stage prepared them for the play's final miracle: the statue coming to life, a miracle possible only in the theatre where, Paulina reminds us, "It is required / [we] do awake [our] faith." The logic of this play is that the greater the theatrical emphasis on the gap in time and generations, the greater the possibility that the play's final scene, one of the most moving in all drama, will convince spectators that faith and penance have "really" brought Hermione back to life. Hence the magical possibilities of theatre.

John Pribyl's Leontes fell quickly to his "dream" of his wife's actions; his soliloquy at 1.2.185 ff, "Gone already!" was a statement of sexual anguish, not a debate about the possibility of his cuckoldry. On his "And arms her with the boldness of a wife / To her allowing husband" (ll. 184-85) Hermione provocatively removed her long black gloves, a staple of Gypsy Rose Lee's "entertainment," as she exited with Polixenes to the garden. Leontes's "And many a man there is" (l. 192), spoken down stage to the audience, was the statement of a man absolutely convinced of his wife's infidelity, not the questioning of a man merely unsure of her intentions. Pribyl cradled his son lovingly, looking into his eyes for signs of his paternity. His growing anger at Camillo, especially his repeated "Satisfy / Th' entreaties of your mistress? Satisfy?" (ll. 233-34) heralded his mad ravings on "Is whispering nothing?" (ll. 284-96). Pribyl spit out the short sentences rapidly, each rhetorical question building in volume and rage; the oft repeated "nothing" marked like pegs his rapidly developing dementia, so that Camillo's response "Good my lord, be cured / Of this diseased opinion, and betimes, / For 'tis most dangerous" (ll. 297-99) was not a warning, but a description of Leontes's deteri-

orating mind. On "I have drunk, and seen the spider," (I.145), Pribyl hurled the Christmas tree to the stage, shattering the festive mood and with it his own mind. Demetra Pittman as Paulina kept her promise to Hermione not to be "honey-mouthed" with Leontes. She scolded him furiously, and when she defiantly placed the basket containing Perdita on Leontes's desk in 2.3, she boldly endangered the child's life. Until Antigonus took up the basket at I. 183, "Come on, poor babe," Leontes several times verged on pushing the basket off his desk. This staging emphasized both Paulina's huge risk with the child and the extent of Leontes's madness.

Hermione entered the trial scene in a plain white smock. Behind her stood a large mirror, reflecting her innocence outward into the theatre. Her speech at II.59ff, in which she protests sincerely that she loved Polixenes "as in honor he required," indicated a complete unawareness of the provocative effect of removing her gloves as she left for the "garden" with Polixenes. While this staging suggested that Hermione perhaps should have realized the potential effect of her glove removal, Catherine Lynn Davis's anguished yet resolute appeal to Leontes erased any trace of guilt on her part. His defiance after hearing Apollo's decree provoked heavenly rage, as lightning filled the stage. After the news of his son's and wife's deaths, Leontes fell to his knees and groveled, like a wounded animal, in futile circles on the red carpet. Paulina knelt with him, holding what she realized has become an emotionally damaged child. A bellowing cape and a roaring bear devouring Antigonus culminated the play's business with "things dying," while the shepherds' intoxicated joy at finding the "fairy gold" introduced the "things new born."

Given Pribyl's vivid portrait of Leontes's destructive violence, the symbolic "descent" upon the stage of a spaceman come to tell us of a "new time" and to introduce a truly "counter" culture of peace and love was remarkable apt. In *Einstein's Dreams* (Pantheon, 1993), Alan Lightman imagines human events happening in wildly different time "signatures," all the product of Einstein's dreams of time's relativity: "Suppose time is a circle, bending back on itself" (p. 8); "In this world, time is like a flow of water, occasionally displaced by a bit of debris, a passing breeze" (p. 13); "In this world, there are two times. There is mechanical time and there is body time" (p. 23). Etc. Well, suppose in this world (the theatre!), sixteen years can pass in sixteen minutes, while spectators were getting wine or coffee. Lightman's novel is eminently post-modern, but this production of Shakespeare's play, with Einstein as its master of ceremony, only showed again that what's new is old.

Edwards humorously depicted the older generations' efforts to be accepted into this hippie love culture. Amid the general hurly-burly of the country copulates and Autolycus's outrageous antics, Polixenes and Camillo entered 4.4 as if straight from a Grateful Dead concert. Polixenes was a hysterical Jerry Garcia clone, with a huge mop of tangled hair, Garcia's trademark narrow sunglasses, a tie-died shirt hanging over his potbelly, floppy clown pants, and layers of beads. He and Camillo, also in dark glasses, beads, and motley, wore parti-colored capes painted with moons and stars. During the festivities, before they reveal themselves to Perdita and Florizel, Polixenes and Camillo stood up stage right looking totally out of place and therefore hysterical; they just stood there like twin posts, wanting to be recognized but fearful thereof. What would they say? "Like, love comes from the moon and stars, man." Edwards used costumes, blocking, and above all silence to evoke marvelous humor.

Bohemia's motley metamorphosed into stately red and white for the final scenes in Sicilia. Hermione rose from beneath the stage, as if from death. Seated in profile, facing stage right, she seemed a classical deity carved in marble for a temple. Paulina urged Leontes to awake his faith, and Catherine Lynn Davis came to life wonderfully slowly, as if being dreamed into life. In a final tableau of forgiveness, Leontes stood between his wife and daughter, all now in white, embracing them. The second

movement of Borodin's string quartet, made popular as the love song "And This is my Beloved," graced this final scene. But not for long; as spectators exited, Borodin's lush melody morphed into The Turtles' rollicking "So Happy Together," taking us back to sunlit Bohemia and Autolycus's love-bug. The "two times" of this *Winter's Tale* fused into a joyous statement of happiness and togetherness. Jerry Garcia would have loved the whole trip.

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Notes

1. All textual references are to David Bevington, Ed. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. 4th ed. New York: Harper Collins, 1992.



Pictures from the production of *Hamlet* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

THE 2002 ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL'S *HAMLET*

by Craig Barrow

In addition to several films of *Hamlet* and productions of the play by other companies, I have seen a half dozen productions by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in the past 25 years. Until 2002, my favorite had been a 1988 production with Ray Dooley as an Oedipally-driven Hamlet of whom Ernest Jones would have approved.¹ Dooley had been especially hired to play the role of the Danish prince, and he was fantastic in projecting Hamlet's many-sidedness. In other productions, when regular members of the Festival's acting company have attempted the role in the past, the results were generally mediocre. Bruce Cromer, in a 1982, took pains to make Hamlet appear strategic, decisive, and forceful, an athletic Prince Hal stuck in a tricky situation, while Steven David Martin, in a touring production a few years ago, played up Hamlet's humor and warmth but made him appear a helpless, perplexed pawn, battling forces beyond his control, a hapless, delaying revenger. However, David Furr, whom I had seen only before this production playing Grumio in *Taming of the Shrew*, was more than up to the task of playing Hamlet. Perhaps having Ray Chambers, another ASF former Hamlet as director, helped Furr's interpretation of the melancholy Dane. Visually, Furr looked at times like a young James Joyce at the turn of the century in Paris, but before saying more about his appearance, I should comment on the stage, lighting, music, and costuming, the spectacle of the play, especially since any Shakespeare company as old as the Alabama Shakespeare Festival has to balance a true sense of the spirit of a play while at the same time create a fresh look. As director, Ray Chambers has to be aware that most of his audience studied *Hamlet* in high school or college and that many in his audience would be familiar with two recent films of *Hamlet*, one with Mel Gibson and the other with Kenneth Branagh. Almost as well known are such derivative, imaginative pieces as the frequently revived play by Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, and the recent Updike novel *Gertrude and Claudius*. Because of these past experiences with *Hamlet*, any audience would have a difficult time experiencing anew the power of the play.

In his "Director's Notes"² Ray Chambers discusses the origins of *Hamlet*, his choice of text, and his interpretation of the play in terms of the history of the Renaissance. While Chambers decries the conflated text of *Hamlet* most people read, he chooses a "cut" text for his production based on Q2 but including "occasional word choices" from the First Folio as well as "structural influences" from Q1. Thus, his production ran approximately three hours with one brief intermission. While he cut lines in famous scenes, characters remained intact—even Fortinbras appeared in this production. Not only does Laertes become a parallel to Hamlet as an avenger of a father's death, but Fortinbras as well since Chambers wants his audience to see Hamlet's delay in avenging his father's murder not as a fault but as a virtue. As Chambers states, his project in directing *Hamlet* is ethical: "What if the enlightened—the reasonable man—were to seek retribution? Does the old tale of revenge change when the actor is moral? Can you fight a terrorist without becoming one?"³ The source of Hamlet's ethical views are Martin Luther's Wittenberg, according to Chambers. As

A.C. Bradley has observed about *Hamlet*, "the whole story turns upon the peculiar character of the hero. For without this character the story would appear sensational and horrible."⁴ Chambers must agree with Bradley's opinion, for in shaping the response to *Hamlet*, his major problem is to help his audience experience a story that is familiar to them with fresh eyes and ears, to make a well-known play novel.



Chambers begins his quest with his use of the 750 seat Festival Stage. Although the thrust stage floor covering reminded me of the checkered floor of Branagh's film of *Hamlet*, here the floor was a series of pale green rectangles making up checkered squares, a nice surface for strategic maneuvers in a "rotten" game. The stage was bare and its bareness made the stage appear larger. End-to-end tables became the battlements of I:i⁵, while chairs with arm rests later suggested the thrones of Gertrude and Claudius. The only elaborate props used were the armoires on wheels.

The lighting sometimes featured opposing spots which cast multiple shadows on the back wall of the stage, particularly when Hamlet encountered the ghost in I:iv and at other times in the play, a visual image of Hamlet's many-sided nature. Visual perspective frequently called attention to itself, almost serving as a gloss to Hamlet's "mirror up to nature" comment in III:ii:21. During Hamlet's advice to the players, actors at make-up tables faced the audience as if the audience were a series of dressing room mirrors. Physical mirrors abounded in the play, and characters frequently served as mirrors for one another. In one of the oddest bits of staging, the audience watches behind the arras with a hidden Polonius in III:iv while out of the audience's sight, Hamlet berated Gertrude.

Although audiences are ordinarily accustomed to costumes as representations of one time period, in this *Hamlet*, costumes are visual symbols of the character's places in history. While Marcellus and Bernardo dressed as Renaissance soldiers with pikes and swords, Horatio appeared as an early twentieth-century student. In his first appearance, Hamlet also wore turn-of-the-century garb. Gertrude, except in the later scenes of the play, wore a red dress that appears almost 17th century, but it opened below the hips, displaying black velvet tights and black suede boots of a more contem-

porary period, while Claudius' red and black robes evoked a Richelieu or a Machiavellian king of the Renaissance. Ophelia's initial costuming was a modest silver-grey eighteenth century, but her rapier thrusting while helping her brother pack for Paris added a phallic experience to her virgin image. Just as Branagh's film seeks to persuade its audience that Hamlet and Ophelia have become lovers, so this play suggested a knowledgeable innocence in Ophelia. In her mad scene of IV:v, Ophelia donned her father's ceremonial robes which had the look of a contemporary doctoral gown so that in her wild grief the audience is visually aware both of her loss of her father and her sense of betrayal by Hamlet. Fortinbras first appeared in the costuming of a typical medieval warrior, but in the play's last scene he wore contemporary camouflage battle fatigues, and he and his cohorts sported machine guns. Perhaps Terry Eagleton's description of the historical epochs in the play can partially explain the costuming: "Hamlet is a radically transitional figure, striking out between a traditional social order to which he is marginal, and a future epoch of achieved bourgeois individualism which will surpass it. But because of this we can glimpse in him a negative critique of the forms of subjectivity typical of both of these regimes."⁶ Ray Chambers as director and Kristine Kearney as costume designer have clothed characters in terms of the historical eras their consciousnesses represent. In his "Director's Notes," Ray Chambers sees the characters of the play in a similar fashion to Eagleton, as he describes King Hamlet as "a dead medieval king," while Claudius "embodies the contemporary English Renaissance ideals of leadership, diplomacy, Protestant values, and as we later find, the worst of Machiavelli." Chambers sees Hamlet as tied to Wittenberg and Martin Luther, and hence "a more severe and radical scholastic/scientific Renaissance world-view: a humanist."⁷

The cellist Jennifer Byers, who played on stage during the intermission of the play and continued during the dumb show of III:ii, was dressed formally as a member of a symphony orchestra would ordinarily appear. The music she had composed was modal with conflicted themes, a more bleak sound than Miles Davis's bluesy musings in the latter 1950s that echo Hamlet's internal dividedness. While the music could have easily been eliminated from the production, it served as an emotive bridge to the two parts of the play separated by the intermission. During the dumb show, the music's effect was similar to that of a piano or organ in a motion picture theatre.

A departure from previous Hamlets that I have seen was the portrayal of the Ghost of King Hamlet. In the beginning of the play, before Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo, Remi Sandri's movements as the Ghost are hostile, almost driving the three characters off the end-to-end tables on which they stood. When Hamlet appeared before the Ghost in I:iv and talked to him in I:v, the Ghost grabbed him to force Hamlet's attention. While the Ghost's voice was gentle when talking about Gertrude and her transgressions, the Ghost was positively abusive when dealing with Hamlet. The temper of the Ghost is even worse when he berated Hamlet's "almost blunted purpose" (III:iv:111) in Gertrude's bedroom; here, though again sympathetic to Gertrude, he seized and shook Hamlet. Also, while in most productions of *Hamlet*, the actor who plays the Ghost also portrays the First Player, in this production less is done to disguise this doubling, so that when the First Player movingly recounted Priam's death in II:ii, Hamlet's guilt in not pursuing revenge for the death of King Hamlet became clearer, a fine introduction to Hamlet's self-disgust in his moving soliloquy, "What's Hecuba to him, or he to [Hecuba]/ That he should weep for her" (II:ii:559-560)?



The harshness of the Ghost's physical actions in the production of the play to Hamlet makes one wonder about the closeness of father and son prior to King Hamlet's death. This treatment of the relationship in the play might advance the Oedipal triangle suggested by Ernest Jones. A youthful, attractive Greta Lambert as Gertrude and a sensual Greg Thornton as Claudius, who both frequently caress each other prior to the bedroom scene of III:iv, would seem to set up an erotically charged encounter of Hamlet and Gertrude; however, this initial staging of the scene with Hamlet and Gertrude out-of-sight nearly blunts this purpose as the audience watched Polonius listening to the mother/son dispute.

David Furr is a contemplative Hamlet appropriate to a former student who wishes to return to Wittenberg, a reluctant taker of action, although action is a release for him from the melancholy the audience initially sees. His mother's quick marriage poisons his sense of value and his idealization of his father, as Janet Adelman has observed,⁸ and his displacement in office isolates him, peeling away friends through the patronage of Claudius, such as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and his lover, Ophelia, whom he sees as being a puppet to the will of her father. Only Horatio, ably played by James Joseph O'Neal, is loyal to him. The Ghost of King Hamlet with his tale of murder and betrayal offers Hamlet escape from melancholy through action, and in this production, Hamlet's hesitations and delays in avenging his father and the seduction of his mother are actually sources of value rather than faults; the reluctance to murder Claudius, even with cause, is seen as positive, and many of Hamlet's great speeches, such as "To be, or not to be, that is the question" (III:1:55) are a working through of a tragic dilemma of revenge justice and Christian conscience. In a mysterious universe, how can one know anything with certainty. Hamlet ponders, and if we cannot know, how can we act?⁹ As Chambers directs the play, and as David Furr plays the part, the conscience that Hamlet decries as making cowards of us all (III:1:82) is a worthy value. Only after the treachery of Claudius in action at the end of the play, in which Hamlet sees his mother die from poison meant for him, is Hamlet able to kill Claudius. In this production, the delays and hesitations of Hamlet are a virtue rather than a vice.

Without a capable Hamlet this production would have floundered, but fortunately David Furr was up to the task, whether revealing the motives of others or anatomizing his own soul, being exuberant over the success of the play within the play or crestfallen at the betrayals of those he had valued. Also important to the production's success were Greta Lambert and Greg Thornton who reprised their roles from the 1988 ASF Hamlet as Gertrude and Claudius. Lambert, more subdued than in the earlier production, dramatized the shallowness of Gertrude here more than in the earlier, more Oedipal production, while Greg Thornton showed a more conscience-ridden villain than in the 1988 play. Ophelia, torn between father and lover, was ably portrayed by Devan Sorvari. Her madness, which has the danger of becoming a set piece by itself, was only a comparison to the feigned madness of Hamlet.

I have seen the Alabama Shakespeare Festival mar the great tragedies of Shakespeare by making casting errors for lead roles, such as in the *King Lear* two years ago and *Othello* in 1978 and 1987. Ray Chambers chose his actors wisely, and with the help of his staff put together a successful *Hamlet*, one that helped his audience see anew a familiar play.

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Notes

1. Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (New York: Norton, 1976).
2. Cast List, p.4.
3. Cast List, p.4.
4. A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian, 1955):79.
5. Quotations accord with *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakesmore Evans, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).
6. Terry Eagleton, *William Shakespeare* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987):74.
7. Cast List, p.4.
8. Janet Adelman, "'Man and Wife Is One Flesh': *Hamlet* and the Confrontation with the Maternal Body," *Hamlet*, ed. Suzanne L. Wofford (New York: Bedford, 1994):220-240. An intriguing earlier article by Rupin Desai, "*Hamlet* and Paternity," *The Upstart Crow*, 3 (Fall 1980), while not psychoanalytic as Adelman investigates, "How can Hamlet be sure he is not the natural son of Claudius" (97)? Both critics deal with the problem of Hamlet's idealization of the father.
9. See Maynard Mack, "The World of Hamlet," *Hamlet*, ed. Edward Hubler (New York: Signet, 1987):234-56.

THE 2001 ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL PRODUCTIONS OF
KING JOHN AND JULIUS CAESAR

by Craig Barrow

In its thirtieth anniversary season, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival produced one play never before performed at the Festival, Shakespeare's *King John*; and *Julius Caesar*, last performed in 1991. *King John* was performed in the 250-seat Octagon Theatre, while *Julius Caesar* was performed in the larger 750-seat Festival Stage. While Howard Jensen of Indiana University directed *King John* and Kent Thompson, ASF's Artistic Director, directed *Julius Caesar*, both directors appeared united in concentrating on keeping the title characters the focus of each play, despite critical fascination with the Bastard Faulconbridge as a developing model of kingliness in *King John* and the tragic fall of Brutus in *Julius Caesar*.

On entering the Octagon to see *King John*, one is confronted by a series of arches forming a rampart set at an acute angle to the stage; each arch seems slightly larger than the next. One wishes imaginatively to make these arches harmonically the same size, but one is frustrated by the creation of this visible symbol of the play by its Scenic Designer, Emily Beck. This skewed design, probably a collaboration with Director Howard Jensen, serves as a representative of the twisted behavior one so often sees in this Shakespearean play. While critics such as James L. Calderwood in "Commodity and Honor in *King John*"¹ and William H. Matchett in "Richard's Divided Heritage in *King John*"² see the Bastard as a potential king in contrast to the ineffectual, morally corrupt John, the ASF production goes another way. Although it does not present the Bastard negatively as Richard A. Levin in "*King John's Bastard*"³ does, where he argues that the Bastard follows rather than criticizes commodity, or self-interest, the production of the play focuses on *King John*, especially his plot against the life, and later the eyes of Arthur, his young nephew and rival to the English throne.

Casting, either by the casting director, Alan Filderman or the director Howard Jensen, shapes the focus of the audience's attention. Ray Chambers, probably the most gifted for serious dramatic acting of the younger actors of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, plays King John, while John Preston, a gifted comic actor, plays the Bastard. Chambers is tall, good looking, with an arresting face; he could easily play Hamlet, while Preston is not quite so tall, heavier, with a face ready to break into a grin or smile. Even though King John appears only relatively strong in the play before the city Angiers and accepts correction from his mother Elinor, the humiliation of reversing himself regarding the supremacy of Rome before Cardinal Pandolph, and the weakness of having the Bastard act as king in John's name, Chambers holds our interest, and the weakness that we see in his *King John* seem only checks to a powerful, ruthless self-interest. Even Jensen and his "Director's Note"⁴ sees Shakespeare's *King John* as "more complex . . . the play action presents us with a dark version of political realities." The moral center of the production becomes not simply John's quest to maintain his crown but his dramatized plot to have Arthur killed by Hubert and later to shift the moral blame upon Hubert as we see in IV.ii:203-248. King John sees only his need to keep the crown; the needs of his country disappear in his

pursuit of commodity. Even at his death, little awareness of others or his country graces his poisoned last lines. Chambers, with his own powerful presence, keeps the audience rooted in his character's fault-ridden collaps. John's plot to kill Arthur in this production almost has the feeling of a tragic error of choice or a dilemma, although neither the director nor Chambers seem to push this effect too far.

While Jensen seems aware of critical attraction to the Bastard as opposed to John, he sees the Bastard's role functionally⁵ as a "strikingly vivid fictional character based remotely on various historical figures, and, like Falstaff, Jensen believes the Bastard exists partly to perform acts and to provide views that help to amplify the action into a coherent and complex work of art." Preston certainly handles this role as commentator well, and he also shows a correcting gravity and responsibility to the office of the king that provide a contrasting mirror to King John's behavior, especially after King John's plot on Arthur's life. Preston is so good in his role as commentator—in his jibes and asides before and after the commodity speech of II:i:561-59—that he directs the audience in what seems the central effect of this production, the examination of political rhetoric. Like the Bastard, perhaps even trained to think like him, the audience begins to weigh the speeches of Arthur's friends, the selflessness that masks advantage of Philip and Lewis, the accusatory speeches of Elinor and Constance covered by maternal love, the self-righteousness that hides the traitorous intrigue of Salisbury and Pembroke, as well as Pandulph's manipulative political maneuvering, which is barely cloaked by religion. Even innocents such as Arthur and Blanche are partially caught by commodity in their decision making. The production frequently seems like a television news analysis of major political leaders scrutinized by the Bastard and his audience.

What is described by Susan Willis, the ASF Dramaturg, as late nineteenth century military costumes appear more like early World War I with its own confusing Balkan problems. Even the women are in uniform here. Such costuming aids the audience in assessing the true aims of speakers and furthers the production's apparent aim of evaluating political rhetoric. The various military encounters in the play, which never have determining results, are sparsely presented in the stylized manner of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. What is important here is that the physical action not seem significant enough to deflect attention from the rhetorical analysis of the virtuous posturings of speaker's language attempting to hide self-interest. The deaths in battle, therefore, seem meaningless, brutal, unfair.

Not just Ray Chambers and John Preston's efforts deserve praise in this production; the entire cast is good, especially considering the excessive length of the speeches in *King John*, which are better suited to late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century performance and taste than that of the modern stage. Even Greta Lambert, the most talented actress of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, is hard pressed to keep audience interest in her major speeches following France's betrayal of Arthur in the beginning of Act III. Deserving of special praise for their performances are Rodney Clark as Salisbury and Brian Kurlander as Pembroke, Paul Hebron as Philip, Aaron Harpold as Lewis, and Rick Hamilton as Cardinal Pandulph. Each is able to show the pose and the interior reality of each character, adding to the triumph of this production.



On entering the Festival Stage to see *Julius Caesar* one sees a stage on one level, but with a series of steps that could be a seat or throne on the audience's left. The name Caesar is in large capital letters at the back of the stage; it is present throughout the action of the play. Kent Thompson seems concerned that the play not divide in two. He says in his "Director's Note"⁶ that "the spirit of *Julius Caesar* lingers

until the play's end. He appears as a ghost to Brutus in the tent scene, and each of the conspirators calls upon him when committing suicide. They cannot escape the power they have created by killing Caesar. Not only will he live on, but he establishes the next great leader—not Mark Antony but Octavius Caesar, later known as Augustus, the greatest of all Roman emperors." While Thompson uses the word *tragedy* to describe Brutus, he nonetheless appears to see the tragic error of Brutus's choice to assassinate Caesar as a subordinate part to Caesar's life and death. The play, in short, could not be called *Brutus*. Maynard Mack, in "*Julius Caesar*," seems to make a similar point in seeing Caesar as the historical center of the play and Brutus the tragic center.⁷ Mack's analysis of both characters is similar, too, in that the endearing part to both Caesar and Brutus is their private selves, while their public selves create problems for both men. Brutus, when forced into a public role by the assassination of Caesar, shows a similar difficulty to his friend, describing his honor in his speech following the assassination in a similar way to Caesar's referring to himself as Caesar, as if his honor were an object almost apart from himself. Both Brutus and Caesar are deaf to what Thompson calls "the hidden side of human existence"⁸ to which Portia and Calpurnia seem attuned, along with the Soothsayer and the portents of the storm prior to Caesar's murder. What is hidden by rationality seems to threaten both Caesar and Brutus. Harold Goddard approaches this issue when he says, "The pride of Brutus is the ghost of Caesar within him as certainly as if at the moment Caesar expired it had literally transmigrated from the dead man to the living one. And so this Tragedy of Brutus is the story of Julius Caesar's spirit after death. The title of the play is precisely the right one."⁹

As with *King John*, the quality of the acting of *Julius Caesar* is excellent, especially with the key roles of Julius Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, and Mark Antony. Roger Forbes wonderfully highlights Caesar's touching weaknesses, his hubristic pride, his generosity. John Resenhouse's Brutus has less distance, more amiability than Jason Robards demonstrated in the Stuart Burge film; Resenhouse nicely shows the corruption of a fine friend and husband by the public roles Caesar's assassination determined for him. Rick Hamilton, probably too old for the part and not exactly "lean" and hungry looking, nonetheless finely portrays Cassius's envy of Caesar, his anger in having to bow to Caesar's pre-eminence, his irritation but respect and love of Brutus. Ray Chambers is an excellent Antony; his funeral oration is a convincing handling of a Roman crowd and the conspirators. Susan Wands as Portia is no Diana Rigg; her flashing of her thigh wound, which makes her seem masochistic, perhaps is meant to tie to her death, but no husband would likely trust any important matter to the privacy of her bosom. Regan Thompson as Calpurnia is much more convincing in her remonstrations to Caesar.

While most of the cuts in the play are logical and unmissed, one part, commented on by Frank Kermode,¹⁰ is surprisingly uncut, Brutus's lines on Portia's death in IV.iii, where even though Brutus talks to Cassius of Portia's death in line 147, he nonetheless responds to Messala's news of Portia's death on line 190 as if told for the first time. Kent Thompson's brilliant intermission, in part to get Caesar's portly body off the stage, makes up for this gaffe.

On the whole, however, the 2001 *Julius Caesar* is excellent, as are all the Shakespeare offerings of the 2001 Alabama Shakespeare Festival season. This season is testimony that the goal of doing all of the Shakespeare canon has not been abandoned.

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Notes

1. James L. Calderwood, "Commodity and Honour in *King John*," *Shakespeare: The Histories*, ed. Eugene M. Waith (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 85-101.
2. William H. Matchett, "Richard's Divided Heritage in *King John*," *Essays in Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 152-170.
3. Richard A. Levin, "*King John's Bastard*," *The Upstart Crow: A Shakespeare Journal*, 3 (1980), 29-41.
4. Howard Jensen, "Director's Note," 2001 Alabama Shakespeare Festival program, p.8.
5. Jensen, p.8.
6. Kent Thompson, "Director's Note," 2001 Alabama Shakespeare Festival program, p.8.
7. Maynard Mack, "*Julius Caesar*," *Modern Shakespearean Criticism: Essays on Style, Dramaturgy, and the Major Plays*, ed. Alvin B. Kernan (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1970), p.293.
8. Kent Thompson, "Director's Note," 2001 Alabama Shakespeare Festival program, p.8.
9. Harold C. Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, vol. 1 (Chicago: U. Of Chicago Press, 1951), p.312.
10. Frank Kermode, "*Julius Caesar*," *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 1100.

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



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