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**ASPECTS IN RENAISSANCE SCHOLARSHIP IV**

**PAPERS PRESENTED AT "SHAKESPEARE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES"**

**SYMPOSIUM, 1984**

**Edited by Linda R. Galyon and Kenneth G. Madison**

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Aspects in Renaissance Scholarship IV

Papers presented at "Shakespeare and His Contemporaries"

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Edited by

Linda R. Galyon

and

Kenneth G. Madison

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## INTRODUCTION

Iowa State University's Shakespeare Symposium Committee held its sixth symposium, "Shakespeare and His Contemporaries," on April 11-14, 1984. Once again, the Symposium collaborated with the Iowa Shakespeare Festival. On this occasion the plays performed in Fisher Theatre were *As You Like It* by the University of Northern Iowa, *Merchant of Venice* by the State University of Iowa, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Iowa State University.

This year the Symposium included two addresses. The first was by Ronald Bryden, University of Toronto, "Figures in the Forest: Staging Shakespeare's Woodland Comedies," while the second was by Coppélia Kahn, Wesleyan University, "Gender and Generation in *King Lear*."

For this Symposium, participants came from sixteen states: South Dakota, Missouri, Texas, New York, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Illinois, New Mexico, Utah, Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi, California, Michigan, Kentucky, and Alabama. They spoke at the sessions titled: "The Contemporaries," "The Histories," "The Tragedies," "Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century," "The Comedies," "The Tragicomedies," and "Women in Elizabethan Drama." After further revision by each author, the papers presented here represent a selection of those given at the Symposium.





## IMAGINATION, MADNESS, AND MAGIC: *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW* AS ROMANTIC COMEDY

George Cheatham \*

**ABSTRACT.** Although it has generally been considered an atypical Shakespearean comedy, *The Taming of the Shrew* in many ways resembles Shakespeare's later, characteristic romantic comedies, especially *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *The Shrew*, like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, uses the central metaphor of theatrical role-playing and the subordinate metaphors of madness and magic to explore in detail the idea of transformation—specifically transformation through love. Kate's successful transformation and the failed transformations of Bianca and Sly suggest that, first, one can play only a compatible role and that, second, the role-playing succeeds only if all parties exhibit sufficient selflessness. Petruchio's madness and the wonder with which others view the change in Katherina further suggest the inexplicable, magical quality of love. With Petruchio's generous help, Katherina rises as if "new-risen from a dream," mysteriously loved and in love. Her shrewishness yields wondrously to the harmonious joy of the marriage bed.

Index words: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, role-playing in Shakespeare, romantic comedy, Shakespeare, Shakespearean comedy, *The Taming of the Shrew*.

The position of *The Taming of the Shrew* in Shakespeare's canon has been and remains uncertain. Well into the current century critics kept it distinct from the other comedies, terming it "ugly and barbarous,"<sup>1</sup> for example, or "altogether disgusting to the modern sensibility."<sup>2</sup> Even contemporary critics have found the play difficult to place. As J. Dennis Huston complains, criticism of Shakespearean comedy has played a kind of shell game with *The Shrew*. Recent studies have shown, he says, that the play is neither happy, pastoral, nor festive comedy. Neither is it an early metadrama. Two recent studies of "early Shakespeare" even ignore the play.<sup>3</sup> Critics have clearly had difficulty finding a critical niche to accommodate *The Shrew*. In one way, of course, such difficulty is good, for readers and auditors must approach the play not as a happy comedy, say, or a festive one, but as itself, as *The Taming of the Shrew*. Unfortunately, the difficulties with classifying the play may have caused some people not to approach it at all and to consider it only one of Shakespeare's unsuccessful early experiments, an oddity in Shakespearean comedy.

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Critics in the last thirty or so years, though, have generally seen *The Shrew* more as romantic comedy than as farce.<sup>4</sup> And in the last fifteen or so years they have begun to cite specific connections between *The Shrew* and Shakespeare's later, characteristic romantic comedies. John Russell Brown, now followed by others, first noted similarities between the ideas of the imagination and acting in *The Shrew* and in later comedies, especially *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.<sup>5</sup> Brown, however, does not elaborate the similarities. Margorie Garber more explicitly makes the connection between the two plays, explaining that Katherina's awakening as if from a dream (IV.i.166-68) is the turning point of her transformation. Although merely figurative and not literal, Kate's awakening nonetheless adumbrates Shakespeare's later mature use of dream devices, in which the dreamer is taken "momentarily out of time" and led "toward a moment of supernatural enlightenment, an accession of knowledge which is frequently self-knowledge."<sup>6</sup> In *The Taming of the Shrew*, she says, we find the germ of the idea of transformation which becomes central in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Garber's analysis is accurate as far as it goes, but the point merits still more elaboration than she gives it, for *The Shrew* contains more than just the germ of the idea of transformation. It, like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, uses the central metaphor of theatrical role-playing and the subordinate metaphors of madness and magic to explore in detail the idea of transformation—specifically transformation through love.

Ironically, the very characteristic that has historically caused *The Shrew* to be judged as an atypical Shakespearean comedy—Petruchio's taming of Kate to be an obedient wife—connects it intimately with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Surprisingly, I have not seen anyone point out how closely Petruchio's taming of Katherina resembles Oberon's "tormenting" (II.i.147) of Titania and Theseus' wooing of Hippolyta:

Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword  
And won thy love doing thee injuries. . . . (I.i.16-19)<sup>7</sup>

Both plays begin with disharmony caused by rebellious females, the implications of which Titania makes explicit, in oft-quoted lines:

The spring, the summer  
The childing autumn, angry winter change  
Their wonted liveries; and the mazed world  
By their increase, now knows not which is which.  
And this same progeny of evils comes  
From our debate, from our dissension;  
We are their parents and original. (II.i.111-17)

The unnatural quarrelling between husband and wife spreads outward, since Titania and Oberon are gods, creating disharmony in

nature itself. And even in *The Shrew*, although Katherina is certainly no goddess and the disruption proceeding from her shrewishness barely extends beyond her father's household, Shakespeare clearly suggests the unnaturalness of her forward temper. Such an uncontrollable person is no woman but a devil, a "fiend of hell" (I.i.88), until she be of "gentler, milder mould" (I.i.60).<sup>8</sup>

Order is restored in both plays, moreover, only when the women are subdued and returned to their natural position, subordinate to their husbands. As Kate herself eventually says, "Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, / Thy head, thy sovereign . . ." (V.ii.146-47). Petruchio finally establishes rightful control only by out-shrewing the shrew; Theseus, by outfighting the Amazon warrior; and Oberon, by out-willing the willful one, showing Titania the folly of doting on the Indian boy by causing her to dote foolishly on Bottom.<sup>9</sup>

But in each case the husband's supremacy leads not to domination but to peace and harmony. Kate eventually offers her hand below Petruchio's foot, but instead of standing over her as a conqueror, he raises her beside him: "Why, there's a wench! Come on, and kiss me, Kate" (V.ii.180). The long-delayed marriage-bed, symbol of fruitful and orderly union, follows, "Come, Kate, we'll to bed" (V.ii.184). Theseus' conquest of Hippolyta leads similarly to harmonious marriage, "With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling" (I.i.19), and to a blest marriage bed. Oberon's subduing of Titania leads to new amity and triumphant dance (IV.i.86-88). Such a view of marriage was, of course, the conventional Christian one, requiring that both partners, despite the male's rightful supremacy, treat each other with "gentillesse," to use Chaucer's words, and not seek "maistrie."

Marriage, as part of the social hierarchy, as part of the so-called Great Chain of Being, reflected all social relationships—the ruler's relation to his people, for example, or Christ's to his church or a master's to his servant—and was in turn reflected by each of them. Each of these relationships could be used metaphorically to describe any of the others. Katherina herself invokes the analogy of sovereign and subject, as quoted above, to describe marriage. Such comparisons were commonplace. In *The Shrew*, however, Shakespeare adduces another analogy to explore the marriage relationship, the unconventional metaphor of theatrical role-playing. Each of the play's three attempts at transformation through role-playing—Petruchio's of Katherina, Lucentio's of Bianca, and the Lord's of Sly—suggests that an ideal marriage requires gentillesse from both partners, not maistrie. Each suggests, specifically, that, first, one can play only a compatible role and that, second, the role-playing succeeds only if all parties exhibit sufficient selflessness.

Katherina's transformation from shrew to wife involves role-playing, and it succeeds, at least in part, because she is called on to play a congenial role, that of loving and obedient wife.<sup>10</sup> Like a

director, Petruchio explicitly details to her and to others the part he expects her to play:

she's not froward, but modest as the dove;  
 She is not hot, but temperate as the morn;  
 For patience she will prove a second Grissel;  
 And Roman Lucrece for her chastity. . . . (II.i.292-95)

.....

And, honest company, I thank you all  
 That have beheld me give away myself  
 To this most patient, sweet, and virtuous wife.  
 (III.ii.187-89)

To induce Katherina to play the part he desires, Petruchio must himself assume a variety of roles, particularly those of madman and shrew. As Gremio notes about Petruchio's antics, "Petruchio is Kated" (III.ii.238)—that is, Petruchio acts like Kate. He acts mad and shrewish and, like her, sets his selfish will against all others. The resulting misery—the spoiled wedding and feast, the beaten servants, and disrupted household—reveals slowly to Katherina what she has been and what she has done to others.<sup>11</sup> Seeing herself in Petruchio's madness and shrewishness, she gradually adopts the alternate role he offers her, that of loving and obedient wife. Her new role, however, comes only with difficulty, and she is for a while disoriented:

she, poor soul,  
 Knows not which way to stand, to look, to speak,  
 And sits as one new-risen from a dream. (IV.i.166-68)

This "stage of wonderment, this subjectivity of experience and suspension of ordinary assumptions is," according to Margorie Garber, "the turning point in the transformation of the shrew."<sup>12</sup> Petruchio so treats her, says Brian Morris, that Katherina "is never allowed to be sure of her own nature until she surrenders to the character he has created for her."<sup>13</sup>

That surrender occurs in Act IV, Scene v. There, meeting Vincentio on the road, Petruchio calls the old man a young woman and demands only that Katherina answer "no" and embrace Vincentio. She, however, responds effusively:

Young budding virgin, fair and fresh and sweet,  
 Whither away? or where is thy abode?  
 Happy the parents of so fair a child!  
 Happier the man whom favourable stars  
 Allot thee for his lovely bedfellow! (IV.v.37-41)

Here Katherina does more than merely obey Petruchio; she sympathetically joins him in his game. She speaks to Vincentio with the "gusto," says John Russell Brown, of an actor given a congenial role.<sup>14</sup>Through this imaginative and generous participation in Petruchio's fiction, Katherina discovers the truth of that fiction. That is, in pretending to be what she does not appear to be, Kate recognizes what she really is. In this speech and in the later one at the wager, Kate helps to create her own role as obedient spouse. And in the creation she and Petruchio take pleasure and find love.<sup>15</sup>

As mentioned, Katherina's transformation succeeds, at least in part, because she is called to play a congenial role—one assigned to her, in fact, by nature. But the success of the transformation depends just as much on the spirit in which Petruchio works on her and in which she accepts his machinations. Such success as they have requires mutual giving, a willingness of both parties to transcend their narrow selves. Kate obviously does so when she surrenders to the role Petruchio provides for her. And Petruchio does so too by surrendering to the roles he must play to alter her. Were his motives, after all, truly selfish (as his famous lines suggest they might be: "I come to wive it wealthily in Padua; / If wealthily, then happily in Padua" [I.ii.74-75]), he could dispense with the role-playing altogether. But he does, finally, "give away" (III.ii.188) himself to Kate.

The failure of the play's other two attempts at alteration, moreover, at least in part through selfishness, underlines the mutual giving by Katherina and Petruchio.<sup>16</sup> Both Lucentio and the Lord of the Induction, like Petruchio, attempt to direct another into a new role. Lucentio, like Petruchio, presents a role which he hopes Bianca to play, that of a goddess:

O, yes, I saw sweet beauty in her face,  
Such as the daughter of Agenor had,  
That made great Jove to humble him to her hand  
When with his knees he kissed the Cretan strand.

.....

Tranio, I saw her coral lips to move,  
And with her breath she did perfume the air.  
Sacred and sweet was all I saw in her. (I.i.164-67, 171-73)

Unlike Katherina, however, Bianca never comes around, partly because the role offered her is unnaturally elevated and thus incompatible and partly because she never consents to play the role. She never overcomes the selfishness she exhibits early in the play—when she refuses to be instructed by her tutors, for example (III.i.16-20).

Bianca's failure is relatively minor, but the play's other failed transformation, that of Christopher Sly from tinker to lord, looms

large in all discussions of *The Shrew*. Some critics argue that Sly's change, like Katherina's, succeeds, that he is transformed and redeemed through the wonderful powers of art<sup>17</sup> or that he is created anew, raised up to life as a lord.<sup>18</sup> Such interpretations, however, seem obviously erroneous. Katherina literally becomes an obedient wife; Sly neither literally nor even figuratively becomes a lord. His marriage with his "lady," for example, will never be consummated. And when he awakens from his drunken slumber, no matter which possible epilogue one chooses, Christopher Sly will still be just a tinker.

Only Sly himself in any way believes the truth of his transformation, the actuality of his fictive role as lord:

Am I a lord? and have I such a lady?  
Or do I dream? or have I dream'd till now?  
I do not sleep: I see, I hear, I speak.  
I smell sweet savours and I feel soft things.  
Upon my life, I am a lord indeed,  
And not a tinker nor Christopher Sly.

(Induction ii, 66-71)

But neither the auditors nor the other characters are ever convinced, for Sly and his new role are essentially incompatible; he does not play his role well. He cannot, for example, order wine, as a lord would, but calls instead for "a pot o' th' smallest ale" (Induction ii, 73). Nor can he master the correct form of address for his supposed wife:

*Beggar:* . . .What must I call her?

*Lord:* Madam.

*Beggar:* Al'ce madam, or Joan madam?

*Lord:* Madam and nothing else, so lords call ladies.

*Beggar:* Madam wife, they say that I have dream'd. . . .

(Induction ii, 106-10)

Just as important to the failure of Sly's transformation, though, is the Lord's motive in practicing on him. The Lord seeks not to alter Sly but selfishly to amuse himself in "pastime passing excellent" (Induction i, 63). The Lord wishes not to change Sly to a lord but merely to place him in the circumstances of a lord so that his essential nature as a tinker will stand humorously evident.<sup>19</sup>

These three attempts at transformation in *The Shrew* lead to two conclusions about role-playing and romantic love. First, one can play only a compatible role. That is, one can become only what at some essential level he or she already is or should be. Katherina, for instance, no matter how shrewish she seems, can become a loving,

obedient wife, for nature intends her to be such.<sup>20</sup> Bianca, on the other hand, cannot become a goddess. And Sly's attempts at lordship serve only to emphasize that he is essentially no more than a tinker. In this respect, *The Shrew* looks forward to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and, indeed, to all Shakespeare's later love transformations. In the later play Bottom's famous "translation" is really no change at all but a literalizing of what he already truly is—an ass. He and Sly are alike in this: exalted surroundings only emphasize their low natures. Hippolyta and Titania, like Kate, similarly become what nature intended for them to be all along, subordinate wives. And Oberon's love potion works on Demetrius and Lysander only because it returns them to their initial love choices, Helena and Hermia respectively.

Second, the role-playing succeeds only if all parties exhibit sufficient selflessness. Here too *The Shrew* anticipates *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the later play's description of the imagination illuminates the former play. Actors must be able to transcend themselves through imagination in order to play roles, and the auditors must likewise use their imaginations to generously "amend" (V.i.208) the actors' feigning. When Philostrate suggests that Theseus can "find sport" in the "nothing" (V.i.78-79) of the mechanicals' play, Theseus argues otherwise:

The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.  
Our sport shall be to take what they mistake;  
And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect  
Takes it in might, not merit.

.....

Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity  
In least speak most, to my capacity. (V.i.89-92, 104-05)

Even the relatively unimaginative feigning of the rude mechanicals, if charitably received, does, as Bottom promises, somehow fall pat, and the play thus "needs no excuse" (V.i.339).

These two conclusions about role-playing apply equally to that metaphor's tenor, romantic love. First, just as a play succeeds only if actors are assigned compatible roles, so true love emerges only if lovers' expectations for love are natural and reasonable.<sup>21</sup> One should not, for example, expect a goddess, as Lucentio does, if he wants a wife. Second, just as a play succeeds only if the actors and audience both imaginatively accept the fiction, so true love emerges only if both lovers generously accept each other and "amend" each other's faults.



Petruchio and Katherina are both lovers and, metaphorically, actors, and the same generous selflessness that enables them to be successful performers (imagination) enables them also to be successful lovers (gentillesse).

In *The Shrew* the successful lovers are also the actors. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, however, the two functions are distinct. The four wedding couples illustrate love; the rude mechanicals illustrate performing; and it remains for Theseus and Hippolyta to connect the two in their lunatic, lover, and poet exchange—their attempt to comprehend the happiness of the young lovers.

After a wild night in the woods the young couples in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are awakened by Theseus and Hippolyta to find themselves—mysteriously—happy and in love. Theseus questions how “gentle concord” (IV.i.142) has grown from their earlier discord, but the youth cannot answer. “My lord,” responds Lysander,

I shall reply amazedly,  
Half sleep, half waking; but as yet, I swear,  
I cannot truly say how I came here. (IV.i.145-47)

The others respond similarly.

Rational Theseus acknowledges the strangeness of the events related by the youth but not their truth, and he tries to explain away the events as merely a set of imagined falsehoods or senseless misunderstandings:

*Hippolyta:* 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these  
lovers speak of.

*Theseus:* More strange than true. I never may believe  
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.  
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend  
More than cool reason ever comprehends.  
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact. (V.i.1-8)

Hippolyta, however, recognizes, although she cannot explain, a truth beyond “cool reason.” The lovers’ story may not make rational sense. But sensible or not, the changes wrought by the night’s happenings are undeniable: All the lovers’ minds are “transfigur’d so together” that the events have grown to “something of great constancy / But howsoever, strange and admirable” (V.i.24-27). Discord has somehow become concord; enmity, somehow love. Even the auditors cannot

explain the changes. They can know only that lovers, like lunatics and poets, have dreams and visions which can, although irrational, somehow be true. The strange and wondrously enriching power of love cannot be explained rationally; it can only be metaphorically compared to a dream's magically coming true through "fairy grace" (V.i.382).

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the figures of magic and dream which metaphorically explain love are concretely presented through the fairies and their potions. In *The Taming of the Shrew* the figures convey the same theme, but only imaginatively, through Petruchio. In him the lunatic, lover, and poet—and a bit of the magician—all meet. He is obviously a lover, and his role as an actor/director/playwright who guides Katherina into her role as wife qualifies him as poet. He is also a lunatic, and Shakespeare systematically presents him as such. Katherina calls him "one half lunatic" (II.i.286) after their first meeting. On the wedding day (III.ii) she names him a "mad-brain rudesby," a "frantic fool" (ll. 10, 12), and his "mad attire" (l. 118) and "mad-brain'd" (l. 157) actions during the wedding elicit the appellation "mad" from Gremio, Tranio, and Bianca (ll. 176, 235, 237). And despite the general madness of Petruchio's actions, specific references to it occur only at these points in the text. That fact seems significant. For immediately after Katherina calls him "one half lunatic," Petruchio describes her ideally to Baptista, in lines already quoted:

Father, 'tis thus: yourself and all the world  
That talk'd of her have talk'd amiss of her.  
If she be curst, it is for policy,  
For she's not froward, but modest as the dove;  
She is not hot, but temperate as the morn;  
For patience she will prove a second Grissel,  
And Roman Lucrece for her chastity. (II.i.289-95)

Immediately after he is termed mad by the wedding guests, Petruchio thanks them for their attendance and again describes Katherina ideally, again in lines already quoted:

And, honest company, I thank you all  
That have beheld me give away myself  
To this most patient, sweet, and virtuous wife. (III.ii.187-89)

To the audience these words seem madness at the time Petruchio speaks them—Kate seems obviously a shrew and no "second Grissel"—but

they are a madness in which truth resides, like the madness in the play's Induction. There what is called Sly's "strange lunacy" (Induction, ii, 27)—that he is Christopher Sly, old Sly's son of Burton Heath—is actually the truth. And by the play's end Petruchio's madness too has become truth: Katherina by then is temperate, patient, sweet, and virtuous.<sup>22</sup> His descriptions of her may be the irrational imaginings of a madman, a lover's vision of an ideal wife, and a poet's description of the ideal role for a woman. But they are also true. Petruchio's visions, which the rest of Paduan society has judged madness, have somehow become real—and in a way that others can explain only by calling the transformation a "wonder" (V.ii.106, 189), thereby acknowledging Petruchio a sort of miracle worker.<sup>23</sup> Like the story of the night in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which strangely grows to something of great constancy, Petruchio's ideal vision of Katherina wonderously bodes, as he says,

peace . . . and love, and quiet life,  
And, to be short, what not that's sweet and happy.  
(V.ii.108-10)

With Petruchio's generous help, Katherina, like the young lovers, rises as if "new-risen from a dream" (IV.i.173), mysteriously loved and in love. And like Bottom/Pyramus rising from the dead, she finds her less-than-perfect performance accepted. Her shrewishness yields wonderously to the harmonious joy of the marriage-bed in much the same way that the Burgomask of rude mechanicals yields magically to the dance of fairies.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>John Bailey, *Shakespeare* (London: Longmans, 1929), p. 100.

<sup>2</sup>G. B. Shaw in *Shaw on Shakespeare*, ed. Edwin Wilson (New York: Dutton, 1961), p. 188.

<sup>3</sup>J. Dennis Huston, " 'To Make a Puppet': Play and Play-Making in *The Taming of the Shrew*," *Shakespeare Studies*, 9 (1976), 73. Huston cites, respectively, J. D. Wilson, *Shakespeare's Happy Comedies* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1962); Thomas McFarland, *Shakespeare's Pastoral Comedy* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1972); C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1959); James Calderwood, *Shakespeare Metadrama* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1971); A. C. Hamilton, *The Early Shakespeare* (San Marino: Huntington Library Press, 1967); and *Early Shakespeare*, Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies 3, eds. J. R. Brown and Bernard Harris (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962).

<sup>4</sup>Roughly since Northrop Frye's "The Argument of Comedy" in *English Institute Essays 1948* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1949), pp. 58-73.

<sup>5</sup>*Shakespeare and his Comedies* (London: Methuen, 1957), pp. 94-98. G. R. Hibbard [ed. *The Taming of the Shrew* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1968), p. 38] says briefly in his introduction that in *The Shrew* Shakespeare was very much interested in imagination, which he explored in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Calderwood calls Sly Bottom's "spiritual cousin" (p. 131). Alexander Leggatt [*Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (London: Methuen, 1974), p. 42] says that Sly's awakening "is a dramatic moment of a kind that will continue to fascinate Shakespeare throughout his career" and, specifically, that Sly resembles the waking lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. T. F. Van Laan (*Role-Playing in Shakespeare* [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1978], p. 52) says that role-playing as structure in *The Shrew* anticipates nearly all of Shakespeare's subsequent plays. Alvin Kernan (*The Playwright as Magician* [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979], p. 67) says that *The Shrew* connects with Shakespeare's later plays thematically in the use of theatrical art.

<sup>6</sup>*Dream in Shakespeare* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1974), p. 34.

<sup>7</sup>Peter Alexander, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1951).

<sup>8</sup>As least as early as the medieval Uxor Noah and Gyll in *The Second Shepherds' Play*, the shrewish wife has been a type of sinful disobedience.

<sup>9</sup>Titania's doting on Bottom is a clear reversal of natural order: a goddess submitting herself to a mortal—to an animal, in fact, to an ass. She awakens with no thought of claiming the Indian boy, for the obvious folly of such a perverse submission to Bottom reveals to her the unnaturalness of her refusal to submit to Oberon. The doting on an ass suggests further that Titania, in refusing to obey her rightful lord, reverts to her bestial nature, which should be subordinate to her rational one. In refusing to play the role nature intends for her, she necessarily becomes beast-like, less than nature intends her to be. Perhaps something of such an idea inheres in the term "shrew" and in the falcon metaphor Petruchio uses with Kate. Also Sly's drinking himself to the level of a "beast" or a "swine" (Induction, i, 30) is similar.

<sup>10</sup>Kernan, for example, argues that "theatrical methods alone" enable Petruchio to alter her from shrew to wife (p. 66), and Van Laan claims further that the play characterizes all life as a theatrical enterprise (p. 43).

<sup>11</sup>Hibbard, p. 21.

<sup>12</sup>Garber, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup>Morris, p. 135.

<sup>14</sup>Brown, p. 98.

<sup>15</sup>See Leggatt, p. 59. Staging of the play, moreover, could very nicely support such an interpretation, as Ronald Bryden pointed out in conversation (13 April

1984). In the first part of the play Kate is able to control the situation. That is, coming from offstage, railing, she is able to present herself as she wishes others to see her. But as the play progresses, she comes to be surrounded by other characters, hedged in. In III.ii, for example, she enters in a group, a wedding train, and even though she is the center of the group's attention, the others nonetheless limit her, as does her engagement. She re-enters later in III.ii, again in a group, this time as a wife, and exits physically carried off by Petruchio. In IV.i she is, in effect, a prisoner in Petruchio's house.

In IV.v, however, the situation changes. Once she accepts Petruchio's game with Vincentio, she is no longer hedged in. That is, she and Petruchio stand apart from the others—here in the sense that they are in on the joke while Vincentio is an outsider and literally in V.i. Her and Petruchio's joint knowledge, which the others lack, gives them joint control. Her acceptance of her assigned role thus frees her. In V.ii she again is able to enter and present herself. But this time she presents herself for and with Petruchio, not just to him. She and he understand what is going on, while to the others her actions can be only a "wonder."

<sup>16</sup>See also Van Laan, pp. 44-53. He, though, considers Lucentio a successful actor/director, who "changes Bianca from Baptista's daughter to Lucentio's wife" (p. 47).

<sup>17</sup>Kernan, p. 67.

<sup>18</sup>Huston, p. 79.

<sup>19</sup>The Lord's joke is appropriate in one sense, though. Through his drinking Sly has become a "beast," a "swine" (Induction, i, 30), less than a tinker. Being shown to be a fool and no more than a tinker is a fit punishment for Sly. See also note 8.

<sup>20</sup>See note 8.

<sup>21</sup>To paraphrase Bottom, love and reason must keep at least some company. For example, no distinction exists between Demetrius and Lysander capable of explaining Hermia's initial love of Lysander and not Demetrius. Her choice, while inexplicable, is nonetheless consistent with reason, for Lysander is undeniably "a worthy gentleman" (I.i.52). See R. W. Dent, "Imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15 (1964), 117.

<sup>22</sup>Katherina, too, is mad, but in two distinct ways. Initially "stark mad or wonderful froward" (I.i.69), Kate willfully and obstinately sets herself against all society. Such selfish madness, that of the pariah, does not enrich her life but instead narrowly limits it. The madness of the lover, on the other hand, that which Katherina exhibits toward the play's end, is enriching. In concurring with and actually surpassing Petruchio's mad assertion that Vincentio is a young maiden, she goes beyond her narrow selfishness, surrendering willingly to something outside of herself. The expansive madness of the lover thus liberates her.

<sup>23</sup>The term is Huston's (p. 77).

## THE CHRONICLING OF MAJESTY IN *PERKIN WARBECK*

Ellen Ryan Dubinski\*

**ABSTRACT.** John Ford's *Perkin Warbeck* is most concerned not with political machinations and questions of rightful succession but with a consideration of alternate types of majesty, on the one hand that allied to literal kingship and on the other that linked to greatness of character. Ford's focus on the latter is reflected on one level in his language, particularly in his repeated use of the word *chronicle* for a drama about a low-born usurper. In addition, the simultaneous eliciting of audience sympathy for both Henry VII and Perkin Warbeck leads to a perception on the part of the audience that legal kingship is not necessarily opposed to the kingship that Warbeck seeks. While Henry VII is presented as a competent and admirable leader of his nation, Perkin Warbeck elicits our sympathy as the king of passion and imagination.

Index words: *Perkin Warbeck*, John Ford, kingship, chronicle, manipulation of audience response, majesty.

In his 1972 volume on John Ford, Donald Anderson recorded a number of answers to the recurring question in *Perkin Warbeck* criticism: what was Ford's purpose in writing this drama?<sup>1</sup> Anderson's survey of feasible responses included the possibilities that the work was an attack upon the theory of the divine right of kings a commentary upon some specific contemporary political occurrence, or a reflection of Ford's ongoing interest in questions relating to the privileges and responsibilities of kingship. There are also those who have believed that the play was a eulogy to James I, a tribute to Stoicism, or another expression of Ford's commitment to Burtonian psychology. These alternatives, all of them to some extent supported by the text, are notable primarily for their variety. However, none explains one crux in understanding the work—how to interpret Ford's development in his audience of sympathy for both Henry VII and his youthful enemy, the pretender to the throne, Perkin Warbeck.

This concern with Ford's motivation is, understandably, not a new one. Seventeen years before the Twayne volume, H. J. Oliver addressed the same issue. Oliver contended that Ford's purpose can be gleaned from the play's message: "Ford sees that civil wars are to be regretted not because they hurt abstractions but because they

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bring death and misery to people that are equally part of England."<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, many of the theories proffered above are based on an assumption that is articulated only by Oliver, although even he does not elaborate upon it. Oliver insists, "The revelation of people like Katherine and Warbeck (in his private capacity), cannot be the main aim of a chronicle."<sup>3</sup> Several of the theories Anderson reviews presuppose the same idea: the essence of a chronicle is not simply to provide "a detailed and continuous register of events in order of time" (*OED*). The word *chronicle* connotes a record of the lives and deeds of the great. Since Perkin Warbeck is a nobody, the son of a vagabond named Osbeck, no chronicle, it is assumed, may focus primarily on his history. His story is important only as it verges on the stories of the powerful.

But Ford does not seem to share his critics' prejudice against his chosen protagonist. The title of the play itself, *The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck, A Strange Truth*, characterizes the drama as a chronicle history, the adjective affirming perhaps the supposedly even-handed nature of Ford's presentation of the facts but, even more, suggesting links between this narrative—the chronicle of a commoner with aspirations to greatness—and the well-known chronicles that concerned themselves with those who had set the course of England's history, Caxton's *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* and Holinshed's *The Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande*, for example. King Henry refers to Perkin as a "gew gaw" (I.i.107)<sup>4</sup> and this "smoke of straw" (I.i.115), but Ford's very decision to tell Perkin's story assigns to the title character greater importance.

Numerous other mentions of the word *chronicle* in the drama indicate Ford's concern with this function. In the Prologue, the playwright announces his intention of presenting "a history of noble mention" (Prologue, 15), one "not forg'd from Italy, from France, from Spain, but chronicled at home" (Prologue, 17-8). For Henry, soon thereafter, how closely Warbeck has been hunted is chronicled in Stanley's knowledge (I.i.105). Katherine connects the term with a record of her suitor Daliell's reputation: "So every virtuous praise in after ages / Shall be your heir, and I in your brave mention / Be chronicled the mother of that issue" (I.ii.156-58). The traitor Stanley's parting message to his brother makes use of the term. "Oh, persuade him," says Stanley, "That I shall stand no blemish to his house / In chronicles writ in another age" (II.ii.102-03). Perkin appeals to no other "chronicle than truth" to witness "how constantly my resolution suffered a martyrdom of majesty" (V.iii.73). But it is Dawbney's statement in the last act of the play that by its very presence questions its own veracity and reinforces the unusual title of the

drama. After he sends Warbeck to his execution, Dawbney, within the chronicle history itself, observes, "No chronicle records this fellow" (V.iii.209). Ford displays thereby a very strange, perhaps a very Fordian, truth. In spite of Dawbney's and the critics' pronouncements, there exists for Ford a broader chronicle than that which records the lives of kings and queens, noblemen and women. The chronicle history that Ford produces is involved at least as much with private concerns and emotions as with public issues and rituals. Ford chronicles not only the monarch but, more atypically, the man and comments upon the importance of each. In this record, the fame of a noble man is as important as that of a nobleman.

A broader view of what constitutes material for a chronicle is accompanied by equally broad and seemingly contradictory demands for audience sympathy. This aspect of *Perkin Warbeck*, the skilled manipulation of audience emotions in what seem diametrically opposed directions, is central to the workings of the drama and is related to the kind of chronicle that Ford has deemed important. It is best illustrated by the initial scenes involving the two major figures.

Having come on stage *supported by* Stanley and Durham, King Henry VII opens the play with words as effective in arousing audience sympathy as is his appearance:<sup>5</sup> "Still to be haunted, still to be pursued, / Still to be frightened with false apparitions / Of pageant majesty and new-coin'd greatness" (I.i.1-3). The triple use of the word "still" and the repetition of the syntactic construction that it begins intensify the audience's sense of the repeated assaults on Henry's lawful authority. At the same time, the position of this speech, immediately following his entrance, insinuates that the king's weariness or physical weakness might be attributable to just those threats of which he speaks.

The king's need for assistance, however, is soon seen to have another possible source. His has been the exacting role of physician; he has cured the "rent face / And bleeding wounds of England's slaughter'd people" (I.i.9-10), halting ninety years of civil strife. Yet he has no rest. The powers of evil—false apparitions, ghosts of York, conjured spirits, and idols—all connected with the woman-monster Margaret of Burgundy and her devilish policies, continue to assault the monarch, protected though he is by "a guard of angels and the holy prayers / Of loyal subjects" (I.i.73-74).

But the spectacle of a good king subjected to the claims of impostors is not all that demands sympathy in this initial scene. Some of Henry's own nobles, "unthankful beasts, / Dogs, villains, traitors" (I.i.80-81), are working with the pretender to usurp the throne. Even more execrable, the Lord Chamberlain, Sir William Stanley, Henry's literal and figurative support is, as the original audience



probably knew from the very beginning and as any audience soon discovers, a traitor. In this context, a rising disdain for Stanley, fueled by his hypocritical assertion of support for Henry's kingship, "what madness 'twere to lift / A finger up in all defense but yours" (I.i.98-99), and by the king's trusting response, "Stanley, we know thou lov'st us" (I.i.101), is accompanied by ever-increasing concern for and identification with the wronged king. However, that this king deserves loyalty more than pity soon becomes clear. After Henry moves from the exhausted complaint of his initial lines to an energetic pledge to pursue Perkin relentlessly, he ends the scene by taking command of the situation, summarily removing his court from Westminster to the more heavily guarded Tower. Even without a knowledge of particulars, the audience senses in Henry's demeanor and in his closing words—"These clouds will vanish; / The sun will shine at full. The heavens are clearing" (I.i.139-40)—assurance of his eventual success. Thus, one scene into the play, the title character has yet to appear on stage, what knowledge we have of him is negative, and Henry has been portrayed as a virtuous king, unfairly menaced, yet skilled enough to protect his interests and those of his country.

This sense of Henry's ability is reinforced by his meeting with Clifford. He deals firmly and effectively with the informer, and, upon the good advice of Durham and Urswick, is able to overcome the passionate outburst that attends his learning of Stanley's betrayal. Though unable to protect himself from either the pain of a bosom friend's betrayal or the rebellion of his Cornish subjects, King Henry retains, and shares with those who observe him, a conviction that he may trust in the willingness of heaven to fight for the just, to protect his lawful claims (I.iii.138). Having been with the competent and admirable Henry through two well-handled crises of kingship, the audience awaits the appearance of his major opposition.

The introduction of Perkin Warbeck, immediately preceded by a discussion among the Scottish noblewomen, seems at first particularly inauspicious. The Countess of Crawford has expressed her lack of confidence in Warbeck's legitimacy, Katherine has reported her father's scepticism concerning the young man's claims to the throne, and the ladies of the Scottish court are predisposed to treat Warbeck's troop of gallants, which includes a mercer, a tailor, and a scrivener, as objects of amusement. In addition, Perkin's presentation to the young King James of Scotland is followed immediately by the introduction of his followers, "whom the noblemen slightly salute" (II.i.39f.), one might suppose with less than whole-hearted enthusiasm.

None of this prepares the audience for Warbeck, whose first speech recounts the moving story of Gloucester's murder of his young nephews. The audience's pity for the poor babes having been aroused, Warbeck alters the end of the tale; in his version, only one innocent was ruthlessly murdered—the other survives. Henry's skillful opponent makes those listening accompany him, involved as they have become in the plight of the helpless prince. His audience, at court and in the theatre, escapes to Tournay with him, witnesses his youthful struggles between fear of assassination and disdain of living in a base and servile manner, and observes his escape to Margaret of Burgundy. King James, youthful but noble, is deeply affected by Warbeck's regal speech. And Katherine, whose virtues have been seen by the audience and attested to by Daliell and her father, is equally impressed: "His words have touched me home . . . As if his cause concern'd me" (II.i.118-19). In less than one hundred lines, the cub, the whelp, of Act I has won the support of a monarch, the intense interest of the Lady Katherine, and, even if it is grudgingly given, the accompanying sympathy of what might well seem a very fickle public. While reason asserts continued fidelity to the rightful monarch, the effect of Warbeck's speech and appearance is felt—as much by the once sceptical audience as by the court.

A willingness on the part of the audience to feel with Warbeck is encouraged by other scenes in Acts II and III. Katherine's joyful betrothal to the yet unproven knight attests to his winning qualities. Even more strikingly, Warbeck's poetic language, his adoration of a new bride whom the audience also admires, and King James' risking battle to place Warbeck on the throne reinforce one's sense of a particularly valuable young man. Ford pulls in what seem two opposing directions, Henry's and Warbeck's, at one and the same time and leaves his audience, at least for most of the play, feeling an uneasy tension between these contradictory allegiances.

The structure of the drama, relating as it must to these opposing perceptions of the main characters, is equally problematic. In other history plays, the rise of one ruler is linked to the fall of his opponent. As one's power is seen to fade, the other's strength gradually increases. However, once again, the movement in *Perkin Warbeck* cannot be defined in terms of other examples of this genre. For throughout the chronicle history under discussion here, King Henry VII maintains his control of his throne. In so far as his fortunes fluctuate, they do so in a manner only occasionally related to those of his opponent. King Henry VII's nadir is learning of his betrayal by his friend and counsellor, Stanley, in Act I. From then on Henry's course

is marked by preparation for and victories in war and successful plots and treaties. While Henry must continually regroup his forces to deal with new challenges, after Act I he is never again tempted to yield his scepter to the bastard duke (I.iii.112).

Warbeck's history, on the other hand, is much more varied, its movement, resultantly, anything but consistent. Notably, however, the peaks in Perkin Warbeck's career have no relationship to the valleys in the kingship of Henry VII. Warbeck's marriage to Katherine, for example, is a notable personal and political accomplishment, but it occurs between Henry's victory over the Cornish and his treaty with the Spanish. In spite of each man's insistence on his right to the throne, one's successes seem to bear little or no relationship to the other's failures.

And it is this fact that leads us to a final conclusion, one that accounts for and explains *The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck, A Strange Truth*. King Henry's chronicle is not opposed to that of Perkin Warbeck; a sympathetic response to the rightful king need not preclude a sympathetic response to his enemy. For, when all is said, the two men cherish and pursue very different kingships, a truth alluded to by Warbeck himself early in the play. "Acknowledge me but sovereign of this kingdom, / Your heart, fair princess," he says to Katherine, "the hand of providence / Shall crown you queen of me and my best fortunes" (II.iii.81-83). In the third act, Katherine reiterates this idea, speaking to her soon-to-depart husband: "You must be king of me, and my poor heart / Is all that I can call mine" (III.ii.168-69).

This question of kingship is again primary in Act V, preceding the execution, with Warbeck's words connecting the chronicle and his kingship. No chronicle but truth, he insists, need witness how I have endured "a martyrdom of majesty" (V.iii.74). When Katherine visits him, he notes that "even when I fell, I stood enthron'd a monarch / Of one chaste wife's troth, pure and uncorrupted" (V.iii.126-27). And the audience's continuing admiration is based, at least in part, on just this reality. Finally, Warbeck's last exhortation to his followers insists upon the same idea of an alternate kingship: "Be men of spirit! Spurn coward passion! So illustrious mention shall blaze our names, and style us king o'er death" (V.iii.207). Ford's vision, having created a seemingly unsolvable tension between the audience's respect and gratitude for the rightful king of England and its affection for the poet/lover, generates its own solution.

Clifford Leech observes that "what emerges as of most importance here is not kingly birth or position but the belief, however won,

in one's own aristocracy, in the unwavering acceptance of the idea of greatness."<sup>6</sup> In other terms, one might say that the kingship with which Ford concerns himself in this other kind of chronicle is quite obviously another kind of kingliness—linked not to birth and position—but to the individual himself. Thus, Ronald Huebert asserts, "Perkin is never more kinglike than in his moment of death, and in this sense death indeed represents a fulfillment of the frustrated dreams of life."<sup>7</sup>

Within the drama, Warbeck never poses any real threat to Henry VII. At least by the end of Act I, if not before, the audience knows that Warbeck's claim to Henry's throne cannot be taken seriously. Even in the court of King James, his champion, Ford has important characters suspect the newcomer's legitimacy. More importantly, Warbeck, unskilled in political mauevering and unwilling, for whatever reason, to do battle, is patently unfit for King Henry's role.

Why then does Ford manipulate us to sympathize with the pretender? The answer to this question also answers the one posed by so many scholars before me—why did Ford write this play as he did. In addition, the answer identifies a concern in *Perkin Warbeck* that has been present in other of Ford's works written about the same time. Ford's interest in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* was not in making moral judgments about incest but in exploring a deeply passionate relationship, albeit one disallowed by the society at large. His concern in *The Broken Heart* was again with the emotions of individual human beings rather than with affairs of state, in spite of the drama's being set in the court and involving royalty and nobility. In many ways, the thrust of *Perkin Warbeck* is little different. The setting may be primarily the courts of great monarchs and battles do occur, but Ford's "strange truth" is that individual, personal nobility is well worth being retold. The miracle, and it seems nothing short of that, is that Warbeck, low-born impostor though he surely is, merits farewells not only from his wife, Katherine, but from Huntley, Daliell, and Crawford. In fact, not just in death, as Huebert contends, but throughout the play, as he moves toward his death, Warbeck is monarch of imagination. In the end he receives no less than honor from the rightful king himself, and Ford's chronicle insists on the same from its audience.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Donald K. Anderson, Jr. *John Ford* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc. 1972).

<sup>2</sup>Harold James Oliver, *The Problem of John Ford* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1955), p. 106.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>This and all other quotations from the text of *Perkin Warbeck* are from the Regents Renaissance Drama Series edited by Donald K. Anderson, Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965).

<sup>5</sup>No reference is found elsewhere in the play to Henry's suffering any disability due to either age or ill-health. In fact, in II.ii, Henry is ready to command a division in the battle against the Cornish. Thus, Ford's depiction of Henry's entrance in I.i. must be related to the situation at hand.

<sup>6</sup>Clifford Leech, *John Ford and the Drama of His Time* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), p. 93.

<sup>7</sup>Ronald Huebert, *John Ford: Baroque English Dramatist* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977), p. 56.

## SILENCE AND GENRE: THE EXAMPLE OF *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*

Philip C. McGuire\*

**ABSTRACT.** *Measure for Measure* ends in ways typical of comedy—with deaths avoided and marriages performed, proposed, or imminent. The play's ending, however, also imposes silences on six characters. Accentuated by Lucio's garrulousness, those silences establish possibilities that are non-comic. The Duke spares four men sentenced to death, but none voices any enthusiasm for the life he has been given. Barnardine, Claudio, and Angelo say nothing, while Lucio, the only one to speak, declares that life as a married man is equivalent to the death he has been spared. After being married by ducal command, Angelo and Mariana exchange no words, and Isabella says nothing when the Duke twice proposes marriage. We cannot be certain that the play ends with marriages based upon the reciprocal love which comedies typically celebrate. Its plot is comic, but the play, because its final silences can undercut the values associated with such a plot, has a generic identity that is not definitively fixed.

Index words: drama, comedy, William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, silence, genre, death, marriage, law, love.

One reason why we feel uneasy assigning *Measure for Measure* to a single genre is because it is a play that heads toward what we think we recognize as tragedy during its first two acts but then veers away and ends in a fashion that Northrup Frye and Suzanne Langer have taught us to regard as typically comic—with deaths avoided and with marriages performed, proposed, or imminent.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, a second reason for our uneasiness, one that arises from the silences that are imposed on six characters as the play moves to its conclusion.

Angelo is one of those who falls silent during the final moments of *Measure for Measure*. He speaks just once after being compelled to marry Mariana, and with those words, the last he utters, he asks not for life but for the imposition of a lasting silence: "I crave death more willingly than mercy; / 'Tis my deserving, and I do entreat it" (V.i.472-73).<sup>2</sup> Barnardine, a convicted murderer who had earlier refused to be executed, is brought on immediately after Angelo craves death. The contrast between the two characters deepens when Barnardine silently

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receives from the Duke the life-giving mercy which Angelo has just explicitly rejected:

Thou'rt condemned;  
 But, for those earthly faults, I quit them all,  
 And pray thee take this mercy to provide  
 For better times to come. (ll.478-81)

Like Barnardine, with whom Shakespeare has him enter, Claudio says nothing all the while he is onstage during the final scene—not to the Duke whose maneuvers have saved his life, not to his sister Isabella, not even to his beloved Juliet. Juliet herself enters with Claudio and Barnardine, and her presence during the final scene, like theirs, is characterized by an unbroken silence. Even when reunited with Claudio, she does not speak. Mariana and Isabella, each eloquently voluble during the first half of the final scene, slip into steadfast silence after each of them calls upon the Duke to extend to Angelo the mercy which Angelo himself subsequently rejects with the last words an audience hears him speak. Mariana remains silent even after Angelo has been made her husband. Isabella's silence endures not only when she sees alive the brother whom the Duke has twice told her is dead but also when the Duke himself twice asks to be her husband.

The silences of Angelo, Barnardine, Claudio, Juliet, Mariana, and Isabella are made all the more striking by the sustained contrast with Lucio's irrepressible garrulousness. His flamboyant and repeated failure to hold his peace even after the Duke commands him to be quiet accentuates the silences in which the other six characters enclose themselves as the play concludes.

The separate silences of those six combine to form various patterns. Among those patterns is the appearance onstage of four men who are or come under the sentence of death. One of them, Barnardine, has killed a man; another, Angelo, has tried to kill a man; the other two, Claudio and Lucio, are "guilty" of fathering a child out of wedlock. All are spared, but three of them say nothing. Only Lucio responds with words to the Duke's words of life-giving mercy, but what he says expresses something other than undiluted gratitude for the life he has been given: "Marrying a punk, my lord, is pressing to death, whipping, and hanging" (ll.517-18).<sup>3</sup> Thus, none of the four men reprieved from the sentence of death, not even the only one who speaks after being saved, utters a word of thanks or joy at being allowed to live.

By having Barnardine, Claudio, and Angelo accept life from the Duke in silence, the play links them in a pattern which can sharpen the audience's sense of the discrepancy in the crimes that brought each of them to the brink of death. Barnardine stands sentenced to death for taking human life, Claudio for begetting human life, and Angelo for "killing" a man who is in fact alive. Earlier in the play, in defending his decision to have Claudio executed, Angelo had argued that the act of illicitly engendering a human life was morally equivalent to the act of taking a human life. "It were as good," he tells Isabella,

To pardon him that hath from nature stol'n  
 A man already made, as to remit  
 Their saucy sweetness that do coin heaven's image  
 In stamps that are forbid: 'tis all as easy  
 Falsely to take away a life true made,  
 As to put mettle in restrainèd means  
 To make a false one. (II.iv.42-49)

The grouping in silence of Barnardine, Claudio, and Angelo himself helps one to see that the Duke's mercifulness during the play's final moments confirms that disturbing and non-comic equation. The Duke treats as equally "good" a murderer, a would-be murderer, and an illegitimate father. He spares them all. Angelo in pursuing rigorous justice and the Duke in dispensing all-inclusive mercy both proceed according to a shared sense of moral equivalence—one which ignores the distinction between murder and fornication, between an act which contradicts comedy's emphasis on preserving human life and an act which expresses the sexual energies which enable life to endure.

As a murderer, Barnardine is the antithesis of comic values, yet as someone who—in contrast to Angelo—resolutely refuses to die, he, like Claudio, articulates that will to live, that vital energy, which comedy celebrates. Nowhere in *Measure for Measure* does Shakespeare give to Barnardine (or to any other character) words that convey any sense of Barnardine's repentance or sorrow. Even when pardoned by the Duke, Barnardine says nothing, and that silence can confirm, cast doubt upon, or totally undercut the Duke's mercy toward him. Is Barnardine's silence when his life is spared a way of expressing sorrow too deep to be uttered or gratitude that is beyond words? Or is Barnardine's unremitting silence a sign of his indifference to the Duke's mercy or even of an incorrigible malevolence



which no mercy can ever touch? If so, are we moved to question the wisdom of granting life to Barnardine? Do we re-assess the relationship between justice and mercy which the Duke's act of sparing Barnardine establishes, perhaps doubting its appropriateness in this case? Does the Duke's act of sparing a murderer who never voices any sense of guilt or repentance strike us as a ringing confirmation of the comic principle that human life is of such value that it must be cherished and preserved unconditionally? Or does it encourage us to question the validity and wisdom of that principle and the comic values which it expresses?

I put these possibilities as questions rather than assertions, because Barnardine's silence and the patterns of silence of which it is a part do not *necessarily* contradict the values which we associate with comedy. Barnardine, when pardoned, *may* fall to his knees in speechless gratitude—as Claudio and Angelo also *may* when each finds that he, too, shall live. There is, however, nothing in the playtext of *Measure for Measure* which says they *must*. In a plot development that is typically comic, Barnardine, Claudio, and Angelo are saved from death, but because of their silences we cannot automatically take the fact that they live as confirmation of comic values. Allowing Barnardine to live can mean that he might kill again. Angelo will live, but as the husband not of a woman whom he has freely chosen to marry but of a woman whom he has been sentenced to marry.

The pattern formed by those who silently receive life from the Duke intertwines with another pattern formed by those who remain silent when confronted with the fact or prospect of marriage. Angelo and Mariana exchange no words after the Duke reveals himself and orders their marriage. Juliet and Claudio say nothing to one another all the while they are onstage during the final scene, and Isabella says nothing in reply to either of the Duke's proposals of marriage. While there is no doubt that *Measure for Measure* concludes, in typically comic fashion, with multiple marriages either performed or proposed, there is also no doubt that it ends without any verbal expression of that mutual, reciprocal love which comedy typically celebrates. That generates a span of possible meanings and effects that range from the comic to the non-comic. To pose but two possibilities at either end of the spectrum: are the silences among those facing marriage at the end of the play an expression of mute, accepting, even joyous wonder at what has come to pass, or do those silences wordlessly attest to the fact that at least two of the marriages result more from the Duke's exercise of legal authority than from the comic imperatives of shared erotic love?

Angelo and Lucio are both beneficiaries of acts of mercy which spare their lives while sentencing them to live out those lives as married men. Lucio, as he is led off to have his sentence of marriage executed, equates the state of matrimony which awaits him with the more lethal sentences which he has been spared: "Marrying a punk, my lord, is pressing to death, whipping, and hanging." The words with which he goes into matrimony resonate against the silence of Angelo, who earlier was taken off wordlessly to be married to Mariana. Brought back onstage as "this new-married man" (1.396), Angelo says nothing for the rest of the play to the woman who has been made his wife, and she says nothing to him. Thus, the only couple whose marriage *during* the play is required by Shakespeare's playtext never exchange words once they are made husband and wife.

The timing and the content of the only words that Angelo does speak after being married establish possibilities which are non-comic. Angelo tells the Duke, "I crave death more willingly than mercy," shortly after the woman who has been made his wife in compliance with the Duke's orders has pleaded for her new husband's life with the words, "I crave no other, nor no better man" (1.422). The repetition of "crave" underscores that what Mariana wants is precisely what Angelo has no desire to be: a living man who is her husband. What Angelo expressly asks for with the last words he utters is death, but what he receives from the Duke is life, and it is life with a woman to whom he never subsequently speaks.

The silence which Angelo maintains toward Mariana from the moment he realizes that she must be his wife becomes total during the remainder of the scene. After craving death, rather than married life, Angelo never speaks again to anyone. He remains silent even when, with Claudio brought forth living, he "perceives he's safe" (1.490). "Methinks," the Duke continues, "I see a quick'ning in his eye" (1.491). The Duke's words in and of themselves do not require that what he says he thinks he sees in Angelo's eyes is in fact there. For one thing, the Duke's phrasing is decidedly tentative, cautious: "Methinks I see . . . ." In addition, Angelo himself never expresses in words of his own the "quick'ning"—the awakening of his desire to live—which the Duke thinks that he sees. Finally, most, if not all, members of a theater audience cannot, given their distance from the stage and the actors, actually see for themselves what is (or is not) in Angelo's eyes. Thus, the "quick'ning" which the Duke says he thinks he sees must be validated by an appropriate and clearly visible gesture on the part of a silent Angelo. He might, for example, take Mariana's hand or put his arm around her or kiss her. Without such a gesture

of confirmation, however, the possibility increases that Angelo's "quick'ning" exists only in the mind, eyes, and words of a Duke whose capacity to say what he knows is not the truth and to overestimate the effectiveness of his own designs<sup>4</sup> has been well established.

After declaring that he thinks he sees a "quick'ning" in Angelo's eyes, the Duke charges him: "Look that you love your wife; her worth, worth yours" (1.493). The Duke's final words to Mariana and Angelo re-phrase that charge: "Joy to you, Mariana; love her, Angelo; / I have confessed her and I know her virtue" (11.521-22). The combination of Angelo's continuing silence and the Duke's calls for him to love his wife poses but does not resolve the issue of whether Angelo does now or ever will reciprocate Mariana's love for him. The more often the Duke calls and the more persistently Angelo stays silent, the less certain we can be that Angelo feels the love which in a comedy we expect a newly married husband and wife to share. The combination of the Duke's call for love and Angelo's enduring silence also raises the issue of the limits of the power which the Duke exercises during these final moments. He can compel his subjects to marry but is it consistent with comic values that he does? And can he compel Angelo to love the woman whom he has been sentenced to take as his wife? Is love—as distinct from the institution of marriage—subject to ducal dictate?

Angelo's silence, even when the Duke twice calls upon him to love his new wife, can direct attention to a parallel between the beginning and the conclusion of the play which can be disconcertingly non-comic. In the early scenes, Angelo uses Viennese law in a way which, by condemning Claudio to death, makes impossible the union in matrimony of the only couple in the play who undoubtedly love one another: Claudio and Juliet. The play concludes with the Duke using Viennese law to impose marriages on two pairs of men and women—Lucio and Kate Overdone, Angelo and Mariana—whose affections are not undoubtedly reciprocal. *Measure for Measure* opens with the law being invoked to punish fornication by death and closes with the law being used to punish fornication by marriage.

The relationship between law and marriage which emerges at the end of *Measure for Measure* has, because of the silences, potentially non-comic aspects which come into focus when compared with two plays—*As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—which are clearly comedies. In *As You Like It*, Duke Senior's authority seals marriages between four pairs of "country copulatives" (V.i.53-54) who come before him impelled by Rosalind's "magic" or by sexual desire. Among them is Phoebe who, because of her promise to marry Silvius if

she should ever refuse to wed Ganymede, finds herself obliged to become the wife of a man whose love she has rejected throughout the play. In contrast to the silent Angelo, however, she makes explicit her acceptance of her spouse: "I will not," she tells Silvius, "eat my word, now thou art mine; / Thy faith my fancy to thee doth combine" (V.iv.143-44).

At the start of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Duke Theseus attempts to impose upon Hermia a marital pairing consistent with the Athenian law upholding a father's right to pick his daughter's husband. Ultimately, however, confronted with the pairings which have emerged after the four young lovers' night in the woods, Theseus sets aside the law whose validity he had insisted upon earlier. Theseus not only accepts the pairing based on mutual love rather than legally-sanctioned paternal preference but formally and officially sanctions them by merging the weddings of the four young lovers with his own to Hippolyta. While Duke Theseus puts law aside in order to allow men and women to marry as they choose, Duke Vincentio employs law at the end of *Measure for Measure* as an instrument to compel marriages. Like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*, *Measure for Measure* concludes, in typically comic fashion, with multiple marriages or betrothals, but only in *Measure for Measure* do any of them result from the ducal exercise of legal authority.

Two reunions occur during the final moments of *Measure for Measure*. One, between Claudio and Juliet, brings together the only couple in the play whose sexual union is both reciprocal and fruitful. The other brings together Claudio and Isabella. Both reunions are marked by silence. Claudio and Juliet exchange no words, but neither do Claudio and Isabella. The reunion between the siblings comes into focus when set against the moment in *Twelfth Night* when Viola, like Isabella, finds herself looking upon a brother she thought was dead, but Viola's brother Sebastian speaks while Isabella's brother Claudio does not:

Do I stand there? I never had a brother;  
Nor can there be that deity in my nature  
Of here and everywhere. I had a sister,  
Whom the blind waves and surges have devoured.  
Of charity, what kin are you to me?  
What countryman? What name? What parentage?  
(V.i.218-23)

And Viola, in contrast to Isabella, speaks to her brother:



Most bounteous sir,  
 Look, if it please you, on this man condemned  
 As if my brother lived. I partly think  
 A due sincerity governed his deeds  
 Till he did look on me. Since it is so,  
 Let him not die. . . .

(II.439-44)

Is the silence between Claudio and Isabella tantamount to a retraction of the bitter words they exchanged earlier, or—to pose but one non-comic possibility—does the silence between them signify a continuing rupture in their relationship and a conflict between erotic love and familial love?

The silence between Claudio and Isabella overlaps with the silence with which she responds to the Duke's initial proposal of marriage. The lines in which the Duke presents and pardons Claudio are also those in which he reveals himself as Isabella's suitor:

If he be like your brother, for his sake  
 Is he pardoned, and for your lovely sake—  
 Give me your hand and say you will be mine—  
 He is my brother too.

(II.486-89)

The roles of husband and brother come close to converging at this point. The newly unmuffled man will be spared insofar as he is "like" the brother Isabella thought was dead, and the Duke's proposal of marriage, if Isabella accepts it, will make that man the Duke's brother as well as hers.

Isabella's silence at this point is all the more striking because the Duke phrases his marriage proposal in terms which call upon her to assent with words as well as a gesture: "Give me your hand and *say* you will be mine." The Duke's request (or command) can be set against Mariana's call earlier for Isabella to join her in seeking mercy for Angelo: "Sweet Isabel, do yet but kneel by me, / Hold up your hands, say nothing, I'll speak all" (II.433-34). Offered that chance to be silent, Isabella chooses to speak on Angelo's behalf, yet when called upon to voice her acceptance of the Duke's proposal, she says nothing. The Duke, whose declared wish to become a husband has been met with silence, breaks that silence by turning to Angelo, newly made a husband by ducal command, and calls upon him to "love your wife." The shift of focus from Isabella to Angelo helps to emphasize that both respond with silence to the marriages which they face. Isabella

says nothing to the man who would make her his wife, while Angelo says nothing to the woman who has been made his wife.

Isabella remains silent even when the Duke proposes a second time:

Dear Isabel,  
I have a motion much imports your good,  
Whereto if you'll a willing ear incline,  
What's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine. (II.529-32)

Neither silence, of course, rules out the possibility that she wordlessly but willingly accepts the Duke's proposal. It is even possible that, too stunned by the Duke's first proposal to respond by word or gesture, she manages, when asked a second time, to make silently clear her willingness to become his wife. Both possibilities are consistent with typically comic values. Although Isabella's silences allow such possibilities, they do not mandate them. It is equally possible and equally consistent with Isabella's silence that she refuses—wordlessly but clearly—to become the Duke's wife. Such a refusal would suspend rather than confirm the values of comedy, particularly if in refusing Isabella makes clear her resolve to return to the convent, to a realm that excludes the sexual energies by which human life continues.

Were Isabella's silences in the face of the Duke's proposals the only ones to occur as the play ends, we might, with relative ease, assume that what emerges from them must be compatible with the comic emphasis on celebrating the capacity of human life to preserve and renew itself, to persist and endure. But hers are not the only silences that *Measure for Measure* presents to us during its final moments. Individually and through the patterns that link them to one another, those silences generate a degree of uncertainty which makes us hesitate and question whether, even as the plot ends comically by joining couples in matrimony and sparing men from death, *Measure for Measure* does or does not affirm the capacities and values which comedy celebrates. The play may affirm them, but because of its silences it does not have to. *Measure for Measure* may be a comedy, but it does not have to be. The silences which abound during its final moments ensure that its generic identity is not fixed and cannot be definitively specified.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Suzanne Langer, *Feeling and Form* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953); Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton

University Press, 1957), and "The Argument of Comedy," *English Institute Essays 1948*, ed. D. A. Robertson, Jr. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 58-73.

<sup>2</sup>All quotations from Shakespeare's plays follow William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, gen. ed. Alfred Harbage, Pelican edition (New York: The Viking Press, 1969).

<sup>3</sup>Lucio's spoken response can heighten our awareness of the silences by which the other three men respond to the sentences which the Duke speaks to put aside the sentences of death pronounced upon them. The interplay of words spoken and silences maintained underscores the power of language, which in this play has the capacity to take or bestow human life when it is phrased into sentences by the Duke, by Angelo, or by whoever is the voice of Viennese law. "Mortality and mercy in Vienna / Live in thy tongue and heart" (I.i.44-45), the Duke tells Angelo on appointing him deputy.

<sup>4</sup>See particularly IV.ii.94ff when the Duke confidently declares in an aside that the message the Provost has just received from Angelo is Claudio's pardon, then discovers that it reiterates the charge that Claudio be executed and adds the stipulation that Claudio's head be sent to Angelo.





## ENTERTAINMENT, HOSPITALITY, AND FAMILY IN *THE WINTER'S TALE*

Daryl W. Palmer\*

**ABSTRACT.** In Jacobean England human interaction was vitally theatrical, fundamentally performed. A rhetoric of entertainment and hospitality, emerging out of the period's plays, banquets, masques, and spectacles, determined the shape of societal institutions. *The Winter's Tale* can be seen as Shakespeare's mature attempt to re-present the Jacobean family's struggle to define itself through this rhetoric.

Index words: entertainment, hospitality, family, *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare.

And after thei daunced, and commoned together as the  
fashion of the Maske is, thei toke their leave and departed,  
and so did the quene and all the ladies.

Edward Hall, Epiphany, 1512<sup>1</sup>

Entertainment succeeds as an event when it gives order to human interaction. Its essence lies in its power to join entertainer to entertained, actor to audience, host to guest. Entertainment forestalls man's natural tendency to depart. It passes a winter's night, looking toward spring. For Jacobean England, entertainment is a way of life, *and* a way of understanding life. Whether play, or pageant, or progress, or simply the hospitality offered by one house to another house, entertainment frames public interaction.<sup>2</sup> David Bergeron points out that "Not all the money in Tudor and Stuart England could assure the success of these entertainments without a public prepared to grasp the meaning of these dramatic shows and to demand more."<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Goldberg concludes that it is to the theatre that "Renaissance man went to know himself."<sup>4</sup> This knowledge, it would seem, derives from a society in which entertainment is a commonplace (both a place to common and a place of rhetorical invention) in which the bonds between individuals and families are realized.

Noting that Renaissance dialogue often duplicates action, Stephen Orgel has suggested that in the theatre, "nothing spoke for itself; every action implied a rhetoric."<sup>5</sup> I would like to suggest that this rhetoric is

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determined by entertainment, following the Renaissance notion that rhetoric functions to provide "Congruitie," to unite disparate things in a pure, coherent whole.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, as entertainment comes to permeate all levels of Jacobean life, a rhetoric of public interaction, based on entertainment, emerges.

Nowhere is this rhetoric of entertainment more in evidence than Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*.<sup>7</sup> In the play we see how the two royal houses, Sicilia and Bohemia, understand themselves—as families—through various entertainments. A rhetoric of entertainment clearly dictates the mise-en-scene of human interaction; family, perhaps the most vital element of human interaction, emerges as a product of successful entertainment. C. L. Barber has suggested that "Shakespeare's art is distinguished by the intensity of its investment in the human family, and especially in the continuity of the family across generations."<sup>8</sup> In *The Winter's Tale* this continuity is ensured by the families' investment in entertainment. So, after considering the play's historical context (the nature of family and the nature of entertainment in Shakespeare's England), we might follow the play's action as though it were a progress, a masque, a pageant, as it moves from place of entertainment to place of entertainment, finally saving and uniting the two families in Hermione's masque-like restoration.

A symbiotic relationship between family and entertainment is suggested by Britain's history of minstrels. The term *mistrel* derives from the Latin *ministeriales*, or servants of the house.<sup>9</sup> Entertainment is, in its beginnings, domestic, a composite of performance and hospitality. Archimedes and Camillo, who serve to introduce the play, discuss the quality of entertainment in Sicilia and Bohemia; they are true minstrels. To serve a house or family is to entertain. Lawrence Stone, in his fine study of the family in England, clarifies this connection. Discussing the decline of kinship (the extended family), and the resulting formation of the nuclear family (father, mother, children), Stone explains that one of the ways to chart this change is by tracing "the decay of 'hospitality' [entertainment] among the aristocracy and greater gentry."<sup>10</sup> According to Stone, the family had traditionally organized itself in the great hall (p. 95). As a matter of definition, the hall's doors were always open to all manner of kin. Stone explains this gathering as a "practice of open-handed hospitality" that "extended to a whole way of life, including the retaining of hordes of largely idle servants and the keeping of an open table for all comers" (p. 95). In other words, the family has traditionally defined itself as a family through its participation in public hospitality.

We find this definition recorded in the family memorial. Stone observes, "The practice of open-handed hospitality was something about which one boasted on one's tombstone" (p. 95). George Duby explains that

the family memorial, solidified, adulterated by myth, and interlaced throughout by factitious ornamentation, this text delivered to posterity, principally to its descendants, but also unintentionally to historians, must be seen, at its base, as becoming gradually identified with a fortune.<sup>11</sup>

So the memorial stone we come to read as critics and historians rehearses a family's entertainment, its honor, its fortune. It is to such a stone that Leontes and Polixenes turn in the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*.<sup>12</sup>

The *failure* of entertainment in *The Winter's Tale* can be traced to the emergence of the nuclear family in Jacobean England. According to Stone, this emergence means a "more *private* and more urbanized life-style for the aristocratic family. It was characterized by the withdrawal of the family from the great hall to the private dining-room" (p. 95) [my italics]. During this period the family seeks a kind of closure, a kind of "privacy" that is not validated by Jacobean society. For as Goldberg points out, in Jacobean England, "All the world is a stage, and offstage is, simply, no place."<sup>13</sup> For life to be real it "needed to be made public."<sup>14</sup> So when the family comes to see itself as occupying a closed, circumscribed space in the wings, its very existence is threatened. Dependent as it is on union with at least one other family for its perpetuity, the family comes to struggle against a self-inflicted paradox: how can the nuclear family (sealed in a private no-place) continue without public connection? In *The Winter's Tale*, what is missing is not intimacy, but a public protocol for human interaction—a protocol provided by entertainment.<sup>15</sup> Recognizing, as Lyman and Scott note, that "Social reality, then, is realized theatrically," we turn to the playwright for social *congruities*.<sup>16</sup>

How can Bohemia and Sicilia, the play seems to ask, unite beyond suspicion, continue without closure? The answer lies in Leontes' and Polixenes' struggle to accept the place of "publike entertainment" in their societies. As heads of their respective houses, the fathers wrongly perceive the bonds entertainment creates as threatening the consonance of their nuclear families.

Indeed, as the play begins, Leontes rashly interrupts Hermione's observance of hospitality, believing it to be a violation of the bounds of

family. He tells Mamillius, "O, that is entertainment / My bosom likes not, nor my brow."<sup>17</sup> He requires reassurance that his family is indeed his own and so asks his son, "Mamillius, / Art thou my boy?" (I.ii.119-20). What is at stake for Leontes is the security of his house, the inviolability of his private diningroom:

And many a man there is (even at this present,  
Now, while I speak this) holds his wife by th' arm,  
That little thinks she has been sluic'd in 's absence  
And his pond fish'd by his next neighbor, by  
Sir Smile, his neighbor: nay, there's comfort in 't.  
While other men have gates, and those gates open'd,  
As mine, against their will. (I.ii.192-98)

Leontes is concerned, even mad, as he "discovers" that the gate to his house is open, and that "To mingle friendship far, is mingling bloods" (I.ii.109). The play's tragic action proceeds from Leontes' failed hospitality.

Act II, scene i, I would argue, dramatizes the play in miniature. It suggests how we might understand "the winter's tale." We witness a domestic court scene as Hermione begs for entertainment and Mamillius obliges. He tells her, "A sad tale's best for winter: I have one / Of sprites and goblins" (II.i.25-26). Speaking softly, Mamillius' winter's tale entertains, drawing the group together. His entertainment engenders *congruitie*. We know that during the playwright's time "a winter's tale" was a commonplace for a way to pass a long winter's night, a way to speed the time until spring. Mamillius' tale is of a solitary man and a churchyard—perhaps full of memorials. Perhaps Mamillius' winter's tale would have described the jealousy of a Leontes? We of course never learn, since Mamillius is interrupted by his father. In the place of harmonious entertainment, "the king's will be performed" (II.i.114). The family is shattered.

Leontes imprisons Hermione. Hospitality, thanks to Leontes' twisted vision, becomes imprisonment. Hermione's trial is staged as a perverse and ancient form of entertainment. Leontes announces that a public trial will demonstrate that he is a just patriarch: only through a form of public entertainment can the truth of familial conflict be determined. This rhetoric of entertainment expresses "those rules that govern a properly ordered society and displays visibly the punishment, in laughter and violence, that is meted out upon those who violate those rules."<sup>18</sup> Hermione responds to the accusations, explaining that her constancy "is more / Than history can pattern, though

devis'd / And play'd to take spectators" (III.ii.35-37). It would be difficult for a Jacobean to describe a more hopeless situation, for that which cannot be played cannot be proven genuine.

Appropriately, it is left to Apollo, the god of tragic entertainment, to conclude this scene. Leontes believes himself punished. Mother and son die. Most important, the destruction of entertainment attends the concomitant destruction of Leontes' family. The oracle makes this clear: "the king shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found (III.ii.134-36). What must be found is not simply Perdita but the harmonious rhetoric of entertainment.

Time's appearance in Act IV, scene i as Chorus is Shakespeare's most overt gesture towards the iconography of entertainment. Time, as Inga-Stina Eubank observes, would have been familiar from "innumerable verbal and pictorial representations and from pageants and masques."<sup>19</sup> Time suggests that life, like a good pageant, will move inexorably toward resolution. Time explains

. . . it is in my power  
To o'erthrow law, and in one self-born hour  
To plant and o'erwhelm custom. . . .

Your patience this allowing,  
I turn my glass, and give my scene such growing  
As you had slept between. . . . (IV.i.7-9, 15-17)

Here Time overwhelms the dogged, patriarchal guarding of the family house that would isolate and stifle the family. Time *in entertainment* makes possible the passage of sixteen years; the play moves across the stage like a pageant, transplanting Arcadia in Bohemia.

Act IV, scene iv has been the subject of much comment. It must not, of course, be seen as an idyllic respite after the tragedy of the first three acts, but rather as a tragic rehearsal of Leontes' rage, this time in the person of Polixenes, who, like Leontes, feels threatened by the intrusion of an outsider. He explains to Camillo, "I fear, the angle that plucks our son thither" (IV.ii.46-47). We are meant here, no doubt, to recall Leontes' fear of his neighbor's *angling*.

Polixenes and Camillo, now masked, are met by Perdita in the true spirit of entertainment: "Sir, welcome / It is my father's will I should take on me / The hostess-ship o' th' day. . . . Grace and remembrance be to you both" (IV.iv.70-72, 76). Present in Perdita's welcome is the father's approval of entertainment. Her hospitable wish that Polixenes have "grace and remembrance" may be heard as a

call to remember the father's role that is central to an entertainment's success.<sup>20</sup>

The festival becomes a dance; the houses of Bohemia and Sicilia merge in the place of entertainment. Polixenes and the Shepherd provide a commentary. The Shepherd tells Polixenes, with more truth than he knows, "If young Doricles / Do light upon her, she shall bring him that / Which he not dreams of" (ll. 180-93). For a brief moment the two families are joined under the fathers' eyes; the bonds made possible by entertainment are beyond dreams.

But Polixenes feels threatened by what he sees. This "publike entertainment" seems to ignore his position. Polixenes becomes enraged and, in the manner of the masque, discovers himself. Northrop Frye has suggested that in this act of discovery is a return to "original identity."<sup>21</sup> I would suggest that the scene is quite ironic, since Polixenes' unmasking does *not* return him to his identity as father. Rather, Polixenes, like Leontes before him, separates himself from the *role* of father because of his inability to understand the bonds that entertainment forms. Like Leontes, he destroys both entertainment and family; issue is lost. Florizel responds, "Let nature crush the sides o' th' earth together, / And mar the seeds within! Lift up thy looks; / From my succession wipe me, father . . ." (IV.iv.479-81). Gonzalo's advice, from another context, is most appropriate here: "When every grief is entertained, that's offered / Comes to th' entertainer—."<sup>22</sup>

Under Camillo's direction the play represents a play, as Florizel and Perdita act out Camillo's script.<sup>23</sup> Camillo explains to Florizel, "What you (as from your father) shall deliver, / Things known betwixt us three, I'll write you down" (IV.iv.660-61). The necessity of entertainment to successful human interaction is clear. Camillo's script makes possible the two families' survival.

Critics often pass over Florizel's and Perdita's arrival in Sicilia in their rush to reach the play's final scene. To make this leap is, however, to ignore the play's critical turn. For the tragedy of *The Winter's Tale* has come about because of the fathers' inability to entertain; and so in Act V, scene i, when Leontes extends an unqualified welcome to Florizel and Perdita, we have the first indication that suffering has taught Leontes the value and the place of entertainment. Leontes tells his guests, "Welcome hither, / As is the spring to th' earth" (V.i.150-51). Having lost his family, Leontes has learned to entertain in both his house and his spirit. Even after discovering the false nature of their script, Leontes is willing to aid his guests. He tells Florizel, "I will to your father: / Your honour not

o'erthown by your desires, / I am friend to them and you" (V.i.228-30). Leontes' triumph is that he has come to trust the roles entertainment assigns.

We hear of the families' reunion, but Shakespeare is careful not to focus on this important moment. Instead we are reminded that the families' reunion is "like an old tale." The winter's tale—entertainment—will not be interrupted.

The cast gathers for a final entertainment. Paulina serves as hostess. Her "poor house" provides a neutral space in which the two families gather. In this space, they gaze at Hermione's statue, while Leontes reads in this family memorial the miserable record of his family's entertainment: "does not the stone rebuke me" (V.iii.37). And then, as though she were the center of a masque, Hermione comes to life in music.<sup>24</sup> Paulina makes clear the condition of the entertainment: "It is requir'd / You do awake your faith" (V.iii.94-95). Faith in entertainment, in the staged, the masked, the acted, is necessary to the family's survival.

Leontes prays, "If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating" (V.iii.110-11). His simile is most appropriate. For the family, having withdrawn to its private dining room, has yet the capacity to common together—not in the great hall, but in the "publike" space between families. Northrop Frye recalls this tradition: "Human kind, as Eliot says, cannot bear very much reality: what it can bear, if it is skillfully enough prepared for it, is an instant of illusion which is the gateway to reality."<sup>25</sup> In this final scene, we can see clearly how, for Jacobean England, the rhetoric of illusion, of entertainment, is truly a gateway to the very existence of family. Leontes commands,

Good Paulina  
Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely  
Each one demand, and answer to his part  
Performed in this wide gap of time. (V.iii.151-54)

The reality of *family* is, finally, neither on stage nor off, but performed in the steady oscillation between the two. When families have commoned together, "as the fashion of the Maske is," entertainment continues in winter's tales that pass time until spring.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Ronald Bayne in "Masque and Pastoral," *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1910), VI, 376-77.



<sup>2</sup>Throughout this essay I will use the terms "entertainment" and "hospitality" and their various forms to denote facets of a dominant rhetorical protocol at work in Jacobean society. While I do not mean to imply that the two terms are synonymous, I do mean to suggest that they are inextricably linked.

The etymology of hospitality (from the Latin *hospes*), referring as it does to both host and guest, suggests that Western Civilization has always struggled against xenophobia. Entertainment, derived from the Old French *entretenir*, literally "to hold together," seems to be an ancient answer to this struggle.

<sup>3</sup>David M. Bergeron, *Twentieth-Century Criticism of English Masques, Pageants, and Entertainments, 1558-1642* (San Antonio: Trinity Univ. Press, 1972), p. viii.

<sup>4</sup>Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1983), p. 150.

<sup>5</sup>Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975), p. 26.

<sup>6</sup>See Abraham Fraunce, *The Arcadian Rhetorike*, 1588, for conventional formulation.

<sup>7</sup>An extended study of this rhetoric would of course have many plays to consider. I am particularly interested in the way this rhetoric changes in the Shakespearean canon from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to *Hamlet* to *The Tempest*.

<sup>8</sup>C. L. Barber, "The Family in Shakespeare's Development: Tragedy and Sacredness." In *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays*, ed. Murray M. Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1980), p. 188.

<sup>9</sup>A. W. Ward, "The Origins of English Drama." In *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1910), V, 3-4.

<sup>10</sup>Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (1977; rpt. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 95.

<sup>11</sup>George Duby, "Memories With No Historian," *Rethinking History*, in *Yale French Studies*, 59 (1980), 13.

<sup>12</sup>See David M. Bergeron, "The Restoration of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*. In *Shakespeare's Romances Reconsidered*, ed. Carol McGinnis Kay and Henry E. Jacobs (Lincoln: The Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1978), pp. 129-32. Bergeron suggests that a contemporary audience would have seen a resemblance between Hermione's statue and Jacobean memorials.

<sup>13</sup>Goldberg, p. 152.

<sup>14</sup>Goldberg, p. 150.

<sup>15</sup>I am indebted to Richard Sennett's *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977) for making clear the *constructedness* of public life, and the extent to which human interaction depends on it.

<sup>16</sup>Stanford M. Lyman and Marvin B. Scott, *The Drama of Social Reality* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), p. 3.

<sup>17</sup>William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, ed. J. H. P. Pafford (New York: Methuen, 1980), I.ii.118-19. All quotations will be taken from this edition.

<sup>18</sup>Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), 253.

<sup>19</sup>Inga-Stina Eubank, "The Triumph of Time in *The Winter's Tale*," *REL*, 5 (1964), 91.

<sup>20</sup>Of course the "model" for this role would be James I, a king "set on a stage," Father of England.

<sup>21</sup>Northrop Frye, "Romance as Masque." In *Shakespeare's Romances Reconsidered*, eds. Carol McGinnis Kay and Henry E. Jacobs (Lincoln: The Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1978), p. 14.

<sup>22</sup>William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Northrop Frye (New York: Penguin Books, 1971), I.ii.16-17.

<sup>23</sup>For an interesting discussion of Camillo's role as playwright, see Robert Egan, *Drama Within Drama: Shakespeare's Sense of His Art* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 67-76.

<sup>24</sup>Frye, pp. 36-37.

<sup>25</sup>Frye, p. 39.



## CHAPMAN'S ANTI-FESTIVE COMEDY: GENERIC SUBVERSION AND CLASSICAL ALLUSION IN *THE WIDOW'S TEARS*

Arnold W. Preussner\*

**ABSTRACT.** Prevailing critical opinion regards Chapman's *The Widow's Tears* as a dark and "mirthless" comedy. This paper seeks validation for that view in Chapman's deliberate subversion of conventional comic norms and in his ironic employment of classical allusions from Homer, Virgil, and Ovid to underscore this subversive practice. The play's main plot is stridently anti-festive and leads to a startling but appropriate non-reconciliation between Cynthia and Lysander. Tharsalio's farcical wooing of Eudora in the subplot insulates this action somewhat from the bitterness of the main plot. But Tharsalio undercuts his comic legitimacy through his repugnant egotism, his cynical methods, and his catalytic relationship to the Cynthia-Lysander plot. The play's odd sequential structure further distorts conventional practice, and the ironic and parodic employment of allusions to Odysseus and Penelope, Dido and Aeneas, Hercules, and Ovidian tales of metamorphosis clarifies the status of all three main characters as focal points for Chapman's satire.

Index words: comedy, genre, classical allusion, mythology, irony.

For most of the twentieth century, prevailing critical opinion has regarded George Chapman's *The Widow's Tears* as a "funereal," "mirthless" comedy, one that requires a "wide extension of the term" even to merit classification as a comedy.<sup>1</sup> Even Lee Bliss' recent emphasis on the dominance of farce in the play's early acts leads eventually to a conclusion emphasizing the audience's "guilty entrapment" in the ruthless, cynically self-serving world of the chief *farceur*, Tharsalio.<sup>2</sup> This paper will argue that the "darkness" of *The Widow's Tears* stems in large measure from Chapman's deliberate subversion of conventional new-comic and festive norms and that Chapman's manipulation of commonplace classical allusions in the play underscores his anti-festive comic practice.

Reasons for adopting a predominantly "dark" view of *The Widow's Tears* emerge as soon as one begins to examine Chapman's handling of his primary source for the play, the "Widow of Ephesus" story in Petronius' *Satyricon*. Chapman altered his source by turning the deceased Ephesian husband into a living spouse who feigns death and returns in a soldier's disguise to test the strength of his wife's fidelity to his memory.<sup>3</sup> Chapman's plot revision suggests possibilities

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for a comic-satiric deflation of overly rigid commitments to ideals by fallible mortals, as well as for a farcical self-cuckolding plot vaguely reminiscent of the double self-cuckolding accomplished by Irus in Chapman's earliest dramatic effort, *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* (c. 1596). But the play rejects both of these options, moving away from both farce and "comical satire" toward a world that is also fundamentally opposed to the new-comic tenets of acceptance, pardon, and reconciliation.

Chapman further complicates Petronius' tale by allowing the disguised husband Lysander not only to capture his wife Cynthia's affection but also to sustain it even though he claims to be her husband's murderer.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently informed of Lysander's ruse by the omnipresent Tharsalio, Cynthia outfaces her husband, claiming that she was fully aware all along of his machinations and identity. She then bids Lysander a hasty and bitter "farewell," leaving him an empty coffin and non-existent corpse to "make much of" (V.v.88-89). By this time, the tomb and its empty casket have emerged as fully realized symbolic correlatives to the hollow, apparently irretrievable relationship of Lysander and Cynthia themselves.<sup>5</sup> Parrott emphasized that a concluding reconciliation between husband and wife is neither "sketched" nor even hinted at by Chapman and concluded that a solution to the marital impasse is "simply burked" by the dramatist (pp. 802-03). Parrott attributed Chapman's failure to resolve his main plot in conventional terms to "haste and recklessness" (p. 806). But the entire downward spiral of the second half of the play points to the non-reconciliation of Lysander and Cynthia as a product of the playwright's carefully calculated dramatic intention.

Some hope for a more suitably comic outcome might be held out for the subplot, which dramatizes Tharsalio's improbably successful wooing of the "chaste" Eudora, a widowed countess in whose household Tharsalio had previously occupied a servant's position. But the comic legitimacy of Tharsalio's successful quest for Eudora is undercut by Tharsalio's unattractive personality, his motive and method in securing his bride, and his function as a catalyst for the Cynthia-Lysander plot, as well as by Chapman's unconventional structuring of the play's main plot and underplot as fundamentally sequential rather than as alternating actions. Rather than functioning simply as a *farceur extraordinaire* whose courtship upholds a "natural comic rhythm" (Bliss, p. 170), Tharsalio occupies the more complex position of a confirmed cynic and egotist who relies on an impressive range of farcical strategies in effecting his rise to the top of

the play's socio-economic ladder. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is his worship of his own self-constructed goddess "Confidence," who replaces the conventional deity Fortune at the pinnacle of Tharsalio's personal pantheon and who functions as a thinly disguised projection of his own brash ego. Further, there is no indication of a romantic motive in Tharsalio's pursuit of Eudora, or even of genuine physical attraction, despite the fact that Tharsalio advances sexual prowess as his chief argument for acceptance. Rather than existing as the goal of a romantic or sexual quest, Eudora represents to Tharsalio a way out of his predicament as the impoverished younger son in an aristocratic family that has itself fallen upon hard times. To be sure, this is a conventional "city comedy" theme, one with autobiographical ramifications for a dramatist who was himself a financially insolvent younger son. All the more remarkable, then, that Chapman paints his fortune-hunter in such negative hues.

When Tharsalio's initial advances meet with rejection, he employs the bawd Arsace to proffer the same blatantly sexual enticements under the guise of a thinly-veiled reverse psychology. Specifically, Arsace warns Eudora that she will be "utterly undone" if she marries Tharsalio, since he is "the most incontinent and insatiable man of women that ever Venus blessed with ability to please them," one for whom "not a hundred will serve his one turn" (II.ii.75-77, 85). Eudora's inability to resist this ploy casts doubt on her viability as a comic heroine, and the entire subplot action both deflates and parodies the mating games of the aristocratic couples who populate Shakespeare's "festive" comedies. When Cynthia and Lysander ridicule Tharsalio's early failure with Eudora, Tharsalio turns his power of suggestion on his brother, first encouraging him to suspect Cynthia's fidelity and then urging him not to inquire too deeply into the extent of his wife's commitment to her vow of celibate widowhood. Tharsalio's "revenge" thus lays the groundwork for Lysander's self-destructive search for empirical certainty in the play's concluding acts.<sup>6</sup> Were Tharsalio's actions confined to the subplot, we might feel much more comfortable about his performance as a farcical mock-wooer. But Tharsalio refuses to remain bound to his own plot line. Instead, he invades and supervises the main action in a fashion unprecedented in Renaissance comedy. His strategies eventually result in the conjugal demise of a brother whose "house" he is allegedly committed to restoring (II.ii.85).

Chapman's unusual sequential structure further determines the play's commitment to conventional comic norms. The

Tharsalio-Eudora subplot ends abruptly in the third act, with the attendant wedding masque occurring prematurely in III.ii rather than at the play's conclusion, where it might serve to counter somewhat the non-reconciliation of the hapless married couple. The early enactment of the subplot marriage ceremony clears the way for a final scene dominated by the absurd Governor of Cyprus, a full-time Lord of Misrule, whose bizarre conduct places the domestic chaos of the Cynthia-Lysander plot in a wider social and political context. Even the match struck between Lysander's son Hylus and Eudora's daughter Laodice does little to modify the unconventional nature of the play's concluding scene. The betrothal functions more as a guarantee of the continued economic viability of the Lysandri than as a genuine symbol of societal integration and renewal. Accordingly, it is "graced" by none other than the witless Governor and is hastily dispatched by Tharsalio as the prelude to his final, unproductive attempt to reunite his brother and sister-in-law (V.v.306-08, 314-17).

*The Widow's Tears*, then, is in essence a counter-generic experiment, one that implicitly questions the norms and assumptions of the "festive" comic format perfected by Shakespeare.<sup>7</sup> As such, it merits consideration alongside Jonson's great middle comedies (particularly *Volpone* and *Epicoene*) and Middleton's "city comedies" (especially *Michaelmas Term* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*).<sup>8</sup> Further evidence of the play's non-festive status is traceable in Chapman's ironic handling of the Christian images and motifs of cross, tomb, and resurrection and in his movement of the Petronian tale's setting from Ephesus to Paphos. As Jackson Cope has noted, this mythographic shift from Diana's to Venus' sacred precincts bodes ill for a character named Cynthia who presents herself as the embodiment of married and widowed chastity (Cope, pp. 56 ff.).

Less noticeable perhaps than Chapman's manipulation of plot, character, setting, and Christian analogues is his use of classical allusion in support of his anti-festive pattern. It certainly comes as no surprise to find the great Renaissance translator of Homer putting the wealth of classical reference at his disposal to dramatic use, and at least one critic (Weidner) has seen Chapman's play-world in *The Widow's Tears* as an inverted or "fallen" Homeric landscape with Tharsalio as its degenerate Odysseus. The remainder of this paper will seek to demonstrate the extent to which commonplace allusions in the play to the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, the Herculean cycle, and several tales from Ovid reinforce the main and subplot patterns that we have traced. Many of these references provide an additional level of ironic

commentary on Lysander's test of Cynthia while also serving to underscore the parodic, deflationary nature of the subplot.

A glance at Chapman's direct and implied use of the Homeric account of Odysseus' homecoming provides a good illustration of the basic pattern. In the subplot, Tharsalio wastes little time establishing himself as a mock-Homeric suitor who will win his Penelope (Eudora) not "by suit, but by surprise" (I.i.150-51). Eudora's servant Lycus lends credence to Tharsalio's statement when he justifies Eudora's entertainment of suitors on the ground that even Penelope "could not bar her gates against wooers" (I.ii.9-10). But Lycus' assumption that the "itch" in Eudora's "female blood" (11) will extend only to the reception of suitors is routed decisively by Tharsalio's successful courtship. In succeeding with Eudora, Tharsalio radically alters the *Odyssey* analogue so as to become a "successful Antinous" whose brashness is rewarded rather than punished.<sup>9</sup>

Penelope's predicament and Odysseus' response to it also function as implied analogues to the interplay between Cynthia and Lysander in acts four and five. Perversely, Lysander insists on assuming two contradictory Homeric roles: that of the absent wanderer returned in disguise to evaluate his wife's constancy and that of a suitor in soldier's disguise attempting a direct assault on the wife's virtue. This attempt to be two characters at once ends—as it must—in failure and shatters a relationship that was at its best superficial and unjustifiably self-congratulatory. While Penelope successfully outwits her suitors and affirms her value as the ideal spouse, Cynthia first betrays and then rebukes Lysander, thus completing the disintegration of domestic harmony unwittingly initiated by her husband. While the subplot carries out a parodic revision of Homer's story, the main plot presents a disturbingly ironic inversion of it.

Chapman's characters also refer on several occasions to the Dido and Aeneas story. In act two, Tharsalio first confidently identifies Eudora as his Dido (iv.199) and then advises Lysander not to be overly "curious" as to whether "some wandering Aeneas" might enjoy his "reversion" (i.e., his widow) after his death (i.20-22). This dual use of Virgilian reference adheres to the same dichotomy observable in the application of Homer, with both the parodic and the ironic uses made fully explicit. In the subplot, Tharsalio re-enacts Aeneas' amatory conquest on a much-reduced level, eliminating from the re-enactment the tragic consequences attendant upon Aeneas' abandonment of Dido. In the main plot, Tharsalio's invocation of a "wandering Aeneas" figure who will intervene between Cynthia and her vow of celibacy



serves as one of the leading provocations of Lysander's ill-fated test. Later, when Cynthia's maid Ero compares her mistress and the "soldier" to Dido and Aeneas in the cave (IV.iii.85), we feel the full force of Chapman's complex irony. For while Cynthia's amorous escapade with her disguised husband bears only a ludicrous, distorted resemblance to Dido's surrender to Aeneas, the disastrous upshot of the liaison does parallel (albeit on a non-tragic level) the eventual rupture of Dido's and Aeneas' affair. At the same time, the severest repercussions of the rupture are transferred from the female to the male partner. Unlike Dido, who can only preside over her own demise, Cynthia wreaks a vengeance on her "monstrous" mate that closes off all immediate possibilities for reconciliation.

A disparity between ironic main plot and parodic subplot applications of classical allusions is also conspicuous in several glances at the exploits of Hercules. While Tharsalio invokes the humorous account of Hercules spinning at Omphale's loom, Lysander comes to realize that his soldier's disguise has become a fatal shirt of Nessus.<sup>10</sup> In the second act, Tharsalio explains away his former service in Eudora's household by asking rhetorically whether he is "the first personage that hath stooped to disguises for love? What think you of our countryman Hercules, that for love put on Omphale's apron and sat spinning amongst her wenches . . .?" (iv.183-84). Tharsalio's analogy contains a boastful anticipation of his success with Eudora, since his "countryman" Hercules rose quickly from slave to consort in Omphale's household. So witty is Tharsalio's invocation of the Herculean analogy that we may momentarily forget to question the dubious legitimacy of Tharsalio's overall alignment of himself with the Greek demigod. Conversely, we cannot help but affirm Lysander's employment of the shirt of Nessus analogy as a half-realized metaphor for his now-poisoned relationship with Cynthia:

O I could tear myself into atoms; off with this antic,  
[throwing off his armour] the shirt that Hercules wore for  
his wife was not more baneful. (V.iii.61-63)

But while Lysander blames his wife for poisoning their marriage, an impartial analysis would insist that the blame be shared equally among all three parties to Lysander's experiment.

The closely related stories of Phaeton and Icarus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* also provide points of contact for Tharsalio and Lysander.<sup>11</sup> Playing to his brother's assumption that he has once again failed to obtain Eudora's hand, Tharsalio in act three quotes the

conclusion of Phaeton's epitaph as part of his justification for the attempt:

Alas, brother, our house is decayed, and my honest ambition  
to restore it, I hope, be pardonable. My comfort is, the poet  
that pens the story will write o'er my head  
*Magnis tamen excidit ausis;*  
Which, in our native idiom, lets you know,  
His mind was high, though Fortune was his foe. (i.49-54)

Tharsalio's self-identification here with a mythical figure who failed in a "great attempt" is, of course, an intentionally parodic pretense that Tharsalio will soon drop in order to reveal his unlikely triumph. But once again the type of myth referred to has serious implications for Lysander. In fact, Lysander himself has just condemned Tharsalio's "insatiate spirit of aspiring" in terms strongly evocative of that other would-be overachiever of Greek myth, Icarus:

Trust me, I something fear it, this insatiate spirit of aspiring  
being so dangerous and fatal; desire, mounted on the wings  
of it, descends not but headlong. (III.i.34-36)

But Lysander either cannot or will not apply his lesson to himself. Like both Phaeton and Icarus, he attempts too much, and his "insatiate" aspiration to test his wife eventually produces the "headlong" descent of his marriage.

Two other Ovidian tales, those of Actaeon and Niobe, also bear directly on Lysander's test of Cynthia.<sup>12</sup> Early on, Tharsalio cites the Actaeon-Diana myth as an obvious example of fatal curiosity:

*Thar:* Brother, are you wise?

*Lys:* Why?

*Thar:* Be ignorant. Did you never hear of Actaeon?

*Lys:* What then?

*Thar:* Curiosity was his death. He could not be content to adore Diana in her temple, but he must needs dog her to her retired pleasures, and see her in her nakedness. Do you enjoy the sole privilege of your wife's bed? Have you no pretty Paris for your page? No young Adonis to front you there? (I.iii.64-73)

Tharsalio's citation obviously forms part of his overall strategy of appearing to advise Lysander against an overly curious examination of Cynthia's fidelity while actually seeking to incite his brother's jealousy and paranoia. Tharsalio's cynical application of the Actaeon story proves remarkably prophetic. Lysander cannot remain content with adoring his chaste Diana in her domestic shrine, but instead insists on placing her in a situation where her carefully constructed pose as the perfect wife (and future widow) will be stripped away, exposing the naked depths of unrestrained passion that lie beneath it.

In act four, Tharsalio observes that Cynthia in the tomb "may turn Niobe for love," and adds that until this "Niobe be turned to marble, I'll not despair but she may prove a woman" (ii.135-37). Tharsalio's observation, which directly precedes his call to "let the trial run on," underscores the unreasonable, inhuman nature of Lysander's test. Apparently, Cynthia may fulfill her testers' demands only by starving to death and metamorphosing into a Niobe-like emblem of grief. At the same time, Niobe's absurd pride in the numerical superiority of her off-spring to those of Latoia parallels Cynthia's feeling of smug superiority to other women in general and Eudora in particular. And finally, in attempting to test, expose, and punish the frailty hidden beneath Cynthia's veneer of rectitude, Tharsalio and Lysander seek to assume roles reserved for the divinities Apollo and Artemis in Ovid's tale. The Niobe story would thus seem to have adverse implications for all three of Chapman's primary characters.

The above examples, although certainly not exhaustive of Chapman's range of classical reference, should illustrate the extent to which his mythography supports his counter-generic practice in *The Widow's Tears*. Although the mythological references are more fundamentally damaging to Lysander than to Cynthia or Tharsalio, they do not serve to isolate any one character as the play's primary "focus" of satire. Rather, whether travestied and "revised" by Tharsalio or invoked as grimly prophetic analogues to Lysander's self-destructive course of action, they underscore the play's unyielding commitment to a decidedly antifestive pattern. Speculation as to whether this pattern stems primarily from the dramatist's personal pessimism, a strong dose of Jacobean melancholy, or "the irrepressible impulse of literature to mock its own antecedents"<sup>13</sup> remains beyond the scope of this paper, although all three options are no doubt worthy of consideration. Whatever the reason, Chapman in *The Widow's Tears* clearly turns away in decisive fashion from new-comic resolution, Shakespearean festivity, and the more genial satire of his own earlier

comic efforts from *A Humourous Day's Mirth* through *May Day* and *All Fools*. This rebellion against inherited comic norms is, I would claim, responsible both for the play's dramatic coherence and for its continuing hold on modern readers and critics.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Marc Parrott, ed., *The Plays of George Chapman: The Comedies* (1914; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), p. 805. For "mirthless," see Samuel Schoenbaum, "The Widow's Tears and the Other Chapman," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 23 (1960), 336; for "funereal," see Jackson I. Cope, *The Theatre and the Dream* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1973), p. 63. For other "dark" views of the play, see Thomas M. Grant, *The Comedies of George Chapman: A Study in Development* (Salzburg: Salzburg University Press, 1972), pp. 197 ff.; Charlotte Spivack, *George Chapman* (New York: Twayne, 1967), pp. 103-08; Henry M. Weidner, "Homer and the Fallen World: Focus of Satire in George Chapman's *The Widow's Tears*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 62 (1963), 518-32; and Albert H. Tricomi, "The Social Disorder of Chapman's *The Widow's Tears*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 72 (1973), 350-59. For a remarkably optimistic reading of the play, see Marilyn Williamson, "Matter of More Mirth," *Renaissance Papers* (1956), pp. 34-41. For other "genial" readings, see Thelma Herring, "Chapman and an Aspect of Modern Criticism," *Renaissance Drama*, 8 (1965), 153-79 (*contra* Weidner); and Ethel M. Smeak, ed., *The Widow's Tears* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp. xvii ff.

<sup>2</sup>Lee Bliss, "The Boys From Ephesus: Farce, Freedom, and Limit in *The Widow's Tears*," *Renaissance Drama*, NS 10 (1979), 182.

<sup>3</sup>As Parrott noted, Chapman's "revision" reverts to a pre-Petronian version of the tale in which "it is the husband himself who tries the virtue of his supposed widow" (p. 801). For a detailed analysis of Chapman's use of Petronius, see Akihiro Yamada, ed., *The Widow's Tears* (London: Methuen, 1975), pp. xxxiv ff. My quotations from the play cite Yamada's edition and will be noted parenthetically.

<sup>4</sup>For a rather unconvincing defense of Cynthia as one who is "out of her mind" due to grief, hunger, and alcohol when she succumbs to the soldier, see Richard Corballis, "The Widow's Tears: Two Plots or Two Parts?" *Parergon*, 20 (1978), 35.

<sup>5</sup>Although we may not agree with Grant's assumption that Cynthia's and Lysander's marriage was once "solemn and vital," there is no disputing his observation that by the end of the play it "appears as empty as the husband's coffin, as lifeless as the graveyard earth" (pp. 208-09).

<sup>6</sup>For an in-depth analysis of Lysander's "destructive search for certainty," see Cope, pp. 55 ff.

<sup>7</sup>My obvious reference point here is C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1959). Links between Latin new comedy and Shakespearean comedy are stressed by Northrop Frye, "The Mythos of Spring: Comedy," *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1967),

pp. 163 ff; and by Ruth Nevo, *Comic Transformations in Shakespeare* (New York: Methuen, 1980).

<sup>8</sup>On the extent to which Middleton's comic practice fails to accommodate new-comic norms, see George E. Rowe, Jr., *Thomas Middleton and the New Comedy Tradition* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press), 1979.

<sup>9</sup>Herring notes this transformation (p. 156) but apparently does not regard it as a deflationary or ironic strategy.

<sup>10</sup>On Hercules and Omphale, see Ovid, *Heroides* IX.53 ff. For the story of the shirt of Nessus, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IX.101 ff.

<sup>11</sup>For the Phaeton tale, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II.1 ff. The story of Icarus is found in the same work, VIII.184 ff.

<sup>12</sup>For Actaeon and Diana, see *Metamorphoses* III.138 ff. For Niobe's story, see *Metamorphoses* VI.146 ff.

<sup>13</sup>Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Representation* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), p. 194.

## **“WHAT A NUMBER OF MEN EATS TIMON”: CONSUMPTION IN *TIMON OF ATHENS***

Daniel W. Ross\*

**ABSTRACT.** Images of various forms of consumption—gastronomic, sexual, and commercial—pervade *Timon of Athens* and account for much of the play's bitterness. This image pattern identifies the illness which is “consuming” the society itself: an overwhelming greed which leads men to choose sensual, temporary gratification at the cost of more permanent values such as friendship, justice, balance. Timon himself is a consumer early in the play, feeding on the insincere flattery of the Athenian lords who care only for his lavish banquets and gifts. When Timon learns that his friendships last only as long as his wealth, he turns against man.

Even in his bitterness, however, Timon remains the moral spokesman of the play: whether he is lecturing the banditti, the prostitutes, or Apemantus, he keenly diagnoses the consumptive ways of Athenian society and the destruction those ways produce. As Timon finally realizes, a society that always consumes, that always takes without giving, destroys itself.

Index words: Shakespeare, consumption, Timon, eating, sex, friendship, greed.

In *Timon of Athens* Shakespeare places considerable emphasis on various forms of consumption, whether gastronomic, sexual, or commercial. Consumption represents not only the predominant image pattern of the play, but the clearest indication of the radical bitterness which permeates *Timon* as well. That bitterness, as Harold C. Goddard has suggested, links *Timon* to Shakespeare's great tragedies, especially *King Lear*, by revealing in extreme the contempt for humanity which lurks just beneath the surface of those plays. In contrast to *Timon*, Goddard notes, the great tragedies evince a restraint which ultimately triumphs over the temptation to dismiss life itself as rotten to the core.<sup>1</sup> Because the forms of consumption in *Timon* so severely tested Shakespeare's restraint, they bear close scrutiny: the focus of this essay is on *Timon* alone, but the play and the image pattern I am concerned with have important repercussions for Shakespeare's dark vision as a whole.

Timon himself is particularly aware in the early acts of the significance of eating, not to sustain life, but as a hedonistic activity. He stages lavish banquets for his fellow Athenians at which he displays his generosity, dispensing extravagant gifts in exchange for

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flattery and, ostensibly, for friendship. But Timon fails to understand, in the first two acts, that he is himself the banquet, the meat upon which his fellow Athenians feed. Timon, in fact, is a consumer also, digesting the flattery of his guests, but he learns that their words lack substance when he loses the resources to entertain them. As the play progresses, we see, with Timon, that man's preying on his fellow man is a regular activity. Indeed, it becomes clear that Athenian society is so selfish, so all-consuming that it has become valueless, the product of every transaction being as insubstantial as the insincere flattery bestowed on Timon. This all-consuming society is self-consuming, diseased by the pox resulting from its commercial sexual exchanges, by the depravity attending its cannibalism, and by the madness ultimately afflicting Timon after his realization that he has no friends, that he has only been taken advantage of by his greedy fellow citizens.

The prominence of eating in *Timon of Athens* is established in the first act, the most carefully wrought in the play. We first see Timon just before one of his splendid banquets. The first scene ends with preparation for the feast, with one lord inviting another to enter the dining hall to "taste Lord Timon's bounty."<sup>2</sup> The lord suggests here that the other guests and he are not content merely to taste Timon's food, but wish to eat *all* that the generous man makes available to them even if Timon is himself consumed in the process. Timon, in short, *is* his bounty. Such suggestions of excessive sensual appetites are abundant in this play, for the citizens of Athens know no mean as regards the gratification of the senses. All material or sensual objects are to be hoarded and treated as financial investments; the source of Timon's immense popularity is that any gift to him will be repaid "Seven-fold above itself" (I.i.278). An act of kindness bestowed on Timon promises a greater profit than any commodity on the stock exchange. But since the appetites of the Athenians know no satiation, the more Timon gives, the more they hunger for.

For Timon the great banquet in Act I, Scene ii provides an opportunity to bestow his gifts and, more importantly, to expound on the joys of friendship and liberal giving. Although Timon verbally eschews ceremony (ll. 15-18), it is plain that the ceremony of giving and then receiving thanks and effusive praise is vital to his ego. In exchange for presents the Athenians feed Timon flattering testimonials. Timon does not yet realize that there is no substance behind the guests' praise. In this scene we can see that Timon is himself a consumer, thriving on the meaningless flattery which the Athenians gladly gorge him with. Nonetheless, Timon's naiveté is genuine. Shakespeare contrives in Timon's speech on friendship the authentic

sentimentality of a man deluded. Timon's wish that he might be poorer, in order that he might be closer to his friends, reveals both the sincerity underlying his poor judgment and his failure to understand himself, his friends, or even the concept of friendship. Timon, in fact, uses his friends and their idle flattery to perpetuate his delusion. He feeds on them (though without malicious intent), just as they feed on him; hence, he too participates actively in the process of consumption.<sup>3</sup>

This process leads the citizens of Athens to a life of extremes and excesses. There is no Golden Mean in Timon's Athens. For example, Timon's delusion in the banquet scene is in stark contrast to the opposite attitude: Apemantus' acerbic, cynical pronouncements. The churlish philosopher's views are bitterer than those of his counterparts in the Shakespearean canon, even exceeding by far the melancholic laments of Jacques. But Apemantus provides an important perspective on the banquet. He recognizes the ultimate viciousness of the feast and Timon's willing participation in the cannibalistic rite:

What a number of men eats  
Timon, and he sees 'em not! It grieves me to see  
so many dip their meat in one man's blood, and  
all the madness is, he cheers them up too. (I.ii.39-42)

To Apemantus the Athenian lords have become cannibals, the ultimate consumers. He is sufficiently repulsed by this realization to abjure the eating of meat. He says he lives on root—a diet that Timon will assume after he too becomes a misanthrope. The eating of meat is equated in this play with the most perverse kind of gluttony.

But mere abstinence from eating meat will not cure all the society's ills. In Act IV, Scene iii Timon waves a root at Apemantus and shouts: "That the whole of Athens were in this! / Thus would I eat it" (ll. 281-82). Timon's every speech outside the walls of the city indicates that he would perpetuate the cycle of consumption in order to gain his revenge. The play's repeated emphasis on consumption suggests that it is the symptom, not the cause, of the degeneration of Athens. The greater problem is that this society permits, even invites extremes. The imbalance is so great that to participate in Athenian society is to overindulge: seemingly, the only alternative to overindulgence is the opposite extreme of rejecting the society of man altogether as Apemantus and (eventually) Timon do.<sup>4</sup> But in truth, Apemantus, like Timon, is also a consumer. Why should such a cynic



attend this banquet? Not for meat, perhaps, but Apemantus “feeds” on the banquet as his object of scorn.

Apemantus is not the only observer at the banquet who is aware of the consumptive nature of most of its participants, just the most vocal. Alcibiades, the professional soldier, does not contradict Timon’s observation that he would prefer to “be at a breakfast of enemies than a dinner of friends” (I.ii.76-77). Perhaps he realizes the dangers of having such “friends” as Timon’s. In addition, the steward Flavius, when called upon to produce more money from Timon’s diminishing coffers, reflects:

There is no crossing him in 's humor,  
Else I should tell him well (i' faith, I should),  
When all's spent, he'd be cross'd then, and he could.  
'Tis pity bounty had not eyes behind,  
That man might ne'er be wretched for his mind.

(I.ii.160-64)

These three men see what Timon cannot or will not see:<sup>5</sup> that his sentimentality and naive generosity leave him prey to his insincere friends. While consuming their flattery, he is in a real sense blinded, unable to see either before or behind. Such a weakness will be fatal in a society as carnivorous as this one.

Timon’s inability to see is ironic in the midst of a society which, more animal-like than human, thrives on sensual gratification. The prominence of sensual pleasure is best demonstrated by the masque of Amazons, introduced by Cupid, presented at Timon’s feast.<sup>6</sup> The masque proves highly entertaining to all except Apemantus, who responds to it with his bitterest invective:

Like madness is the glory of this life,  
As this pomp shows to a little oil and root.  
We make ourselves fools to disport ourselves,  
And spend our flatteries to drink those men  
Upon whose age we void it up again  
With poisonous spite and envy.  
Who lives that's not depraved or depraves?  
Who dies that bears not one spurn to their graves  
Of their friends' gift?  
I should fear those that dance before me now  
Would one day stamp upon me. 'T 'as been done;  
Men shut their doors against a setting sun.      (I.ii.134-45)

Apemantus *has* correctly seen the true nature of Athenian sensual appetites. Those like Timon think men "drink to" them to express love and gratitude, but Apemantus collapses the phrase, creating another cannibalistic image: Timon's guests are in fact drinking him. Timon will come, eventually, to agree with this view, though he will argue that his assessment of Athenian cannibalism is even more valid, for he has been no mere observer, but a victim of their excess. Apemantus also predicts the reversal of fortunes that will prove important in the play. Not only will Timon be "stamped upon" by those who entertain him with their flattery, but the entire state of Athens will succumb to the force of its most loyal servant, Alcibiades.

Timon, after his conversion to misanthropy, rails against man's consuming habits with even more bitterness than Apemantus, who has found in cynicism a way of accommodating his distaste for man's faults. Man's folly proves a source of inspiration to Apemantus, providing abundant "material" for his jeremiads. But for Timon man's corrupted, consuming nature is absolute: a world without honest, genuine human relationships is for him a world without meaning. Timon emerges from his former delusion with a profound hatred for mankind, a hatred almost impossible for him to modify. He does finally accept one man, Flavius, as good, but for Timon one good man is merely an aberration, not sufficient, as in the last two books of *Paradise Lost*, to redeem man. One feels it a pity that Timon could not have merely divorced himself from the Athenian society of merchants and lords and joined the one group, his servants, who seem to have a true spirit of friendship. Time and again the play suggests that wealth is a burden. All those with it consume to excess, while at least some of those without it know the virtue of living in moderation.

In Acts IV and V we see Timon the misanthrope, rejecting all mankind (except, finally, Flavius) as vile and corrupt. Man's degradation is, in Timon's mind, irreversible: man has, in fact, become no better than a beast. Timon believes that man, in his degeneration, has destroyed the harmony of the universe. In his bitterest speech (IV.iii.327-45) he describes in detail the disorder of the universe. At this point Timon sees a vicious cycle of consumption dominating the activities of all creatures. Also, in this scene, Timon becomes Apemantus' teacher. Apemantus believes that since man alone is the source of the world's woes, the world can be improved by giving it to the beasts, who would eradicate man. Timon's response to this notion indicates that he is still capable of shrewd observations: "Wouldst thou have thyself fall in the confusion of men, and remain a beast with the

beasts?" (IV.iii.324-25). Timon recognizes that Apemantus can offer no solution to the world's problem: in fact, he has mistaken the disease for the cure. Man has shrunk to such a low stature because he *has* become like the beasts. Man is beast-like in his use of trickery, his predatory ways, his suspiciousness of his fellow creatures, his gluttony, his pride, and his wrathfulness. All of these qualities are evident in Timon's Athens. But to Timon man can and should be something better: noble, generous, and loving. Man's rejection of these qualities and subsequent descent into a bestial state is, for Timon, sufficient reason to repudiate mankind altogether.

Timon's analysis of man's degeneration perhaps explains why his bitterness is so great. Apemantus has never known any faith in man: for him the world would be better without man, for man is the cause of the world's problems. But Timon did once believe in a dignity of man: thus, his disappointment is greater. Whereas Timon sees man as having sunk from a once lofty stature, Apemantus gives no indication that he has ever regarded man highly. Once Timon has delivered his evaluation, Apemantus realizes that Timon has made the keener judgment and has correctly diagnosed the problem: "The commonwealth of Athens is become a forest of beasts" (IV.iii.347-48). The tense of Apemantus' verb is all important. Athens was once a great civilization. But through selfishness, greed, and a lust for sensual gratification, Athens "is become" a forest of beasts—every man for himself, a Darwinian realm where only the most powerful and most deceptive can survive.<sup>7</sup> The disillusioned Timon has no desire even to attempt to survive in such a world.

Later in this scene we see Timon again in his role as teacher or preacher. This time the banditti are his congregation, with Timon's sermon bringing surprising and ironic consequences. Timon first instructs the banditti to live on roots, but when they tell him they must have meat to live on, he instructs them to "eat men" (l. 425). Timon then seizes the opportunity to preach, but the results of his demonic sermon (which he appropriately concludes with an "amen") are beneficial to the community of man; the banditti are so charmed that they consider abandoning their profession. Timon's sermon should be compared to Apemantus' facetious blessing at the banquet in Act I. The prayer captures in brief Apemantus' quality of negativism or no-thingness: he asks for nothing, prays for no man. Timon's sermon, in contrast, goes far beyond mere sarcasm: it is black satire<sup>8</sup> (and, as satire, a corrective) of what man "is become." Like Apemantus, Timon stresses the necessity of trusting no man, but Timon intensifies his message by marking the disorder of the cosmos:

the sun, moon, sea, and earth are all charged with thievery. From Timon's point of view, man's degeneration seems to have thrown the entire universe into chaos. Timon respects the banditti for admitting to be thieves and not hiding behind the masks of more respectable professions. But he charges them to go beyond thievery—to "Cut throats" and "Break open shops" (ll. 445, 447). He encourages their crime, for anything they take will have been stolen from less honest thieves. The banditti are moved by Timon's tirade, because they realize that his harsh words are spoken not from a desire to see them prosper, but from "the malice of mankind" (l. 452). Thus Timon, who cannot redeem himself, perhaps does redeem a few lost men whose consciences can be pricked only by him and the example of his suffering, induced by the inhumanity of other men.

Sex provides another index to the degeneration of the Athenian society. Throughout *Timon of Athens* sex is associated with consumption, eating, and disease. Like friendship and other human relationships, sex is a commodity to be bought and sold in the Athenian marketplace. It exists not to form lasting relationships but, like Timon's banquets, merely to gratify the senses. Both men and women are equally culpable in this exchange. Men treat women as objects, and women willingly sell their bodies (like any other product) for gold. The inevitable result of such widespread dealing in commercial sex is disease and, ultimately, a deformation of the race. Hence, the corruption of the Athenians is not just moral, but physical as well. Athenian man is destroying himself by preying on his fellow man by eating him—this is precisely the image used by Apemantus to describe women who "eat lords; so they come by great bellies" (l.i.206-07). In the prevailing sexual mores, Apemantus sees another form of consumption, no better and no worse than the eating of Timon which he witnesses at the banquet. The prostitutes consume men and, in turn, both parties are consumed by the venereal disease that attends commercial sex. But the most hideous result of this sexual climate is the degeneration of the race itself: we sense that Apemantus is exaggerating only slightly when he says "the strain of man's bred out / In baboon and monkey" (l.i.250-51).<sup>9</sup> Since syphilis attacks the brain, constant sexual consumption can lead to a genetic corruption of man, reducing him to a bestial state.

The degradation of sex is discussed by Apemantus and the Fool in Act II. The dialogue is contrived to ridicule the servants of Timon's creditors who have now come to collect their debts. The Fool's riddle clarifies the link between sex and the greed which has made man a consumer of his own kind:

I think no usurer but has a fool to his servant;  
 my mistress is one, and I am her fool. When men  
 come to borrow of your masters, they approach  
 sadly, and go away merry; but they enter my  
 master's house merrily, and go away sadly. The  
 reason of this? (II.ii.98-102)

The exchange between a man and his usurer resembles one between a man and his whore. He leaves his mistress' house sadly, perhaps because of disappointment over the product he has purchased, or more likely because of the pox he takes with him. Men leave the usurer's house happily, but their joy is merely a delusion. Eventually, they will be called on (as Timon is being called on in this scene) to render payment with interest. Thus, both customers are victimized and pay for more than they have received—one by means of a surcharge, the other by means of the disease contracted from the whore. In either case the exchange is corrupt, illusory. The customer is used by both creditor and whore, taken advantage of in the name of profit. The consequence is a diseased society, exemplified by the syphilis contracted at the brothel or the madness contracted by Timon when he realizes he has no friends, that he has only been manipulated by his fellow citizens for their material benefit. Both exchanges produce essentially the same effect; both are acts of vicious consumption and profiteering.

The duplicitous content of Apemantus' statement about sex in Act I and his dialogue with the Fool in Act II can be compared to Timon's encounter with Alcibiades and his two whores in Act IV, Scene iii. There is no possibility of ambiguity in this encounter. Like the banditti, the prostitutes represent their profession unashamedly, while in earlier acts the consumers are impostors, posing as reputable citizens. Timon curses the prostitutes, as he does everyone else at this stage of his life. They are, as Timon knows, driven by greed like the Athenian lords, and Timon, who by this time has discovered gold, gives them money to encourage their trade. Their response to Timon is much like that of the flattering lords; they call him "good Timon" and hold out their hands for more, even though Timon curses them as he dispenses the money. Timon considers his gift to the prostitutes "earnest" (l. 168). It is not an act of generosity but a business investment from which he hopes to reap the dividend of seeing more men ruined by prostitutes.

Nevertheless, Timon seems to feel a kinship with the prostitutes. Indeed, as Robert Fulton notes, the banquet scene in Act I has prepared

us for this kinship with its imagery suggesting Timon is the whore of Athens, making himself available to anyone for the price of "friendship."<sup>10</sup> To Timandra (whose name resembles his own) he says,

Be a whore still. They love thee not that use thee;  
Give them diseases, leaving with thee their lust.  
Make use of thy salt hours, season the slaves  
For tubs and baths, bring down rose-cheek'd youth  
To the [tub-]fast and the diet. (IV.iii.84-88)

Timon, like the prostitutes, was used by his fellow men, although the prostitutes are fully aware that their relationship is purely commercial. Timon encourages the prostitutes not to abandon their profession, seeing their spreading of disease as a means of revenge against man which he cannot himself exact. More significantly, he uses the image of seasoning, which is related to the more predominant image of consumption. Consumption and disease are closely linked by Timon. As man consumes his fellow man, he will be "repaid" with disease which will consume him. In other words, Timon believes that only more disease will eradicate the disease of consumption; by "eating" men, the prostitutes thwart men's appetites, driving them to "fast" and "diet." Thus, man's consuming ways will ultimately reverse the process of Athenian greed. One can consume only to a point before being consumed.

The consequences of this lust to consume become explicit in Acts IV and V, where it becomes obvious that Athens is a society without values. Friendship, sexual relations, even art are all insubstantial activities, founded on empty gestures and insincere words. The painter sums it up best:

To promise is most courtly and fashionable;  
Performance is a kind of will or testament  
Which argues a great sickness in his judgment  
That makes it. (V.i.27-30)

The impression given is one of a society turned upside-down. A balanced, healthy society would regard empty promises, not performance, as the sickness. This image of Athens as a society that inverts everything recurs; Athens is a community where "mean eyes have seen / The foot above the head" (I.i.93-94), and where it is believed that "nothing emboldens sin so much as mercy" (III.v.3). In this society value is assigned only to things (false promises, ingratitude, temporary

sexual gratification) that do not last. Once their brief worth has been exhausted, nothing is left upon which the society can depend for physical or moral sustenance.

Because of its consuming ways, Athens is, in short, a society used up, worn out. As the painter says in the play's opening lines, this world "wears, sir, as it grows" (I.i.4). Thus, *Timon*, from the beginning, reflects the sense of aging and exhaustion that *King Lear* best illustrates in its last lines, Albany's statement that "The oldest hath borne the most; we that are young / Shall never see so much, nor live so long" (V.iii.326-27). Timon's Athens is a worn society that continues to consume itself in various ways. To consume means, in its worst sense, to destroy or devour by using up. Just as Timon believed, a healthy society, like a healthy friendship, depends upon reciprocity, a willingness to give as well as take. But the wealthy Athenians will only take and, thus, the society's best resources, the generosity of a Timon or the loyalty of an Alcibiades, are exhausted.

The conclusion of *Timon* illustrates the cost of such a waste of resources, while muting the stridency that had dominated much of the play. The consumption of resources finally leaves Athens too weak to defend itself against the angry Alcibiades, the last remnant of strength and energy in this society of "pursy" lords and of senators who "sit and pant in . . . great chairs of ease" (V.iv.11). But Alcibiades, despite a reputation for ruthlessness, has been moved by Timon's story and has perhaps even learned from him the need for moral values like mercy and justice. Having seen that consumption brings only waste and ruin, Alcibiades refuses the spoils of victory, choosing instead to mete out "regular justice" and punish only those who have offended. In the play's final lines, Alcibiades promises to use the olive with the sword, to "Make war breed peace, make peace stint war . . ." (V.iv.83). Thus, the cycle of consumption is halted and balance is restored to Athens.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Harold C. Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1951), II, 172-73. As Goddard notes, this suppressed contempt is apparent not only in the tragedies but in the dark comedies and even in some of the sonnets.

<sup>2</sup>*The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1974), I.i.274. All quotations from Shakespeare are from this edition and will be cited hereafter in the text.

<sup>3</sup>A similar conclusion is reached by William W. E. Sleights in "*Genera Mixta* and *Timon of Athens*," *Studies in Philology*, 74 (1977), 47.

<sup>4</sup>Bestial imagery plays an important role in the play, frequently extending the suggestion that the Athenians have allowed their greed to make them consuming and consumptive. When Timon first exiles himself from Athens, he delivers a long tirade damning Athens. In this speech he refers to the Athenians as wolves (IV.i.2), perhaps the most appropriate metaphor for the Athenian lords in the play. Wolves, in the bestiaries, were known for ferocious greed and a rapacity so great that they often were compared to prostitutes. See *The Book of Beasts: A Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century*, ed. T. H. White (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954), p. 56. As we will see, the play suggests that prostitution of all kinds, involving men more than women, is consuming man.

<sup>5</sup>Lesley W. Brill feels we should be cautious not to take Flavius' judgments at face value. Since Flavius is under Timon's employ, his view of his master is not unprejudiced or disinterested. See Brill's "Truth and *Timon of Athens*," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 40 (1979), 27-28. Brill's point is well taken, but it ignores the fact that Flavius, having worked for Timon and handled his money, is perhaps best qualified to judge Timon's character, especially the intended generosity of Timon's giving. Indeed, Flavius seems in many ways the most trustworthy judge of character in the play: he is more disinterested than the misanthropic Apemantus and more worldly than Alcibiades.

<sup>6</sup>As Robert C. Fulton, III, reminds us, Renaissance poets often used Cupid as a reminder of the destructive aspect of Eros. See his "Timon, Cupid, and the Amazons," *Shakespeare Studies*, 9 (1976), 286. Indeed, as I will show, every depiction of Eros in the play is destructive, consumptive. In addition, the image of Timon's blindness gives him a notable connection to Cupid, the "blind boy," and his prodigality makes him a logical subject of Cupid's praise.

<sup>7</sup>When Timon first exiles himself from Athens, he delivers a long tirade damning Athens. Here again Timon uses wolves as the animals most analogous to the Athenian lords (see IV.i.2).

<sup>8</sup>One of the most hotly debated topics in *Timon* criticism centers on the play's genre. Some argue it is a tragedy; others call it a satire. G. Wilson Knight represents one pole, calling Timon "the archetype and norm of all tragedy." See his *The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearean Tragedy* (1930; rpt. New York: Meridian, 1957), p. 220. At the other end of the spectrum is Alvin B. Kernan, who regards the play as "the most penetrating analysis ever made of the satiric sense of life." See *The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance*, Yale Studies in English, Vol. 142 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959), p. 198. Surely the play has elements of both genres. Sleights tries to settle this problem by calling the play a *genera mixta*, or mixture of forms (p. 59). But even he finally proves the play to be a satire since satire (from Latin *satura*) is by definition a mixture of forms. Sleights also believes (as I do) that the tragic element of *Timon* is subordinated to the satiric (p. 56). Timon's lack of insight alone should preclude our judging the play a tragedy. Though Timon resembles Lear in many ways, Kernan accurately summarizes the difference: "where Lear passes through satiric outrage with the world to tragic perception, Timon persists in his unyielding



hatred" (*The Cankered Muse*, p. 203). Tragedy depends upon a hero's gaining profound insight like Lear's.

<sup>9</sup>Apemantus' choice of animals is revealing: baboons were associated in the bestiaries with violence, biting, and ferociousness, while monkeys were linked to the Devil and to a specifically genetic, sexual corruption. See *The Book of Beasts*, pp. 34-35. Apemantus' remark, however, also indicates the occasional insincerity and illogicality of his cynicism. Coming in the first scene, the comment should, if it were completely sincere, make it unnecessary for Apemantus to learn from Timon in Act IV that man "is become a forest of beasts."

<sup>10</sup>Fulton, p. 291. Lewis Walker has also commented on the heavy emphasis on prostitution in the play, noting that Fortune, the predominant ruling force in the play, was often depicted in the Middle Ages and Renaissance as a whore. See his "Fortune and Friendship in *Timon of Athens*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 18 (1976), 582.

## A DIRECTOR PREPARES: STAGING A FEW LINES OF *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*

Stephen C. Schultz\*

**ABSTRACT.** Suggestions for effective staging are implicit in the text of *Measure for Measure*, IV, iv-vi and the first fifty line of V,i. Shakespeare controlled variation of tempo, heightened interest by foreshadowing, suggested stage movement which has interpretative significance, and focused audience attention where he wanted it. Early in V, Shakespeare dictated staging which emphasizes Angelo, allowing the actor to demonstrate clearly the character's oscillation between moral sensibility and fear for reputation. If this staging is followed, Angelo's ultimate repentance does not seem—as some critics have suggested—too sudden for credibility. The paper discusses incidentally several textual difficulties in terms of their theatrical implications.

Index words: Shakespeare, staging, *Measure for Measure*, directing, theatre.

By profession I am a teacher of theatre and a theatrical director, and I propose to reconstruct how my mind operated as I planned the staging of about 125 lines of *Measure for Measure*: scenes four, five, and six of Act IV plus the first fifty lines or so of Act V.<sup>1</sup>

Such a reconstruction must deal in details, asserting that large stage effects grow from small textual causes. But Shakespeare invented the details, and their observation may demonstrate the extent to which he continues to give suggestions for effective production of his plays. In rehearsal of Shakespeare, I often find myself saying, "Oh, *that's* what he wants" as though he were present—which in some sense he has taken care to be.

While preparing for production, then, I seek Shakespeare's apparent desires, not interpretative novelties. When the play has excited so much scholarly attention as has *Measure for Measure*, I probably could not discover anything utterly new anyway. But, if writers of more literary bent have anticipated my insights, that may suggest that the aims and results of a competent theatrical interpreter resemble those of a competent critic.

Indeed, the essential difference between the director's analytical craft and the critic's is simply that a critic who makes negative evaluations can congratulate himself upon refined perception and quit the field. A director who considers that, for instance, Angelo

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repents too suddenly for credibility must still communicate with an actor trained to demand believable motivations, must affect an audience most moved by actions which recognizably imitate those of human beings, and must collaborate with Shakespeare, compensating for his occasional nods or even demonstrating that supposed faults may be unrecognized facets of his genius.

Scenes four, five, and six of act four will not win a place in any anthology of Shakespearean purple patches. But Shakespeare crafts these scenes for the stage masterfully, most obviously by creating dynamic growth in foreshadowing. Shakespeare knew, and his director must recognize, that onstage nothing, including the audience's knowledge and expectations, can long remain in steady state. From IV,3, we have learned part of the Duke's plan: he will return to the city gates, where Isabella must interrupt Angelo's surrender of power with accusations (2232-34).<sup>2</sup> In four, five, and six, this plan gains shape and color; the audience's interest is increasingly piqued by additional information, their anticipation progressively honed by suggestions of unease. Scene four reveals Angelo's fear that the Duke's previously undisclosed (and never fully explained) flurry of "uneven and distracted" orders may evidence madness (2274-75) and that the deputy's crimes may have changed his own fortune so that "nothing goes right" (2304-05). Scene five informs us that the Duke has revealed his plot to the provost (2309), ominous notification of a prison official. And the Duke's order that Peter may "blench . . . As cause doth minister" (2312-13) suggests that the ruler's apparent assurance conceals anxiety that the plotters may be forced to improvise. Scene six adds to our knowledge of the Duke's plan that—for still mysterious reasons—he may "speak against [Isabella] on the adverse side" (2331), that Isabella must accuse Angelo as though the bedding had not been a trick, and that this novice doubts the morality of a plan which will compel her to lie (2325-26). The director will instruct his actors to season their performances with the trepidation suggested as a subtext to the spoken lines, and by the beginning of Act V, the audience will have been given enough information for understanding, little enough information that they must still attend with care, and sufficient reason for fear of the outcome that they are in some suspense.

While accomplishing these purposes, Shakespeare has demonstrated in little his control of the double-time convention. In scene four Angelo refers to the Duke's desire for a proclamation "an howre before his entring" (2279-80), beseeches Escalus to "let it bee proclaim'd i' th' morne" (2286-87), and bids the counselor "good night"

(2290). Scene five “floats” in time; probably after Angelo’s “good night” we will assume that what follows occurs the next morning, but we have no other reason to do so. By the beginning of scene six, however, the trumpets which Valencius *et al.* were put in charge of six lines earlier have already sounded twice (2340). For verisimilitude the implied lapse of time may be desirable, but no one who sees these three scenes piling upon each other will sense them as other than continuous, an effect by which Shakespeare increases a feel of rush and busy-ness.

If time has elapsed between five and six, a persistent puzzlement vanishes. In scene five, the Duke orders Peter, “These letters at fit time deliver me” (2308). Dr. Johnson asserted that Peter does not deliver the letters, that Shakespeare must have forgotten them, and more recent editors have puzzled over their destination.<sup>3</sup> But, if time passes between five and six, Shakespeare’s memory can be redeemed and a seeming improbability resolved: how did Isabella receive the new instructions to which she refers in scene six?

Besides, he tells me, that if peradventure  
 He speake against me on the adverse side,  
 I should not thinke it strange . . . (2330-32)

If the audience is quick enough to worry about such matters in the rush of performance, the actress need only carry a letter and refer to it as she speaks. One of the Duke’s letters has gone to Isabella, supplementing instructions given her earlier. The time between five and six—sufficient for trumpets to be procured and twice sounded—will also have allowed Peter time to come and go and be coming again.

These three scenes go with a rush, clipping along at 37, 13, and 12 lines respectively. During these sixty-five lines at least nine entrances and exits occur (ten if—as seems sensible—Friar Peter departs after “It shall be speeded well” [2318]), one of them—that of the problematic Varrius—serving no apparent function except to add to the comings and goings. That Shakespeare directs his director to rapidity is obvious. Less obvious—and easily blurred in production—is the playwright’s insistence that the velocity steadily increases. The overt action of these scenes is largely giving of orders, and the urgency of these commands grows as the scenes progress. In four, Angelo would have Escalus issue a proclamation “betimes i’ th’ morn,” for he wants notice abroad before Angelo arrives at Escalus’ home next day (2286-88). Shakespeare still has time, on this night before the main event, for Angelo’s soliloquy—brief and agitated though it is. But “the matter

being afoot" (2310), the Duke's commands in five tumble over one another somewhat, perhaps suggesting that his grip on the situation is not so firm as he would have it appear; after commanding Peter to "hold . . . ever to our speciall drift," he urges him in some circumstances to "blench from this to that" (2311-13) and then reiterates the importance of notifying the mysterious Flavius, fearing that his command to notify the equally mysterious Valencius, Rowland, and Crassus may have obscured the priority of Flavius (2313-17). Peter, undismayed by these somewhat confusing instructions, promises to "speed" them well (2318), upon which Varrius enters to be thanked for his "haste" (2320). In six, Mariana must urge the wavering Isabella to "be rul'd by" the Duke (2329), after which her own anxious desire for Peter's return is abruptly interrupted by Isabella's "O peace, the frier is come" (2335-36). He is come simply to hurry them along, for "very near upon / The Duke is ent'ring" (2342-43).

Shakespeare creates proclamations to proclaim, errands to run, previously nonexistent nobles to notify, and an ever-nearer deadline by which all these must be performed. He radically foreshortens time and presents the results in three brief scenes which include an entrance or exit on an average of every 6.5 lines. Amazingly, the result makes sense when examined closely, can be made as clear as need be to an audience, and yet suggests both anxiety and increasingly urgent rush. Then—Shakespeare demonstrates his control of stage rhythm. He has thus accelerated his story to emphasize the *adagio* with which the play arrives just short of its goal. For a few moments it will slow, gathering force for its conclusion.

When Friar Peter has hustled Isabella and Mariana offstage, the tempo changes as the Duke and his party enter "*at several doores*" (2347). The preceding three scenes are begun and ended either by one person or by two crossing a doorway together. Even if the Globe had only two doors, this action can be imagined literally continuous: as the heels of a group disappear at one side of the stage, the toes of the next group can appear on the other. But, as Peter and his charges exit, a momentary pause must occur till their doorway becomes totally clear. Perhaps one of those trumpets actually sounds. At least nine actors (assuming the "Lords" and the "Citizens" have only two representatives each and that the guards who will escort various prisoners sneak in later) come through what I—who think the Swan drawing authoritative—take to have been two doors. If, as the Folio suggests, Peter and Isabella are to re-enter a few lines later (2367), one door must be made visible for that re-entrance, so the Duke's party will deploy itself on the side opposite that on which the re-entrance

is to occur. If—perhaps more likely in view of the Friar's claim to have discovered a "stand" (2337)—Peter, Isabella, and Mariana re-enter at the beginning of the scene,<sup>4</sup> they will wait till the rest of the crowd has entered, lending a bit of verisimilitude to their journey from wherever scene six supposedly occurred. All this takes time. The tempo modulates to that of public ceremony, the urgent desires of previous scenes submerged in epideictic oration. The Duke greets his underlings separately, presumably allowing time for physical expression of the relationship between a ruler and his "very worthy Cosen," his "old, and faithfull friend" (2348-49). The ceremonial nature of the occasion is reinforced by the practiced chorus of "Happy returne be to your royall grace" (2350), and the Duke responds with the equally formulaic "Many and hartly thankings to you both" (2351). Then he lauds Angelo, in a self-conscious, fulsome, leisurely panegyric which allows the deputy a long moment to bask in security before his fall (2352-63).

If Angelo responds as the Duke and Shakespeare intend, the deputy who was last night "dull to all proceeding" (2392) now preens a bit, and the actor will be glad to do so. Were he not allowed this moment to swell with pride, his later playing of humiliation might require such grovelling that Angelo would lose all sympathy in losing all dignity. But, measuring the character's fall from this moment of public acclaim, the actor can demonstrate profound attitude change without having to become prostrate.

During the Duke's eulogy of Angelo occurs a crux which may not be so minor as it first appears: "Give we your hand" (2361), which allows either of two obvious emendations. Lever, without explanation, prefers "Give we our hand." All other editors have followed F3's "Give me your hand," also without explanation.<sup>5</sup> A staging effect suggested by "me your" lends some credibility to the usual solution. Suppose that the Duke, to emphasize his authority, moves apart from the crowd. With "Give me your hand," he calls Angelo to him, still apart. In a moment—addressing "relate your wrong" to Isabella (2376)—the Duke will move away, and Angelo will be left standing isolated—for purposes which I will explain later.

On the other hand, the last lines of the same speech seem to contravene the effect I have just described. The Duke summons Escalus to his side (2364-65), near that Angelo whom I have just described as about to become isolated. If I acknowledge the obvious—that the process in which I am engaged can be only suggestive, never conclusive—perhaps my reader will allow me to imagine that Escalus follows the Duke to Isabella's side, leaving Angelo alone. At any rate,

the Duke does call Escalus to him, and Escalus' cross and some succeeding by-play occupy the Duke and his two followers more-or-less believably—without simply freezing—while Friar Peter interjects his advice to Isabella: "Now is your time / Speake loud, and kneele before him" (2368-69).

Still, Peter's interjection invites the awkwardness of a stage wait, and an insensitive director may circumvent the difficulty by cutting a line whose function is not immediately obvious. I did so and gained respect for Shakespeare as a craftsman. In large part, the director's job is to focus the audience's attention where the playwright wants it. Consider Peter's speech as a directorial stratagem. The audience has attended to the Duke and Angelo for eighteen lines. Now their attention must suddenly shift to Isabella, who has taken no part in the scene. She may get attention by roaring, "Justice, O royall *Duke*, vaile your regard . . ." (2370ff.), but she is beginning a long scene during which her emotions must grow. If she starts too high, she risks becoming shrill later. In such a situation, most directors will instruct the actress to precede her speech by some bold gesture or movement to attract the audience's eyes, after which their ears will follow. In fact, Shakespeare orders something like that. Perhaps, as the Folio suggests, Peter and Isabella enter at this moment; if so, their entrance will attract the eye. If they have already been standing onstage together, Peter's voice will attract attention to Isabella's vicinity and, when she follows his advice to kneel, she will get focus by the movement and the contrast of her posture to that of everyone else. Thus, she can begin her plea at only moderate intensity and modulate the rest of the scene within bounds of human possibility.

Within two lines she provides the director a faint guidance to solution of a perennial difficulty: is Angelo's ultimate repentance unbelievably abrupt? Isabella has no sooner begun to speak than she pleads, "Oh worthy Prince, dishonor not your eye / By throwing it on any other object" (2372-73). Perhaps the adjuration is figurative. But her four-times repeated "Justice" (2375) suggests that she already suspects her message needs much emphasis if it is to get through. I suggest that the Duke has looked away, focusing not on Isabella but on Angelo, that on his next line—"Relate your wrongs; / In what, by whom? Be briefe" (2376-77)—he may move toward Isabella but that he immediately turns back to the deputy on "Here is Lord Angelo shall give you Justice" (2378). The Folio seems to further the effect when Isabella—still addressing the Duke—ends her next speech, "Or wring redresse from you: / Heare me: oh heare me, heere" (2384-85). The Folio

prints these words as two trimeters. They sometimes have been edited as one line, an Alexandrine.<sup>6</sup> Not every short line in the Folio signals actors' byplay. But these cannot be emended into regularity, and the context makes attractive some suggestion such as this: Isabella seems to end her plea with "Or wring redress from you." She awaits a reply for approximately the length of four syllables. But the Duke is looking for Angelo's reaction, and Isabella's frustration at his apparent inattention explodes, "Hear me! O hear me, hear!" (Or perhaps F1's "heere" should become F3's "here," not in the flaccid sense communicated by the "hear me here" of most editors,<sup>7</sup> but with the demand of "Not over there.") Four more syllables of silence, while the Duke observes the increasingly uncomfortable Angelo, until the deputy breaks an awkward silence with his feeble "My Lord, her wits I feare me are not firme" (2386). My theatrical colleagues would assert that this scene is "about Angelo." That is, though he says little, the audience's chief concern will be his reaction to the unexpected presence of Isabella. Shakespeare commands what teachers of directing call "indirect focus." The stage crowd focuses upon Isabella, who is saying odd things. Isabella focuses upon the Duke. But the Duke—intently searching his deputy for that humanity which may yet lead to repentance—funnels all this attention upon Angelo.

For some time Shakespeare has prepared the audience to understand the predicament in which Angelo now stands. In his scene four soliloquy, the deputy indicates two poles between which his mind oscillates. On one hand, yet-vital remnants of moral sensibility are displayed even after he has rationalized that a Claudio saved by his sister's sacrifice might have revenged the dishonorable bargain: "Would yet he had lived. / Alack, when once our grace we have forgot, / Nothing goes right, we would, and we would not" (2303-05). Angelo is thus torn because his surviving moral sense wars against his care for his own reputation:

But that her tender shame  
Will not proclaime against her maiden losse,  
How might she tongue me? yet reason dares her no,  
For my Authority beares of a credent bulke  
That no particular scandall once can touch  
But it confounds the breather. (2294-99)

The actor will have shown fear of Isabella's accusation beginning as Angelo reads the Duke's command that "if any crave redresse of injustice, they should exhibit their petitions in the street" (2280-81).



Shakespeare stresses the public nature of the meeting at the gates, announced by trumpets and attended by those whose opinions count: "men of sort and suit," the Duke's "friends," "the generous, and gravest Citizens" (2288, 2321, 2341). The Duke tests Angelo by confronting him with Isabella. When Angelo does not immediately confess, the Duke leads her to public accusation. When that does not work, the Duke plays upon Angelo's empathy for human misery, adding humiliation and arrest to Isabella's plight, apparently hoping that the sight of misery of which Angelo is first cause will appeal to the deputy's decency. This scene resembles the play scene in *Hamlet* as Barker described it: a "guilty creature" is exposed to a spectacle in hope that he will reveal his guilt; the scene depicts struggle within the creature to prevent self-revelation.

The most startling aspect of the scene is that the Duke greets Isabella coldly, with sarcasm (the Folio's question mark after "Nay it is ten times strange?" [2397] requires no emendation; the Duke ironically questions Isabella's repetition of the word through out her preceding speech), and ultimately with apparent anger and real incarceration. In the preceding scene, Shakespeare predicted this curious behavior: "Besides he tells me, that if peradventure / He speake against me on the adverse side, / I should not think it strange" (2330-32). This speech functions like a Brechtian placard. The Duke's behavior may seem shocking; lest shock distract us from Angelo's reactions, Shakespeare warns us in advance. We may puzzle over how the Duke's actions advance his goal, but we will know that a goal is in view.

The scene four soliloquy has shown that goodness still lives in Angelo's soul, but—however attractive repentance may seem ("we would, and we would not")—he cannot easily confess before this multitude. Even after he does confess, he would willingly die to cut short public exposure: "No longer Session hold upon my shame" (2773). The staging which I have described, which I believe Shakespeare prescribed, assures that the audience will have watched Angelo war with himself, that they will have realized he has not repented suddenly nor facily.

With that, I hope, provocative observation, I arbitrarily close. The back and forth shifts in this paper between scene and scene may have suggested the interdependence of parts. Interpretation of a play may begin with long views, but it soon becomes a search for that interdependence. Thus, the function of no part can be fully understood without understanding of the whole, and this paper could get even longer—as it will not. I close by observing that Shakespeare gives

his director clues to that interdependence, and that I as director have no moments happier than those when, standing puzzled in the middle of a rehearsal hall, I suddenly realize, "Oh, *that's* what he wants."

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>For several years, my association with Louisville, Kentucky's Shakespeare in Central Park has allowed me to test onstage my notions about some of the plays. I thank that organization and its producing director, Bekki Jo Schneider, for the opportunity. I am also grateful to Humana, Incorporated, generous sponsors of my 1983 production of *Measure for Measure*.

<sup>2</sup>Because the sequence in which lines occur is important to examination of staging, and because their positions in that sequence may occasionally be obscured by reference to scenes, I have resorted throughout to the continuous numbering of the *Variorum*. (Mark Eccles, ed., *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: Measure for Measure* [New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1980].) I have also quoted (silently modernizing "u" to "v") from the *Variorum* text, which follows F1. But within the body of the paper it has seemed easier to refer to "scenes four, five, and six" and to "act five," though this usage obscures the continuous nature of Shakespearean production at the time *Measure for Measure* was written.

<sup>3</sup>Eccles, p. 230, n. 2308.

<sup>4</sup>Throughout this paper I have tried to limit myself to conclusions from clear indications in Shakespeare's text, without reference to my own theatrical preferences. However, I suggest that the Folio's delay of the re-entrances of Isabella and Mariana blunts a potent theatrical effect: their presence at the periphery of the placid opening of act five would powerfully foreshadow Angelo's peril in his moment of seeming triumph.

<sup>5</sup>Eccles, p. 235, n. 2361.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 237, nn. 2384-85.

<sup>7</sup>J. W. Lever, ed., *Measure for Measure* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1965), p. 127, n. 34.



## THE DISGUISES OF SHAKESPEARE'S *AS YOU LIKE IT*

Kay Stanton\*

**ABSTRACT.** In *As You Like It*, the complexities of disguised identity are examined most thoroughly through Rosalind's disguise as "Ganymede," but a context for it is given through the less dramatic disguises of several other characters. Celia, the Clown, Orlando, Charles, and Le Beau, as well as Rosalind, disguise themselves somewhat in response to the actions of a tyrant, either Duke Frederick or Oliver. The tyrants themselves disguise their motives and attitudes. In Arden, Duke Senior's group's changes in attire reflect their changes in feeling about themselves and their exile. Orlando's various "disguises" illustrate his developments in self-realized identity. Rosalind's disguise, however, leads to an intricate layering of aspects of her personality. She becomes an artist by recreating herself in such a full range of human possibility. Her last artistic creation, the masque of Hymen, portrays the relationship between nature and art, and the epilogue reveals further subtleties of disguise.

Index words: *As You Like It*, comedy, disguise, Shakespeare.

The physical disguise of Rosalind as the male "Ganymede" is one of the most discussed features of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.<sup>1</sup> Most commentary, however, either completely neglects or minimally addresses the disguises of Celia as "Aliena" and the Clown as "Touchstone." More than a simple plot device, the disguises of these three characters provide an external manifestation for their internal tensions. Furthermore, several of the other characters disguise themselves in less dramatic ways in response to the image expected of them by those who hold power over them. The use of forms of disguising throughout the play gives Rosalind's physical disguise a context, and the necessity for disguise is one of the play's themes: a variation on the nature/art tension that pervades *As You Like It*.

In the household of Oliver and the court of Duke Frederick, the characters who are without political power are unhappy, depressed, frustrated, or angry. Orlando feels that his true identity as the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys is obscured by his older brother Oliver's tyranny and unfairness. Similarly, Rosalind must attempt to generate "more mirth" than she is "mistress of," in order to hide her

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moroseness over her father's political overthrow. Even the minor characters Charles and Le Beau reveal that their political sympathies are not with Duke Frederick. The court's motley fool (who will become "Touchstone") must worry about being whipped for offering his criticism of the current regime. Because they cannot feel support for the present rulers, all of these characters must disguise their attitudes somewhat in order to survive. For these characters, "natural" life has become "unnatural," so they must resort to the art of seeming to be what they are not.

In the case of Orlando, the youth seems to have reached the breaking point of his disguised self-control at the opening of the play. His complaints to Adam show that, rather than actively trying to be what he is not, he had been passively accepting the "disguising" of his true position as Sir Rowland's son imposed upon him through Oliver's treatment of him. His remarks imply that he has endured for some time this condition that hides his genteel self in an enforced disguise of rusticity. At this point, he is not quite sure how to remove the disguise. He also seems to have some difficulty in perceiving exactly who or what he is underneath the disguise; he continually refers to the spirit of his father within him. He can as yet only understand his own identity in terms of his heritage and the qualities in himself that are like those of his deceased father; he has no clear idea of self without the context provided by Sir Rowland.

The means that Orlando settles on as the way to remove the disgraceful disguise given to him from Oliver is to go to court, disguised, in order to challenge Charles, the court wrestler. The point of the disguise is not made clear, and its success is questionable: Charles knows before Orlando even comes to court that this youngest son of Sir Rowland is the wrestler. Although after he has triumphed over Charles, Orlando proudly asserts his identity as Sir Rowland's son, he seems to "mine" his own "gentility" by at first keeping his name a secret. However, the disguise is probably at first merely a device to allow Orlando access to Duke Frederick's court without being turned away at once simply on the basis of his identity as the son of an enemy to the ruler.

Before and during the wrestling match, both Rosalind and Celia are impressed with Orlando, concerned for his safety, and hopeful for his success. Both definitely also find Orlando attractive. But after the match, when Orlando's identity is revealed, Rosalind takes Orlando to be "hers" because of the friendship between their respective fathers. Significantly, immediately before the match, Rosalind says to Orlando, "Pray heaven I be deceived in you!" (I.ii.186).<sup>2</sup> Her wish is granted. She

is deceived in underestimating Orlando's strength, but she is also deceived in thinking Orlando to be only a good-looking, strong, bold young man. As the son of Sir Rowland, her father's beloved friend, Orlando is her political ally, thus more "hers" than Celia's. Rosalind perceives herself and Orlando to have an immediate and strong bond because of their heritages and their true selves that are being repressed.<sup>3</sup>

The events of the meeting of Rosalind and Orlando at court rehearse the events of their relationship in the forest, except that at court it is Orlando who is disguised; in the forest it is Rosalind. At court, the unidentified Orlando inspires warm feelings in Rosalind, who has a potential rival for his affections in Celia until Orlando's true identity is known. In the forest, Orlando has warm feelings for Rosalind as "Ganymede," who is loved by Phebe until "Ganymede" 's true identity is revealed. Thus the use of physical disguise by Rosalind is foreshadowed in the less complicated use of "disguise" of political withholding of identity by Orlando.

In trying to forge Orlando into an unrefined menial, Oliver wishes to make Orlando "disguise" himself as a servant like Adam. Although Orlando rejects the proffered role-model, in his rebellion against Oliver he styles himself in the manner of another character, Charles the wrestler. Some parallels between Charles and Orlando can be noted. Each sees physical strength as his means of making a place for himself in the world. In stressing his physical powers, each diminishes the importance of his other characteristics in the eyes of those who observe him. Charles is often considered to be merely a ruffian by many critics; Rosalind and Celia habitually refer to Orlando as the "wrestler."

By understanding that Charles is himself also making use of a kind of disguise, we can resolve some of the difficulties seen in his character by several commentators. Although often called by critics an "inarticulate brute," Charles actually displays considerable nobility of spirit in the concern for Orlando which he expresses to Oliver. Furthermore, Charles' description of Duke Senior's forest life, often read as being merely a crude means for exposition in the play, actually shows that Charles admires Duke Senior and his life of (as Charles supposes) romantic freedom. Rather than being "evidence" of Shakespeare's uncorrected revision, the discrepancy between Charles' behavior with Oliver and his behavior at court should be understood as an indication that, in order to provide for himself, Charles must play a part. Wrestling is an approved form of entertainment at court because it is a metaphor for the political overthrow by force through which Duke Frederick gained his power.<sup>4</sup> Seeing that Duke Frederick's

court offers a place for someone with his kind of talent, Charles exploits his natural ability and artfully disguises his political antipathy. At court, he acts the brute in order to fulfill the expectations of a brutal ruling class. Orlando sees the same opportunity.<sup>5</sup> He wants to succeed at court in order to free himself from one kind of disguising, but he cannot maintain the disguising of his political sympathy as well as Charles does.

Another minor character at court, Le Beau, also disguises his sympathies in his outward show. During his initial conversation with Rosalind and Celia, Le Beau seems to be merely a longwinded, insensitive fop. However, when he converses with Orlando after the wrestling match, Le Beau gives the youth a succinct and comradely warning, hoping to meet him again "in a better world than this" (I.ii.274). His astute warning to Orlando about Duke Frederick's moods suggests his implicit hope for the tyrant's overthrow. Like Charles, then, Le Beau is playing a part, disguising himself in order to provide a place for himself at court.

If Orlando, Rosalind, Charles, and Le Beau are aware of the need to disguise their attitudes at court, so are the power figures, Oliver and Duke Frederick, extremely sensitive to the strategy of disguise. During and after his conversation with Charles, Oliver reveals to the audience his own use of several levels of disguise. While disguising his true feelings about Orlando, Oliver says that he has tried "by underhand means" (I.i.135) to discourage his brother from wrestling Charles. He lies about Orlando's character, disguising the youth's true good nature in a shroud of supposed villainy. Rather than using "underhand means" to prevent Orlando from wrestling, Oliver underhandedly tries to allow the match to proceed and to provoke Charles into eliminating Orlando for him. In his soliloquy following the conversation, we see not only Oliver's true undisguised attitude, but also that he somehow attributes his own lack of popularity to Orlando.

In Duke Frederick, we see another man who is obsessed with the disguising of attitudes. Because he himself had been disguising his negative feelings about Rosalind for so long, he assumes that she is disguising her treason. Again, because he, like Oliver, fails to perceive that naturalness and uncomplicated goodness make for popularity, he suspects those who seem to be natural and good to be putting on a disguise to cover their subversive aims. His excuse for banishing Rosalind is that she disguises Celia's brightness and virtue in the people's eyes, because their attention is distracted by pity for Rosalind. His real reason, made explicit in Shakespeare's source,

Lodge's *Rosalynde*, is that he is worried that Rosalind will marry and that her husband will try to reclaim the power in her name. This reason is implied in *As You Like It*, because Duke Frederick is not provoked to act against Rosalind until after the son of his enemy has appeared and has caught Rosalind's eye. Duke Frederick, then, not only induces the need for disguising in his subjects, but he also disguises his own attitudes and reasons for his actions. The obsession of both Duke Frederick and Oliver with disguised attitudes sets the tone for the court scenes and creates a context for the physical disguises that result when disguised attitudes are no longer sufficient.

The necessity for the assumption of physical disguise by Rosalind and Celia is a direct result of Duke Frederick's banishment of Rosalind on the grounds that she disguises her political motives. He saw Rosalind as being disguised when she was not. By assuming a disguise, in one sense she then embodies his conception of her. She chooses, however, to become "Ganymede," the beloved page of Jove. Ganymede's loyalty and love toward his master could not be questioned. By "becoming" "Ganymede," Rosalind demonstrates that she is a loyal and loving subject. The disguise allows her to be what she is naturally, with the layer of disguise projected upon her by Duke Frederick removed. However, by "becoming" a man, *she-he* could claim the dukedom. In V.iv.28-29, Orlando reveals that when he first saw "Ganymede," he thought that "he" was a brother to Rosalind. As her own "husband" or "brother," Rosalind could become the "traitor" that Duke Frederick suspects her to be: one who could reclaim what her father had lost.

Similarly, Celia's choice of a disguise allows her too to become more fully what she is by nature. At court, she is forced to disguise her alienation from the behavior and attitudes of her father, Duke Frederick. By translating her name from "Celia," which means "heaven," to "Aliena," "the estranged one," she demonstrates her change from her lofty position of power to her chosen position in banishment from "his Grace," her father. In "poor and mean attire" and with an umber-besmirched face, Celia shows her voluntary assumption of poverty and her self-conscious besmirching of herself as daughter. She prefers to be alienated, poor, and colored by disgrace in her father's eyes than to seem to be like him.

By recognizing that the disguising of attitudes leads to physical disguise that releases a character's true identity, we can then understand why the Clown seems to change so much from court to country. The change in the Fool's behavior has been unjustly attributed to Shakespeare's supposed haste in composition, his supposed



faulty revision, and even to the fact that Will Kempe left Shakespeare's company at about the time that *As You Like It* was composed. Shakespeare, it is sometimes suggested, had to alter the role to suit the talents of Kempe's replacement, Robert Armin, and the Bard then simply forgot to change the "low" comedy of the Clown at court (composed for Kemp) to match the "high" comedy of Touchstone in the forest.<sup>6</sup>

Critics concerned with these arguments usually forget that the Clown is never referred to by name at court and that introducing his first appearance in the forest (II.iv.1) is the stage direction "Enter Rosalind for Ganymede, Celia for Aliena, and Clown, alias Touchstone." "Touchstone," then, is a newly created identity, just as "Ganymede" and "Aliena" are. The Clown should be granted the liberty to express himself more freely in the forest than in the court which is granted by commentators to Rosalind and Celia.

Although the Clown does not seem to use much, if any, physical disguise (Jaques refers to him as a "motley fool" in II.vii.13), Touchstone is in some respects best equipped for a life of deception. At court, he is sometimes on the brink of being whipped for revealing satirical attitudes toward Duke Frederick's rule; however, we learn after he has departed that the Clown had usually managed to make himself agreeable to the usurper (II.ii.8-9). Also, his speech at court in I.ii.69-70, 72-77 points the way toward the subtleties of disguise that Rosalind will achieve as "Ganymede." After he is asked by Rosalind to "unmuzzle" his "wisdom" or show his undisguised logic, the Clown tells Rosalind and Celia to stroke their chins and swear by their beards that he is a knave. When they do, swearing by what they do not have, the Clown reveals to them that they have just learned the secret of how to lie successfully: "if you swear by what is not, you are not forsworn" (II. 73-74). Although Rosalind will not assume a beard as part of her disguise, she will incorporate the Clown's lesson into it. Whatever she swears to as "Ganymede," even if it is an expression of her most undisguised feelings as Rosalind, she is always protected against being "forsworn" as a disguised maidenly Rosalind by making her statements on the basis of what she is not, a man.

In Arden, physical disguise is also assumed by Duke Senior and his followers and by Orlando. The stage direction for II.i (the first forest scene) tells us that we meet "Duke Senior, Amiens, and two or three Lords, like Foresters." In II.vii another stage direction reveals that Duke Senior and his Lords enter "like outlaws." Of course, "foresters" and "outlaws" could perhaps have been used almost interchangeably, but as a stage direction only once specifies the

disguised disguises of Rosalind, Celia, and the Clown, it is possible that the Duke and party are dressed differently in the two scenes. When dressed as foresters, the Duke and his followers fit Charles' previous description of them as being like Robin Hood and his men. The audience has its conception of how the group should look realized. However, as they are dressed as "outlaws" in II.vii, the scene in which Orlando encounters them, their appearance justifies *his* supposition that he is in an "uncouth" forest in which "all things" are "savage." As the people he comes upon are dressed like outlaws, Orlando acts like an outlaw himself. In III.ii.43 Celia will describe Orlando, as she has just seen him, as being "furnished like a hunter." By this time, some of the audience's romantic illusions about Duke Senior's party will have been discarded. Presumably, being now part of the Duke's group, Orlando will be dressed as they are. The group is seen to be neither primarily innocent, jolly "Robin Hood" followers, nor villainous outlaws. They can, however, definitely be characterized as *hunters*—not only after deer, but also after ways to accommodate themselves to their exiled condition. Orlando will also be hunting for the fulfillment of his love, as noted in Rosalind's symbolic interpretation of his costume: "O ominous! He comes to kill my heart" (III.ii.244). The array of the Duke and his group, then, ultimately represents them according to their role in nature. Orlando, specifically, as a hunter, has now assumed an outward semblance that reflects his inner identity better than had the "disguise" forced upon him by Oliver.

Although Orlando takes up the role of lover in the forest, "Ganymede" tells him in II.ii that he is not properly dressed for the part. He is "rather point-device in [his] accouterments" (l. 375.) According to "Ganymede" 's description of the lover, the "hose should be ungartered . . . bonnet unbanded . . . sleeve unbuttoned . . . shoe untied, and everything . . . demonstrating a careless desolation" (ll. 371-74). Of course, Rosalind plays a role while she describes a role. As "Ganymede," she satirizes the traditional presentation of a lover; as Rosalind, she tells Orlando that his looks more suggest his loving himself "than seeming the lover of any other" (ll. 375-76), in order to call forth protestations of love from him. Orlando's excessiveness in love is revealed in his poetry, not in his costume. He need not "disguise" himself as a lover, because he *is* a lover. Ironically, he instead neatly wears the costume of the hunter, while he is unwittingly being hunted by the disguised Rosalind. Beneath her "Ganymede" disguise, Rosalind is evidently pleased that Orlando is not so foolish as to pose as a lover by means of his disguise, while she grants herself

the liberty to exploit her own attire in order to test the depth of Orlando's love.

Although commentators often speculate on the reasons for Rosalind's maintenance of her disguise after she is in the forest and has met Orlando, the explanation is quite simple. When she meets Orlando, she has only been in the forest a short time and has not yet found her father. She may consider that she is still in danger—if not from the forest's residents, then from being found by Duke Frederick's men. When she first hears of Orlando's presence in the forest, she is confused about what to do about her disguise: "What shall I do with my doublet and hose?" (III.ii.217-18). As Orlando appears before she can answer this question, she is thus instantly inspired to "speak to him like a saucy lackey, and under that habit play the knave with him" (ll. 291-92). Early in their encounter, she gives Orlando a definite clue that she actually *is* a woman, by telling him that she dwells "here in the skirts of the forest, like fringe upon a petticoat" (ll. 331-32). She seems to be willing to give up her disguise if Orlando can see through it. As he does not, she then makes full use of it in her complicated role-playing that is to follow.

As has been shown, then, Rosalind's physical disguise is echoed by the disguises of Celia and the Clown, and the disguises have their roots in the disguisings of the true self in the unnatural world of the court. The tyranny of Duke Frederick and Oliver resulted in a masking of the natural personalities of Rosalind, Celia, the Clown, Orlando, and even Charles and Le Beau. The tyrants, however, are not in their power free to express themselves naturally but must also resort to the disguising of their motives. The shift in attire in the Duke Senior group in the forest reveals the characters' seeking after the best outward demonstration of their internal reality, as does Rosalind's disguise as "Ganymede." Orlando undergoes several stages of disguise in his transformations, from being an aristocrat disguised as a menial, to being disguised at court as a wrestler, to being a lover "disguised" as a neatly attired hunter. But it is of course Rosalind who exploits the potentials of disguise most fully. What was undertaken as a necessary response to the false identity imposed upon her became the perfect vehicle for testing and teaching Orlando. While disguised as "Ganymede," Rosalind then poses as "Rosalind," in order to pose further as one who will "cure" Orlando of his lovesickness, and this last pose actually masks her truer identity as one who desires the youth's love above anything. She thus constructs layers of disguises, with some reflecting her "true" self more than others, but with all indicating some of her own characteristics. Through this layering, Shakespeare seems to be

indicating the levels of real and disguised feelings that an intelligent woman may have toward her lover. She can simultaneously mock his excessiveness and cherish it. She can "identify" with him through her own "masculine" tendencies (and thus gain a larger perspective of the relationship), while at the same time indulging in her "feminine" feelings of passion. The poses of Rosalind, then, can be seen as being enhanced versions of the poses that many intelligent women take in love, with the manifestations here given outward form through disguise.

The disguises of Rosalind, however, also emanate out into the furthest reaches of identity and creativity. By creating "Ganymede," Rosalind provides herself with a homosexual rival for Orlando's affections, as well as providing Silvius with a homosexual rival for Phebe. Rosalind recreates herself as an actor with parts to play in several pageants, splits herself into a variety of characters. Through her disguises she becomes an artist whose mind shapes several identities. She must then step aside and let her work deliver her meaning, which is why she delegates power to Hymen in the masque that reveals her "true," if diminished, identity.

The masque of Hymen has often been misunderstood, criticized as a superfluous, gratuitous intrusion into the play. Actually, it is integral to the consummation of the play's statement on the relationship between nature and art.<sup>7</sup> The masque simultaneously represents the play's "moment of truth" and its height of artifice. Music, poetry, song, and the unrealistic presence of Hymen compensate for the removal of the artifices of Rosalind and Celia, who become again their "natural" selves through art. In her last moments as "Ganymede," Rosalind promises "to make all this matter even" and again "To make these doubts all even" (V.iv.18, 25). However, it is Hymen who makes things "even" by presenting Rosalind and Celia as their real selves; he adds that it is *he* "must make conclusion / Of these most strange events" (ll. 109, 126-27). By this act he seems to usurp Rosalind's role. He is a "new" character; we are not told whether he is Corin or some other character in disguise, which he may well be. The characters and the audience are to suspend disbelief and accept him as the God of Marriage. Yet the characters are less amazed by his presence than by the simple truth of Rosalind's and Celia's identities. Hymen's recapitulation of Rosalind's statements indicate that he is the last identity created by Rosalind. She began by recreating herself as "Ganymede," the page to a god, and she concludes by creating a god, or at least by making him, or an illusion of him, appear. She gives up artifice after she has finally created a work of art that is larger than herself but that

shows her to be a person taking her place in society with others, subject to the laws of nature. The masque epitomizes what the play has suggested throughout: that human beings need art in order to realize their natures fully. It is through art that we are struck by the wonder of nature.

The complexities involved in disguise seem to the "made even," or resolved, in the masque, but still another layer of the problem of the relationship between disguise and truth or art and nature is uncovered in the epilogue.<sup>8</sup> In it Rosalind reveals that "she" actually *is* a male. The audience members who had enjoyed the dramatic irony of characters' thinking "Ganymede" a boy now see the play as having pulled an ironic trick upon them. Of course, contemporary audiences "knew" that boys played female's parts, but the epilogue forces the audience to acknowledge the truth behind the convention, the "disguise." But even this revelation is not allowed to be final, as Rosalind in this last speech is really both sexes. She denies being a woman, but by her curtesy at the end, she again seems to be one. She further makes both a heterosexual and a homosexual advance to the audience in offering to kiss some of the men if she were a woman, which she is and is not by being Rosalind. She can only be male and female, character and actor, through art and its disguises. By stripping off her last layer of disguise, Rosalind shows her ultimate identity as the spirit of art, which must use human nature—the artist, the actor, and the audience—as its medium and its subject. Just as nature and art merge in the disguises of the characters of *As You Like It*, so does the art represented by Rosalind merge with the "nature" of the audience members in her offer of sexual interplay with them.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See F. H. Mares, "Viola and Other Transvestist Heroines in Shakespeare's Comedies," in *Stratford Papers, 1965-1967*, edited by B. A. W. Jackson (Hamilton: McMaster Univ. Library Press, 1969), pp. 96-109; Kent van den Berg, "Theatrical Fiction and the Reality of Love in *As You Like It*," *PMLA*, 90 (1975), 885-93; Margaret Boerner Beckman, "The Figure of Rosalind in *As You Like It*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 29 (1978), 44-51; Nancy K. Hayles, "Sexual Disguise in *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*," *Shakespeare Survey*, 32 (1979), 63-72; and Shirley F. Staton, "Female Transvestism in Renaissance Comedy: A Natural Perspective, That Is and Is Not," *Iowa State Journal of Research*, 56 (1981), 79-89.

<sup>2</sup>All quotations from *As You Like It* are from the Signet Classic Edition, edited by Albert Gilman (New York: New American Library, 1963).

<sup>3</sup>For speculation on the relationship between Duke Senior and Sir Rowland, see David G. Byrd, "Shakespeare's Familiaritie Between Sir Rowland and Duke Senior in *As You Like It*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 26 (1976) 205-06.

<sup>4</sup>Ralph Berry interprets the wrestling match to be a strikingly appropriate figure for covert power struggles in the play. See his "No Exit from Arden," *Modern Language Review*, 66 (1971), 11-20.

<sup>5</sup>For information on the traditional choices open to Orlando as the youngest son, see John W. Draper, "Orlando, the Younger Brother," *Philological Quarterly*, 13 (1934), 72-77.

<sup>6</sup>See, for example, T. W. Baldwin, "Shakespeare's Jester: The Dates of *Much Ado* and *As You Like It*," *Modern Language Notes*, 39 (1924), 447-55; and Charles S. Felver, "Robert Armin, Shakespeare's Source for *Touchstone*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 7 (1956), 135-37.

<sup>7</sup>For other views on the meaning of the masque of Hymen, see Sylvan Barnet, "'Strange Events': Improbability in *As You Like It*," *Shakespeare Survey*, 4 (1968), 119-31; Marilyn L. Williamson, "The Masque of Hymen in *As You Like It*," *Comparative Drama*, 2 (1968), 248-58; David A. Griffin, "Deus Ex Machina in *As You Like It*," *American Notes and Queries*, 9 (1970), 23-24; and Alan Brissenden, "The Dance in *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*," *Cahiers Elizabéthains*, 13 (April 1978), 25-34.

<sup>8</sup>For other analyses of the epilogue, see Alvin Thaler, "Shakespeare and the Unhappy Happy Ending," *PMLA*, 42 (1927), 736-61; and R. Chris Hassel, "Shakespeare's Comic Epilogues: Invitations to Festive Communion," *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, 8 (1970), 160-69.



## THE CROWN SCENE IN *HENRY IV, PART 2*

Edmund M. Taft, IV\*

**ABSTRACT.** Recent critical responses to the crown scene in *Henry IV, Part 2* have been well off the mark. Source changes and a close reading of the scene itself both confirm that the center of interest lies in history, especially political history. In a misleading and fallen world, the truth of history is often buried, and the simple "facts" about the past can mislead us about its essential nature. One limited solution to this problem occurs in the private world, where emotional authenticity can override political necessity. In such instances, the heart may speak freely, lending a kind of emotional truth to what is said. Thus, we learn in the Jerusalem Chamber that neither Hal nor Henry are usurpers, and we are prepared for the Rejection Scene, during which the truth of the heart is squarely on the side of Sir John.

Key words: Hal, Henry IV, Falstaff, history plays, Shakespeare, misleading, heart, *Henry IV, Part 2*, second tetralogy, political plays.

A close examination of the crown scene in *Henry IV, Part 2* reveals that Shakespeare constructs this important confrontation between Hal and Henry around two central ideas. First, the meeting between the king and his son shows that the outlines of the past—the "bare facts" of history—can be inherently misleading. Indeed, the "facts" may even point toward the very opposite of the truth about the past. Second, the reconciliation between Henry and Hal suggests a limited solution to the problem of how to discover historical truth: in the private world—where public crowds are absent, and where rhetorical concerns are limited—the spontaneous testimony of the heart, of deep and genuine emotion, verifies the essential truth of the past, though lingering doubts and questions are sure to remain. In my view, these two insights into the nature of historical truth form the core of *Henry IV, Part 2* and reveal a playwright intensely interested in the developing discipline of history itself—an interest he shares, of course, with his near contemporaries, the Tudor Chroniclers, and with his exact contemporary, Samuel Daniel.<sup>1</sup>

That Shakespeare took great pains with the crown scene seems clear enough from the careful way in which he revised his sources. When the great historian Ralph Holinshed wove the stealing of the crown into his narrative, he was careful to guard against either the notion that Hal coveted his father's crown or the idea that the prince

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wished for Henry's death. In Holinshed, everyone thinks that the king has died, and so he is covered with a linen cloth before Hal enters. Because Shakespeare omits these details, he also omits the reasonable response that Holinshed attributes to the prince: "Sir, to mine and all mens' judgments you seemed dead in this world, wherefore I as your next heir apparent took that as mine owne, and not as yours."<sup>2</sup> Instead of a linen cloth, Shakespeare uses the stage convention of a feather, with the interesting result that Hal thinks his father dead and, as knowledgeable patrons of the theater, so do we.

In the anonymous *Famous Victories*, reconciliation between father and son precedes the "theft" of the crown, and therefore when the prince "steals" the symbol of kingship, he is already "borne new again" (l. 580).<sup>3</sup> Thus, in this earlier play, seizing the crown is a simple mistake, and nothing more. In fact, Henry admits in this source play that he probably did seem dead.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, Shakespeare reverses the sequence of events he inherited and thereby puts into question the very action that the author of the *Famous Victories* sought to explain away. This change necessitates that the audience for Shakespeare's play remember Hal's "theft" of the crown and match this recollection against the competing interpretations of Henry and Hal, both of whom offer explanations about the meaning of what the prince did.

A third major source for this episode, *The Civil Wars*, stresses the ambiguity and ambivalence that other authors try to avoid. Samuel Daniel's Hal takes the crown "As if unwilling longer time to lose" (BK.III.121.8),<sup>5</sup> a cryptic but suggestive line. Hal "stole" the crown out of impatience; for whatever reasons, the prince felt that it was time for him to assume the throne. Shakespeare assigns this interpretation to Henry, who poignantly asks his son,

Dost thou so hunger for mine empty chair  
That Thou wilt needs invest thee with my honors  
Before thy hour be ripe? (IV.v.94-96)<sup>6</sup>

Despite the care with which Shakespeare modified his sources, modern criticism either avoids the issue of "stealing" the crown or is hopelessly divided on the subject. Apparently indebted to Ernst Kris, Philip Williams argues that Hal displaces his patricidal wishes onto the crown.<sup>7</sup> In short, Henry's worst fears are correct. Harold C. Goddard claims that the prince's act demonstrates that he has become infected with "dynastic pride and the poison of power."<sup>8</sup> Goddard strongly suggests that Hal is a liar and a hypocrite, a perception

that Robert Ornstein seems to share in his study of the history plays.<sup>9</sup> Sigurd Burckhardt insists that the crown itself is the central issue because it symbolizes two mutually exclusive models of reality that Shakespeare could not reconcile.<sup>10</sup> Most recently, John W. Blanpied concludes that “stealing” the crown is a ritualistic act in which Hal unconsciously yearns to murder his father while Henry wishes to be absolved, in the religious sense of that word, from the terrible sin of usurpation.<sup>11</sup>

None of these interpretations is convincing. The source of critical difficulty lies in not accentuating the great interest in the emerging discipline of history, especially political history, which Shakespeare and his audience shared. In other words, John Heminge and Henry Condell, the two actors who worked with Shakespeare and who helped put out the First Folio, knew what they were doing when they classified the second tetralogy as plays about history. That is exactly what they are. Although not as famous (or infamous) as the rejection scene, Hal’s “theft” of Henry’s crown is the central episode in *Henry IV, Part 2* because in it Shakespeare demonstrates that any outline of history, even of the most recent history, can be inherently misleading. In such instances, the motions of the heart point toward truths that our limited understanding of the past obscures. But these motions are only allowed to surface in the private world—in this instance, during the intimate conversation between a father and his son. Here, unlike the rejection scene, there is seldom a “necessary” attitude to take; there is no crowd that must, at all costs, be shown a miraculous “change”; and there is only an occasional need to simplify or distort the past to insure psychological health and optimism.

Shakespeare sets up the “theft” of Henry’s crown so that we view the action mainly from Hal’s perspective. The prince receives the news that Henry is “exceeding ill” just after a series of events and observations that establish a dark and somber mood, a mood which prefigures death. Henry faints on stage; Warwick offers what reassurance he can to Clarence (IV.iv.114-17); Clarence, however, is sure that death is imminent (IV.iv.117-20); then Gloucester speaks of strange occurrences that any Elizabethan would interpret as portents signifying the death of kings:

The people fear me, for they do observe  
 Unfather’d heirs and loathly births of nature.  
 The seasons change their manners, as the year  
 Had found some months asleep and leapt them over.

(IV.iv.121-24)

Next, Clarence confirms our impression that Henry's end is near by noting the unnatural behavior of the Thames which, "old folk" say, happened once before when Edward III died (IV.iv.125-28). Finally, we see Henry carried—"Softly, pray" (IV.iv.132)—to the side of the stage, after which Clarence observes, "His eye is hollow, and he changes much" (IV.v.6).

At this point we cannot know that Shakespeare is about to unfold the old story about "mis-taking" the crown; indeed, no obligation existed to include it. What we do know—or think we know—is that Henry's death will occur any second. Therefore, the audience expects—as does the prince—that these are the king's last moments:

Why doth the crown lie there upon his pillow,  
 Being so troublesome a bedfellow?  
 O polish'd perturbation! golden care!  
 That keep'st the ports of slumber open wide  
 To many a watchful night, sleep with it now!  
 Yet not so sound, and half so deeply sweet,  
 As he whose brow with homely biggen bound  
 Snores out the watch of night. O majesty!  
 When thou dost pinch thy bearer, thou dost sit  
 Like a rich armor worn in heat of day,  
 That scald'st with safety. By his gates of breath  
 There lies a downy feather which stirs not.  
 Did he suspire, that light and weightless down  
 Perforce must move. My gracious lord! my father!  
 This sleep is sound indeed, this is a sleep  
 That from this golden rigol hath divorc'd  
 So many English kings. Thy due from me  
 Is tears and heavy sorrows of the blood,  
 Which nature, love, and filial tenderness  
 Shall, O dear father, pay thee plenteously.  
 My due from thee is this imperial crown,  
 Which as immediate from thy place and blood,  
 Derives itself to me. (*Puts on the crown.*) Lo where  
     it sits  
 Which God shall guard; and put the world's whole  
     strength  
 Into one giant arm, it shall not force  
 This lineal honor from me. This from thee  
 Will I to mine leave, as 'tis left to me. (*Exit.*) (IV.v.21-47)

Hal's immediate focus on the crown has troubled some critics who conclude that the prince harbors patricidal wishes. A closer look at what Hal says, however, reveals that he actually offers a split focus: the crown and the crown's effects. Because these effects can only be defined as care and worry, Hal must see the crown itself as a duty or obligation. Moreover, the effects of the crown simultaneously point toward the past and the future. Hal sees in Henry's sick and wasted condition not only the price kingship has exacted from his father, but also the price the crown will soon exact from him. Consequently, there is little room in Hal's meditation for lusting after the crown or for wishing Henry dead. Instead, the prince offers an analysis that, if anything, conceals the private wish for this burden to be lifted from him. In the simplest terms, who wants a future full of care, worry, and sleepless nights? Only duty, symbolized by the crown itself, commits a man to such prospects.

The audience also recognizes that Hal's apostrophe to the crown echoes Henry's earlier apostrophe to sleep (III.i.4-31). Both speeches stress that kingship demands constant vigilance: the man wearing the crown necessarily forfeits the easy repose of the most humble subject. Whereas Henry understands the costs of kingship only after long years of bitter experience, Hal demonstrates to the audience that he already knows the enormous burden of the crown and its effects on the mortal man beneath it.

Hal's observations about kingship convince us that he is ready to inherit the crown. When, therefore, Shakespeare introduces the Elizabethan stage convention of the feather, two expectations seem fulfilled: as we sensed, Henry's death has come; and the moment when the prince becomes king is at hand. Now Hal finds himself torn between the private and the public world. As a son, Hal needs to express through grief the bond of love that unites him to his father. As the new king, Hal must demonstrate the continuity of kingship and give evidence of his commitment to England.

The prince fulfills these obligations in a carefully balanced, complex response to Henry's "death." At first, like any grief-stricken son, Hal shows surprise and sorrow at his father's passing: "My gracious lord! my father!" The caesuras here strongly suggest that Hal shakes his father and tries to revive him. Only when the prince's worst fears seem confirmed does he distance himself and reflect on how this death fits into the overall cycle of English history: "this is a sleep / That from this golden rigol hath divorc'd / So many English kings." As we all do in moments of great emotional stress, the prince enumerates his proper duties to gain additional perspective. Unlike the rejection

scene, he does not have to choose one duty over another. Hal will first discharge his public duty by putting on the crown and then immediately retire to fulfill his private duty by mourning Henry's death.

Why does Hal actually put on the crown? Throughout *Part 2* the motif of guarding the crown has surfaced again and again, in John's comments after Gaultree Forest, in Henry's command to put the crown by his pillow, and, indirectly, in the general concern about succession and the state of England that suffuses this play. Hal's response, therefore, fits into this overall pattern, and his action also symbolizes and marks the pince's ascent to the throne, a moment the audience has been eagerly awaiting. Finally, to put on the crown is to forecast the future, to promise fidelity, continuity, and strength, all of which the prince vows in his final, thrilling lines to the audience (IV.v.43-47).

The ending of *Henry IV, Part 1* demonstrated that even a prince can be misled. Falstaff's timely fall not only saved his life but also fooled the prince—and perhaps the audience as well. In *Part 2*, both the prince and the audience clearly have been misled. With Henry's feeble cry—"Warwick, Gloucester, Clarence!"—the audience senses, probably for the first time, that this is Shakespeare's version of the old tale about "stealing" the crown—a puzzling story so far because, as both the spectators and the prince know, Hal has done nothing wrong; he was simply misled by events in this strange and confusing fallen world.

Now the "theft" of the crown becomes an act in the past remembered by us and by Hal, but interpreted at first by Henry. Although the king's bitter diatribe shocks us by its length and intensity, we have no difficulty understanding why Henry feels as he does. The king knows only the bare outlines of what happened. While he was asleep, everyone but Hal left the chamber. The crown that Henry put by his pillow is now missing, and the prince must have taken it. The king combines these "bare facts" about the past, which seem to carry their own implication about the prince, with Hal's public reputation as a royal wastrel and concludes that the worst has happened:

*Prince.* I never thought to hear you speak again.

*King.* Thy wish was father, Harry, to that thought:  
I stay too long by thee, I weary thee.  
Dost thou so hunger for mine empty chair

That thou wilt needs invest thee with my honors  
 Before thy hour be ripe? (IV.v.91-96)

As Henry sees it, Hal's nature has fallen into revolt because gold was its object. The prince wanted the king dead so that the crown would be his. Henry's version of events underscores the vast gap that can exist between the truth of the past and its interpretation in the present, even when the incident in question occurred only moments ago.

Like all of England, Henry is misled about his son. In *Part 2* the entire past from Richard's unkinging to the present has become a misleading muddle seemingly devoid of hope, and the symbol of lost hope is the profligate Prince of Wales. Therefore, Henry reflects the fears of "every man," who sees Hal as the incarnation of "riot." Unable to detect any sparks of greatness and royal blood in Hal's past, "every man" projects this lack of hope into an imagined future of disorder and chaos:

O my poor kingdom, sick with civil blows!  
 When that my care could not withhold thy riots,  
 What wilt thou do when riot is thy care?  
 O, thou wilt be a wilderness again,  
 Peopled with wolves, thy old inhabitants! (IV.v.133-37)

Because of Hal's "theft," Henry has now lost all hope.

Time and again in *Part 2*, an essential truth surfaces whenever the motions of the heart become manifest. Amid the welter of confusing reports about Shrewsbury, Northumberland could see the truth of Hotspur's death in Morton's face, "thou tremblest, and the whiteness in thy cheek / Is apter than thy tongue to tell thy errand" (I.i.68-69). The ironic fencing between Hal and Poins gave way to a moment of truth when the prince disclosed his heart, "But I tell thee, my heart bleeds inwardly that my father is so sick, and keeping such vile company as thou art hath in reason taken from me all ostentation of sorrow" (II.ii.47-50). The great valediction to Falstaff—with the moving words of the Hostess and Doll's heartfelt tears—revealed Sir John's role as a life-giver to all around him. And the motions of the heart led Mowbray to predict the terrible perfidy at Gaultree Forest, "There is a thing within my bosom tells me / That no conditions of our peace can stand (IV.i.181-82).

Logical retrospection by itself cannot choose between Henry's version of what happened and Hal's. This dilemma has led some critics to see the prince as a hypocrite and others to see this entire scene as forced or clouded.<sup>12</sup> For two reasons, however, the audience knows that Hal tells the truth as best he can. First, we have shared with the prince the experience of "stealing" the crown. And, second, we sense the motions of the heart in Hal's tears, a refutation of Henry's accusations even while he speaks them. Thus, we believe the prince when he vows,

God witness with me, when I here came in,  
And found no course of breath within your Majesty,  
How cold it strook my heart! (IV.v.149-51)

Hal's recapitulation of the past is not perfect—no rendition of events ever is. The prince reports that he immediately thought Henry was dead and only then did he speak to the crown. We remember that the opposite is true. Hal's recollection of what he said about the crown is also faulty; in reality, the prince saw the crown as the symbol of royal duty and as the cause of care. Now he says he saw the crown as a murderer and as an enemy to contend with. The careful observer cannot help but note that even the most recent event is subject to distortion when it is retold. However, the sensitive observer also understands why these misleading particulars occur. First, the double shock of discovering Henry dead and then discovering that he is not dead dominates Hal's consciousness and therefore colors the past, as recent as it is. Second, Henry's charge that Hal hungered for the crown causes the prince to stress the degree to which he perceived the crown as an antagonist, as an "enemy" rather than a "friend." Given the circumstances and the faulty nature of memory, who could report exactly why and what he said? In fact, Hal never answers Henry's most fundamental question, "But wherefore did he take away the crown?" (IV.v.88). We remember that the prince carefully balanced his duties to the "memory" of Henry and to England, but how can Hal explain this to his father without sounding as if he *were* impatient for the crown? He cannot, and so he does not. Sometimes, we see clearly, circumstances prevent disclosing the whole truth.

At some level Henry recognizes that his son's motivation for taking the crown remains unanswered, but the king is rightly convinced of the emotional authenticity of his son's response. Therefore, Henry invents a cause for Hal's action that may or may not be true:

O, my son,  
 God put it in thy mind to take it hence,  
 That thou mightst win the more thy father's love,  
 Pleading so wisely in excuse of it! (IV.v.177-80)

Perhaps. Perhaps not. This interpretation, however, confirms the emotional closeness to his son that the king now feels, and this new rapport leads in turn to the most accurate assessment so far of Bolingbroke's reign:

God knows, my son,  
 By what by-paths and indirect crook'd ways  
 I met this crown, and I myself know well  
 How troublesome it sate upon my heart. (IV.v.184-86)

Critics hostile to Bolingbroke usually quote only the first two and one-half lines, which is misleading.<sup>13</sup> Out of context, Henry may seem to confess that God is aware of his guilt in using devious means to seize Richard's crown; but in context, the king contrasts what God knows to what he knows: Henry is aware of the history of rebellion that took place during his reign. However, only God understands the process whereby Bolingbroke attained the crown. The king also recognizes accurately how public opinion judged the replacement of one king by another, "It *seemed* in me / But as an honor snatch'd with boist'rous hand" (IV.v.190-91, emphasis added). Like many of the tragic heroes later in the Shakespeare canon, Henry achieves only a partial understanding of the past, and this is not enough to wipe away all of his guilt.

The proof that Henry tries to be as honest as he can occurs when the king admits that his hopes for a crusade were double-edged. Foreign quarrels, the dying king whispers to his son, are designed to keep the reigning monarch reigning. The king's confession is remarkable because we know from an earlier appearance that Henry genuinely longs for a crusade to wash away his guilt. For the moment, however, Henry puts aside this motivation in order to stress another, even more deeply buried, reason why he hoped to wage a holy war. The king's objective was to "waste the memory of the former days" (IV.v.215) because it seemed the cause of continuous rebellion. Just as the bare outline of events misled Henry about Hal's "theft" of the crown, so, in retrospect, the bare outline of Richard's deposition misled many of Henry's subjects, who rebelled because they mistakenly concluded that Bolingbroke was a usurper. In fact, Henry's



lingering guilt shows that even he is tempted to believe Richard's version of the past, "How I came by the crown, O God forgive, / And grant it may with thee in true peace live" (IV.v.218-19).

The prince responds to his father's remaining doubts by prepresenting the past in its most positive light:

My gracious leige,  
You *won* it, wore it, kept it, and *gave* it me;  
Then plain and right must my possession be,  
Which I with more than a common pain  
'Gainst all the world will rightfully maintain.

(IV.v.220-24, emphasis added)

Like the end of Hal's apostrophe to the crown, these lines are thrilling because they build on the past to assert a strong, positive view of the future. Yet Hal's use of *won* and *gave* subtly changes the outlines of the past. How Bolingbroke "met" the crown remains a mystery to those who have not seen *Richard II*: at any rate, Bolingbroke did not win it. Moreover, Hal took the crown before his father could die and give it to him. Nonetheless, Hal's revisionism consoles his dying father and provides a blend of truth and fiction, at best a version of the past, that leads to renewed hope for the reign to come.

The overall effect of the crown scene is to lessen ambivalence because in the privacy of the Jerusalem Chamber both the "true" prince and the "real" Bolingbroke reveal themselves and their past. Public opinion about both men is misleading; Henry is not the usurper that many think he is, and Hal is not the profligate that everyone takes him for. These basic truths emerge, however, against fearful odds. The mere outline of the past, whether it be Hal's "theft" or Henry's, is inherently misleading, and only in the private world can the heart aid in filling in the gaps in history. The two-part structure of this "theft"/reconciliation scene also emphasizes that Hal cannot look to the future without in some way "resolving" the past. Henry could never put the past to rest during his reign, and so it continued to haunt him in the form of constant rebellions. In the private world, Hal has effectively refuted Henry's misapprehensions, but soon the future king must demonstrate his "new" virtue in the public world, first with the Lord Chief Justice while the court watches, and then with Sir John Falstaff while the coronation crown looks on.

In this latter instance, it is essential to remember that Sir John reveals his heart openly, if impolitically, and that the new king, politically, must do exactly the opposite.

<sup>1</sup>For a fine discussion of why Tudor Chroniclers considered the past misleading, see F. J. Levy's *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library Press, 1967), p. 169. For Levy's comments on Samuel Daniel's view of the past, see p. 277.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 316.

*Hen. 4.* Stand up my sonne,  
Thine answer hath sounded wel in mine eares,  
For I must need confesse that I was in a very sound sleep,  
And altogether unmindful of thy coming. . . .  
(*Famous Victories*, ll. 662-65)

<sup>6</sup>All quotations from *2 Henry IV* come from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

<sup>7</sup>Ernst Kris, "Prince Hal's Conflict," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 17 (1948), 487-505; and Philip Williams, "The Birth and Death of Falstaff Reconsidered," *SQ*, 8 (1957), 359-66.

<sup>8</sup>Harold C. Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 196.

<sup>9</sup>Robert Ornstein, *A Kingdom for a Stage: The Achievement of Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 163-66.

<sup>10</sup>Sigurd Burekhardt, *Shakespearean Meanings* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p. 183.

<sup>11</sup>John W. Blanpied, " 'Unfathered heirs and loathly births of nature': Bringing History to Crisis in *2 Henry IV*," *ELR*, 5 (1976), 212-31.

<sup>12</sup>Blanpied, for example, thinks that IV, v, depends on “dream” logic (p. 223). Burckhardt (p. 181) and Ornstein (p. 166) make similar comments.

<sup>13</sup>For instance, see Ornstein, p. 166; Burckhardt, p. 172; and Edward I. Berry, "The Rejection Scene in *2 Henry IV*," *SEL*, 17 (1977), 201-224: "The shapers of history usurp crowns; its victims happen upon them:

God knows, my son,  
By what by-paths and indirect crook'd ways  
I met this crown. . . . (IV.v.183-185)

Henry IV would rather be time's victim than his own" (pp. 213-14).



## BOOK REVIEW

Shao, Paul, 1983. *The Origin of Ancient American Cultures*. 374 pp., 430 ills., Iowa State University Press, Ames, IA. Cloth (ISBN 0-8138-1288-7) \$42.75.

This volume, like its predecessor (*Asiatic Influences in Pre-Columbian American Art*, 1976; see review by David H. Kelley in *Quarterly Review of Archaeology*, vol. 2, no. 4, p. 9, 1981), is a difficult work to review. The author is one of a small minority of scholars engaged in a neglected, unorthodox and academically unprofitable pursuit: showing that contact with the Far East had a perceptible effect on cultural development in the Americas and, particularly, Mesoamerica, well after the initial peopling of the western hemisphere, but well before the arrival in it of Europeans.

Most scholars disagree with that thesis, not because they have examined the evidence in detail and found it wanting, but because the models they favor leave little room for such events in explaining cultural change. Their complacency needs to be shaken, and any attempt to do so within the bounds of adequate scholarship and common sense must be welcomed, particularly if one believes, as I do, that contacts of this nature did, in fact, occur.

I find myself in sympathy, therefore, both with the author's goals and several of his ancillary positions. Like Shao, I am impatient with the irrelevant, emotional and narrow-minded view that to acknowledge the possibility of such contacts is somehow to belittle the accomplishments of native Americans. Moreover, as Shao explicitly states, contact does not explain everything. Under some conditions, it may even have no effect whatsoever.

Nonetheless, fundamental reservations must be raised concerning Shao's approach to his subject, as conveyed in the relatively short text (some twenty pages, followed by a bibliography of about equal length) which supplements the volume's many illustrations. Peppered with such expressions as "holistic continuum proposition," "gestalt correlational system," "articulative ceramics," and "negative subsistence-settlement-demography pattern," that text often obscures more than it clarifies the author's intent. What does come through, however, is disappointing in what it reveals both of the author's method and of the theory behind it. It suggests that Shao has been unable or

unwilling to assimilate either the concepts or the terms needed to communicate with his fellow-scholars in American archaeology. One looks in vain for any systematic discussion of the points of method or of theory most crucial to the author's purpose. How was the evidence he presents recognized as relevant? What does it contribute to the problem at hand? How does one evaluate its strengths and weaknesses? Are there any difficult decisions to be taken in interpreting it, and what of other scholar's opinions on the matter? The issues are many, and range from the coding of attributes used in such comparisons to how and why change takes place in art and in culture. The reader will find here few telling arguments, no methodological insights, and little nourishment generally for the Cartesian mind. He will not even find satisfactory definitions of the 17 themes used to organize the visual material which constitutes the core of the work and which, in the author's estimation (and in mine as well) illustrates the influence of Chinese thought and art on the cultures of the New World and, particularly, Mesoamerica.

It would be a mistake, I believe, to dismiss the information conveyed here by more than 400 photographs and drawings as insignificant, or irrelevant to the understanding of America's past. The value of this material cannot be assessed on the basis of a text which the author has deliberately, and perhaps wisely, "kept . . . to the minimum." One should question, indeed, the appropriateness of some 33 figures which present lithic materials and other evidence related to the initial peopling of the Americas. Their relationship to the remainder of the volume is tenuous, the problems they raise are altogether of a different kind, and the author is not a prehistorian. The other pictures in Shao's book, however, constitute a valuable and challenging corpus which should be seen and pondered by all those interested in New World culture history.

On the Chinese side, illustrations are drawn mainly from the Shang (1500—1000 B.C.) and Zhou (Chou; 1000—250 B.C.) periods, though Neolithic, Han, and later materials are also shown. On the American side, the style most abundantly represented is the Olmec of Mesoamerica (1500—1150 or 800 B.C. in calendar time, depending on the region), though other styles and periods are called upon to provide parallels with Chinese examples. They range from Preclassic and Classic Maya in Mesoamerica to Chavin and others in South America, and to the wood carvings of the Northwest Coast in North America. Many Americanists are certain to be bothered by the scatter of this evidence in time and space. Parallels which involve the Northwest Coast, in particular, may be seen as raising yet another

problem, distinct from that of links between China and Mesoamerica. Within the latter area, however, which provides the vast majority of the visual parallels offered, I believe it is defensible to treat the iconography as a common fund shared by several regions and periods, and to draw upon it accordingly for outside comparisons.

What are we to conclude from the fact that the early iconographies of China and Mesoamerica represent humans and animals with several of the same attributes of costume, posture and physique, including flame eyebrows and cleft heads (with and without plants growing out of them), that they share as well a repertory of arbitrary and complex motifs which Shao calls the eye-paw-wing, the mouth cross and the sun-eye, and that they represent dragons with saurian and feline attributes in similar positions and contexts?

Such questions, which have been raised before and, in particular, by such scholars as Robert Heine-Geldern and Gordon F. Ekholm, will not go away. The materials assembled by Shao reiterate them with insistence and on the basis of abundant evidence, much of it previously unpublished. Yet it is doubtful whether anyone today can provide a coherent, convincing account of the manner in which these parallels arose. Shao evidently believes in sporadic and involuntary landfalls by boatloads of refugees from the Chinese periphery, contributing specific elements of symbolism and belief to what was already, in some degree, a shared cultural tradition going back to Paleo-Indian times. Factors he does not consider include what Robert Rands has called "pattern elaboration" (essentially, the limitation of possibilities within the framework of a selective elaboration of particular themes or sets of elements), and the functional requirements of particular activities, types of society or grades of evolutionary development. All are likely to account for some of our observations, and none is likely to provide a simple or complete explanation of all of them.

It is a task for the future to weigh the respective contributions of these factors to the parallels noted by Shao and others. It will require a breakdown of the images compared into constituent elements; inventories of latter by provenience and context; the formulation of rules governing their combinations in the styles under comparison; the attribution of the evidence to units of time and space appropriate to the scale of the question raised; evaluation of this evidence in the light of cross-cultural and other criteria; and an even-handed review of alternative and complementary hypotheses designed to account for our observations. Analysis along such lines should help identify and sharpen some of the hinge questions which must be answered if a

satisfactory solution is ever to be found for the broader problem. It is doubtful that it can do more, at least in the near future, for we know too little of the functions of art or of the constraints which determine its content and formal characteristics.

Meanwhile, we should be grateful to Shao for gathering together the mass of evidence presented in this volume. We can only regret that he was not more successful in sharing with us his own vision of it, by guiding the eye and mind of the reader to make him see what Shao himself sees in these materials. It is a service which archaeologists badly need, particularly in the New World, and which art historians such as Shao are uniquely qualified to provide. "Visual illiteracy," as Shao points out, is indeed rampant among those who commonly deal with this evidence. It is also clear that the 400 or so figures in this volume are replete with information which needs to be identified explicitly to be exploited. Rather than discussing broad problems of cultural origins, one wishes the author had told us where to look and what to see in his illustrations. As it is, he succeeds in providing us with a valuable sourcebook of visual material, which will intrigue even the reader with an untrained eye, and should point the way to further, more narrowly-focused investigations.

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