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## *Direct Address and Double Dealing: A Study of Subversive Stage Convention*

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**M**ONOLOGIC discourse must be as old as the history of drama itself. Even today, in storytelling cultures such as Africa and elsewhere, the singular performer is a commonplace. As a singular performer he, and it is more usually a “he”, demonstrates a capacity to transform himself from narrator into character, commentator, animal, god, spirit and even, sometimes, into a natural event. In the Tudor period, one can also point to a multiplicity of forms of such modes of discourse in the drama as prologue, epilogue, soliloquy, aside, message—a kind of solo narrative—and to figures like Rumour, Time and Chorus. Most often these kinds fall into the category of direct address to the audience, the aspect of performance with which this paper is concerned. Problematically, it is vital also to recognise that such discourses are communicated as much through the attitude, body and voice—the style—of the performer as through the mere verbal content of the message. These we can, of course, only recover hazily from the written evidence of the texts which we have inherited. Furthermore, although our own practice may usefully inform such hypothetical “restoration”, one of the limitations of an article is that even this restorative practice can only be made manifest at a further remove, through written description. However

well fashioned, such description will, like the chewing gum on the bedpost, offer even less flavour of the effect, affect or indeed effectiveness which may be adduced from such monologues when performed. With this reservation in mind, and making an earnest appeal to readers to recover memories of the experience of actual performances as best they can, this paper will embrace the task of representing what purports to be a theatrical, that is, a performed convention.

To begin with an example, here are the opening nine lines of Hamlet's first soliloquy:

O that this too too solid flesh would melt  
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,  
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God! God!  
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!  
Fie on't, ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden  
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature  
Possess it merely. That it should come to this! (I. ii.129-37)

The most familiar notion of soliloquy is that it is a private musing, overheard by the audience, and intended to reveal something of a character's inward state of mind. It is thus a convention which dramatises the internalised debate, the thought process, the emotional truth otherwise submerged beneath the demands of social propriety. Manfred Pfister goes so far as to interpret Hamlet's soliloquies as a specific, possibly deliberate reflection of character, of, as he puts it "his sense of isolation, his problematic individuality, and his tendency to indulge in introspection" (p. 134). A convention of writing and performance has become itself an indicator of an inferred psychological condition.

If, then, we interpret soliloquy as synonymous with interior monologue, let us imagine it performed instead as direct address. Immediately expectations are subverted. Direct address shifts our perception and reception of the words; they acquire a more direct import for us. As members of the audience we will feel ourselves shifted from spectatorship, from a somewhat distanced, reflective and rather judgemental perception, to one of nearer engagement, a position in which, phenomenologically, we become more closely aligned with the character's predicament. That is, although the words remain the same, and our sense of the character's inward struggle remains intact, the meaning is experienced differently; a disturbance of our perception occurs which gives greater scope to

the power of the imaginary world of the play. Our positioning as audience is less secure. The distance from the character and the action on stage has been subverted in favour of greater involvement. Direct address also gives greater authority to the character and, and perhaps especially, to the performer, who, to their mutual advantage, achieve power over the audience. It is to examine the scope and scale of this power as it may have been exercised in drama of the sixteenth century that this paper aspires.

Now, I freely admit that the genesis of this paper was a performance given at Warwick Arts Centre of Peter Brook's *La Tragédie d'Hamlet*. Amongst a great number of significant surprises, the play set off from the soliloquy cited above. The production, therefore, dispensed with the opening scene on the battlements, the first appearance of the ghost, and the whole of Claudius' *apologia* for his and Gertrude's "o'erhasty marriage" (II.ii.57). Furthermore, the soliloquy was transformed in its function and meaning, as I have previously tried to indicate, by the fact that William Nadylam, the black Hamlet, delivered it as direct address to the audience. Thus the erstwhile "soliloquy", the internal monologue, introspective device, was transformed into a dynamic interplay with the audience. The whole process of the question of Hamlet, to borrow Harry Levin's engaging title, took on a very different meaning as it progressed. The audience found themselves as much the subject of the questions raised as did the characters. This was especially true even in the ending, when all the dead rose up again from the floor, advanced upon the audience and, directly addressing them in one voice, pronounced the key first question of the play, not abandoned, as we had imagined, but re-visioned: "Qui est là?". In light of this, my main point would be that direct address had played a significant part in foregrounding not only issues of the moral and consequential notions of appearance and reality, mother/son/lover relationships or revenge, but also, in the experience of the performance, the way we had understood the relationship between the performance and ourselves, the way that the idea of *communitas* had been incorporated within the experience of theatre. In his *The Shifting Point*, Peter Brook makes this clear:

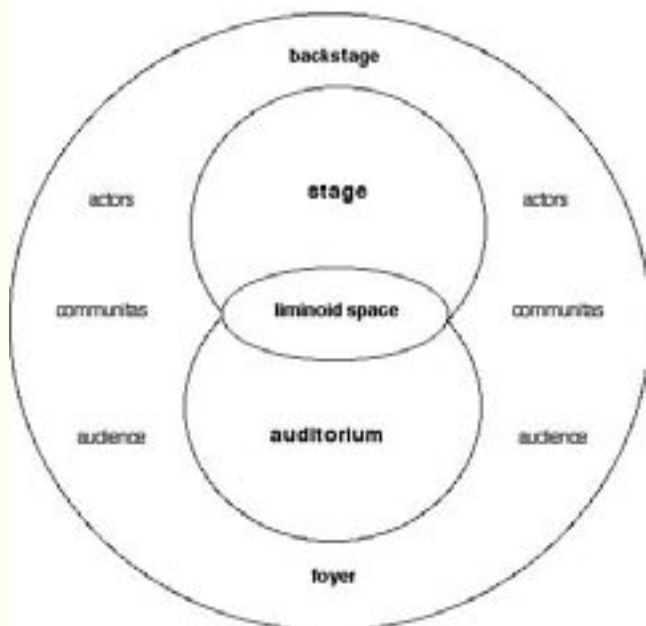
The theatre must get away from creating another world, beyond the fourth wall into which the spectator can escape. It must attempt to create a more intense perception at the heart of our world. If one wants the actor to be on a level with the world of the spectator, a performance has to become a meeting, a dynamic relationship. . . Theatre only exists at the precise moment when these two worlds—that of the actors and that of the audience—meet. (pp. 235–36)

And within that statement is encapsulated another belief of Brook's, mythical perhaps, that the Tudor theatre in general and Shakespeare in particular somehow embodied this principle, a principle which has, in the course of history, been lost and which Brook himself has sought to recover.

The subversive nature of the convention of direct address relates to the theme of "outsiders within" most directly when confronting this idea of *communitas* in theatre. Erving Goffman promotes his analysis of social performance through the use of a theatrical paradigm, and borrowing from him we can imagine, first, a diagram with a containing circle (Fig. 1). The outer circle represents the larger concept of *communitas*, the embracing concept of a "culture" which, with all its loopholes and adventitious occurrences, is where we may be said to belong. Contained within the outer circle are two smaller circles overlapping in the manner of a Venn diagram, which can be a model for that singular event which we call theatre and which may be interpreted as a microcosm of the larger *communitas*. One circle is the actors' space; the other belongs to the audience. Each has two divisions, what Goffman would call a "front" and a "backstage". The audience once in the auditorium follow the conventions of spectatorship; the actors on their stage follow conventions of performance. In their respective "tiring rooms" they return to more relaxed and familiar social interactions, no less rule-determined, perhaps, but separated from each other and thus free from the theatrical conventions described above.

However, if audience members behave in a way which diverges from the conventions of spectatorship, as Erasmus pointed out, they outlaw themselves and deserve either to be restrained or forcibly removed. By the same token it could be argued that an actor who steps out of the spectacle to engage the audience with direct address is guilty of a similar solecism, transgressing the agreed order of the theatre. The actor becomes, in that sense, an outsider, however momentarily, to the performance. He inhabits what Victor Turner terms a liminoid

Figure 1



space betwixt and between the performance and the audience, where the rules, if they exist at all, will be ill-defined, a space in which, potentially, anything could happen. In stepping outside in this fashion, the actor/character becomes a double dealer, apparently subverting the performances of his fellow actors and pretending to fellowship with the audience, even acting as a sort of go-between. Yet there is, even in this, an underlying dishonesty, because direct address most often appears founded upon the assumption that audiences will be powerless to respond in contravention of the conventions of spectatorship. So direct address asserts a certain relationship of power, in which the actor/character is privileged to a high degree, in contrast to the audience and to his fellow characters/actors. Paradoxically, in these circumstances, the actor usually retains sufficient residue of his fictional self for the audience to accept his duality, his double dealing, his subversion of the fictive “truth”, and his fellow actors often seem to behave as if they hadn’t even noticed. All of which would seem to indicate that this double dealing must be regarded by everyone involved as in some way acceptable and fulfilling a function which is both allowed and sustaining of the larger frame of the performance. While it has to be admitted that not every play exhibits this convention of direct address, a review of a few select examples from the Tudor repertoire will give support to the general point and also demonstrate how it may have been differently put to use with different implications in a range of different theatrical environments.

Beginning, then, near the very end of the historical period, there is a strong reason for looking at the case of Iago. He is given a very special place of privilege in relation to the audience, and his moments alone with them provide a significant amount of plot material, as well as character self-presentation. In Act I, Roderigo and the audience hear from Iago that he is not what he is. In his first monologue at the end of Act I, the audience is presented through Iago with his intention to lead the Moor by the nose. The character confirms for us how he makes “my fool my purse” (I.iii.381), how he can gain advantage of Othello, who “holds me well” (388) and has “a free and open nature” (397), how his planned revenge is gradually formulating, and how “Hell and night / Must bring this monstrous birth to the world’s light” (402). Early in Act II, he rehearses and amplifies this theme for the audience:

That Cassio loves her, I do well believe it;  
That she loves him, ’tis apt and of great credit:  
The Moor, howbe’t that I endure him not,

Is of a constant, noble, loving nature;  
 And I dare think, he'll prove to Desdemona  
 A most dear husband: now I do love her too,  
 Not out of absolute lust, (though peradventure  
 I stand accountant for as great a sin)  
 But partly led to diet my revenge,  
 For that I do suspect the lustful Moor  
 Hath leap'd into my seat, the thought whereof  
 Doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards,  
 And nothing can, nor shall content my soul,  
 Till I am even with him, wife, for wife:  
 Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor,  
 At least, into a jealousy so strong,  
 That judgement cannot cure. (II.i.281-97)

It is not difficult to accept that these monologues are in fact directly addressed to the audience. We are given information, our understanding of the situation is led along, that information is inflected in ways which suit the character, for sure, but also operate through the duality of an exchange between the play-world and the world of the performance: Iago is intermediary to our developing perception of the fictive world which he inhabits. The character is speaking behind the backs of the other characters and opening up a sphere of action which we are invited to watch as it unfolds. The frequently asserted parallel between Iago's behaviour and that of the sixteenth-century Vice figure adds to this impression. Iago's duplicity is both a character trait and a subversive element in our viewing of the play.

A second example from Act IV shows how this becomes, in the course of the play, extended into an assumption of the audience's complicity in his plots and actions:

*Iago.* Now will I question Cassio of Bianca;  
 A housewife that by selling her desires  
 Buys herself bread and clothes: it is a creature  
 That dotes on Cassio: as 'tis the strumpet's plague  
 To beguile many, and be beguil'd by one.  
 [Enter Cassio]  
 He, when he hears of her, cannot refrain  
 From the excess of laughter: here he comes:  
 As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad. (IV.i.93-100)

By this point in the play, he behaves as if he can assume that we, the audience, are prepared to go along with this act of deception. He acts as an obliging Master

of Ceremonies introducing us to a performance which will lead Othello forward to the extremity of his jealousy. Through the means of direct address, the character of Iago is able to draw the audience into the toils of the murderous situation which has been created by him. The audience is, one might say, abused by this behaviour, and their capacity to judge Othello is subverted. Through the infringement of the liminoid space between stage and auditorium, the audience has been gradually and almost innocently, yet irresistibly, drawn in as accessory to the plot to bring Othello down.

But moving on from consideration of this late manifestation of the Vice, we can see in earlier examples how the principle of direct communication with the audience may be put to similar use. *Arden of Faversham*, for instance, gives good examples of this in practice. Alice has two monologic speeches in the opening scene. They each exhibit a clearly expressive function and might be considered soliloquies. She is certainly revealing the “set” of her character to the audience—her animosity and murderous intent towards Arden himself and her passion for Mosby. However, the writing of the speeches suggests that the actress is expected to share the words with the audience rather than speak them for herself. The second speech is especially interesting:

[Exit Adam]

Alice. Do, and one day I'll make amends for all.

I know he loves me well but dares not come

Because my husband is so jeal[i]ous,

And these my narrow-prying neighbours blab,

Hinder our meetings when we would confer.

But if I live that block shall be removed,

And Mosby, thou that comes to me by stealth,

Shalt neither fear the biting speech of men

Nor Arden's looks. As surely shall he die

As I abhor him and love only thee. (i.132-40)

Occurring as it does in an interval between one character's leaving and another's arriving, the speech is almost like an aside, a secret revelation to the audience of a subtextual message. Despite this invitation to interpret this “aside” as a version of interior monologue the first five lines seem, on the contrary, to suggest direct address, particularly the use of the indicative reference to “he”, “my husband” and “these my narrow-prying neighbours”. The use of “he”, “my” and “these” seems to locate Alice almost physically between the audience and these signifi-



cant others in her life. Similarly, her apostrophe of Mosby in the last four lines acquires a more dynamic meaning as an experience shared with the audience rather than as an expression of a personal and interiorised state of mind.

The significance of this is made more evident when considered beside other uses of monologue within the same play. In Scene iv, Franklin offers the audience an image of Arden in a state of “fretful jealousy” (iv.41). He paints a living portrait of his friend’s physical and mental torments. “What grievous groans and overlading woes / Accompanies this gentle gentleman” (42-43), he says, following with an itemisation of actions suited to Arden’s mood: the shaking of “his care-oppressed head”, his eyes cast up “towards the Heavens” seeking “redress of wrong”, his words involuntarily cut off as he is reminded of “his wife’s dishonour” (44-51). All of this arrives at the summary, “So woe-begone, so inly charged with woe / Was never any lived and bare it so” (54-55). It has the power of a messenger speech whose only recipient can be the audience. The playwright is pleading sympathy for the victim of a murder still to be committed. The pull of the *communitas* to which I have referred is here powerfully present, and by this means the audience is recruited to Arden’s cause. It is most surprising, therefore, that two lines later, after Franklin has retired, this sympathetic portrait is followed by a monologue from Michael:

Conflicting thoughts encamped in my breast  
Awake me with the echo of their strokes;  
And I, a judge to censure either side,  
Can give to neither wished victory.  
My master’s kindness pleads to me for life  
With just demand, and I must grant it him;  
My mistress, she hath forced me with an oath,  
For Susan’s sake, the which I may not break,  
For that is nearer than a master’s love;  
That grim-faced fellow, pitiless Black Will,  
And Shakebag, stern in bloody stratagem—  
Two rougher ruffians never lived in Kent—  
Have sworn my death if I infringe my vow,  
A dreadful thing to be consider’d of. (59-72)

In this evocation of “conflicting thoughts”, there is an expository principle at work which is not altogether dissimilar to Franklin’s previous portrait of Arden. We see here a sufferer in person juxtaposed with the previous image of a sufferer, and yet the character’s suffering is manifested through the logical representa-

tion of a series of apparently inescapable obligations. Incrementally demanding, they climax in a vision of terror in which Michael foresees not only the murder of Arden but also his own demise. He conjures the ruffians' "ruthless hands" and "daggers drawn", and Arden himself "pleading for relief" yet "mangled by their ireful instruments" (73-78). The previous picture of Arden's pathetic state has been extended through Michael's speech to encompass his murder. The audience, in other words, while being asked by Michael to engage with his personal moral entanglement, is in fact being worked upon as observers and judges of the anticipated crime against Arden. As well as foregrounding empathy for Michael's terror and revealing an interest in his state of mind, the monologue, despite its development into a waking dream, operates rather to enhance in the audience the fear of violence and the sympathy to be accorded to its victims. Achieving this sense of immediacy in the event through the medium of direct address—an effect no doubt reinforced by the topicality of the piece when it was first performed—foregrounds once again the significance of theatre as a microcosm of the larger *communitas*.

Retreating further into the century, the tragedy of *Cambyzes, King of Persia* offers further examples of interest with regard to direct address. The play may stand for a range of similar productions of the mid-century, and its possible performance at Court in 1560/1 places it within what might be termed, tentatively, a "tradition". Thomas Preston's play has in the course of history received more than its fair share of critical abuse because it is not Shakespeare, either in its poor command of verse forms, its awkward plotting of tragic and comic episodes or its shallow drawing of character. However, both in, and partly because of, such "weaknesses", it helpfully reveals something of how the period understood the relationship of an audience to its plays. The opening Prologue, for instance, while showing the characteristics of a varsity author, with its classical "authorities" and moralising lessons for an aspiring monarch, ends with a supplication to the audience craving "patience". The performance thus represents a kind of intrusion, however welcome, upon the time of the audience who are asked to give it welcome. The Prologue's final line, "I take my way. Behold, I see the players coming in" (35-36), reinforces this sense of the invasion of an existing situation by an alien group. The performance space, most probably a hall, then becomes a temporary environment shared between these two groups, the alien players and the insider audience. The existing community is given for a while a new dimension and dynamic.

This proposition can be tested further when the character of Ambidexter makes his appearance. Much has been written about the Vice figure, not least about his assumed relationship of intimacy with the audience, but there are a number of significant elements in the representation of Ambidexter which give insight into the contribution this figure makes to the overall effectiveness of performances of this earlier period. He announces himself, for instance, with “Stand away, stand away, for the passion of God!” (l. 126). This is unlike the more familiar “Make room”, and we quickly understand why. Ambidexter proceeds to show off his grotesque armaments—the stage direction gives an indication of the style with an “old capcase on his head, an old pail about his hips for harness” (ll. 125–26) and so on. We can only imagine the no-doubt extravagant gestures with the “rake on his shoulder”, for which space would be needed on the floor. The audience, of course, have also to be protected in some measure from the violence of the succeeding fights between Ambidexter and Huf, Ruf and Snuf. But my point is that the injunction to “stand away” makes sense only if the audience is understood to be within range of the action. This is, as I have indicated, most likely to be the case in the relatively informal audience arrangements of performance, where the stage space and the audience space would have been coterminous, that is in an aristocratic, school or university hall, and even at Court itself.

It is also clear from the text that Ambidexter will establish direct links with his audience. By turns he invites admiration for his absurd soldiership, complicity in his schemes to deceive other characters, sympathy for his discretion in face of the violence of Meretrix. He often provides a kind of moral commentary upon the action which has just passed or an introduction to that which is to come. His role, one way or another, is to put the audience wise, to oil the wheels of the performance as it proceeds. This is most apparent in his second main entrance, when he introduces himself with “Indeed, as ye say, I have been absent a long space” (l. 602). It is the “as ye say” which gives the game away, and the unspoken thought, “how clever of you to notice”. Could the writer have known that the audience would respond in this way? Possibly not, unless the text succeeded the performance. But the main issue is that if such a response to the reappearance of the popular figure of the Vice is probable, that is, to be expected, then his function may be somewhat different from that which may be inferred from an interpretation only of character or theme in the play. The context must be that we are concerned predominantly with peripatetic companies of actors. Each performance, therefore, is undertaken in circumstances close to those to which I have

referred. The players as “strangers” are invited into an existing community to perform. For their performance to be effective, in the sense of getting its message across, they have to establish very quickly a rapport with their host group. Such a rapport for Ambidexter comes about through his direct address.

Given the context of an informal playing space such as a room set up for the occasion, however, the idea of the liminoid space must be revised. Whereas in a purpose-built theatre that space can be located easily between stage and auditorium, the hall situation elides these areas. In the absence of a distinct division, the space between audience and actor is everywhere and nowhere. More to the point, it can be transgressed wherever and whenever an actor/character chooses to do so. So the audience is vulnerable to this proximity of the actor and as a result lives in a state of enhanced excitement. Paradoxically, this relationship also leads to a kind of camaraderie, which could be seen as an essential ingredient in the reception of the travelling players and the play. The Vice emerges as a significant means by which the play may be made acceptable to the established *communitas* in a situation which might otherwise be inhospitable, even hostile. Ambidexter, by name and nature, is the perfect double dealer, both with regard to the other characters in the fiction itself and, perhaps to greater advantage, with regard to the audience he encounters as his accomplices and friends. Thus it is that his direct dealing with the audience serves to give the Vice an uncommon status and real power.

Retiring still further into the sixteenth century, we come to the plays of John Heywood, specifically *Johan*, *Johan*. It is well established that the play is a translation of a French farce which stays close in content to its source text. While the convention of direct address in this case derives as much from a French as from a native theatrical tradition, it seems to serve a similar purpose to that noted already. From the audience’s point of view, it certainly privileges the speaker’s version of events. In this case, that means that the audience are persuaded at first that Johan’s indignation at his wife’s misbehaviour may be well-founded. Within a very short space, however, his hesitations and alternating assertions as to whether he should or should not beat his wife for her misdemeanours persuade the audience that he is also part author of his own predicament:

*Johan*. Beten, quoth a? Yea, but what and she therof dye?  
Than I may chaunce to be hanged shortly.  
And when I have beten her tyll she smoke,  
And gyven her many a[n] hundred stroke,

Thynke ye that she wyll amende yet?  
Nay, by our lady, the devyll spede whyt!  
Therefore I wyll not bete her at all -  
And shall I not bete her? No, shall. (ll. 19-26)

This shifting indecision is spun out for over the first hundred lines of the play. It is a comic *tour de force*, with the character at every new turn drawing the audience further into his perception and experience of the world. The direct address fulfils the functions of personal confession, apparently unconscious self-revelation and direct appeal to the audience's consciousness of a wider world of folly and moral failing. It provides a unique opportunity for the playwright to satirise a gossip culture, shrewish women, lazy, corrupt and corrupting priests and so on. It also depends upon the skill of the performer in characterising Johan's indignation, frustration, jealousy and ineffectualness, and in achieving the comic timing necessary to deal climactically with the arrival of his wife Tyb:

Johan. And whan she cometh home she wyll begyn to chyde,  
But she shall have her payment styk by her syde  
For I shall order her for all her brawlyng  
That she shall repent to go a catter wawlyng.  
[Enter Tyb]  
Tyb. Why, whom wylt thou beate, I say, thou knave?  
Johan. Who, I, Tyb? None so God me save. (ll. 107-12)

The comic force of Johan's instant deflation in face of Tyb's arrival derives as much from the rapport which has been established between himself and the audience as from the sudden reversal effected by her entrance and her challenge to his bravado. In this case, the dramatic authority built up over the opening scene passes almost instantaneously to the new character. Tyb now rules the roost. However, Johan's relationship with the audience, so thoroughly established, is never abandoned, and the *sotto voce* aside, direct address in a particular form, is endlessly exploited, as he tries time and again wishfully to reassert himself. Most especially representative of the intimacy of a hall performance, however, is the episode in which Johan goes to take off his coat in order to fetch trestles for the dinner table:

Johan. Abyde a whyle, let me put of my gown.  
But yet I am afrayde to lay it down,  
For fere it shalbe sone stolen—  
And yet it may lye safe ynough unstolen.

It may lye well here and I lyst—  
But by cokkes soule here hath a dogge pyst.  
And if I shulde lay it on the harth bare  
It myght hap to be burned or I were ware,  
Therefore I pray you take ye the payne  
To kepe my gowne tyll I come agayne.

But yet he shall not have it by my fay,  
He is so nere the dore he myght ron away;  
But bycause that ye be trusty and sure  
Ye shall kepe it and it be your pleasure;  
And bycause it is arayde at the skyrt,  
Whyle ye do nothyng—skrape of the dyrt.  
Lo nowe am I redy to go to Syr Johan... (ll. 242–58)

I make no apology for citing this negotiation with the audience at such length because it moves the discussion into the area of direct audience contact—a kind of extension, it may be said, of the principles of direct address. Examples of this kind of intimacy are a particular feature of play-texts of the early part of the century. With the performance space in such cases now condensed and shared between actor and audience, a necessary concomitant will be that there is more opportunity for such moments to occur. Inevitably, the play will be experienced as a more immediate event, in which theatrical time and actual time may be at any moment interchangeable. As Bert O. States remarks, theatre in whatever form “is not a matter of the illusory, the mimetic, or the representational, but of a certain kind of *actual*” (p. 46), but, I would argue, nowhere is this more so than in the circumstances of hall performance. Johan’s speech about his coat and where to leave it safely is a clear example of this “ontological confusion” (p. 47), poised between the actual and the virtual. The audience perceives the coat as belonging to the character in the fiction. This perception is then challenged when the actor presents his coat to members of the audience as if it actually existed. The playful suggestion that the coat might be stolen—that is, that this audience is not to be trusted—and the subsequent interplay with the man near the door belong to Heywood’s source. He has, however, added the lines which invite the person, as if he has nothing else to do while watching the play, to “skrape of the dyrt” with which the coat has become “arayde at the skyrt”. It feels as if we have been granted a brief insight into the realities of sixteenth-century theatre practice. Heywood must have understood what his actors could manage. He could

confidently write in a piece of interactive business with which their experience and skill would be able to cope.

Such interplay, pre-scripted or improvised and recorded, might well derive from the fact either that a household troupe is performing for its home crowd or that a visiting troupe has done its homework and knows how to exploit insider knowledge about particular individuals in the audience. Such “goosing” of familiar audience members is most obvious in Henry Medwall’s play *Nature*. There are a number of incidents of audience involvement recorded in this script, but one in particular stands out in Part 1. Pryde, chief sin in the play, who shows a remarkable likeness to successive Vice figures, arrives back on the scene after an absence. Rather in the manner of Ambidexter, he greets the audience like old friends and then proceeds to ask after the character Man, who has just gone off to the stews. After a brief exchange with Sensualyte and Slouth he turns to the audience and says:

Now must I to the stewes as fast as I may  
To fech thys gentleman!—but syrs, I say,  
Can any man here tell me the way?  
For I cam never there.  
Ye know the way, parde, of old!  
I pray thee tell me, whyche way shall I hold?  
Wyl ye se thys horson cocold?  
I trow he can not here!

Now yt were almes to clap thee on the crown! (II.400-8)

The approach to an individual (it all suggests someone of some seniority and dignity), the cheeky inferences made about knowledge of the stews, the obvious embarrassment and refusal to be drawn of the person so approached, the abusive “horson cocold”, the accusation of deafness, and, what must be the final indignity, the ruffling of the hair or, more likely, the patting of the bald head of the poor object of the joke clearly illustrate a subversion of the accepted conventions of performance, which, even in the most risky circumstances of direct address, would normally keep the actor and audience at a secure distance from each other. When the liminoid space, with its potential as a place betwixt and between, in which anything could happen, is itself transgressed to allow such an invasion of audience space, then the theatre event itself would appear to be stretched to the limits of its own conventions. The actual, the liminal and the

virtual are challenged to maintain an equilibrium in such a circumstance, where the power of the actor becomes paramount. But it remains remarkable that, far from destroying the pleasure and efficacy of the performance—the worry that Erasmus expressed—such moments seem paradoxically to enhance the audience’s engagement. The career of the character who has so transgressed is followed now with increased interest. His link with the audience is stronger than before.

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## *Out of Their Classical Depth: From Pathos to Bathos in Early English Tragedy, or, The Comedy of Terrors*

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WE—and this includes Stephen Greenblatt in *Hamlet in Purgatory* (pp. 152-53)—tend to take for granted the creaky neo-Senecan machinery of the ghostly framing device in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, if not to snicker at its naïveté, as Beaumont found it easy to do in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*: “When I was mortal, this my costive corpse/Did lap up figs and raisins in the Strand...” (V.303-4).<sup>1</sup> I propose to listen attentively to those creaks and to some of their reverberations through English tragedy from the late 1580s on. My excuse for doing so in the present context is that the spectre of Don Andrea and his companion Revenge are conspicuous “outsiders within” in at least two senses: with respect to the dramatic action, obviously, but also as instruments for superimposing a pagan eschatology upon a play-world that is nominally Christian.

That eschatology, I think, is not just classically kitschy decor; its very kitschiness is functional. So it more clearly is in, say, *Antonio's Revenge* ten years later, where a mannerist Marston evokes “Tragoedia Cothurnata” (II. ii.220) by way of obtrusive Senecan scraps and grotesque postures—witness Andrugio's Ghost: “I taste

1. Faser and Rabkin (p. 547, n. 29) also cite the echo of Clarence's ghost in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, V.iii.125.

the joys of heaven/Viewing my son triumph in his black blood” (V.iii.67-68). At such moments, encouraged by our sense of the boy-actors who played the roles, we can with reasonable confidence affix the label of parody. By comparison, the pagan trappings of *The Spanish Tragedy* seem to take themselves seriously, as if claiming to delineate a valid and coherent metaphysics. It is in this sustained cause that they protest too much, and, whether or not the pagans themselves took such fictions seriously—Seneca himself, in fact, pronounced them to be childish<sup>2</sup>—the cause is by definition a lost one for an Elizabethan audience.

Not only is the pagan eschatological framework of *The Spanish Tragedy* richly detailed—Andrea’s narrative account of Hades impressively confines in little room the mighty underworld descents of epic—but it gets the first and last words, and very extravagant ones they are. Its paganism also obtrudes regularly into the main action, notably by way of Hieronimo—from his multiply plagiarized Latin fantasia on suicide (II.v.67ff.), to the Senecan tags he opposes to the Bible’s “*Vindicta mihi!*” (III.xiii.1ff.), to his resolution to “Knock at the gates of Pluto’s court” (III.xiii.110), itself echoed by Isabella’s “sorrow and despair”, which “hath cited me/To hear Horatio plead with Rhadamanth” (IV.ii.28-29). It is Hieronimo’s resolution, of course, to take the infernal work in hand that spectacularly prevails, and his infringement on the divine monopoly of revenge might have been expected to guarantee his damnation. Instead, it surprisingly engages the pagan machinery on his behalf: Andrea’s ghost will personally “lead Hieronimo where Orpheus plays,/Adding sweet pleasure to eternal days” (IV.v.23-24), while his request that “sweet Revenge” (29) put his slain enemies in the place of mythology’s archetypal sufferers—Tityus, Ixion, Sisyphus (31, 33, 40)—meets with eager assent:

Then haste we down to meet thy friends and foes:  
To place thy friends in ease, the rest in woes.  
For here, though death hath end their misery,  
I’ll there begin their endless tragedy. (45-48)

Thus pagan eternity eclipses the Christian version—except that the glow of truth shines just brightly enough to build in the reminder that this hell is indeed a stage fable, standing in to some unknowable extent for one that is not. Balthazar will be left “Repining at our joys that are above” (38); Pedringano will “live, dying still in endless flames/Blaspheming gods and all their holy names (43-44). The audience receives a parting kick, as it were, in its willing suspension of disbelief.

2. See below, n. 13.

Literal belief in this fabulous hell is never in question, and we are accordingly free to laugh away its excesses, rhetorical and otherwise, as sheer literary inventions. But the laughter will be uneasy, precisely in proportion as classical fable is felt to shadow Christian truth. I think that this uneasiness and uncertainty would attach to theatrical ghosts throughout the period, however vaguely or outrageously Senecan, even if, as Greenblatt insists (esp. pp. 236–54), Hamlet’s father stands out as a purgatorial tease (at once declaring and withholding the horrible “secrets of my prison-house” and even using the word “purg’d” [Shakespeare, *Ham.*, I.v.13–14]). Even in his ultra-serious case, a nervous humour hovers in the air: “Alas, poor ghost!” (4). I would further extend this theatrical phenomenon to those early tragic protagonists whose grotesque excesses in both suffering and cruelty blur the distinction between serious and comic in dramatic universes nominally homogeneous, whether pagan or Christian. An Elizabethan audience is regularly cued to respond with something like the mixed belief and disbelief structurally imposed in *The Spanish Tragedy*. Thus, in the thoroughly pagan *Titus Andronicus*, Aaron imports a nagging Christian diabolism, while in the Christian-dominated *The Jew of Malta*, where religion is nevertheless up for grabs, Barabas’ destiny as a human tea-bag assimilates damnation to pagan “endless tragedy” by bringing, as it were, imagined underworld horror concretely, but also ridiculously, *up* to earth.<sup>3</sup>

Such mixed effects stem, ultimately, from a sign defiantly declaring its own disjunction from its signified, the deferral of meaning through the intervention of signification. A classicized eternity can never *be* the “promis’d end” of the Christian promise (or threat) but rather is doomed to remain the “image of that horror” (Shakespeare, *Lr.*, V.iii.264, 265)—a point self-reflexively made by the exchange of the pagan Kent and Edgar. Intervention in what? In, essentially, that unified medieval symbolic system that called a spade a spade, a devil a devil. Self-conscious representation changes the equation, humour included, by making the whole indeterminately greater, because infinitely less, than the sum of its

3. What for me is the crucial question of jarring metaphysical systems is simply sidestepped in traditional discussions of Senecan elements in Elizabethan tragedy, most recently that of Miola, even where, for instance, he cites Aaron as at once “swaggeringly Senecan” and descended from “other progenitors including the Machiavel and Vice” (p. 27). Nor is Miola at all concerned with the possible inflection of Senecan influence on English practice by “parallel uses on the Continent” (p. 10). By the same token, Seneca does not appear in the index of Cox’s work, the most recent full-length study of the diabolical tradition in English drama, which confines itself to “stage devils” and their direct descendants, viewed “in light of traditional demonological assumptions” (p. 2), both Catholic and Protestant.

parts. Of course, there was plenty of humour in the medieval stage imag(in)ings of that horror which purported to be not images at all but incarnations in action of “the thing itself” (*Lr.*, III.iv.106). The Last Judgement pageants abound in gleeful demonic recitals of sins committed and endless punishments in store; the Wakefield version is typical: “Now shall they have rom in pik and tar ever dwelland;/Of thare sorow no some, bot ay to be yelland/In oure fostré” (ll. 597-99). But, as a function of the divine comedy, to which the comic devils are in service, these are not endless *tragedies* in any pertinent sense of that term, and among the “warid wights” divided from the “chosen childer” (*Judgment*, ll. 528, 524), there is neither jesting nor cursing, but only the sorrowful echoing of the true Rhadamanth’s awful Word:

Alas, for doyll this day!  
 Alas, that ever I it abode!  
 Now am I dempned for ay;  
 This dome may I not avoide. (ll. 512-15)

As for those comic caricatures of worldly tyranny often labelled theatrical ancestors of Barabas, the joke is naturally, supernaturally, and metadramatically, on them, as, in contrast to *The Spanish Tragedy*, the ending of false revels reveals true ones—witness Diabolus in the N. Town *Death of Herod*:

This catel is min[e].  
 I shall hem bring onto my celle.  
 I shall hem teche pleyes fin[e]  
 And shewe such mirth as is in helle. (ll. 233-36)

If they acknowledge their endless ends at all, it is, like the Wakefield Cain, by ventriloquizing the moral:

Now faire well, felows all, for I must nedys weynd,  
 And to the dwill be thrall, warld withoutten end.  
 Ordand there is my stall, with Sathanas the feynd. (*The Killing of Abel*, ll. 464-66)

They may retain a touch of the bullying blindness that damned them—Cain can still manage to curse, “Ever ill might him befall that theder me commend” (l. 466)—but none goes out with boisterous defiance like Barabas (“Die, life! Fly, soul! Tongue, curse thy fill, and die! [Marlowe, *Jew*, V.v.89]) or Richard III (“let us to it pell-mell;/If not to heaven, then hand in hand to hell” [Shakespeare, *R3*,

V.iii.312-13]) or, for that matter, Macbeth: “Blow wind, come wrack,/At least we’ll die with harness on our back” (Shakespeare, *Mac.*, V.v.50-51). In dramatic universes that multiply replace Medieval certainties with more or less fantastic “dreams” figuring “the dread of something after death” (*Ham.*, III.i.65, 77), such bluster is not comically absurd, like that of Herod, for whom Death and devils visibly wait in the background; it *un*-Herods Herod by taking on the thrilling charge of eschatological risk, the one most of us run. It is only a small step to rendering that risk explicit through conscious unknowing, the abyss that gapes uncannily for the lost souls of *The Duchess of Malfi*; Julia may serve as spokeswoman: “I go,/I know not whither” (Webster, V.ii.283-84).

In terms of literary history, the master narrative here is the invention of English tragedy by grafting medieval traditions of representing comic evil onto re-“discovered” classical stock, particularly the models of Seneca, which supply the revenge motif and the proliferation of horrors. It is not surprising that such mixed breeding should branch off in incongruous metaphysical directions. But I also want to suggest that this hybrid, which flowers so abundantly and variously in the English theatrical climate from around 1585, is actually a transplant, and that its origins shed light on the cultural work it continues to perform in its new soil.

Even in adapting this potted metaphor, I am conscious of trying to coax new life into a wilted perennial; as early as 1911, after all, Elizabeth Jelliffe Macintire opined in *PMLA* that “English classicism”, which “made firm roots in Elizabethan soil”, was an “exotic” plant that “came of French stock” (p. 496). But her idea of what that meant was a rather restrictive one, to say the least:

The French mind tends to orderliness of idea and rule of procedure. It is the land of *convenance*. Hence, it is not strange that the notion of developing literature on some definite and well-conceived plan appears early in France. (Macintire, p. 498)

Quaint as the expression now seems, the prejudice is still built into official literary history and, with respect to drama, it continues to exercise much the same influence as it did on Macintire, who does not allow her discussion of dramatic literature to stray in the unruly direction of the theatre. The French contribution remains firmly circumscribed within what used to be conceived as the Sidney-Pembroke sphere of influence, decorously extending from Philip Sidney himself, who set out the rules in *An Apology for Poetry*, to Fulke Greville’s closet drama, to the Countess of Pembroke’s translation of Robert Garnier’s *Marc Antoine*, and more or less finally, to Samuel Daniel, with his unstaged *Cleopatra* and *Philotas*.

This is the neat little garden planted by Macintire (pp. 523–24), and subsequent criticism, by and large, has kept it carefully tended and free from weeds, on the comfortable assumption that flowers and weeds are different species. That assumption deserves to be delved to the root, and I propose to do my part here, not merely by extending French neo-classical influence to the Elizabethan theatre in its most public and popular form, but by de-classicizing, with due caution, French drama itself.

There is no question but that the Italians and the French were first off the Neo-Senecan mark, putting in place the generic scaffolding that enabled Sidney to praise *Gorboduc* (1561) as a trail-blazer, though more for its poetry “rising to the height of Seneca’s style” than for its faulty “circumstances” (p. 134). It is striking that Sidney, writing about thirty years later, found no more recent example of English neo-classical tragedy to praise, despite the appearance in the interim of translations of Seneca’s plays, while the corpus of original works in Italy and, especially, France was already considerable. The Italian avatars, beginning with Cinthio’s *Orbecce* (1544), are an obvious source of extravagant and sensationalistic horror. What the French ones, especially those of Garnier, most obviously contribute is serious political thought with immediate, if cautious, applicability, given the profuse bleeding of the body politic from those “wounds of civil war” whose very thought was painful to the English.<sup>4</sup> The apparatus of classical mythology, including the omnipresent motif of vengeance, is justified by classical historical settings but becomes a way of figuring the self-immolation of France through a concept that *anglicistes* are likely to think of as quintessentially Marlovian: the scourge of God. Diabolical forces of division are unleashed upon a nation that has abused the divine favour, with the implicit promise that, once due humility, piety, and virtue are restored—as seems never to have been the case in ancient Rome, at least—the incendiaries of discord will be consumed in the flame of God’s righteous wrath.

Garnier’s first tragedy, *Porcie*, first published in 1568, then again in 1574—a play that Kyd must have known, since he proposed to translate it as a sequel to his rendition of *Cornélie* in late 1593 or early 1594—proclaims its civil war theme through an opening invocation of discord by the Fury Mègère. The politico-reli-

4. Hence my allusion to the title of Thomas Lodge’s play (c. 1587–92) on the wars between Marius and Sulla, a precedent the French did not fail to apply to their own situation (though not, to my knowledge, in dramatic form).



gious redeployment of the Senecan device is striking compared with its use in *Gorboduc*, even if the latter's preoccupation is likewise civil war. There it is in the Dumb Show preceding Act Four that the three Furies (Alecto, Megaera, and Tisiphone) rise from hell, "each driving before them a king and a queen"—these include Tantalus, Medea, and (perhaps in compliment to Thomas Preston) Cambyzes—"which, moved by Furies, unnaturally had slain their own children" (Sackville and Norton, p. 92). The origin of public discord then, true to the Senecan model, is perverted personal passion resulting in unnatural crime. Not so with Garnier's Mègère, who lays her curse upon the whole Roman nation in envious despite of its collective "arrogance" (Garnier, l. 82):

C'est trop, c'est trop duré, c'est trop acquis de gloire,  
C'est trop continué sa premiere victoire:  
Rome, il est ore temps que sur ton brave chef  
Il tombe foudroyeur quelque extreme mechef. (ll. 89-92)

A splendid curse it is, moreover, rolling on in "the height of Seneca's style" for one-hundred-and-fifty Alexandrines, complete with the invocation of Alecto and Tisiphone, asked to give a respite to Tantalus, Sisyphus, Prometheus and company "Pour faire devaler ces troupes magnanimes/De leurs mortels tombeaux aux eternels abysmes" (ll. 69-70).

The accomplished rhetorical performance of Garnier's Mègère is neither a laughing matter nor incongruous as the induction to a sustained tragic treatment of a Roman theme. Such high seriousness in recuperating classical mythology in service to French national preoccupations is likewise sustained in the Pléiade's most notable effort at epic, the *Franciade* of Ronsard. But the all-too-obvious French relevance of rich Roman evocations of carnage—not only by Seneca but, explicitly in the context of civil war, by Lucan—as well as the temptation to dish out religious polemic in transparent pagan guise, also exerted a strong pull on writing of a less exalted kind. The result is neo-classical deviations from high seriousness—some no doubt inadvertent, but others not—that strike a chord with the grotesque comic element in early English tragedy.

In the year of *Porcie*'s first publication, a certain Pierre Du Rosier published a verse-pamphlet entitled *Déploration de la France sur la calamité des dernières guerres civiles, aduenues en icelle, l'an 1568*. This is an unabashed Catholic attack on Huguenot "rebels" as responsible for France's ills, and it is significant that the introductory

sonnet<sup>5</sup> puts the author in the company of both Ronsard and Garnier as hurling “vers foudrayans” at their adversaries: that is, then, what at least some contemporaries thought those two gentlemen of letters were doing at least some of the time. The mythological framework is a mingling of Christian and classical, complete with angry Jupiter, Bellona, and Furies, on the one hand, appeals to “Dieu” the “Seigneur”, on the other. Jupiter is asked why he wastes his thunderbolts on innocent rocks when he could be blasting the new race of Titans and the “periure teste” of the “Tyran” who leads them.<sup>6</sup> The partial answer comes in a comparison of this monster to a new Tamburlaine, “ce grand fleau/De nostre Chrestienté” (sig. B<sup>v</sup> [p. 10]).

The villain in question is named only indirectly, but straightforwardly enough for contemporary readers. When the rebel army is urged, “Retirés le fer de vos propres entrailles/Et croisés sur le Turc, comme ce grand Billon [i.e., Godefroy de Bouillon]/Eternisés l’honneur de vostre Chastillon” (sig. Ciii<sup>r</sup> [p. 24]), the main target, already sketched in outline, comes into full view as Gaspard de Coligny, Admiral Châtillon, widely blamed by Catholics for igniting sectarian strife in general and the third civil war in particular, which broke out in August 1568. It is he, therefore, whom the author’s wishful thinking dooms to a series of pagan underworld punishments that, to say the least, teeters on the brink of absurdity:

Puis vous Demons affreus, satellites fidelles  
Du Roy Tartarean, punisseur des rebelles,  
Ne vous lassés iamais, iamais ne vous soulés  
De batre incessamment ses membres martelés  
A coups de grosse barre, & d’infecter ses leures  
De Crapeaus, de Lesars, de sifflantes Couleures,

5. Signed “Iaqves Moysson”. Page numbers are those of the BnF digitalized electronic facsimile of Du Rosier’s poem.
6. Et toy grand Iuppiter, qui portes en tes mains  
Les traits Vulcaniens pour punir les humains,  
Pourquoy vois tu silent ceste pariure teste,  
Que tu ne la gremis [*sic*—“gémis”?] d’vne iuste tempeste?  
Et auec ce Tyran, sa race, à celle fin  
D’eteindre tout d’un coup vn genre si mutin,  
Dresse toy contre luy, ride ton front seure,  
Enfonce tes sourcis, enflambe ta colere,  
O grand Saturnien, & n’amuse tes bras  
A batre les Rochers qui ne t’offencent pas... (sig. Aiiii<sup>r-v</sup> [pp. 7-8])

Qui luy beurent le sang, & dedans & dehors  
Enfleront de poison son miserable corps. (sig. Aiiii<sup>v</sup>-B<sup>r</sup> [pp. 8-9])

Obviously, the Christian poet, restrained, pious, and humble when praying for divine mercy, takes the avowedly fictional status of the classical underworld as an imaginative licence to over-kill; he can thus give retributive fantasy free rein without infringing on the principle of “*Vindicta mihi*”. The resulting mixture of both metaphysics and tones is not far from Kyd’s, the persona’s impotent sorrow and rage not far from Hieronimo’s.

This effect may be Neo-Senecan but it is not technically dramatic. Moreover, Du Rosier’s Tamburlaine *redivivus* is portrayed strictly from the outside. Still, if one were to evoke the mentality of such a ruthless overreacher, one might approach Marlowe’s conception of that figure, or, for that matter, other scourges such as Barabas or Richard III. Again in response to the outbreak of hostilities in 1568, a certain Antoine Fleury attacked Coligny, this time in prose, but inventing for him an extended self-disclosing soliloquy: “Voila en somme le langage que le dit Admiral tient en son cueur, & dont nous voyons les desseigns & effects si confirmes, que nous n’en pouvons plus douter” (Fleury, sig. Hiii<sup>r</sup>). The combination of Machiavelism and atheism in this speech has such a multiply familiar ring for students of early English tragedy as to justify citing it at length. The Admiral actually begins by addressing God, who, he admits, has preserved France united in one true religion for fifteen hundred years; he then determines, however, to go his own way:

Toutesfois puis que je voy et apperceoy les hommes selon la révolution des temps tendre et incliner à changement, soit par le regard de la religion, ou de la police, et discipline civile, qui m’empeschera de troubler et pervertir l’ancienne obéissance? Et si un Mahomet de simple pâstre, s’est fait premier autheur et fondateur d’un si grand empire que celui des Otomans: si un citadin Romain a conquis et subjugué les Gaules en dix ans: si tant de Rois ont esté despouillez par de petits compagnons de leurs subjects: Et si pour parvenir à nostre temps, un cousturier s’est faict Roi des Anabaptistes en la Germanie: si un bastard par subtils moyens s’est attribué la couronne d’Escosse: et si desia j’ay remué l’estat d’Espagne, révolté celui de Flandres et esbranlé si avant ce Royaume, qu’un bon nombre de la Noblesse et du peuple s’est asservy et soumis à mes voluntes, pourquoy aiant un si beau subject ne pousseray-je ma fortune jusques au bout: et mesmes qu’estant vaincu je ne puis rien perdre que la teste, que j’ay ainsi par mes forfaitcs engagée au roi

et à la justice: vainqueur je demeure maistre de la plus grande et opulente  
Monarchie du monde? (sig. Hii<sup>r</sup>-iii<sup>r</sup>)<sup>7</sup>

This is a soberly sinister self-portrait, of course, not a grotesque caricature, and the pagan mythological machinery is missing. What would result if the Colignys of Du Rosier and Fleury were fused into one and furnished with a suitable theatrical “world . . . to bustle in” (Shakespeare, *R3*, I.i.152)? The answer is succinctly provided by François de Chantelouve in his dramatic apology (composed 1574, published 1575) for the Saint Bartholomew massacre, *La tragédie de feu Gaspard de Colligny*, where, as far as I know—and to judge, necessarily, from the extant texts—he produced European theatre’s first comic Machiavellian villain. He did so, essentially, by dragging “the height of Seneca’s style” down to the depths, half- (but only half-) paganizing the medieval model of the hell-bent blustering tyrant in a way that puts new (gnashing of) teeth into the old alliance between the energy of laughter and the awe of divine mystery.

In Coligny’s opening monologue—he appears with a noose, ready to hang himself in shame at his recent defeats—the villain invokes the standard torments of the classical underworld upon himself in lines recalling the despair of Garnier’s Porcie over Brutus’ death (ll. 1603ff.)—that play, we recall, received its second edition in 1574. But the underworld Coligny invokes is inhabited, not only by Sisyphus, Ixion, the Furies, and so forth, but also by Satan and Calvin, as well as his own predeceased brothers. Porcie’s invitation to the pagan gods to punish “mon chef blasphèmeur” (l. 1607) for protesting against their injustice becomes a far different matter—and approaches the “blaspheming” of Kyd’s damned Pedringano—when the punishment of Coligny’s fellow heretics enters the picture: “blasphémés en hurlemens horribles,/[aux supplices] du juste punisseur” (ll. 10–11).<sup>8</sup> Du Rosier’s appeal to “Jupiter” not to expend his thunderbolts on rocks is reformulated as an explicit challenge to divinity:

... s’il y a nul Dieu qui ait puissance adonques,  
Car en mon cœur meschant de Dieu je ne creus onques,  
Qu’il monstre son pouvoir, & darde sur mon chef  
Et non sur un rocher, des foudres le mechef. (ll. 15–18)<sup>9</sup>

7. The fictive monologue is also cited by Crouzet, p. 473, as an example of the discourse deployed against Coligny in the years prior to the Saint Bartholomew massacre.

8. “blaspheming with horrible shrieks — / . . . as He just vengeance wreaks”. Translations are supplied from my translation and edition of the play.

9. . . . if there is any God upon whom to call  
(For in my foul heart I believe in none at all),

Coligny's half-ridiculous, half-horrendous daring of God out of his heaven and alliance with the powers of darkness, which he summons to swallow him up, is the standard stuff of Elizabethan theatrical villainy. It finds an especially close echo in some mighty lines of Marlowe split between the hubris of Tamburlaine and the despair of the defeated Bajazeth:

*Tamburlaine.* . . . Stoop, villain, stoop! Stoop, for so  
                he bids

That may command thee piecemeal to be torn,  
Or scattered like the lofty cedar trees  
Struck with the voice of thundering Jupiter.

*Bajazeth.* Then, as I look down to the damned fiends,  
Fiends, look on me; and thou, dread god of hell,  
With ebon scepter strike this hateful earth,  
And make it swallow both of us at once! (IV.ii.22-29)

Also to the point, though the comic potential is muted, or transmuted, is *Doctor Faustus*. Chantelouve shows the Admiral goaded into the regicidal attempt that finally provokes the king's reaction (and fulfils the divine vengeance) by a smooth-talking diabolical embassy aimed at snatching his soul. The objective is falsely to convince the Admiral of the king's responsibility for his wound, which has in fact come, more or less directly, from God, presented—in the thinnest of disguises—as Jupiter. The chief ambassador is the spirit of Coligny's slain brother, Anelot, who is backed, as in Seneca's *Thyestes*, by a Fury. Chantelouve's dramaturgy is avowedly Senecan here, overdetermined by way of *Thyestes* and *Agamemnon*, but it pulls all the more conspicuously in superficially contrary Christian and comic directions. And while no one could accuse Chantelouve of being less Catholic than the Pope, it does so without so much as raising the spectre of Purgatory, even as Anelot sports the “‘piteous’ looks” that Greenblatt would deny to “Spirits loosed out of Hell” (Greenblatt, 239).

In fact, although Andelot rises from hell, he is never “out of it”, for he confesses to being tortured by alienation from “the face of God” (Marlowe, *Faustus*, iii.78, 79; cf. Chantelouve, ll. 901-2), and this brief respite from physical torments (Chantelouve, ll. 909-12) is overlaid on his eternal condemnation to them. In contrast to the refractory ghost of Tantalus, Andelot performs his evil willingly, thus

Let him show his power, and pour upon my pate,  
Instead of some pointless rock, his thundering hate.  
Du Rosier is also more straightforwardly echoed by the Chorus in ll. 301-6.

showing himself naturally at home among the damned. He even shows himself psychologically astute, exploiting his brother's vulnerability—"Et le voyant ainsi blesphemer & desplaire, / Il sera plus enclain à ma volonté faire" (ll. 917-18)<sup>10</sup>—and his pride. The accompanying Fury (ll. 971ff.), in pointed contrast to that of *Thyestes*, keeps her whips out of sight (even if she probably cannot do much about her hair), and her only speech is a parodic masterpiece of the rhetoric of persuasion, in which flattery and pleading turn on the theme of honour. Andelot and the Fury both absurdly obscure the extravagant horrors to which they seek to lure their victim: Andelot actually depicts the underworld as a sort of genteel rest-home where swords are not permitted (ll. 965-68), while the Fury incongruously envisages the repose of his soul (l. 1002). The result is a through amalgam of classicism and Christianity, with grim humour binding them together, that adds up to exactly what Hamlet imagines when he fears that the seeming spirit of that person nearest and dearest to him "may be a dev'l" that "[a]buses me to damn me" (Shakespeare, *Ham.*, II.ii.599, 603). And it may be to the point that the incitement in both cases is to the vengeful killing of a king.

When it comes to the pains of hell themselves, the pagan fiction is again stretched to parodic limits. The Fury's reference to Andelot's reposing soul is so absurd because that character has just delivered, in soliloquy, the ultimate catalogue of the underworld tortures to which he is everlastingly doomed. Indeed, with Andelot, Chantelouve pushes neo-Senecan infernal embellishment beyond Du Rosier's involuntary bathos—including his "Crapaus" and "sifflantes Couleures"—into what can only be deliberate burlesque:

Si donques je me veux reposer à mon aise,  
 Je me couche en un lict couvert de chaude Braise.  
 Si j'ay froid j'ay le glas tout prest pour me chauffer,  
 Et si quelque appetit a mon ventre en enfer,  
 De crapaux, & Serpens, ma table plus insigne  
 Se couvre, pour pouvoir appaiser ma famine. (ll. 881-86)<sup>11</sup>

10. "finding him thus blaspheming, with downcast mind, / I know that to my will he'll be the more inclined". Cf. Marlowe, *Faustus*:

For when we hear one rack the name of God,  
 Abjure the scriptures and his saviour Christ,  
 We fly, in hope to get his glorious soul;  
 Nor will we come unless he use such means  
 Whereby he is in danger to be damn'd. (iii.49-53)

11. If then to repose at my ease I should desire,  
 I recline on a bed of coals glowing with fire.

To a play that is all talk, like almost all French sixteenth-century tragedies, the comic extravagance of Coligny, Andelot, and the several other figures of evil adds an impressive quotient of imaginative theatricality. On the one hand, that theatricality is in active service to the highest of causes, an absolute religious truth imposing a clear division between good and evil human creatures, heaven and hell. On the other hand, the recourse to pagan eschatology to validate that truth inevitably raises the destabilizing spectre of different ways of believing. The Wars of Religion, after all, were just that. Nor were they essentially foreign, either politically or ideologically, to the English spiritual experience, as scholarship is coming increasingly to appreciate. We can perhaps approach more closely by this route to historicizing the metaphysical doubt and questioning in which Elizabethan tragedy engages, not least through the comic portrayal of evil.

In its extraordinary conflation of classical and Christian mythologies and dramatic techniques, of the comic and tragic, of cosmic process and current events, Chantelouve's play is unique among the surviving texts of French sixteenth-century tragedy. The only candidate for a rough companion piece is Pierre Matthieu's equally ultra-Catholic *La Guisiade*, which deals with another "massacre", Henri III's 1589 less than scrupulously legal execution of the Duke and Cardinal of Guise. There, moreover, another component of the Elizabethan mixture, which had been part of French controversialist discourse for years, finally receives a name: the counsellors that instigate the king to his crime are identified as Machiavels. Chief among them is Matthieu's equivalent of Chantelouve's Coligny, the Duke of Épernon, who, in a lengthy soliloquy, conjures the dark powers of a hell at once pagan and Christian:

O peste de ce Tout, execrable Megere,  
 Par mon ame qui t'est fidelle messagere,  
 Par Cocyte et Tantal, par l'ardent Phlegeton,  
 Par ces deux autres seurs Thesiphone, Aleceton,  
 Par le cruel Minos, par le grand Rhadamante,  
 Par le poison qui sort de ta bouche beante,  
 Par tant et tant d'esprits qui talonnent mes pas,  
 Par le Luxe, et l'Orgueil, qui sont mes chers esbas,

If I am cold, to warm me I have lots of — ice;  
 And if I feel, in hell, that a meal would be nice,  
 All of serpents and toads my prodigious collation  
 Is made ready, which serves to keep me from starvation.

Par l'Erreur insensé, par l'infidelle Schisme,  
Par l'infecte Heresie, et le sale Atheisme. . . (Matthieu, ll. 867-76)<sup>12</sup>

It is very probably more than coincidence that Marlowe's dramatic intervention in French religious politics a few years later, *The Massacre at Paris*, violently yokes the events of Chantelouve's and Matthieu's tragedies and turns their ideological orientation inside-out. Marlowe, of course, transfers the role of Machiavelian atheist from Coligny and Épernon, respectively, to the Duke of Guise—the epitome, for both Chantelouve and Matthieu, of Catholic heroism and, for the latter, of martyrdom as well. The function of hero and martyr is recuperated, in accordance with long-standing Protestant hagiography, for Coligny, while Épernon becomes a loyal and respectable counsellor of his monarch. “O Satan: o Calvin” (l. 9) is virtually taken out of the mouth of Chantelouve's Coligny and given to Guise: “Religion! O *Diabole!*” (Marlowe, *Massacre*, ii.63). In sum, the Prologue to *The Jew of Malta*, in announcing that Machiavelli's spirit, “now the Guise is dead, is come from France” (Marlowe, *Jew*, Pro. 3), may well be tracing, not just a moral, but also a literary pedigree.

I have explored Marlowe's connection with Chantelouve and Matthieu at some length elsewhere (*Shakespeare, Marlowe and the Politics of France*, esp. pp. 72-III). My focus here on the neo-classical component of comic villainy imposes a conclusion along a different line. The example of Du Rosier shows the pagan machinery of underworld punishment used as non-dramatic invective against a contemporary politico-religious enemy, and theatre historians do well to bear in mind that even when such elements figure in plays, they do not necessarily, or simply, derive from Senecan dramaturgy. In grotesquely combining the diverse famous torments of mythology for Andelot, on the premise that no single one would do justice to his egregious evil, Chantelouve might equally have been

12. The following is my translation, which appears in the same volume as that of Chantelouve's *Coligny*:  
Megaera, . . . you fell harbinger,  
By my soul, which acts as your faithful messenger,  
By Cocytus, Tantalus, burning Phlegeton,  
By your two sisters Alecto and Tisiphone,  
By Minos the cruel, Rhadamanthus the potent,  
By the poison that from your gaping throat you vent,  
By the numberless demons that with me consort,  
By Lechery and Pride, which provide me with sport,  
By outrageous Error, by infidel Schism,  
By stinking Heresy and filthy Atheism. . . .



taking his cue from Claudian's extended poetic assault on his contemporary *bête noire*, Rufinus, governor of the eastern Roman Empire under Theodosius and his son Arcadius. (This work was widely available in humanist editions: the two books *In Rufinum* begin the collected works of Claudian as issued by Taddeo Ugoletto in Parma, initially in 1493; they were published on their own in Vienna in 1518, edited by Philipp Gundel.) According to Claudian, Rufinus was a monster nurtured by the fury Megaera and sent by the infernal powers to plague the world. After the bloody vengeance wrought upon his body by a mob of soldiers and citizens, his spirit descends to the underworld and comes before its judge, who is so revolted that he sentences Rufinus to undergo all the famous torments, and worse, since his crimes surpass all others (II.498ff.). The horrors are evoked in splendiferous detail, attached to the usual names, and the rhetorical excess lends the attack a satirical quality not remote from the comic grotesquery of Chantelouve or even, for that matter, of Kyd. But also to the point is that the whole sequence, the spectacular meting out of vengeance in this world and the next, despite the variable and uncertain favour of the gods in the short term (II.440–41), is framed by the poet (I.1ff.) as vindicating, not merely divine justice, but the very existence of the gods and thereby converting him from his Epicurean atheism. This is to out-Seneca Seneca himself, who, in his *Epistulae Morales* (*Letters to Lucilius*), takes Epicurus' dismissal of the infernal myths so profoundly for granted that he will not stoop to repeating it.<sup>13</sup> The lesson of Claudian is that the pagan lesson in its crudest forms is eminently adaptable to Christian polemic.

It is this adaptability that Ben Jonson intertextually exploits, within a framework that remains nominally pagan, when, as has been recognized by editors (though Jonson did not signal the point in his own notes), he borrows from *In Rufinum* his vivid account of the mutilation of Sejanus by the Roman mob:

Old men not staid with age, virgins with shame,  
Late wives with loss of husbands, mothers of children,  
Losing all grief in joy of his sad fall,  
Run quite transported with their cruelty—  
These mounting at the head, these at his face,

13. See letter 24.18:

*Non sum tam ineptus ut Epicuream cantilenam hoc loco persequar et dicam vanos esse inferorum metus, nec Ixionem rota volvi nec saxum umeris Sisyphi trudi in adversum nec ullius viscera et renasci posse cotidie et carpi: nemo tam puer est ut Cerberum timeat et tenebras et larvalem habitum nudis ossibus cohaerentium. Mors nos aut consumit aut exuit.*

These digging out his eyes, those with his brain,  
 Sprinkling themselves, their houses, and their friends.  
 Others are met, have ravished thence an arm,  
 And deal small pieces of the flesh for favours;  
 These with a thigh; this hath cut off his hands;  
 And this his feet; these, fingers, and these, toes;  
 That hath his liver; he his heart; there wants  
 Nothing but room for wrath, and place for hatred.  
 What cannot oft be done is now o'er done.  
 The whole, and all of what was great Sejanus,  
 And next to Caesar did possess the world,  
 Now torn and scattered, as he needs no grave;  
 Each little dust covers a little part. (Jonson, V.824-41)<sup>14</sup>

The prelude to the villain's downfall is a series of divine portents, most spectacularly the averting of the face of the statue of Fortune, the only deity that Sejanus had worshipped, in true Machiavellian style. Her role is highlighted by Arruntius' sardonic rhetorical questioning in the final lines: "Dost thou hope, Fortune, to redeem thy crimes?/To make amends for thy ill-placéd favours/With these strange punishments? (V.901-3); this translates, as editors do not seem to have noticed, an interjection in the midst of Claudian's narrative of mayhem:

criminibusne tuis credis, Fortuna, mederi  
 et male donatum certas aequare favorem  
 suppliciiis? una tot milia morte rependis?  
 [Does thou hope, Fortune, thus to right thy wrongs? Seekest thou to atone  
 by this meting out of punishment for favour ill betowed? Dost thou with one  
 death make payment for ten thousand murders?] (II.421-23)

Editors have also failed to realize that Jonson was not original in adapting the passage from Claudian. In the poem, it is the soldiers that go at the corpse head-first, then the body (II.410-15), and are said to lack only scope for their vengeance (II.415-16); they then carry the pieces triumphantly on spears. Only then do the ordinary victims of Rufinus, the widows and mothers, join in, stamping on the limbs and stoning the head as it is borne aloft (II.431-35). Jonson's rearrangement confirms what might be inferred from his making of Sejanus' fall, in part, a matter of blasphemy—namely, that he read Claudian, not just in the original (as he certainly

14. See Jonson, *Sejanus*, ed. Ayres, nn. to V.824-42 and 828. Cf. nn. to *Sejanus*, Herford, Simpson, and Simpson, eds., vol. IX.

did), but also through the adaptation that had already been made—this borrowing, too, has eluded critical notice—by the Huguenot poet Guillaume de Saluste, seigneur Du Bartas, in the latter’s rendition of the biblical Book of Judith. There the object of a vengeance administered by the true God on behalf of, and by means of, his chosen people is the pagan tyrant Holofernes, who undergoes mutilations unprecedented in the biblical account, first of the severed head, then of the body. When Judith first brings the head back to Bethulia, it is set up on the wall—Jonson’s mention of the people “mounting” at the head of Sejanus, which has provoked editorial puzzlement,<sup>15</sup> may well reflect this—whereupon

... les peres, les fils, les pucelles, les vefves,  
 Tristes d’avoir perdu par les ethniques glaives  
 Leurs enfans, leurs parens, leurs amis, leurs espoux,  
 Esperdus de tristesse et fumantz de courroux,  
 Pellent son menton palle, esgratignent sa face,  
 Crachent dessus son front, arrachent de sa place  
 La langue qui souloit mesme outrager les cieux  
 Et d’un doigt courroucé luy pochent les deux yeux. (VI.215–22)

(“Pellent”, incidentally, must be picked up by Jonson’s “digging”, which has no equivalent in the Latin—or in the 1584 English translation by Thomas Hudson.<sup>16</sup>) The mutilation of the body takes place later, after the Hebrew victory over the discomfited Assyrian host, when the headless corpse of Holofernes is discovered on the battlefield and torn, not merely limb from limb, but—as in Jonson, though not Claudian—atom from atom, by a vulgar mob lacking only scope for vengeance and eager for souvenirs:

Car il n’a nerf, tendon, artere, veine, chair  
 Qui ne soit detranché par le sot populace  
 Et si son ire encore ne trouve assés d’espace.  
 ...

15. See Ayers, ed., n. to V.828.

16. Cf. Hudson’s translation, VI.213–20:

There, fathers came, and sonns, & wives, & mayds,  
 who erst had lost amongst the *Heathen* blayds,  
 There sonnes, their parens, maks, & louers deare,  
 with heauie harts & furious raging cheare.  
 They pilde & paired his beard of paled hew,  
 Spit in his face & out the tounge they drew,  
 which vsde to speak of God great blasphemies,  
 And with their fingers poched out his eyes.

Il n'y a dans Jacob si malotru coquin  
Qui de sa chair ne vueille avoir quelque lopin. (VI.310-12, 317-18)

In all three texts, the sequence concludes with the ironic contrast between the tyrant's vast ambition and the little room, less than a grave, now needed for his remains (Claudian, II.47ff.; Du Bartas, VI.345ff.), although Du Bartas, naturally, points the moral in Judaeo-Christian terms: "O grand Dieu . . ." (VI.345). Still, the classical roots of Du Bartas's epyllion of vengeance show through, as when the doomed Holofernes falls drunkenly asleep and intuits the punishments awaiting him in the next world:

Ja se tourne son lict, ja mille clairs brandons  
Luisent devant ses yeux, ja dis mille bourdons  
Bruyent dans son oreille. Il voit des Minotaures,  
Meduses, Alectons, Chimeres et Centaures. (VI.97-100)

Likewise, Rufinus "diu curis animum stimulantibus aegre/labitur in somnus [whose mind had long been a prey to anxiety, sank into a troubled slumber]" (Claudian, II.326-27) and had intimations of his death presented by the ghosts of his victims. And when Holofernes is dead, we are told that he, "deja, miserable,/A passé du noir Styx, la rive irrepassable" (Du Bartas, VI.251-52).

But if Jonson, the most rigorously and self-consciously neo-classical of English Renaissance playwrights, rewrote Claudian's exuberant verbal vendetta in light of Du Bartas's earnest *exemplum* of divine justice visited upon an atheistic criminal, a blasphemer, and an enemy of the truth, he had a French theatrical precedent even for such rewriting. We return once more to Chantelouve. *La Judit* swells the crowded ranks of controversial texts published just prior to *Coligny*, to which it stands in stark and pointed opposition. It would have been clearly understood, according to the contemporary encoding of political-religious issues and Du Bartas's religious affiliation, that the chosen people delivered by divine intervention represented the Huguenots. More specifically, the symbolism of Holofernes' miraculous demise before the walls of Bethulia was already in place: the allusion was to the 1563 assassination of François, duc de Guise, which rescued the besieged Protestants in Orléans<sup>17</sup>—a murder widely attributed to Coligny. So it is by Chantelouve (ll. 52-54, 235-37), as one of the egregious crimes for which

17. See Baïche, ed., XXI-CIXC. On this contemporary typological interpretation of events, see *Histoire et dictionnaire des Guerres de religion*, p. 120. Agrippa d'Aubigné, too, invokes it in *Les Tragiques*, V.381-86.

Saint Bartholomew was divine retribution. It is, then, across the narrative inter-text of *La Judit* that the militant Catholic playwright recuperates the vindictive lesson of Claudian for his blaspheming Huguenot tyrant, who, by the grace of God, is finally beheaded, mutilated, and made to point, upside-down, the same ironic moral about his need for space:

Il estimoit l'onde  
 Les terres, le monde,  
 Petites pour luy,  
 Et or sa chair vaine  
 Par la boüe traine,  
 Sans los aujourd'huy. (ll. 1179-84)<sup>18</sup>

Yet Chantelouve's Coligny is also something that Du Bartas's villain is not: a fortune-worshipping Machiavel aspiring to royal power. To this extent he inter-textually displaces Holofernes as a link between Claudian's Rufinus and Jonson's Sejanus, and also attracts, like Sejanus, the ironic moral along what might be termed its vertical axis:

Bref, & celuy qui desiroit la France  
 Seigneurier, en son desir felon,  
 Est possesseur, ô divine vengeance,  
 Du plus haut lieu qui soit en Mont-faulcon. (ll. 1185-88)<sup>19</sup>  
 For whom the morning saw so great and high  
 Thus low and little, 'fore the'even, doth lie. (Jonson, V.912-13)

18. He thought the huge sea,  
 Every territory,  
 For him was too small;  
 Now his vain flesh and blood  
 Is made in the mud —  
 And in scorn — to sprawl.

In turn, the Huguenot pamphlet *Le Tocsin contre les massacreurs* (1577) seems virtually to be reimagining Coligny's fate through that of Rufinus when it describes the treatment of his body at the hands of the Parisians: "ils portèrent le tout [tête et partie honteuses] sur des bastons par la ville et l'exposait ignominieusement en vente à qui en voulait" (cited Postel, p. 186).

19. And so, on that traitor whose spirit showed  
 To lord it over France such appetite,  
 Vengeance divine has finally bestowed  
 Possession of Montfaucon's greatest height.

Montfaucon, outside Paris, was the site of the public gallows, where Coligny's mutilated body was displayed in grotesque mockery. The irony was recorded approvingly by many Catholic partisans.

In this form, the moral has ample classical precedents, including Senecan ones.<sup>20</sup> But a highly specific link, if it is not palpable, can almost be smelt. Jonson's tragedy turns on the turning-away of Fortune during Sejanus' ceremony to propitiate her. The audience would have witnessed the rites described in the elaborate stage direction (V.183S.D.); these culminate in the offering of incense, the "begging smoke" (V.82) that Sejanus has declared himself, however grudgingly, willing to offer her alone among the gods. The violent reaction of Sejanus picks up this element and tinges his atheism with the comic grotesque:

Nay, hold thy look  
Averted, till I woo thee turn again;  
And thou shalt stand to all posterity  
Th'eternal game and laughter, with thy neck  
Writhed to thy tail, like a ridiculous cat.  
Avoid these fumes, these superstitious lights,  
And all these coz'ning ceremonies. . . (V.195-200)<sup>21</sup>

In his final soliloquy, Sejanus dares, like Chantelouve's Admiral, "you, that fools call gods" to "let me be struck/With forkèd fire" (V.390, 397-98).

The Admiral, too, has problems with Fortune:

O souveraine Royne, & princesse du monde,  
Qui le piéd mal-certain tiens sur la Boule Ronde,  
Que t'ay je fait affin d'ainsi me renverser. . . (ll. 63-65)<sup>22</sup>

In determining, as Fleury had put it previously for him, to "[pousser] ma fortune jusques au bout", Chantelouve's Coligny effectively anticipates Sejanus' desperate resolution—"Mais courage, ceux là qui n'ont plus d'esperance,/Fichent tout leur espoir sur la desesperance" (ll. 99-100)<sup>23</sup>—and promises the goddess the same offering if she will turn his way again:

Que si à mes desirs tu respond, o fortune!  
Mon invincible cœur fera la mort commune,  
Et n'estant point ingrat d'Encens je couvriray  
Tes autels, & l'odeur aux astres envoiray. . . (ll. 103-6)<sup>24</sup>

20. See Ayers, ed., n. to V.912-13.

21. The subtle alignment here of the atheist Sejanus with Protestant iconoclasm fits with Jonson's Catholicism.

22. O most sovereign queen and princess of the world,  
Who keep uncertain footing as the globe is whirled,  
What have I done to you to be thus overthrown . . . ?

23. "But courage: those who have no further hope yet dare / To stake a kind of hope even upon despair".

24. If only, O Fortune, you deign to grant my prayer,

There used to be a perfume advertisement that went, “Promise her anything, but give her . . .”. The respective sequels offer dramatic, highly theatrical proof that lady Fortune in both Chantelouve and Jonson is quite capable of recognizing their promises as *de la fumée*, which is another way of saying that there is nothing truly heavenly about her.

The point is not that Jonson may have known the tragedy of Coligny, though this is hardly impossible: if Marlowe did so, the odds are that Jonson and others did, too. Of course, we are dealing with commonplaces—and the most common of places, by proverbial definition, is Rome, to which all roads lead, or at least led. In the case of early modern English tragedy, however, the conclusion seems inescapable that one of those roads—which also, of course, led away from Rome—passed through Paris.

My invincible heart will spread death everywhere,  
And, since I'm not stingy with incense in the least,  
From your altars I'll send the stars a fragrant feast.

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## *Ekphrasis in Tudor Drama: The Representation of Representations*

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THE PAPER will explore, within the verbal texts of certain Tudor plays, descriptions of non-verbal “texts”: the latter might include not only pictures, tapestries, and sculpted objects but also apparitions and enacted spectacles. We might imagine that all of these could have been “read” by fictive characters before being re-presented in the dramatic texts that we read.

What is the function of such rhetorical strategies? Verbal descriptions of the “characters” or figures depicted in these sister forms can serve to mediate the perception of the audience, often by establishing homiletic or prophetic windows into the action. This had been their function since Homer described the shield of Achilles in Book 18 of the *Iliad*; we might also think of the descriptions of the temples of Mars and Venus in Chaucer’s “Knight’s Tale” or the set-piece descriptions of paintings in nineteenth-century novels like *Villette* and *Middlemarch*. (Such extended descriptions of paintings, of course, would scarcely suit theatre.)

“Ekphrasis” is a term used by late classical rhetoricians (Aphthonius of Antioch, for example) to describe techniques for bringing people or places to the “mind’s eye”, for verbal description, for making a poem resemble a picture. Later, after generations of school-

boys had imitated the exemplary descriptions in textbooks like the *Progymnasmata* (a set of exercises by Aphthonius), it came to designate a narrower range of descriptions: descriptions or representations not of *realities* but of *representations*, textual strategies that might make pictures like poems or make pictures “speak”. It is not surprising that the subject is topical now: ekphrasis is not only a touchstone for many Renaissance projects, in that many embedded descriptions are concerned with classical subjects, but is a common concern of post-modern texts and post-modern criticism. It reverses the usual direction of comparison contained in the tag “*ut pictura poesis*”. On the MLA online Bibliography in October 2004, the word generated 419 hits, although the modern meaning has not yet found its way into the *OED*.

In my main exemplars, Lyly’s *Campaspe* and, from *Hamlet*, the verbal and visual appearances of the Ghost, as well as the Pyrrhus narrative, we can see how these ekphrastic figures are deployed not just morally, or to modulate *fabula* and *sjuzet*, but psychologically: they are ways of registering internalised perception, of rendering what is both “outside” the action and “inside” the characters. They bind the visible and invisible, what Claudius calls the “exterior” and the “inward man” (II.ii.6).<sup>1</sup>

In fact, there are not many extended descriptions of artefacts in Tudor drama; I shall deal briefly with a few before turning to *Campaspe* and *Hamlet*. A picture of the hero, Wit, in a Court play of 1568, *The mariage of Witte and Science*, figures as a ritual token sent to his inamorata, Science. Like photographs on lonely-heart sites today, this image is obviously idealised. However, Wit’s servant, Will, who has to carry the portrait to Science, mocks its quality—or perhaps the actual appearance of the hero:

Sir, let me alone: your mind I understand,  
I will handle the matter so that you shall owe me thanks,  
But what if she find fault with these spindle shanks,  
Or else with these black spots on your nose? (spelling modernised)

This obviously serves two functions: as a comic device for debunking the hero, typical of servant cross-talk in the period, and also as a metatheatrical marker, drawing attention to the distance between role and actor, what may be represented and what can be conceived.

1. See Ackerman.

Pictures could be not only hazardous, by virtue of inviting realities to be set against their flattering idealizations, but also powerful. Despite decades of Reformation iconoclasm, images are often invested with something akin to a talismanic force. In the Painter addition to *The Spanish Tragedy* (which may be by Shakespeare himself [Edwards, p. lxii]), Hieronimo in his madness commands a gallery of pictures depicting the progression of his agony in order to proclaim his pain. These ghostly ekphrases both recapitulate the action and are an index of a crazed mind. Later, in *2 Henry IV*, here is Falstaff, who has just captured Coleville of the Dale and is yielding him up to Prince John. He contrasts the power of a written record with the power of a picture:

Here he is, and here I yield him, and I beseech your grace let it be *booked* with the rest of this day's deeds; or, by the Lord, I will have it in a particular ballad else, with mine own *picture* on the top on 't, Coleville kissing my foot. To the which course if I be enforced, if you do not all show like gilt twopences to me, and I in the clear sky of Fame o'ershine you as much as the full moon doth the cinders of the element (which show like pins' heads to her), believe not the word of the noble. Therefore let me have right, and let desert mount. (IV.i.394-405; emphasis added)

The second part of this reads like the verbal part of a Renaissance emblem—emblem books are prime examples of ekphrases.

At the opening of *The Wisdome of Doctor Dodypoll*, an anonymous Paul's play of 1600, the Earl of Lissenberg, disguised as a painter, declares to his love and model Lucilia that Nature created the world by painting, presumably adorning the substance of God's creation. The obvious explanation for the potency of visual images, as it is evoked in that sequence, is that pictures were much more rare than they are in our contemporary culture, super-saturated with images as it is.

Images could be instrumental too. Given the power that was attributed to pictures and figures, it is easy to see how maleficent image-magic came to be practised.<sup>2</sup> In *1 Henry VI* the Countess of Auvergne thinks that a picture has enabled her to take prisoner Talbot, terror of the French:

*Talbot.* Prisoner? To whom?  
*Countess.* To me, bloodthirsty lord;  
And for that cause I trained thee to my house.  
Long time thy shadow hath been thrall to me,  
For in my gallery thy picture hangs;

2. See Thomas, pp. 612-14.

But now the substance shall endure the like,  
And I will chain these legs and arms of thine. (II.iii.33–38)

In *Arden of Faversham* (1591), the villain Moseby describes a related kind of malifience, the process of casting a spell known as “fascination”. It depends upon the power of images:

I happened on a painter yesternight,  
The only cunning man of Christendom;  
For he can temper poison with his oil,  
That who so looks upon the work he draws  
Shall with the beams that issue from his sight,  
Suck venom to his breast and slay himself.  
Sweet Alice, he shall draw thy counterfeit,  
That Arden may by gazing on it perish. (II.228–34)

In this light I want to defamiliarise a passage in *Hamlet*: the prince is quizzing Rosencrantz:

*Hamlet.* Do the boys carry it away?  
*Rosencrantz.* Ay, that they do, my lord, Hercules and his load too.  
*Hamlet.* It is not strange; for mine uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mows at him while my father lived give twenty, forty, an hundred ducats apiece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out. (II.ii.332–38)

Does Hamlet mean that the change in the popularity of Claudius is seemingly miraculous, or that his image is reputed to have talismanic or supernatural powers?

As we might expect, there had been a significant number of references to the visual arts in playtexts by the academically inclined John Lyly. As a preliminary, we might take note of a passage in the Dedication to *Euphues* (1578) where Lyly had reminded his readers of the way images, not only verbal but also visual, are to be read as well as seen.

Paratius [i.e., Parrhasius], drawing the counterfeit of Helen... made the attire of her head loose, who, being demanded why he did so, he answered, “She was loose”. (cited Pincombe, p. 43)

This conceit hints that many “characters” are ekphrastic, representations not of “real people” but of representations or images, of textualised bodies. Ekphrasis is all around.

A few years later Lyly embarked on an extended exploration of the power of images in his first play, *Campaspe* (1583). This recounts how Alexander renounces his passion for his humble Theban captive Campaspe when he realises the intensity of the love between her and the artist Apelles. There is a parallel action depicting Diogenes the cynic. I take it that the thematic link is that Diogenes, like Apelles a man prepared to speak up freely before his prince, seeks to expose the power of images. Lyly's Plato and Aristotle with their comical mannerisms display what might be called their "philosophical lifestyle" as they pass across the stage:

Plato. It is a difficult controversy, Aristotle, and rather to be wondered at than believed, how natural causes should work supernatural effects. (I.iii.30-32)

In contrast, Diogenes lives in his tub—the image, of course, is itself a potent one. He also announces his intention to fly, to create a spectacle, and then berates the citizens of Athens when they come to absorb the show (IV.i).

In Act III, the third scene shows Campaspe arriving at the workshop of Apelles. She has been sent there by Alexander in order to demonstrate to the artist that she exemplifies, as he says, "that finished by nature that [the painter] has been trifling about by art"—that line had ended the second act. There she views pictures of Leda, Alcmena, Danaë, Europa, and Antiope, all of whom, as Ovid relates in Book VI of the *Metamorphoses*, had been raped by Jupiter.

Apelles. This is Danaë, into whose prison Jupiter drizzled a golden shower and obtained his desire.

Campaspe. What gold can make one yield to desire? (III.iii.19-21)

Perhaps the sequence was meant to portray an intermingling of the human and divine in the realm of love, that which might be painted but not enacted. However, this dialogue is nicely ambiguous: is Jove a figure for Alexander, whose desire for Campaspe may emerge Jove-like in violent form, or is this a figure for all princes whose licensed power might exceed the bounds of political morality?

Were the pictures visible in Tudor performances? G. K. Hunter thinks that there was no need for the pictures to be shown, but that the boy-players were called upon to gesture towards a mansion or booth that represented the workshop (Hunter, ed., pp. 31-32). If there was a picture of Danaë, was it eroticised or even "bawdified" in the way that Apelles' description suggests? Or does Campaspe's female gaze scorn Apelles' suggestion that the picture depicts not a



rape but an act of prostitution? It turns out, to use Hamlet's terms, that many images or "shapes" were "questionable", ambiguous. Or, as the Poet in *Timon of Athens* remarks, perhaps somewhat acidly, "To the dumbness of the gesture / One might interpret" (I.i.33-34).

Apelles, it turns out, while painting the portrait of Campaspe, falls in love with her, but deliberately blemishes the portrait so that she must constantly return to his workshop. It comes about that Campaspe and Apelles are allowed by Alexander to pursue their love. As Hephestion, Alexander's confidant, remarks, "Commonly we see it incident in artificers to be enamoured of their own works" (V.iv.15-16). This nicely ironises their love: for it could be that Apelles was, as John Donne was reputed to be, in love with the idea of a woman, rather than a creature of flesh and blood:

Apelles. Whom do you love best in the world?  
 Campaspe. He that made me last in the world.  
 Apelles. That was a God.  
 Campaspe. I had thought it had been a man. But whom do you honour most, Apelles?  
 Apelles. The thing that is likest you, Campaspe.  
 Campaspe. My picture?  
 Apelles. I dare not venture upon your person. (IV.ii.42-49)

Apelles, it is hinted, may be in love with the "colours", "shadows", "counterfeits" he has created—play upon these words laces the drama. As the Page pertly reports, "The king thinketh that now you have painted it, you play with it" (IV.v.6-7). The device that Alexander deploys to extract Apelles' true feelings is to have a page rush in to say that the artist's studio is on fire, so that he tries to run out to save his painting. Then, in a long soliloquy from Apelles, we hear:

O Campaspe, I have *painted* thee in my heart: painted? Nay, contrary to mine art, *imprinted*, and that in such deep characters that nothing can raze it out unless it rub thy heart out. (V.ii.16-19; emphasis added)

Perhaps Apelles realises this and abandons painting for verbal inscription—the former is too ambiguous.

As always, Shakespeare pushes further the debates concerning the bounds of form and representation. In Samuel Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond* (1592), Rosamond, mistress to Henry II, comes to tell of her undoing. Before he took her, the king had sent her a casket engraved with images of those classical maidens who were undone by the gods. These ekphrases can be read both as signals that the king's

desire is not to be withstood and as awful warnings to a fair woman. In his *Mortimeriados* (1596), Michael Drayton has Queen Isabel, after her husband Edward II's cruel murder, prepare for her lover Mortimer "A stately chamber with the pencil wrought / Within whose compass was imparadised / Whatever art or rare invention taught" (sig. P4<sup>r</sup>).<sup>3</sup> The room is adorned with paintings of the lascivious loves of gods and mortals at their sports of love.

The extended description of the painting of the destruction of Troy in *The Rape of Lucrece* (1593-94) enables Shakespeare to capture Lucrece's prophetic soul, as, *after* her rape, she surmises consequences analogous to those that had followed the rape of Helen—in the case of Lucretia, the end of the Roman kingdom. But well before this there is a kind of induction on the power of visual representation. When Tarquin is contemplating his rape of Lucrece, he ponders:

"Who fears a sentence or an old man's saw  
Shall by a *painted cloth* be kept in awe".  
Thus graceless holds he disputation  
'Tween *frozen conscience* and *hot-burning will*. (*Lucrece*, 244-47; emphasis added)

There are two points here: the general one about the potency of images, and a more specific one that takes us forward to *Hamlet*. Pyrrhus, the avenging son of Achilles, intrudes into Hamlet's "frozen conscience" in the rehearsal scene and, within the psychomachia of the drama, can be seen as the antagonist of the Ghost, who, fresh from the fires of purgatory, fans the flames of Hamlet's will to revenge his father. The forms of representation, Pyrrhus in a pastiche of Marlovian heroic verse, the Ghost as a figure that is visible to some characters, invisible to others, and heard only by Hamlet, draw attention to their diegetic status.

The First Player's "portrait" of Pyrrhus is the perfect "outsider within", in that it is outside the action but a besieging figure in Hamlet's consciousness, and also a metatheatrical sign, a token and defining presence of epic history within the tragedy. We are to think of Pyrrhus not as a person but as a signifier: he must be *read*.

Marlowe offered the recipe for this sort of thing. Faustus makes it plain that the conjured figures of Alexander and his paramour are not creatures of flesh and blood:

3. See Quinn, pp. 19-35.

My lord, I must forewarn your Majesty  
That *when my spirits present the royal shapes*  
Of Alexander and his paramour  
Your Grace demand no questions of the King,  
But in dumb silence let them come and go. (xii. 44-48; emphasis added)

This derives fairly directly from the *Faustbuch*, Marlowe's main source. There Faustus says to the Emperor:

My most excellent lord, I am ready to accomplish your request in all things, so far forth as I and my spirit are able to perform. Yet your majesty shall know that their dead bodies are not able substantially to be brought before you, but such spirits as have seen Alexander and his paramour alive shall appear unto you in manner and form as they both lived in their most flourishing time. (cited Jump, ed., p. 131)

As Hamlet explores what is in his mind's eye, the "shape" of Pyrrhus becomes a representation of an icon of revenge, a demonstration of how the avenger that his father's ghost wishes him to become is also a bloody murderer:

The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,  
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble  
When he lay couchèd in the ominous horse,  
Hath now this dread and black complexion smeared  
With heraldry more dismal. Head to foot  
Now is he total gules, horridly tricked  
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,  
Baked and impasted with the parching streets,  
That lend a tyrannous and damnèd light  
To their vile murders. Roasted in wrath and fire,  
And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore,  
With eyes like carbuncles the hellish Pyrrhus  
Old grandsire Priam seeks . . . (*Hamlet*, II.ii.410-22)

Like Hamlet, Pyrrhus pauses before he sweeps to his revenge:

. . . his sword,  
Which was declining on the milky head  
Of reverend Priam, seemed i' th' air to stick.  
So, *as a painted tyrant*, Pyrrhus stood,  
And, like a neutral to his will and matter,  
Did nothing. (*Hamlet*, II.ii.435-40; emphasis added)

This is typically Shakespearean: while he is representing the process of rehearsal or re-presentation, he throws in an allusion to a figure in a painted cloth.

Hamlet's father appears not only as a ghost but also in a picture, which is obviously both idealised and false:

Look here upon this picture, and on this,  
The *counterfeit* presentment of two brothers. (*Hamlet*, III.iv.53-54; emphasis added)

As Ghost, he may be even more "counterfeit": Hamlet senior comes from outside the kingdom, but Hamlet himself ponders whether what is rotten *in* the state of Denmark may not have something to do with the Ghost:

The spirit that I have seen  
May be the devil, and the devil hath power  
T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps,  
Out of my weakness and my melancholy—  
As he is very potent with such spirits—  
Abuses me to damn me. (II.ii.551-58)

The Ghost, as has frequently been pointed out, may be a "counterfeit", the Devil himself.

R. A. Foakes has recently argued<sup>4</sup> that this is the only armed ghost in the corpus—a line in *A Warning for Fair Women* suggests that ghosts commonly "were lapped in a foul sheet or a leather pilch (l. 55). Horatio reports to Hamlet that he saw the Ghost armed "Cap-a-pe" (I.i.200), and that this was the full body armour he had worn when fighting the King of Norway. The similarities between feudal and antique hero pervade Hamlet's consciousness—emblems of a problematic revenge ethic or "obsolete militarism", according to Foakes:

Marcellus and Barnardo have seen the Ghost:  
Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,  
And will not let belief take hold of him  
Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us.  
Therefore I have entreated him along  
With us to watch the minutes of this night,  
That if again this apparition come  
He may approve our eyes and speak to it. (*Hamlet*, I.i.23-29)

As Alan Ackerman has written, "The slippage in Hamlet and Horatio's dialogue, from metaphorical to literal and back to metaphorical seeing, touches upon the

4. In a lecture at the International Shakespeare Conference, Stratford-upon-Avon, 2004.

very nature or roots of the theatre, in the Greek *theatron* or place of seeing” (p. 124). This “slippage”, I would submit, derives from the ekphrastic nature of the Ghost.

In the First Quarto’s version of the closet scene, the Ghost is described as entering “*in his night gown*” (*Tragicall Historie of Hamlet*, sig. G2<sup>v</sup>). Given that here only Hamlet sees the Ghost—to Gertrude the figure is invisible—it seems to me that this is, perhaps like the armed Ghost, a projection of an image in Hamlet’s mind, an intimation that he has delayed too long, that Claudius should have been despatched when he was praying and the Ghost has started up from a brief snatch of purgatorial slumber.

These two ekphrastic figures are dreams of antique heroism and modern militarism, one depicting the horrific realities of revenge, the other invested by Shakespeare or by Hamlet—we cannot tell—with the attributes of a denizen from a theological realm whose existence had been absolutely denied by European reformers. They define Hamlet’s inward vacillation between “frozen conscience” and “hot-burning will”. Yet as ekphrastic rather than real figures, they can only be interpreted, not defined. We cannot deduce Shakespeare’s intention from contemporary debates about Purgatory. As we have seen, images of this kind are both potent and ambiguous. Perhaps this is Shakespeare’s way of preventing us from plucking out the heart of Hamlet’s mystery.

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## *Mary Magdalene on Stage: “The Sinner in the City” and the Persistent Remnant of Catholic Culture in an Anglican Society*

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MARY MAGDALENE has been one of the most popular female saints, if not *the* most popular, since the Middle Ages. She strikes the reader as being an outsider in two ways: on the level of her story proper, she is a debauched woman whose fleshly sin excludes her from the community; on a broader, cultural level, she appears as the remnant of a Catholic culture. Yet the outsider Mary Magdalene embodies is very much “within”, again both narratively and culturally: after her conversion, she becomes herself a converting agent, reintegrating the community. In this form, her image persists through drama after the Reformation. This persistence may partly be explained by the essential paradox at the heart of her character, a paradox clearly visible in the oxymoron *beata peccatrix* or “holy sinner”, often used to refer to her; Mary Magdalene is indeed the result of the conflation of two opposite leading female figures, Eve and the Virgin Mary, and this paradoxical quality is at the basis of an enduring fascination. The study of three plays belonging to successive cultural phases will allow us to focus on Mary Magdalene’s status of “outsider within” and on the changes her figure underwent. These plays are the Digby *Mary Magdalene* (c. 1485), Lewis Wager’s *The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene* (1567) and Thomas Dekker’s *The Honest Whore* (1604 and 1630).

Mary Magdalene does not exist as a distinct personage in the Bible. She is the result of the merging of three different women—namely, Mary of Magdala, Mary of Bethany, and the anonymous sinner who washed Christ’s feet at Simon’s house—who were fused into one by Gregory the Great in the sixth century. The conflation was aided by the fact that most women named in the canonical Gospels are called Mary. Then, the *Golden Legend* (c. 1265) constructed an elaborate biography for Mary Magdalene. The transformation of the Gospel figure was then complete, and Mary Magdalene thus became a manageable, controllable character, an effective weapon and instrument of propaganda against her own sex. Her image was refashioned again and again to suit the needs and aspirations of changing times.

Mary Magdalene, having committed the archetypal sin of the flesh, stands on the margins of the community. This sin sets her up as the opposite of the prevailing feminine ideal, i.e., virginity in the Middle Ages and chastity in the Renaissance. She confirms the idea of Woman as the daughter of Eve. When Magdalene was referred to in the Middle Ages as “the sinner in the city”, everyone understood that she was a prostitute: sexual sins occupied the prime place in the medieval catalogue of evils. So only a small step was necessary to transform the *peccatrix* into a *meretrix*. Since Mary Magdalene made satisfaction for her sins with her eyes, hair, and mouth, the logical conclusion preachers reached was that she had necessarily used them for wicked purposes before. Besides, our character was depicted as beautiful and of a noble family, two elements enticing women to become vain and to commit carnal sin. The idea that Mary Magdalene sinned openly rather than locked away in her house made her sin worse. She had compounded her sin by implicating others in it; lechery was held as the most contagious of sins, and prostitution was a potential pollutant of society. Priests used the symbol of Mary Magdalene to attack the vanity, folly and sexual licentiousness ascribed to all women.

Yet Mary Magdalene’s association with Eve could be read in a more positive light: as Katherine Ludwig Jansen states in *The Making of the Magdalen*, death came through Woman, but so did the news of the Resurrection. The principle of similarity called for a female sinner to rectify the sin of Eve. Because the Virgin Mary was sinless, the responsibility fell to Mary Magdalene (Jansen, pp. 31-32). She was converted into a penitent prostitute and successfully reentered the Christian community, becoming the unrivalled symbol of penitential life. Jansen insists that the fact that Mary Magdalen was a paradigmatic symbol of hope for all sin-

ners explains her extraordinary attraction (p. 15). More than that, she even converted sinners, showing them the path to virtue. The figure of Mary Magdalene could be adapted to different types of messages, and she was also a potent symbol for Reformers, who saw her as an *exemplum* of penitence and salvation, as Wager's play shows.

What constitutes the formidable appeal of the figure is above all the paradox at the heart of her character. Indeed, the phrase *beata peccatrix* can be read not only as summing up Mary Magdalene's story in a chronological way, but also as an oxymoron suggesting that she is both at the same time. The paradox first stems from the fact that Mary Magdalene subsumes the identities of the two opposite female figures of Eve and the Virgin Mary. Mary's immaculate perfection prevented the sinner from identifying with her, while Eve's fault forbade any hope. It is in this gap that the figure of Mary Magdalene found space to develop, as a comforting mirror and a promise of hope for those who fall. The way of penitence she embodies was the *via media* between Mary's innocence and Eve's perdition. As Jacques Dalarun (basing himself on Le Goff's studies) suggests, this third way also corresponds to the third eschatological place built in the twelfth century: purgatory, the *via media* between heaven and hell. While sinners still feared damnation and the miseries awaiting them in hell, they could now hope that repentance and some time spent in purgatory would enable them to reach heaven, which did not appear as definitively lost anymore.

Our character's ambiguity is particularly visible in her hair and her nudity. In both her pre- and her post-conversion life, the Magdalene's predominant physical attribute is her copious and flowing hair. At the moment of her conversion, her loose hair (a symbol of sexual sin) becomes the emblem of her penitence. The same holds for her nudity: on one level, representations of Mary Magdalene's nakedness such as those found in Italian Renaissance paintings and sculptures (especially those linked to the Neoplatonist trend) could be construed as representing her post-conversion condition of innocence and purity (see Haskins, figs. 48, 50, 51, 52). But given her prior associations with the sin of the flesh, medieval depictions of the naked Mary Magdalene also pointed back to her sexual aspect. According to Susan Haskins (p. 67), Mary Magdalene's erotic aspect is largely due to the association commonly made between her and the Bride of the *Song of Solomon*, an association related to the erotic element which has always been part of the mystical relationship between Christ and the Magdalene. (Of course, there are other allegorical interpretations of the characters of the *Song*: they have

also been taken as representing Christ and the Church, or the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary.) The identification of our character with the bride links powerful female eroticism to direct access to the divine. Again, these remarks stress the paradoxical quality at the heart of the character. Through Mary Magdalene's relationship with Christ, eroticism tends to lose its connotation of sin to become an essential aspect of communication with God.

This paradox is at the heart of the Digby play. As Marjorie Malvern states in *Venus in Sackcloth*, the frank eroticism celebrated by the Bride of the *Song of Solomon* enters the Digby Mary Magdalene in both her roles: if eroticism is an obvious component of Mary Magdalene's profligate life as a prostitute, there also lies the trace of the sexual love so present in the *Song* in the spiritual love shared by the Magdalene and Christ (Malvern, p. 125). But the mythical Magdalene sank into decline as the Reformation developed. To early Protestants, Mary Magdalene was the prime example of the absurdity of Catholic teaching. They chose to emphasize her efficacious penitence above all else, and to drop her role as a female apostle. Yet the powerful attraction of her image could not be discounted.

The ambiguity of our character is magnified when brought on stage, for the theatre shared with prostitution the characteristic of being both outside and within the community. Indeed, both activities (officially) occupied the same suburban space, the Liberties of Southwark and Shoreditch. They were both rejected by the official discourse as being marginal and unrespectable, but nevertheless concerned all social classes and attracted thousands of customers every day. The people who invested in the theatre and those who made a business out of prostitution were often the same. For instance, Thomas Henslowe, the owner of the famous playhouses of the Rose and the Globe, also owned several brothels (Lenz, pp. 837-39). As Joseph Lenz insists in his article, "Base Trade: Theater as Prostitution", the actor was often compared to a prostitute, using his body and faking emotions for profit. This comparison was frequently voiced by the Puritan opponents to the theatre, who conceived the boy actor decked in female clothes as a whore, a simulation that can provide only false pleasure. According to this view, both the actor and the prostitute are performers, beguiling their clients with simulated experience (Lenz, p. 840). Like the prostitute, the professional actor sells himself for pleasure and profit (Lenz, p. 842).

Both the Digby playwright and Wager made Mary Magdalene an atemporal figure yet also one very much of her time. This imbued her character with interest and excitement for the audience. Making Mary Magdalene a contempo-

rary phenomenon helped to reinforce the audience's involvement in the story. This is particularly true of Wager's heroine, who, with her language and clothes, aped young Tudor women's coquettish manners, while presenting to the audience the timeless problems of corruption by flattery and of lapse into sin. The use playwrights made of her also reflects contemporary issues of a wider relevance. For example, the holy sinner was of great use in religious controversy: Wager, notably, in *The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene* used Mary Magdalene to demonstrate the Calvinist doctrine of salvation through faith. The play deals with the general evangelical theme of justification by faith through imputed grace. As a Protestant, Wager left no place for post-biblical miracles and the other legendary aspects of Mary Magdalene so dear to the medieval cult of the saint. The action begins with Mary Magdalene, the representative of universal man, depraved and already rampant in sin, and it is only when she is wrenched from sin to a state of regeneration by means of irresistible grace that salvation is awarded. It seems at first sight surprising that a Protestant writer like Wager would have used the ambiguous figure of a saint who does not even appear in the Bible to convey his message. It is in this way, too, that Mary Magdalene can be considered an "outsider within", as she was the remnant of a Catholic culture within an Anglican society. This fact was largely due to the protean quality of the saint, who could be suited to very different messages.

One cannot but be struck by the persistence of the figure of the Magdalene through early English dramatic history. This may mainly be explained by the fascination entailed by her paradoxical quality, which also the key to her adaptability. Underlying the latter, in turn, is undoubtedly her archetypally heterogeneous aspect.

Mary Magdalene is one of the first characters of English drama. Although she appears in previous drama, she was for the first time treated as a full-blown heroine in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*, at a period when she was the most popular saint after the Virgin Mary. The play ambitiously deals with both her scriptural and her legendary life. It combines apocryphal legend and the scriptural account with allegorical and historical modes of representation. As Malvern states in her very subtle approach to the play, the double plot (the dramas of the Passion and of Mary Magdalene herself) serves to enhance the Magdalene's sainthood. She is also used as a vessel for the ancient dualistic split between body and soul, light and darkness. But the Digby author does not identify darkness with the mate-

rial world and woman, but, rather, with human mortality and the ignorance of Christian doctrine. The Magdalene is the enlightened one enlightening others (Malvern, p. 115).

The dramatist stresses the aspects of Christ's life and ministry pertaining especially to Mary Magdalene. Her fall is represented through an allegorical sequence in which her castle is besieged by the Seven Deadly Sins during her grief for her father's death, which has made her extremely vulnerable. She then goes through a very brief period of sin; the writer avoids salacious details and stresses her naivety. (The emphasis laid on the eroticism of her character is no pretext for bawdy; it is much more an aspect of her divine relationship with Christ.) The implication is that a single act of lechery with Curiosity transforms Mary Magdalene into a common woman. Her bitterness and contrition receive much fuller treatment. After her conversion, she develops from a position of passivity and dependency to one of active spiritual authority (when she has a disciple of her own and converts the King of Marseilles). The writer gives free rein to his imagination to emphasize the saint's apostolic function through a romance of travel, adventure and miraculous occurrence partly taken from the *Golden Legend*. The episode of the King of Marseilles demonstrates the miraculous power of the Magdalene's grace and also satisfies the audience's craving for adventure. The final stage of her spiritual development occurs in the desert, when her very life becomes a miracle (she is elevated by angels three times a day and is fed with manna) and she herself an object of devotion. Her ascension into Heaven at her death recalls the assumption of the Virgin Mary, also a subject of dramatic representation, and constitutes the culmination of a number of points at which an association with the Holy Virgin is implied (for instance, Mary Magdalene has the power to destroy the idols). The Digby heroine takes on all the various roles tradition had defined for her.

The form of the play links it with Morality plays. The struggle between good and evil in Mary Magdalene's soul is typical of this kind of play. So are the staging and characterization. Although the author shows a strong interest in the Magdalene's spiritual biography and her development in terms of religious authority, he represents his heroine as the locus of a cosmic conflict. Mary Magdalene dwells simultaneously in the worlds of human narrative and spiritual abstraction. The towers of Heaven and Hell remain visible throughout, attesting to the presence of a vast spiritual domain. The Digby author is openly didactic. He clearly identifies the Magdalene's fundamental sin as pride and enhances the

Christian virtue of humility represented in the penitent woman. The sin of pride is here directly linked to Mary Magdalene's carnal sin: it is her pride and vanity which lead the young woman to seek compliments from gallants and to develop a liking for adorned and enticing clothes.

While Catholic narratives and plays emphasize saints' post-conversion lives of repentance and good works more than earlier misdeeds, things are quite different in Protestant accounts. Wager's *Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene* was written just after the reign of Mary, at a time when Protestantism needed re-establishing in England. It is the only extant example of a Protestant saint's play, a fact which constitutes a telling reflection on Mary Magdalene's status as an apostolic figure. Wager gives a typically Protestant interpretation of the Magdalene's experience. The play confines itself to Scriptural details narrowly relevant to the process of repentance, and the miraculous elements found in the Digby play are rigidly excluded. It was designed for the entertainment and the instruction of teenagers of noble households and relied on traditional medieval dramaturgy, especially allegory. In this respect, it is closer to morality plays than to saints' plays. Indeed, Wager follows the morality play's traditional pattern, i.e., the succession of temptation, fall, repentance, and salvation, with the heroine placed in the midst of personified abstractions. The Protestant Mary Magdalene is usually a truncated figure, and Wager's version of her is particularly so: he travesties her goddess-like qualities, making them part of her temptation and fall; Christ explicitly denounces Mary Magdalene's extra-Scriptural mythology. Nowhere is the eroticism present in her pre-conversion phase given any positive aspect. In the Digby version, Mary Magdalene's eroticism before she repents has the same essence as the love she shares with Christ. She exchanges her worldly love for the love of Christ, but sensuality is an essential component of both. In Wager, the saint's sensuality in her pre-conversion phase is reduced to bawdy, and eroticism is absent from her relationship with Christ. Wager's Mary Magdalene is thus as far removed as she can be from her Digby counterpart. She becomes Every(wo)man, an exemplary figure of the universal sinner, which, although exemplary, should not be worshipped as a saint able to perform miracles.

The figure of the prostitute retains a more threatening aspect in Protestant writing than in Catholic hagiography, because as a sexual sinner she disrupts the patriarchal patterns of authority designed to keep this system in place. Catholic tales of conversion emphasized the importance of the institution of penance and



the miracles performed by the reformed sinner, whereas in their Protestant counterparts, confidence in one's own salvation rested more on inward assurance than on institutionally validated signs or tasks. Protestant writers used these stories to show the inward assurance granted to believing sinners, and to demonstrate how figures of authority in a properly ordered Christian society could reform others. The prostitute served as a useful symbol for a different process of salvation, based on justification by faith and emphasizing social integration over asceticism or other extreme acts of penance. The prominent role of faith is constantly stressed in these texts.

The essential first step towards salvation, an intensely private experience, is self-recognition. Protestant stories of salvation imply the ongoing struggle against sinfulness that the elect Christian faces throughout his life. The moment of intercession and the risk that the intercessory effort could fail are more fully dramatized and problematized than in Catholic texts. Wager emphasizes Mary Magdalene's sins and repentance, not her life as a penitent. From the moment of her conversion on, he stresses doctrine at the expense of dramatic interest. The play shows a strong Calvinist bias. It rejects the Catholic insistence on free will in favour of the Protestant concepts of predestination and grace. Man cannot save himself in Wager's world. The play is very much indebted to Calvin's *Institutes*. Especially dependent on Calvin's text is the dramatization of the process of conversion. Mary Magdalene's declaration to the audience in ll. 1769-70 sets her up as an example of Christ's mercy to the whole world: "To all the worlde an example I may be, / In whom the mercy of Christ is declared".

There are similarities between the two plays. Both are committed to combining edification with entertainment, and the scene in Wager where Christ extracts seven demons from the saint is highly theatricalized, with much wriggling and roaring on the part of the possessed witch that Mary Magdalene seems to be at that point. But Wager does not at all portray the saint's virtuous life after her repentance: he concludes with her acknowledgement of the power of God's love.

One finds in the phase of the character's degeneracy an overlapping of the traditional pattern of Vice intrigue and spiritual corruption with satire directed against the youth of the privileged classes. Mary Magdalene appears as already naturally disposed to sin. The four Vices compare her to Thais, Lais and Helen, i.e., famous whores. This phase is portrayed in lively, comic realism. To enhance the play's appeal to noble youth, the heroine is beautiful, spoilt, and coquettish.



The Vices instruct her to dress provocatively in the latest style, to dye and curl her hair, etc., in order to allure rich young suitors. This mimics the habits and courtly manners of the time. The laughter evoked by the Vices is a means of implicating the audience in the experience of temptation the protagonist undergoes. Because of her riches, Mary Magdalene cannot plead necessity in defence of turning a prostitute: Wager emphasizes her desire both for luxurious wealth and for carnal pleasure. She is a passive creature led into wickedness by circumstances and her own weak nature. Infidelity works on Mary Magdalene through the same device as that used by Lechery in *Digby*, i.e., flattery and a *carpe diem* speech. In the conversion phase, the godly figures' serious, homiletic speeches encourage critical detachment in the audience. Their placing and grouping mirrors what happens in Mary Magdalene's mind, but also in the mind of every spectator elected by divine grace. The young woman cannot save herself by human means. The pivotal moment when Christ enters to reward her is highly theatrical, and enables Wager to make his doctrinal point. The moral lesson of the play is constantly stressed, from the prologue, where it is said that the play gives "an example of penance the heart to grieve" (l. 6), to the very last words, in which Mary Magdalene hopes that everyone will go the same way as she. The characters are self-presentational and constantly explain to the audience what they stand for.

If *The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene* is the only example of a Protestant saint's play, the figure of Mary Magdalene did not completely disappear from the English stage, as her early Jacobean avatar, Bellafront in Dekker's *The Honest Whore*, witnesses. Protestant versions of the reformation of prostitutes retain Catholic texts' emphasis on Woman's responsibility for and "natural" association with sexual sin, but they also question and complicate the rather simple reformation process present in Catholic hagiography. Protestant texts often de-emphasize the prostitute's symbolic position as a mere abstract representative figure of female sinfulness, and take into account the socio-economic forces affecting the protagonist's moral and religious choices, and the community's response to them. Such is the case when Bellafront blames men for women's fall into prostitution and when she calls poverty "that cunning bawd" (2 *Honest Whore* III.ii., IV.i).

Bellafront is a very successful representation of the repentant whore in the tradition stemming from medieval Magdalene plays. The heroine follows the Christian schema of resisting temptation to prove her honesty (the worst temptation being Hippolito's attempt at turning her into a whore again in Part II).

She shows a deep awareness of sin. The play's oxymoronic title is puzzling to the spectator, and one finds oneself confronted again with the paradox already present in Mary Magdalene: the oxymoron reflects the evolution of the character but also suggests the coexistence of the two aspects in Bellafront. Her repentance links her with Wager's Mary Magdalene, but Dekker, like the Digby playwright, emphasizes her return to honesty. The first scene in which she appears is that of her conversion. In choosing to present her reformation as instantaneous, the author closely adheres to the structure of traditional Catholic narratives of converted prostitutes. But the motivation behind Bellafront's conversion is much less traditional: she desires Hippolito and reforms out of love for him. Her reasons for becoming a prostitute were also intensely personal, not stereotypical: she attributes her fall from honesty to lack of opportunity rather than to lust. The conversion is shown visually on stage by a change of props between Act II, Scene i, and Act III, Scene iii, where ink and paper replace make-up, mirrors and phials. This recalls Wager's Magdalene's being "sadly apparelled" (l. 1764) after her reformation.

Once turned "honest", Bellafront becomes in turn a converting agent for erring sinners, just like Mary Magdalene. For instance, she tries to persuade her former customers to forsake their lives of gaming and whoring (Part I, III.iii). But her efforts prove vain, for there is no place for a new Mary Magdalene in Jacobean London. Dekker does not adopt an obviously religious stance, or, rather, he tends towards the Puritan side. The contemporary and the realistic aspects are essential to his play, in which he gives a picture of the corrupted world he and his audience inhabit. People in the "real world" lack the Christian virtues of faith and charity embodied in Christ in the plays of the Digby author and of Wager. Dekker's perspective is much darker. Like Mary Magdalene, Bellafront often stresses her role as an *exemplum* through addresses to the audience. For instance, in Part I, she declares: "By my example / I hope few maidens will put their heads / Under men's girdles" (III.iii.131-33). And at the very end of Part II, she says: "women shall learn of me, / To love their husbands in greatest misery" (V.ii.540-41). Yet one must keep in mind that it is Hippolito and not Christ who converts Bellafront. The young woman proceeds from physical desire for Hippolito to contrition induced by his scornful rejection, and finally to a chaste love for him. It is thus much more difficult for the audience to decide what value to give to the prostitute's abrupt change. Hippolito and Matheo, the two men aiding her conversion, prove limited in their effectiveness and questionable in their morality. Yet, once Bellafront enacts her

reformation, she never wavers from chastity and faithfulness. Her depiction in the conversion scene subverts the traditional association between prostitution and indiscriminate lust, since she asserts her preference for monogamy. Besides, the play portrays the fall into prostitution not only as a moral failing but, as mentioned above, as the result of other kinds of circumstances, such as the failings of (male) heads of household and economic factors. Dekker also stresses the individual's role in her reformation: Bellafront is not overcome by divine grace; she can choose between a lapse into sin and a virtuous line of behaviour at any time. Her reformation is linked to the strength of her will above all else.

As Jean E. Howard argues in her article, "Prostitutes, Shopkeepers, and the Staging of the Urban Subjects in *The Honest Whore*", Bellafront by her reform cleanses the civic body and provides a model for urban dwellers. Her reformation occurs against the backdrop of the unreformed and the unrepentant (madmen and whores). Indeed, both parts of the play end in institutions symbolizing the control of the state over the unruly, i.e., Bedlam and Bridewell. The elaborate staging of the singing and cursing whores in Part II constitutes an exemplary spectacle meant for the edification of both those who watch on the stage and those who watch in the theatre. The Bridewell scene stages three stereotypical prostitutes (a quality emphasized by their names, i.e., Dorothea Target, Penelope Whorehound and Catharina Bountinall), whom the authorities (represented by the beadle of Bridewell) try to subdue. For this purpose, the three women are made to wear a blue gown supposed to symbolize their shame and repentance, and they are forced to perform manual work for the benefit of the community. Yet the prostitutes do not easily submit, and they curse the people coming to see them. The staging of the unrepentant whores is both a warning and a reassurance (Howard, p. 175).

After her conversion, Bellafront nevertheless remains stigmatised. In the second part of the play, she is continually forced to demonstrate her integrity in order to counter public insistence that she is ultimately merely a whore. Even the young woman sees herself as such. Ironically, Bellafront's transformation into a penitent and chaste lover subjects her to far more degrading abuse from society than she had ever known as a whore—a satiric inversion of the conventional morality play structure. Again, Dekker's pessimism regarding the possibility for salvation makes its presence felt. But one can also see his stance as endorsing the rigid moral condemnation of the prostitute, who must pay for her sins all her life long.

Thomas Middleton also relied on the convention of the reformed whore in his comedy *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1606). His characterization of the courtesan (by this word we mean a woman having a long-term illegitimate amorous relationship with one single man) is truly original, however, in that he combined the penitent of the native morality tradition with a thoroughly comic world. This is to go well beyond *The Honest Whore*, for Middleton uses the convention of the converted prostitute for ironic and satirical purposes much more obvious than Dekker's—proof, however, of how completely this convention was assimilated. Middleton shows his courtesan as having much sounder moral standards than the supposedly respectable people surrounding her, who prove corrupt and greedy. The courtesan's reformation speech at the end of the play is pointed at as the convention it is; what seems to matter to Middleton is that his courtesan is more clever, and in her own way more honest, than the "respectable" members of the society she lives in.

The character of Mary Magdalene is at the root of an enduring tradition: that of the type of the repentant prostitute, a blessed sinner becoming in turn an agent of redemption. The rich paradox at the core of her character is surely one reason for the longevity of the type. Its potential to function as a scapegoat, enabling the dominant discourse (i.e., the male patriarchal world to which authority belongs) to screen its own vices and to cleanse them through a symbolic reform, is probably another. Still, the type remains relatively rare in Renaissance drama: playwrights between Wager and Dekker ignored the character of the repentant prostitute, and the theme disappeared after 1608. It was probably more entertaining and more cathartic for the audience to see the prostitute as a Vice needing chastisement, and to see this chastisement carried out on stage, as happened in the streets of London every day.

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## *Staging the Doubting Conscience : From The Conflict of Conscience to Richard III<sup>1</sup>*

Catherine LISAK  
Université Bordeaux III

### *Reconstructing Character*

Our renewed sense of the significance of character in Renaissance drama has recently sparked off a general reappraisal of dramatic characterisation. Character had been relegated to the past as post-structuralism weighed in with an argument that shook literary criticism at the grass roots: it claimed that by flattening historical complexities, this category of criticism muddled the waters to the point of becoming ideologically reprehensible. Such studies as A. C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) came directly under fire. The effect of his enquiry into character study had been so debilitating that to this day, over a century later, critics like Laurie Maguire still feel the urgency to show up Bradley's "intrusively inventive character study" to undergraduate students, playgoers, novices,

1. This paper was written following the 2004 ISC seminar on "Shakespeare's Characters", in which I took part, and I am much indebted to all that was said during that working session. I would like to acknowledge two contributions, especially, which I found extremely helpful for the writing of this article: Laurie Maguire's paper on "New Realism" and Camille Wells Slight's paper entitled, "When is a Bastard not a bastard? Character in *King John*".



and admirers alike. Bradley's general approach, as illustrated by his analysis of Gertrude in *Hamlet*, "serves no critical function", Maguire argues, "not least because, as the tell-tale tense of 'drunkenness is disgusting' shows, it confusingly conflates subjectively moral judgment with analytical criticism" (p. 4).<sup>2</sup> However, in assessing the impact the revisionist process has had upon character criticism, Maguire also draws the conclusion that the swing of the pendulum may have gone too far:

innovative critical schools brought with them new discoveries but also new dangers: their specialist vocabularies have made Shakespeare criticism less accessible to the ordinary reader and playgoer, and their theoretical basis has, as Alan Sinfield puts it, threatened to "make character a wholly inappropriate category of analysis" [p. 58]. Heather Dubrow writes that "character has virtually become a dirty word" [p. 17]. Once alerted to this creeping marginalization of what is dramatically essential, we can reach an accommodation which retains much of the new territory won by the theoreticians, for character is partly created, affected, and altered by the power structures and cultural contingencies (i.e., situation) to which the new scholarly *isms* have taught us to be attentive. The blunt reality of dramatic characterization remains. (p. 4)

In a bid to revitalise this long-disregarded analytical category, literary criticism is once again engaging in the revision of certain criteria to grasp anew the implications of dramatic characterisation. Most interesting is Alan Sinfield's *Faultlines*, in which the critic elaborates a definition of *character* by considering those instances where characterisation has not been achieved. Rather than determine the moment when an agent acquires character, the basis of Sinfield's reasoning is articulated in the negative. Specifically, he identifies substance and meaning in a category of analysis by disqualifying all that might not apply, because it somehow falls short of the mark. He thus asks, "When Is a Character Not a Character?" (p. 52).<sup>3</sup> When does a character fail in his attributes? When is the critic's use of

2. Bradley's study of this character, which Maguire quotes (p. 3), went as follows: "The Queen was not a bad-hearted woman, not at all the woman to think little of murder. But she had a soft animal nature, and was very dull and shallow. She loved to be happy, like a sheep in the sun; and to do her justice, it pleased her to see others happy, like more sheep in the sun. She never saw that drunkenness is disgusting till Hamlet told her so; and though she knew that he considered her marriage 'oer-hasty' . . . she was untroubled by any shame at the feelings which had led to it. It was unpleasant to sit upon her throne and see smiling faces round her" (p. 167).
3. "When Is a Character Not a Character? Desdemona, Olivia, Lady Macbeth and Subjectivity" is the title of Chapter Three of *Faultlines*.

the word unwarranted? The conundrum, if anything, requires we reassess the confusions the English language instills between different kinds of agents in a play (the actants or *dramatis personae*) who are, or not, endowed with *character*. It might prove useful to refer back to Aristotle's own interpretation of character, which first and foremost designates a quality of mind that is revealed to the audience at a moment of moral choice (*proairesis*). As Hollis Rinehart points out in his study of the peripatetic conception of character,

Aristotle sharply distinguishes between the agents of the play (*prattontes*) [Aristotle, *Poetics*, vi, 5]<sup>4</sup> and character (*taethe*). In English the same word does for both the agents, or *dramatis personae*, and the qualities of mind of those agents. In Aristotle the distinction is quite clear: he even has different words for the two concepts. In fact it is quite possible, in Aristotle's view, to have tragedy without character (vi, 14), although not without agents. That is because all action is performed by agents, but not all action stems from character. Character, as we have seen, involves moral choice, but not all action stems from moral choice. It may also arise from thought (*dianola*), when the choice is obvious, or when it proceeds from reasoning alone.

Alan Sinfield draws a similar distinction; indeed, he explores a set of contra-distinctions, by marking off those *dramatis personae* who, being devoid of certain attributes, simply serve as backcloths to a plot or ideology. Hence, “a character is not a character when he or she is needed to shore up a patriarchal representation” (p. 54). This leads him to formulate what he believes to be the prerequisite condition for character construction—that there be “an impression of subjectivity, interiority or consciousness, and a sense that these maintain a sufficient continuity or development through the scenes of the play” (p. 62). What we have here are in fact two requirements, the first resting on the dramatic manifestation of an inner self, the second, on this manifest impression being sustained for the sake of the audience—two criteria which call for further consideration.

The first precondition—the translation of such characteristics as “subjectivity, interiority or consciousness” into external signs—suggests that a character comes into his own when he displays inwardness and thought. Perhaps, what Sinfield's choice of words does not make clear is whether “subjectivity, interiority or consciousness” imply mere thought (where the choice is obvious and only requires reasoning [*Poetics*, vi, 25]) or whether it includes a moral choice (*Poetics*, vi, 24) that cannot be taken for granted. If both ideas invoke the notion of inward-

4. All citations of Aristotle's work follow the system applied in Fyfe's edition, viz., first citing the chapter (in Roman numerals) then the sentence (in Arabic numerals).

ness, thought alone does not stand as a sufficient attribute in Aristotelian terms for an agent to become a (tragic) character. The process of introspection implies there be a more complex, moral grounding for the agent to acquire the status of dramatic character proper. Are we to assume that the idea of a moral stance is inherent to such concepts as “subjectivity, interiority and consciousness”?

From these first remarks, there arises another difficulty. Studying the links between inwardness and theatre in the Renaissance, Katharine Eisaman Maus demonstrates that “inwardness as it becomes a concern in the theatre is always perforce inwardness displayed: an inwardness, in other words, that has already ceased to exist” (p. 32). This implies that all interiority, when staged, looks outwards as a testimony for the audience to see and hear, and, to various degrees, operates as a theatrical display that rules out interiority as it simultaneously enacts it. As Stephen Greenblatt similarly observes, “The task of conveying an inner life is an immensely challenging one in drama, since what the audience sees and hears is always in some sense or other public utterance” (“The Death of Hamnet”, p. 43). Such thought-provoking comments give us the measure of the inherent antagonism that exists on stage between that which is contained—subjectivity, consciousness or conscience—and that which is displayed. We will further argue that it is precisely such dynamic interplay that activates the process of dramatic characterisation. If, *in fine*, “the chronic doubts of what can be seen tend to make theatre an art of incompleteness: a form of display that flaunts the limits of display” (Maus, p. 210), might we not go so far as to say that the construction of character as a form of dramatic mediation becomes a theatrically anxious experience, as much for the actor as for the audience? This in turn would suggest not only that to witness characterisation in the making is both the most problematic and the most gratifying of dramatic experiences a play might have to offer, but also that character construction is intricately linked with audience reception.

The second criterion Sinfield formulates is that manifest inwardness be sustained. Character consistency also constitutes Aristotle’s fourth and final aim. The notions of continuity, consistency or sustained subjectivity invite us to take into account not only the audience’s expectations<sup>5</sup> but plot requirements as well.

5. Rinehart argues that consistency is an aim which “stems not from the requirements of the plot, as do ‘usefulness’ and ‘appropriateness’, but, like ‘likeness’, from the needs of the audience. For the audience not only needs to see visible signs of character, but needs to see them consistently, in order to establish the probability that the character will continue to make the choices which the plot requires. This need for probability is the real source of the need for consistency”.

“When is a character not a character” is a question that also focuses on timing and plot, for it invites us to consider at what point in a play a character should be expected to have acquired character. Is it crucial that dramatic characterisation occur early relatively in the play, or might an agent acquire *character* and thereby become a fully-fledged character as far into the play as the climax? Can character construction coincide with—even mark—the highest point of dramatic tension that leads to the main conflict finally being resolved? What if a character comes into being at the final stages of a play, for a matter of an instant, as he struggles to make his moral choice, but does not sustain the required attributes to the last? Can it be said that no dramatic characterisation has taken place? Can a character revert back to being a simple agent? In other words, is characterisation an irreversible process? Once a character has acquired character, can that character come undone, fall apart at the seams, on the early modern stage, for all the audience to see?

This paper proposes to use these different yet complementary lines of thought to explore the development of characterisation as it occurs within two apparently very different plays: Nathaniel Woodes’s relatively obscure hybrid morality play, *The Conflict of Conscience*, printed in 1581, and Shakespeare’s notoriously popular history play, *King Richard III*, which was composed over a decade later (1592–93). In both cases, I will focus on the conflict of conscience that takes place—in Act IV, Scene iii of *The Conflict of Conscience* and Act V, Scene iii of *Richard III*. In a study especially concerned with the way certain scenes serve to display the making, or unmaking, of a character with depth and a moral sense of self, it seems appropriate to focus on the staging of a conscience in turmoil, because, as Anne Ferry argues, conscience was the term and concept which, in the sixteenth-century English understanding, came closest to evoking continuous internal awareness (pp. 45–46), an indispensable attribute that enables an agent to be regarded as a character proper. Moreover, the fact that both scenes occur near the end of the play—and correspond, in dramatic terms, to scenes of recognition (preceding the final catastrophe)—will lead us to interrogate the accepted assumption that character must be sustained. My final aim will be to suggest that the hero’s speech in Act IV, Scene iii of Nathaniel Woodes’s play might very well have served as an additional springboard, or possible *source*, for Richard’s soliloquy in *King Richard III*. I will venture to argue that Shakespeare’s play could be considered, in this respect, as belonging to the same transitional dramatic tradition as *The Conflict of Conscience*.

## *The Indeterminacy of Character and Genre*

Nathaniel Woodes's *The Conflict of Conscience* partakes of the transitional drama of the 1580s and 1590s. Its originality resides to a large extent in its wavering generic claims and the effect such hesitation has on characterisation. There were in fact two versions of *The Conflict of Conscience* that appeared within a single edition. The dichotomy partook of a central tension that not only typified such transitional drama, generally speaking, but reflected the play's specific hesitations in intention. It was, indeed, trying to negotiate the representation of a specific historical biography, the "lamentable Hystorie" of an Italian Protestant converted to Catholicism, Francesco Spira, or "Frauncis Spira" in Woodes's play (first issue, title page), with an exemplary figuration of man—the "lamentable example" of the idealised figure called "Philologus" (second issue, title page) who, like Everyman, would be blessed with endgame redemption.<sup>6</sup> Thus, depending on the version, the play presents itself as being either "dolefull" or "joyfull" (l. 2411 in each issue), that is, either tragic or comic. The intriguing fluctuation in genre had repercussions on character construction and deconstruction—in Act IV, Scene ii, especially. It was William Carew Hazlitt who, in 1744, first pointed to the fact that by "looking merely at this list [of *dramatis personae*], which we have exactly copied, it does not appear in what way the performance bears even a remote resemblance to tragedy or comedy." The critic found that the strange inconsistency in characterisation clouded the issue of genre in the extreme.

The conflicting generic tendencies of the play find one explanation in the use that was made of a great diversity of source materials. Nathaniel Woodes borrowed from the specific though remote biography of an Italian recusant, the representative stories of martyrdom in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, the allegorical tradition of the morality, and the conventional structure of psychomachia (especially, the alternation between good and evil). One can see how this diversity in sources might affect characterisation. Again, Hazlitt remarked that

The names read like an enumeration of such personages as were ordinarily introduced into the Moral-plays of an earlier period—indeed, one of them seems to be derived from the still more ancient form of Miracle-plays, frequently represented with the assistance of the clergy. We allude to Satan, who opens the body of the drama by a long speech

6. This led the author to introduce slight variations within the title pages, the Prologue and the *Nuntius* of the final scene. See, in particular, Hazlitt, ed.; Campbell; Spivack, pp. 238–39; and Bevington, pp. 245–51.

(so long that we can hardly understand how a popular audience endured it) but does not afterwards take part in the action, excepting through the agency of such characters as Hypocrisy, Tyranny, and Avarice, who may be supposed to be his instruments, and under his influence and direction. Nevertheless, a real and, as he may be considered, an historical, personage is represented in various scenes of the play, and is, in truth, its hero, although the author, for reasons assigned in the Prologue, objected to the insertion of his name in the text.<sup>7</sup>

Hazlitt consequently argues that *The Conflict of Conscience* like *The Tragical Comedy of Appius and Virginia*, were plays that formed “a class by themselves”, because in them, “characters both abstract and individual [were] employed in the same performance”. What transpires from Hazlitt’s various comments is that character determines the agent, the nature of his performance, as well as the generic claims of the plot—a working assumption also formulated in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. As Rinehart explains: “It is character, then, which gives a quality (*poias*) to the agents and through them to the action which they perform (vi, 7-8) . . . it is through his or her character that the plot will take on a tragic quality or not”. *The Conflict of Conscience* not only brings together on the same stage different sorts of *dramatis personae* that represent either fact or fable, reality or allegory, individuality or abstraction, the exemplary or the historical; it also succeeds in fusing these different (dare one say, opposed) attributes within a single character—Philologus. In his own analysis of the play, David Bevington suggests that the configuration of this character relies on and varies with the play’s competing generic claims: “Woodes . . . is able to portray the life of an historical personage who is also a universal type, and whose career is potentially either tragic or glorious” (p. 247). Bevington seems to be making the same point Hazlitt had been making two centuries earlier, except that his causal analysis between character and genre actually works in the reverse. He goes on to argue:

In *Conflict of Conscience*, it is the struggle between the impulse toward biography and the impulse toward generic representation that produces the two endings. One may imagine that Woodes originally conceived of his work as an edifying spiritual biography; but in adapting his historical source to a moral structure he perceived that the organization of events, and the whole weight

7. Bevington offers a different explanation of the change of genre: “In *Conflict of Conscience*, it is the struggle between the impulse toward biography and the impulse toward generic representation that produces the two endings. One may imagine that Woodes originally conceived of his work as an edifying spiritual biography; but in adapting his historical source to a moral structure he perceived that the organization of events, and the whole weight of tradition behind that organization, impelled him to an idealized ending in place of the historical one.” (pp. 250-51).

of tradition behind that organization, impelled him to an idealized ending in place of a historical one. It is this tension between what is or was, and what ought to be, that produces a very real excitement in the play (despite its mediocre style) up to the final scene. It is inescapably true that Philologus could be saved or damned until the last moment. The author's final decision in favour of a happy ending is not one of caprice or arbitrary use of *deus ex machina*, but stems from the central conflict in transitional drama between secular fact and religious ideal. (pp. 250–51)

Bevington suggests that hesitancy around genre and plot accounts for belated character construction (or determinacy). If it is true that the hero of the play “Philologus could be saved or damned until the last moment”, the impression that is being sustained, and which characterises the hero, is not one of subjectivity so much as of indeterminacy or of some potential yet to be realised or declared. The implication of this remark is that an agent might manifest only late in the play an ability to act upon his own potential, construct his own sense of self through moral choice, and even gain insight into his position in the play as a dramatic character proper.

I would further argue that in the case of *The Conflict of Conscience*, character construction (by which I mean when the agent gains *character*) occurs at a critical stage in the plot—the moment of Recognition, before the play finally sways towards tragedy or comedy. This marks the moment when Conscience definitively leaves the stage as an allegorical figure and returns, as a voice within a voice, within the protagonist's speech, thus enabling a process of introspection and moral choice-making. As a consequence, the protagonist is faced with his own, internal ambivalence, where impulses converge and a conflict of conscience is acted out. The agent grows into a more complex, subjective and moral *persona*, if only for an instant, as he wrangles with his divided urges and struggles to make a final decision. We witness the hero become increasingly self-aware. Such a gain of awareness, it should be noted, is often expressed in the shape of a speech that only approximates an internal monologue or soliloquy.

### *The Staging of Conscience*

Conscience appears at only one point in *The Conflict of Conscience*: in Act IV, Scene iii. Like Spirit, and Suggestion, his adversary, he is an allegorical figure who stands up to his adversary with counter-arguments in an alternating dialogue over good and evil. From the outset, Philologus has been witness to this

spiritual tug-of-war, which has progressively unsettled him in his convictions. After the opening scene, in which Satan lauds the Pope (I, i) and plots the overthrow of Christ's ministry on earth (II, i-ii), Philologus resolves with Mathetes (a force of good) to endure martyrdom in the name of truth (I, ii). There ensues a monologue, the only one he speaks in the play, in which the hero expresses apprehension as he considers the prospect of looming Roman tyranny (III, i). During a long and climactic episode that runs from Act III, Scene ii, to Act IV, Scene i, he is subjected to an inquisition. He successfully answers questions from such awesome figures as Cardinal, Cacon, and Tyranny, but finally avows that he is torn by a fundamental dilemma. Thus, speaking to Suggestion, he says:

For I will heere you with hartes delectation:  
Because I would gladly to your doctrine consent,  
If that I could so my conscience content.  
But my Conscience crieth out and bids me take heede  
To loue my lord God aboue all earthly gaine,  
Whereby all this while, I stande in great dread,  
That if I should Gods statutes disdain,  
In wretched state then, I should remaine:  
Thus cryeth my Conscience, to mee continually,  
Which if you can stay, I will yeelede to you gladly. (IV.i.1379-88)

Though Philologus has trodden the path of indeterminacy and indecision all through the play, it is only now that he presents us with a case study of his divided self. He acknowledges that he is turmoil inside, being both drawn to worldly pleasures and suppressed in his ways, as by the tyrannical rule of his conscience. As he rests his destiny within the hands of external forces, Philologus continues to cast himself in the role of an agent with no character, that is, devoid of all self-determinacy. He perceives conscience as an oppressive driving force, whereas Suggestion is portrayed as a reliable figure he may count on to keep all excesses of conscience in check. In his increasing confusion of values, the hero reverses the moral role of each allegorical figure, seeing evil in good (Conscience) and good in evil (Suggestion).

Conscience is, undeniably, an unsettling figure. This nagging internal voice, which had remained all this while contained and unheard, is now beginning to break through Philologus's speech, as it "crieth out" to awaken the hero to an awareness of his own subjectivity. The result is that Philologus's lines seem to impersonate Conscience's cries in a manner that verges free indirect speech,



metatheatrically punctuated by such expressions as “But my Consience crieth out” and “Thus cryeth my Consience, to mee continually”. This creates a superimposition of voices within a single speech, which suggests that a complex construction of self is taking place. Spirit attempts to show Philologus the way to salvation (IV, iv) by driving home a sense of self and prompting the hero to take responsibility for his motives and actions:

Thou art yet free Philologus, all torments thou maist scape,  
 Onely the pleasures of the world, thou shalt awhile forbear,  
 Renounce thy crime, and sue for grace, and do not captivate  
 Thy Consience unto mortall sinne, the yoke of Christ doo beare,  
 Shut up these wordes within thy brest, which sound so in thine  
     eare:  
 The outwarde man hath caused thee, this enterprise to take,  
 Beware least wickednesse of spirit, the same doo perfect make. (IV.iv.1699–1705)

Spirit’s counsel is grounded on the commonplace theological argument that behind many a man’s apparent composure there lurks a misguided relationship with his quarrelsome conscience. In Nicholas Ling’s *Politeuphuia. Wits Common-Wealth* (1598), there are several quotations listed under the heading of “Conscience” which point back to this idea. Thus, “He that frameth himself outwardly, to doe that which his conscience reproveth inwardly, wilfully resisteth the law of God” (sig. C2<sup>v</sup>). Observations on the notion of conscience were often construed around the opposition between the world without and the world within—a conflict, contrast or contradiction that needed to be negotiated. As Ling’s collection of citations illustrate, a man’s conscience could work itself as deep as a worm “that bindeth and never ceaseth”, and yet be brought out into the open, by way of some denunciation or accusation: “none is more guilty than hee whose conscience forceth him to accuse himselfe”, while “to excuse ones selfe before he is accused, is to finde a foul crack in a false conscience” (sig. C2<sup>r-v</sup>). Evidently, Spirit dramatises this very division, which attends those who have not learnt to manage the tensions that oppose the “outwarde man” with the being that lies “within”. As the play draws to an end, Theologus, one of Philologus’s sons, who will not manage to save his father from his fate, concludes that Philologus’s fault lies in not having managed to negotiate the boundaries between inside and outside, between self and other. In an exhortatory address to God, he remarks: “The outwarde man doth thee not please, nor yet, the minde alone,/But thou requireth both of us, or els regardeth none” (V.iii.2389–90).

The value of Spirit's counsel resides in the mode of conduct to be followed if Philologus is to secure a sustained sense of self and interiority: "Shut up these wordes within thy brest, which sound so in thine eare" (IV.iv.1703). If we look more closely at the framing structure of this line, we note that it is hemmed in by "Thy conscience" in the previous line and "The outwarde man" in the following. The basic effect is one of ambiguity: the words to be shut within his breast could be either those of his Conscience, or those of Suggestion—the outward man. Accordingly, the interpretation of Spirit's advice varies. He could either be pressing Philologus to safeguard his conscience by letting his teaching sink in, or inciting him to capture, enclose, withhold, or suppress the outward man's worldly pleasure principle, maintaining it within a deep-seated part of the self by an act of self-appropriation, a process which would imply his taking in society's discourse.

However we choose to read these ambivalent lines, Spirit's consideration of how to manage the outsider within reveals the remarkable degree of awareness early modern society had of the many hidden, tacit and obscured strata that in fact made up a human being and a character. Philologus is being compelled to negotiate his identity by internalising Otherness, while externalising the self. Both Suggestion and Conscience stand on stage as externalisations of Philologus' troubled self, as well as emblems of all that should be self-contained, for better or for worse. In identifying the external matrices that exert this "enterprise" of "captivation" on Philologus, Spirit seeks to show the hero how to turn subjection ("The outwarde man hath caused thee") into subjectivity. He is, in short, teaching Philologus how to reverse the process of alienation. Thus, the explicit mention of "outwarde" implicitly appeals to the notion of *inwardness*, while "caused", in this reversal of logic, similarly incites the hero to realize his potential to be a character endowed with free will.

The three figures of Suggestion, Spirit and Conscience play a remarkable dramatic role, as emblematic agents, for they position Philologus at the threshold of characterisation. They occupy the stage as mediations that may construct Philologus as either an Everyman or a fully-fledged character, depending on the way the protagonist chooses to address the notions of within and without. Having each had their say, they leave Philologus to ponder on the moral choice that awaits him and take stock of himself in this dramatic moment of Recognition. The spiritual struggle between external provocations, to which Philologus simply stood witness, has now turned into a personal tussle with his own internal knowledge:

Ah wretched man, what shall I doo: which doo so playnly see,  
 My flesh and Spirit to contende, and that in no small thing,  
 But as concerning the euent, of extreame miserie:  
 Which either studie to auoyde, or els upon me bring,  
 And which of them I should best trust, it is a doubtfull thing.  
 My *Conscience* speaketh truth mee think, but yet because I feare,  
 By his aduice to suffer death, I doo his wordes forbear.  
 And therfore pacyfy thy selfe, and doo not so torment,  
 Thy selfe, in vaine I must seeke some meanes for to eschew,  
 These griping greefes, which unto mee, I see now imminent.  
 And therefore will no longer stay, but bid thee now adue. (IV.iv.1891-1902)

Philologus speaks these lines to himself. The allegorical figures surrounding him are silent, as they now stand witness to another's conflict. It is no longer the emblematic agents who convey to the audience information about Philologus's state of mind and heart or motivations. The alternating dialogue has been internalised so that Philologus holds an internal dialogue between "My Conscience" and "Mee", between the moralising, universal vision of a "wretched man" and the individualised personal pronoun "I". Awakened to the responsibility of a decision he had repeatedly disclaimed, Philologus internalises Conscience, which he had till now cast as an outsider. For an instant, the allegorical figure coalesces with the protagonist. He is self-reflexive ("mee think") yet addresses himself as he would another person, in the second person singular ("And therefore pacify thy selfe"). In this duplication of self through different modes of address, he plays the part of two potential participants in an internal dialogue which dramatically emulates the internal workings of his mind. As his name suggests, Philologus displays the love of talk, to the detriment of God's word, by talking about himself to himself. He plays all roles in his internal dialogue, in which he is embodied in the first, second and third person singular. Within the interstices of this dialogue, doubt is maintained long enough for the agent to gain in autonomy sufficiently to make a moral choice.

Self-awareness is enacted in a different mode, no longer voiced by some exterior force but contained within the speech of the protagonist, who speaks in no other voice than his own. For the first time, Philologus is presented as determining his self (if not yet his fate) by passing from doubt to decision, thus staging his own, interiorised drama of the self. The conflict of conscience is now taking place within the single character. The notion of competing wills is contained in the word "contende", while the idea of negotiation between contraries is expressed in such words as "concerning" and "conscience", particularly in the

shared prefix, which signifies togetherness. This was the very definition William Perkins gave of *Conscience* in his 1590s lectures in Cambridge. Commenting on the etymology of the word—“con” (“jointly”), and “science” (“knowledge”)—he argued that conscience “signifieth a knowledge, joined with a knowledge. . . . First because when a man knows or thinkes any thing, by means of conscience, he knows what he knows and thinkes. Secondly, because by it, man knows that thing of himself, which God also knows of him” (2: 11).<sup>8</sup> It would appear that by the end of Act IV, Philologus is ready to gain in *character* and become a character by an applied effort to “studie” his “self” and the “event” or outcome to his final decision.

However, his internal dialogue which constructs an impression of subjectivity is short lived. As the final lines of his speech reveal, he freely chooses to relinquish his conscience and bids him farewell in scurrying flight (“And therefore will no longer stay, but bid thee now adue”). Conscience becomes once more an exterior presence (“thee”) not the force he was beginning to process and assimilate. Far from investing the hero’s speech, Conscience now stands powerless. He attempts to halt him in his stride and call him back, but his exhortations are in vain. Philologus leaves the stage in company of Suggestion, while Conscience summarises the poor role Philologus has chosen to play, before leaving the stage once and for all:

Oh cursed creature, O frail fleshe, O meat for wormes, O dust,  
O blather puffed full of winde, O vainer then these all,  
What cause hast thou in thine own wit, to have so great a trust:  
Which of thy selfe canst not espie, the euils which on thee fall,  
The blindness of the outward man, Philologus shew shall  
At his returne, unless I can at last, make him relent,  
For why the Lord him to correct, in furious wrath is bent. (IV.iii.1909-15)

It seems that during this brief moment, there transpires an “impression of subjectivity, interiority and consciousness”. In becoming a character in his own right, Philologus might have run the risk of being like “the foxe, which caught in snare, and scapt with loss of tale” (IV.iii.1792), had lost at his hind end what he’d gained in mind. But self-reflexivity has proved unsustainable and Philologus hastens to extinguish all conscience gained. Struck by “the blindness of the outward man”, he reverts to his “undiscerning” self (V.ii.1974), “which of thy selfe canst not espie”

8. I first encountered this quotation by William Perkins in Camille Wells Slight’s paper, “When is a Bastard not a bastard? Character in *King John*”.



## Richard's Troubled Self

It has been argued that Nathaniel Woodes's play represents, "with or without direct connection . . . an important link in the dramatic tradition between *The Longer Thou Livest* and *Faustus*" (Bevington, p. 245),<sup>9</sup> between William Wager's 1558 morality play and Christopher Marlowe's 1590 tragedy. Bevington argues that in the case of transitional drama, the sudden change of focus in the final scenes of the play had a decisive effect on the generic outcome of a play:

The alteration is symbolic of the manner in which the entire body of Psychomachia drama was able to adapt itself to a tragic pattern, simply by terminating its usual progression of spiritual downfall and recovery before the final phase. The earliest of Psychomachia drama contained in its phases of comic and grotesque degeneracy the materials for a tragic resolution. The phenomenon developed in plays like *The Longer Thou Livest* and *Conflict of Conscience*, and reached its fullest maturity in the comic degeneracy of Doctor Faustus' own decline.

This also implied that changes in dramaturgy reflected the evolving tastes of an ever-changing audience; they also modelled, modified and processed the audience's expectations. It might be said that spectators progressively detached themselves from the heroes' tragic lot, perhaps because end-of-the-century plays no longer required that they relate the moral or existential downfall of a hero to their own personal fates. The spectators' response to characters evolved as dramatic characterisation increasingly weighed in the determination of the play's generic perspective. Transitional drama was no longer "the product of a culture" anymore, "in which the difference between an individual and a group has not become highly charged", as Maus observes of morality plays (p. 88):

As Bernard Spivack writes, "The human situation . . . is treated from some partial point of view, and restricted to the vices characteristic of some mode or station of life" (p. 207). This particularizing tendency begins to confound the rather simple kinds of identification between character and spectator that Renaissance defenders of the theatre take for granted. (Maus, p. 88)

9. Thus, Bevington explains, "The question of Marlowe's direct indebtedness to Woodes's play is controversial" (p. 245). Campbell finds little evidence of Marlowe's having known the earlier play. Spivack, on the other hand, cites "general and specific similarities" (p. 245), though it is suggested that the similarities reveal that Marlowe may have been familiar with Woodes's source, the autobiographical narrative of Francesco Spira, rather than with Woodes's play.

In this final part, I would like to analyse Shakespeare's *King Richard III* (written two or three years after Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*), and more specifically, Richard's monologue, in Act V, Scene iii—a scene where Richard awakens from a nightmare and struggles with his doubting conscience—in the light of Philolugus's own conflict of conscience. My aim will be to demonstrate that Shakespeare's history play partakes of this same tradition of “transitional drama”, in which the moment of Recognition and the dramatic characterisation that ensues mark the decisive generic turning point in the play.

In Act V, Scene iii of *Richard III*, Richard awakens from a nightmare. Dramatic characterisation shifts when the protagonist addresses—and voices—his conscience for the first time. It has long been established that this scene found its sources in such pieces as Hall's account of the night before the Battle of Bosworth field in *The Union of the Two Noble . . . Families of Lancaster and York* (1548),<sup>10</sup> and the anonymous contemporary play, *The True Tragedy of Richard III*.<sup>11</sup> In *Hamlet in Purgatory*, Stephen Greenblatt argues that

Conscience in Hall's account is not simply a psychological element; it is an objective moral function, designed to produce (or at least to offer the opportunity for) repentance and hence to enable one to make a good end or alter-

10. The passage reads as follows: “for it seemed to him being asleep that he saw diverse images like terrible devils pulled and haled him, not suffering him to take any quiet and rest. The which strange vision not so suddenly strake his heart with a sudden fear, but it stuffed his head and troubled his mind with many dreadful and busy Imaginations. For incontinent after, his heart being almost damped, he prognosticated before the doubtful chance of the battle to come, not using the alacrity and mirth of mind and of countenance as he was accustomed to before he came toward the battle. And lest that it might be suspected that he was abashed for fear of his enemies, and for that cause looked so piteously, he recited and declared to his familiar friends in the morning his wonderful vision and terrible dream.” (Hall, 3: 291)

11. *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, in Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 3: 338. Richard reveals that he has had some horrifying nightmares:

The hell of life that hangs upon the Crown,  
 The daily cares, the nightly dreams,  
 The wretched crews, the reason of the foe,  
 And horror of my bloody practise past,  
 Strikes such a terror to my wounded conscience,  
 That sleep I, wake I, or whatsoever I do,  
 Methinks their ghosts come gaping for revenge,  
 Whom I have slain in reaching for a Crown.  
 Clarence complains, and crieth for revenge.  
 My Nephews bloods, Revenge, revenge, doth cry.  
 The headless Peers comes pressing for revenge.  
 And every one cries, let the tyrant die.

natively to confirm one's own damnation. Shakespeare uses many of the same materials but shapes them to a different end. (p. 178)

In fact, what drew late Elizabethan dramatists, and Shakespeare not least, towards the construction of complex characters, was that Conscience was “not simply” the reified allegorical abstraction encountered in earlier dramaturgy; it was being turned into a psychological element that constructed an impression of subjectivity, interiority and consciousness, which enabled agents to appear as individualised and naturalistic characters. When viewed from this angle, Shakespeare’s scene comes much closer to Nathaniel Woodes’s own staging of Conscience in the scene of Recognition (as a conflicting psychological element that constructs a character proper late in the play) than to Hall’s mid-Tudor interpretation of conscience as some exterior force. Where Shakespeare also seems to join Woodes, and depart from Hall, is in the way Richard apparently “manages to harden his heart” (Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, p. 178), though his atheistic bravado (as is the case with Philologus) is, to the last, shot through with fear:

Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls;  
Conscience is but a word that cowards use,  
Devis'd at first to keep the strong in awe. (V.iii.309–11)

If we examine Richard’s monologue (V.iii.178) with Philologus’s lines (IV.iv.1891–1902) in mind, the possible similarities and associations quickly draw us to the striking differences that reveal the originality of Shakespeare’s writing and investigation into character construction. Both speeches are spoken at the moment of Recognition as both heroes turn to their conscience in self-pity and spiritual turmoil. In a self-reflexive, rhetorical question, Philologus picks up on what Conscience has reportedly warned him against. Indeed, a few lines back, Philologus declared: “In wretched state then, I should remaine:/Thus cryeth my conscience. . . .” The voice of conscience speaks through him so clearly that it would seem, for an instant, that both characters merge. Thus Philologus exclaims: “A wretched man, what shal I doo”.

Tormented by the haunting voices of his dead victims, Richard is awoken to the wretchedness of his state. This awakening is the trigger to a speech in which Richard conjures up his conscience. Richard’s rhetorical question leads to an interior dialogue with his conscience: “O coward conscience, how thou dost afflict me!” (V.iii.180). Both characters claim to be distressed and wracked by their conscience.



Both speak their lines in an exclamatory and self-pitying mode, as they dramatically open themselves up to the audience with sharp awareness of their sufferance. But whereas Conscience speaks through Philologus in some singular, Other voice, Richard's voice of conscience does not merge imperceptibly with his own. On the contrary, it divides and breaks up: "My conscience hath a thousand several tongues . . ." (V.iii.194), shattering the character himself into fragments of many selves. If Philologus appears to be master of his fate because he believes he can ultimately choose to harbour or cast away his conscience, Richard's state of conscience commands Richard's fate and state of being as a character to the last.

For much of his speech, Philologus's sense of self filters through expressions of doubt, hesitation and fear, that are those of an awakening self-conscience. But as we witness Philologus deal summarily with his dilemma and just as quickly give up on his conscience, we also note how he twice addresses his "self" in the second person singular: "thy self". This reveals that his appropriation of the self is only partial, for it remains in his phrasing someone other. However close, the self stands as a false twin, with whom he is involved in sibling rivalry. This is fundamentally because Philologus chooses, undiscerningly, between his self and his conscience, as if they could be considered separately.

In contrast, Richard's self and conscience coalesce into the first person singular; fragmentation only underscores fusion, a state reinforced by the repetition of a same attribute—"Myself" or "I". Alternation only leads to misidentification, as the "I" of utterance is confused with the possessive pronoun "I". Thus, with fusion comes confusion: "Myself, myself confound", "I and I". Self-reflexivity is created through the impression of a subjective and self-inflicted vicious circle. Richard finally becomes aware that to impose any distinction is to be abused. To talk of one's self is but to misuse the very word and concept "self", as Elizabeth retorted to him in the previous act:

*King Richard.* Then by my self—  
*Elizabeth.* Thy self is self-misus'd. (IV.iv.376-77)

In contrast with Philologus, Richard's state of doubting conscience is sustained throughout, and is all-consuming. Maus argues that "Everything Richard thought he had put outside himself keeps covertly returning", so that the character finds himself entangled in a relational mode. Indeed, because the character is unable to relinquish his conscience, inner conflict swells and drives him ever deeper into verbal and moral turmoil. Self-reflexivity and moral judgement, as

the combined manifestations of conscience, are both at work in Richard here, relentlessly denying him all self-pity: “I myself/Find in myself no pity to myself”. At this specific point in the play, he is quite unlike Philologus, who, having forsaken his conscience, seeks to comfort himself by himself—“And therfore pacyfy thy selfe, and doo not so torment,/Thy selfe”—however mistakenly, as he recognises this will be “in vaine”. Unable to withstand internalisation, he chooses delusion and seeks a way out. No more than Richard will he find one.

By renouncing his conscience, Philologus becomes a vacuum that crosses the stage under the delusion of a sense of self and integrity he has in fact also relinquished. On the contrary, King Richard collapses inward, caves in, precisely because his gain of conscience, his new self-awareness, threatens to destroy the character and the part he had till now played. As Richard Hillman argues, the hero self-implodes under the effect of his own judgement, accusation, and lucidity. Paradoxically, the dynamics that constructed Philologus for an instant as a figure of mediation—critical study of the self—are precisely the same that deconstruct the character of Richard. By obsessively reverting to his self, he finally self-destructs:

There is plenty of precedent, including the precursor soliloquy in *The True Tragedy*, for self-interrogation as a rhetorical technique, and even Wolfgang G. Müller, for whom this speech marks a thorough internalizing of inner conflict, hence a development beyond the quasi-allegorical method of the morality plays, perceives only dialectic: “Das Ich (‘myself’) erscheint als Subjekt und Objekt, Verursacher und Opfer seiner Not [The I (‘myself’) appears as subject and object, originator and victim of its distress]” ([Müller, p.] 322). I suggest that there are more than two sides to the question here—that, in fact, the question keeps shifting its ground, so that the standard pattern of conscientious self-division is transformed into an intensely solipsistic circularity, a search for self premised on, and productive of, self-absence. (Hillman, p. 148)

This comparative study has not sought to measure one play against the other. As Maguire teaches us, “if there is a difficulty with character study, it is that Shakespeare has set a standard by which other dramatists are measured and found wanting” (p. 9). In many respects, however, Richard’s soliloquy reads as a response to the problem Philologus was putting to the audience concerning the construction of self on stage as Shakespeare as the issue to a same problematic is made to work in reverse.

These two opposing visions of self-conception suggest that the history of the subjective—and the construction of character—calls for either continuity (as Sinfield suggests), or else rupture (as encountered, in different ways, both in Woodes and in Shakespeare). Commenting on these two working fantasies of English Renaissance culture—continuity and rupture—Maus astutely comments: “These seem to be less contradictory notions, but again and again they are voiced together, so that they seem less self-canceling than symbiotically related or mutually constitutive” (p. 29). One might suggest that dramatic characterisation and subjectivity occur when the stage negotiates a shift inwards (whether dialectic or not) of vociferous humours and emblematic elements within an agent—a shift that may threaten at any time to implode, or explode, the vessel that discovers he alone holds them all together and justifies their presence.

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## *Metatheatre in the English Mystery Cycles: Expositor, Contemplatio, Prolocutor and Others*

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IN THIS PAPER I should like to address two uncertainties which in themselves prevent us from developing a single theory as to how and why Expositor figures are used in the English biblical cycle plays. The term “Expositor” is shorthand for several such persons appearing in these plays, amongst whom Contemplacio and Doctor are also used quite often. I shall also look at metatheatrical aspects of these figures, which, I shall suggest, may help us to appreciate the nature of the dramatic process on offer to the audiences. The two features affecting our interpretation are the variability of the state of the texts concerned and the phenomenon that, unlike a considerable number of continental cycle plays, none of the English ones depends comprehensively or even consistently upon the pervasive presence and function of an Expositor figure. The only exception to this is the three surviving episodes by John Bale from what was apparently a cycle centring upon the Passion. The irregularity of the appearances in the other cycles means that we may question why they do indeed appear in certain places and, by implication, not elsewhere. In the course of this study, I propose to draw upon some of the results of bibliographical scholarship of these texts, since they may shed some light upon the incidence of these figures.

I hope to develop some details of the continental practice, especially with regard to French and German cycles in a complementary paper. Here it is perhaps sufficient to say with regard to German-language cycles that in those from Alsfeld and Künzelsau there is a consistent presence of an Expositor who mediates much of the dramatic experience, and that the Swiss *Luzerner Osterspiel* also has a significant presence of such figures, but there they are divided between differently identifiable individuals, largely because they have a distinctly exegetical purpose.

The French practice was rather different. Eustache Marcadé's *La Vengeance Jesucrist*, dating from the first half of the fifteenth century and printed in 1491, has two of these voices, who divide the framing functions between them. Le Prescheur is the principal spiritual figure drawing attention to the thematic material, but he also has a part to play in the pacing of the cycle and the unfolding of events. Le Meneur du Jeu is used more than once to bring in historical detail surrounding the action, and also to explicate the scriptural and patristic authorities upon which the narratives are based. Gréban's *Mystère de la Passion* is of equal interest as a single coherent composition identifiably by one and the same author throughout. There are some variations in the surviving texts, but in general we can assume that this is the work of one person. As a result, the same policies run through it with regard to the speaker, called the Prologue, who has distinctive doctrinal and theatrical functions, which he exercises at the beginning and end of each of the four days of performance. It will be seen later that this practice is followed by Bale, but, as we shall also see, Bale specifically identifies the figure with himself. The same cannot be said with certainty for Gréban, though it is a possibility. There is one distinction between the continental cycles and the English ones which may have a bearing upon the frequency and extent of the Expositor figures. Processional performance on pageant wagons, as at York, Chester, and Coventry, is not found as such in the continental productions. The standard practice in France and Germany was the use of a large space with fixed locations, which were often given a fixed identity.

It is also relevant to note that Gréban's *Passion* originated around 1450, whereas the dating of the examples in the English cycles is a much more uncertain business. The two most significant English examples which use Expositor figures are somewhat later than their French counterparts. The N. Town manuscript can hardly have been written out before the last years of the fifteenth century, and the early sixteenth-century seems more likely. The Chester Cycle,



though it probably existed early in the fifteenth century, has come down to us in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century manuscripts, and these are thought to derive from a lost *exemplum* of 1568, which in its turn had recreated the lost master copy (Mills, p. 183). In all probability, this influential text, broadly similar to the extant ones, which are all later than 1590, was created around 1530 at a time of growing religious conflict, when the Chester Plays were moved from Corpus Christi to Whitsun week, but it is not possible to compare this supposed master text convincingly with anything that may have existed earlier. Because of these assumptions about date, it may be that the compilers of these two English cycle plays knew of their continental predecessors and followed them to some extent, but their practice was not as consistent or comprehensive as these apparently earlier examples from France. In the case of the German-language plays the dating is broadly similar, or perhaps slightly later: the Künzelsau play with Procession is recorded in 1474, with the manuscript dated 1474; at Alsfeld the Passion is recorded in 1501; performances of the *Luzerner Osterspiel* are recorded from 1450, and the first surviving manuscript dates from 1465. It is indeed notable that so many of the cycle plays from both France and Germany began at roughly the same time: from about 1450 onwards. We shall see, moreover, that they did offer some help to the English compilers in the process of assembling their texts, and these elements appear in several instances to be part of the process of bringing together material from different provenances.

Besides these two cycles and Bale's fragments, there are very few other examples of Expositors. It is hard to pin down any such figure in *Towneley*, and in the *York Plays* such figures appear in only two episodes. These both occur in passages which came under the eye and influence of John Clerke, the sixteenth-century Common Clerk charged with looking after the manuscript long after it was originally made in the fifteenth century. In the York *Annunciation*, it is Clerke who has written in the speech prefix "Doctor" for the long introductory passage about the prophecies for the Nativity (12.1-144). In the case of the Priscipal who introduces the *Purification*, the text of the whole play is in Clerke's hand, and it was apparently inserted into the manuscript after 1567. It is out of sequence between *Emmaus* and the *Incredulity of Thomas*: it appears between Plays 40 and 41, when it should be Play 17 (Beadle, ed.). We might add that the prevailing dramatic style of this cycle does not make a suitable atmosphere for Expositor-type introductions. Perhaps because of the processional method, there is a preoccupation with getting on with the dramatic content as quickly as possible. Very many of the York

plays begin with explosive boasts by the Herods, or by Pilate, and others have important pronouncements by the divine figures. However, we shall see that there are some Expositor figures in shorter biblical plays surviving in the Digby Manuscripts, all from the early sixteenth century, some of which show signs of having other lost plays associated with them.



In considering the N. Town Cycle, I will not attempt a full textual account, since this has been done admirably by others (Meredith and Kahrl, eds.; Meredith, ed., *Mary Play and Passion Play*; Spector, ed.). But here it is important to recall that this is a composite cycle, and one for which there are no clear indications about whether it was ever performed in the form in which it now appears in the manuscript. Nor has it a local attribution, other than one based on linguistic characteristics suggesting that the principal scribe came from south-west of Norwich. Even though some parts of it are rich in details suggesting performance, there is a high probability that this is essentially a paper cycle. That being granted, we can here set about examining where and perhaps why the late fifteenth-century compiler incorporated Expositor figures at certain points.

Recent textual work has developed a disintegrative view of the cycle by concentrating upon two sections which had independent existence before they were incorporated into it: these are a group of plays concerning the life of Mary the Virgin before the Nativity, and the plays about the Passion (Meredith, ed., *Mary Play and Passion Play*; Spector, ed., II: 436, 539-40). In these sections, Contemplacio has a significant role, appearing in four plays of the first group and one of the second. To some extent, he is concerned metatheatrically with what is to be performed partly in terms of entertainment, for he hopes at the beginning of the Mary sequence that it “may profite and plese” those present (Spector, ed., 8.6; all N. Town references are to this edition). He manages the performance by his calls for silence, by attending to the amount of detail which is to be performed, as though conscious of the pace of the incidents: “We passe ovyr þat, breffnes of tyme consyderynge” (9.4). Later he says that if these matters were treated with “good prevydens,/Eche on wolde suffice for an hool day” (9.300-1). He also steps aside from the portrayal of events by his repeated concern for the spiritual well-being of the audience. He speaks directly to them in contemporary terms, prays for them and appeals to their right understanding of the events. He does not always tell the audience exactly what they should think, however, and his con-

cern is often expressed generally, rather than in purely didactic terms aimed at explaining the significance. I want to suggest at this point that this spiritual function is the principal means by which he is detached from the action yet remains part of the performance.

Contemplacio also has a role in providing continuity. This is partly anticipating events to come, as in his reference to the Parliament of Heaven, the subject of the next play, which is to follow the end of the *Presentation of Mary* (9.307). But this anticipation can sometimes be far-reaching, and thus he has a prophetic role, ranging over what is to come much later in the narrative of events, even those outside the plays with which he is directly involved. He draws upon and helps to create a sense of design for the whole cycle, even though in the end its unity is problematic.

So far, then, we may suggest that in these Mary episodes Contemplacio was used as a means of managing them and giving direct attention to the audience, but it is not apparent why this should happen for the Mary episodes and not elsewhere to the same extent, or indeed to a lesser one. The only conclusion I can offer is that Contemplacio was in the original group of plays and the compiler took him over rather than deciding to remove him. It is quite possible that this Mary sequence came to the compiler somewhat late, since most of the individual plays in it are not mentioned in the Proclamation at the beginning of the manuscript, where the bulk of the episodes are summarized. The function of such Proclamations in N. Town and Chester is variable, and the correspondence between the scenes they anticipate and what actually occurs later in the cycles is not exact. We can, however, throw a little more light on this by looking at some manuscript features.

It looks as though the N. Town scribe came under some pressure in two places which concern Contemplacio. At the end of the *Presentation of Mary*, Contemplacio's speech follows the play in the normal way, but the rubricated number appears too early, at the side of his speech on fol. 48<sup>r</sup>. Play 10 does not start until a new sheet, fol. 49, and the verso of Contemplacio's conclusion of Play 9 is filled up with a subsequent insertion intended and marked to go into Play 10 at a later point. Moreover if we look at his speech as a whole, we find that there is a change in the verse form (two quatrains [9.294-301]; a nine-line stanza [9.302-10]).

This example is perhaps not as strong as the second one, which occurs at the end of the *Visit to Elizabeth*. Here there is an alternative ending for the episode. The original, copied out normally and in proper sequence on fols. 73<sup>v</sup> and 74<sup>r</sup>,

has Elizabeth end the play with a recognition that the time of mercy is now coming. The revised version crams in a new short speech by her at the foot of 73<sup>v</sup>, marked “si placet” and with the catchword “Contemplacio”. His speech, with a new speech prefix (3.150A-185A), is then placed under the first ending on the following page. However it was too long for the vacant space, perhaps because the compiler acquired some extra material after he had started (Spector, ed., II: 466), and the result is a much overloaded page. When we look at the content of this alternative, we find that it principally does two things. It carries out an exposition on the terms *Ave* [*regina celorum*], *Benedictus* and *Magnificat*. In addition, the last stanza contains thanks to the audience for their patience and leads into singing the antiphon *Ave regina celorum*, perhaps as a processional ending to this play. But we should notice particularly that this form of Contemplacio’s speech might also have been appropriate as a conclusion for the whole group of Mary episodes when they had formed a separate unit.

I want to suggest here that these passages may well indicate that the compiler saw that Contemplacio could be used as a means of linking together the Mary episodes and of connecting them with the rest of the cycle, since from time to time they point to a larger prospectus. But if this is indeed how he saw this external voice, he did not use it consistently. Perhaps he did not have the authority or the time to impose such a framework. Moreover, we have another appearance in the Mary sequence to consider, and this is apart from the fact that he did not use this figure to link in one other Mary episode, *Joseph’s Doubt* (12), which is markedly different stylistically. Meredith does not include it amongst those coming into the cycle from the Mary Play (*Mary Play*, pp. 2-4). The much more intense appearance of the Expositor in *The Parliament of Heaven* (11) differs from the others, in that here he is an integral part of the play and a motivating force from inside it. In a highly emotional tone, he reflects, in four heavily alliterated stanzas, upon the suffering of those who have now lain tormented in hell for four thousand and six hundred years, and begs for mercy for them. He longs for the saviour to come: “And levyn erys thre and threttye,/Thyn famyt folke with þi fode to fede” (11.11-12). But the manuscript again shows signs of alteration, for the four stanzas are marked in such a way as to show that they were at some stage meant for two speakers, each having two stanzas each. Their original designation is revealed in the following speech by the representative angelic figure Virtutes, who indicates that these verses were supplications by patriarchs and prophets. The rest of the first part of this play is so arranged that the appeal,

backed by Virtutes, is the start of the debate of the Four Daughters about the need for a saviour, which, in its turn, prompts God to send Gabriel to make the Annunciation to Mary (Fletcher, pp. 111-12). Rosemary Woolf makes the point that the emotional vehemence of this intervention by the Expositor is rather like that found in the liturgical treatment of the need for the coming of the Saviour (p. 168). The alterations suggest that Contemplacio was not in the original text copied into the cycle and that the scribe decided he might improve the cycle by attributing the speeches in question to him.

The last appearance of Contemplacio in N. Town occurs in the Passion sequence. Here the textual problems are also interesting, since the Passion was apparently derived from two earlier sequences incorporated into the manuscript. We need to look at the second of these, which begins with Contemplacio's introduction to *Herod; The Trial before Annas and Caiaphas* (29). This part of the manuscript is distinct from the rest in terms of paper, watermarks and handwriting. Contemplacio's speech contains a prayer for the audience referring to the Trinity, but its main preoccupation is to act as a link in the narrative. In fact, it reveals that this second Passion sequence was performed on a different basis from that implied, but not necessarily achieved, in the rest of the cycle. He refers to the performance "last Šere" (29.9) and gives details which do indeed correspond with the incidents in the first Passion sequence. Now, he explains, we are going to take the story further, and this brief remark implies that the two Passion sequences were thought of at one time as being alternatives for performance. The absence of background documentation which might enable us to contextualize a performance leaves the apparent alternation impenetrable. The implication must be that this Contemplacio is a survivor of an earlier arrangement, as there would be no point in writing this passage afresh when its new position corresponds with the rubricated numbers and also with the description of these plays in the Proclamation.

Thus the contribution of Contemplacio in N. Town is internally inconsistent, and to some extent, at least, it reflects some functions which are no longer required in the play as it now stands. In short, it reflects the incoherence deeply embedded in the text as a whole. Yet there is a sense that some measure of introduction is necessary and this, I suggest, is reflected in the use of a number of other figures who make isolated appearances. We shall see that these speakers share some features with Contemplacio, and also that their appearance may have some strategic importance in the attempt to render the cycle coherent.

Two of the plays are introduced by devils. The most significant rhetorically is Satan at the beginning of the *Conspiracy* (26.1-124). His long, prosodically diverse speech actually introduces the three plays of the first Passion sequence, which, as we have seen, was incorporated into the cycle as a separate whole. He addresses the audience, but he is frank in showing that, unlike other Expositors, he is concerned to bring about their destruction. He offers them pain as a reward for sin. His own extravagant appearance as a dandy (“my dysgysyd varyauns” [26.65]) is turned into a pattern for sinners to follow, and this shift in clothing is cleverly the means by which the people are themselves to show the cunning and craft of sin. He offers them new names whereby they may hide the true names of the Deadly Sins:

3e xal kalle pride “onesté”, and “naterall kend” lechory,  
And covetyse “wysdam” there treasure is present;  
Wrreth “manhod”, and envye callyd “chastement”. (26.111-13)

During some of the speech he recounts his own past attempts to destroy Christ. In these he admits to defeat and some bafflement, but still he intends to pursue Christ to death, an element bringing into play the notion that the devil does not properly understand the divinity of Christ. Thus, although he functions as summarizer and a false prophet, he is also partially absorbed as a participant in the action. It is a bravura performance and one of those places where the poetic language conveys emotion as well as moral significance: “Gyff me 3oure love, grawnt me myn affeccyon,/And I wyl vnclose þe tresour of lovys alyawns” (26.61-62). It is perhaps no surprise that what he says he has done is not quite the same as what is shown in previous episodes, but in view of the nature of the manuscript, this is more likely attributable to the earlier separate existence of this sequence than to any deviousness on his part. Nevertheless, this speech is a rich introduction to the Passion Play and to Satan’s part in the events it portrays. His ignorance is one of the themes of the Passion sequence, and it is important to establish it at the beginning. His self-display is immediately countered by a complementary speech from John the Baptist (26.125-64). Instead of the way to damnation, John offers the right path to salvation. He warns against the Deadly Sins and offers a necessary relationship between hope and dread: “So these tweyn must be knyht be on acorde” (26.161).

There is a further introduction by Satan to the composite play *Satan and Pilate’s Wife: The Second Trial before Pilate* (31), but the function of the speech is notably

different, in that he does not seek to involve the audience, as in the *Conspiracy*. The tone is more boastful than beguiling, and he speaks with relish of the torments awaiting Jesus in hell. He makes a point of referring to the prophet called God's son, thus revealing that he still thinks Jesus is human, not divine, and therefore destined for hell. Satan explains that he has prepared the cross and the nails, and then he initiates the action of the scene by calling those in hell to make ready for a "guest". But the response from the offstage Demon in hell is that Jesus must not come to hell for fear of the devils losing their power. This becomes the driving force for the rest of the action. Satan makes a u-turn and, by frightening Pilate's Wife, seeks to prevent the crucifixion in what had become the traditional manner, as it appears in the York *Pilate's Wife's Dream* (30). This all means that the opening speech here is working not as a framing device but rather as an opening step in the narration. However, we should also bear in mind that the presence of the Devil in the Passion sequences of N. Town is rather more emphatic than it is in the other English cycles (Fichte, p. 117). This does seem to be a thematic and structural decision. If it is, his introductory role is contextualized in a way which gives him narrative potentiality.

There are two other introductory speeches which might be separated from the action in N. Town, at least in part, and both seem aimed at a comic effect. Den the Summoner has a boastful call for silence, as though in a medieval ecclesiastical court, at the beginning of the *Trial of Mary and Joseph* (14). The speech is a bravura performance of an alliterated list of sinners who must appear at the court and who might offer him bribes (14.1-33). He does not appear again, and there is no follow up to his summons. The play is not part of the series identified by Peter Meredith as the *Mary Play*, yet it is about Mary in some measure. In yet another play about Mary, there is another rather comic introduction, that by the Doctor to the *Assumption of Mary* (41). This text is another which had a physically separate existence, and in this case it is not in the hand of the main scribe/compiler, though he has corrected some items in it. It is curiously inconsistent in tone, in that it begins by addressing the audience respectfully and reminding them of the stages of Mary's exemplary life. But the last stanza is a tirade against the audience, beginning, "Pes now youre blaberyng in the devilis name!", and concluding with a crude threat: "For what boy bragge outh, hym spille I!/As knave wyth this cragggyd knag, hym kyllle I!" (41.27-39). One can only suppose that this separate textual item preserves elements from another intended performance, and that the Doctor's introduction has not been properly reconciled with the rest of the N. Town cycle.



A general conclusion regarding the Expositor figures in N. Town would therefore be to suggest that they were often taken over embedded in the separate elements incorporated into the cycle, but also that the scribe/compiler saw some possibility of using them as linking features, and also as a means of relating to the audience, especially in terms of doctrine and prayer. Because of the relatively late date of the compilation of the manuscript, these procedures may have been determined to some extent by continental practice.

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The Expositor figures in the Chester cycle are hardly any more consistent than those in N. Town. This is somewhat surprising when we consider the nature of the Chester texts which have come down to us. Though the cycle had a chequered history, and though we are very uncertain about its state before about 1530, it seems likely that it was recreated in the sixteenth century, and the characteristics of this text suggest a far greater uniformity of style and concept than can be proposed for N. Town (Clopper; Lumiansky and Mills, pp. 174–75, 182). This is supported by the relative uniformity of its versification and by its consistent reliance upon the *Stanzaic Life of Christ*, a work local to Chester, as a source. David Mills (p. 155) notes the stylistic and prosodic uniformity of much of the cycle, and it is much more likely that this text is substantially the work of one dramatist than is the case for N. Town. Yet the Expositor appears by name in only four plays out of a total of twenty-four, and a Doctor who carries out a similar function occurs in only two, in one of which the manuscripts confuse these two ascriptions. Nor do these appearances follow any kind of pattern or regularity. They can be briefly summarised as follows.

The Expositor appears in the middle of *Abraham* (Lumiansky and Mills, eds., Play 4) as a bridge between the episodes of Melchysedeck and Isaac. It is a characteristic of the way most of the Chester plays are organised that each of them contains two episodes, but only in *Temptation* (12) does the Doctor carry out a similar function. In *Abraham* he is riding a horse. In the following play, *Moses* (5), the Expositor overlaps with the Doctor, who begins and ends the play, in that one manuscript (BL Harley 2124) gives the Expositor some speeches attributed to the Doctor by the others. In the *Nativity* (6), after the portrayal of the Midwives, the Expositor adds references to further miraculous events derived from the *Stanzaic Life of Christ* and warns about unbelief. In the play called *Antichrist's Prophets* (22), the Expositor appears throughout, giving a complementary exegesis to the words



of each of the four prophets. To these we must add the Doctor's link in *Temptation* (12). He preaches after the Temptation of Christ, making a parallel between Adam's sins and the three temptations mounted here by the devil (12.169-216); he also preaches about grace after the episode of the Woman Taken in Adultery (12.281-312). The only other character who speaks with authority at the beginning of plays is Deus or Christ: the former begins plays 1, 2, 3, and 24, and the latter 13, 14, 15, and 20. In some of these, the divine figure is addressing the audience directly, and a pastoral concern for doctrine and salvation is uppermost. In parallel or parody, the Antichrist performs an introduction to his own play (23.1-58).

In general the Expositors in Chester are learned commentators. Thus in *Abraham* the Expositor explains how the old custom of sacrificing beasts has been replaced by the new sacrament of bread and wine. He explains how tithes originated and also that Abraham stands in some measure for God the Father. There is an explanation of how circumcision, a sacrament of the Old Testament, has been replaced by baptism since the death of Christ. Though it is important not to oversimplify, it seems likely that the need to attend to some of these details relates to the intention to defend the doctrine and practice of the Church in the contemporary context. Tithes, circumcision, and the primacy of the bread and wine may have had support from well-established, even patristic teaching, but the emphasis here seem to be upon the New Testament, and the implied stance is Protestant in its emphasis upon doctrine based upon it. A similar process may be observed in the Doctor's exposition in the *Temptation*. The parallel between the sins of Adam and the temptations brought to Christ by Satan can be found in St. Augustine, but the conflict, which is also to be found there, between the mercy offered by Christ and the crueller demands of the old law against adultery is something that, it must have been felt, needed underlining in keeping with the new gospel-oriented religious attitudes. There is little doubt that at Chester there was a need to steer a careful course between conflicting ideologies, and the Protestant interpretation is notably muted. This conflict between different Protestant orthodoxies became much more active later (Mills, pp. 142-49, 163).

But in spite of these significant doctrinal matters, there is also scope for the Expositors to fulfil an enabling role in the presentation by attending to transitions between episodes, or by managing the pace of individual dramatisations. Thus the Doctor in *Moses* explains that the story of the two sets of tables for the commandments is too long, even offering a comic hint that it might take a month to perform (5.41-64, esp. 46). At the end of one version of this play, the Doctor also

links the prophecy it contains to the coming of the three kings, and in doing so he points out that this will appear “tomorrow” (5.451). This suggests that we are at the end of the first day of performance, on the assumption that the performance lasted three days (Mills, p. 116). As we have seen, the Expositor appears extensively in *Antichrist’s Prophets* (22). After all his thematic interventions, he also plays a linking role near the end. He describes the fifteen signs of the day of Doom in some detail, anticipating the last play in this cycle. Before that, however, comes the play of *Antichrist* (23), and the Expositor’s foresight is connected to the coming of the dreaded protagonist by his final cry: “Hee comes! Soone you shall see!” (22.340).

The content of *Antichrist’s Prophets* is closely linked with the Expositor’s commentary. There is no action, and, as Woolf (p. 292) has pointed out, the structure is modelled on prophets’ plays anticipating the Nativity. Here there are four prophecies: Ezekiel foretells the Resurrection of Christ, but Zacharias, Daniel and St. John give details of the story of the Antichrist, which is played out in the next episode of the cycle. The Expositor again takes a learned stance, and his interventions contain phrases which draw attention to his exegetical function: “Nowe for to moralyze aright/which this prophet sawe in sight . . .” (22.73–74). There is no other play of this type in the English cycles, but the Antichrist and the preparations for his reign had some currency in continental examples. Moreover there is a good deal of support for the narrative and its interpretation in patristic writings, including Jerome, as well as in Bede, Peter Comestor, and the *Legenda Aurea* (Mills and Lumiansky, II: 319–29). Possibly we are dealing here with material which was introduced into the Chester Cycle from an independent source, and one which owed something to continental practice. As with some other occurrences of the Expositor figure, this instance may well have arisen, therefore, from extraneous circumstances. Granted that the Chester Cycle is rather more integrated than that of N. Town, it is still evident that the Expositor figures are somewhat incoherent. They do link elements in the cycle from time to time, and they play a pastoral role in relation to the audience. This can be both intercession as well as teaching, but the co-ordination of different elements in so far as it is deliberately intended seems more attributable to divine speakers.

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Before we turn to Bale, where the use of the Prolocutor is more systematic, we may consider briefly three isolated examples of Expositor figures, one from the Norwich Grocers’ Play of *Adam and Eve* and two from minor plays from the Digby

manuscripts where the Poeta makes significant contributions. All come relatively late in the period we have been considering, and after Marcadé and Gréban. *The Conversion of St. Paul* is thought to have originated early in the sixteenth century, and *Candelmes Day and the Kylling of þe Children of Israelle* bears the date 1512 on the manuscript. As it happens, the figure called Poeta in both plays gives some indication of the nature of performance. In *St. Paul* he is used to mark the movement from one station to another in this rather rare mode of performance. It is not a matter of performing the same section of narrative at succeeding places, as in the York and Chester cycles. Here the action is divided up between locations, and the Poeta's interventions show when the change is to take place. When the action is complete at the first station, he asks the audience to follow the procession to the next (Baker, Murphy, and Hall, eds., 155-57).

In *Candlemes Day* the Poeta first celebrates the importance of the solemn feast and then becomes involved in a narrative. But he also gives an indication that this play is part of a sequence, though it appears that different parts were performed each year. He refers to the now lost *Shepherds play* done "last yeere" (Baker, Murphy, and Hall, eds., 25), and later he looks forward to next year, when they will show the *Disputation of the Doctors*. It is not made clear, unfortunately, how many episodes there were or how long it took to perform the whole group of plays. The performance of a series of narrative elements spread out over a number of years is found in some continental cycles. The Dutch *Bliscapen*, for example, had a seven-year cycle of events in the life of the Virgin. It was apparently performed in this way for more than a century from 1448. It is also worth noting that the summary of events given in the prologue by the Poeta does not match exactly what is found in the following play. Nevertheless, there is a possibility here that this is part of a lost cycle and one in which there was an explicit spoken framework. The events embodied in it might have been confined to the nativity and childhood of Christ.

The Norwich *Adam and Eve* presents textual problems, since it exists in two states. The second, text B, contains an alternative prologue by a Prolocutor (Davis, ed., 12-13). This speech refers to the previous pageant about the Creation, then proceeds to summarize the contents of the play to come, concentrating upon the nature of the offence it enacts, particularly that committed by Eve. This version originated about 1565, and may well have been part of a Protestant revision.

These intermittent glimpses at structural relationships with other plays are more than a little tantalizing. They give us unsatisfying insights into what

has apparently been lost, and they leave us wondering about the extent of biblical plays in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. As far as the nature of the Expositor conventions is concerned, they give us some indication that he served as a practical staging device, and they hint that he was at least available to help shape the audience's sense of developing and related narrative elements.

#### IV

Three of John Bale's surviving plays are apparently part of a longer sequence of some eleven plays concentrating upon the Ministry and the Passion, composed most probably in the 1530s and listed by him in his *Summarium* (1548). I have considered these plays in relation to the other English mystery cycles elsewhere (Happé, "John Bale's Lost Mystery Cycle"). We cannot be sure that the lost plays were necessarily written to fit together, but it is striking that the three extant ones do conform to a pattern with regard to the function of the Expositor figure: in all three cases, the plays have a preface and a conclusion spoken by Bale himself, identified as Baleus Prolocutor. We may note that there is a picture of Bale in the 1547 edition of *Three Laws*, a play in which he also appears. It shows him bonneted, in academic dress and carrying a book, presumably a New Testament.

*God's Promises* follows the tradition of the earlier cycle plays by identifying Old Testament prophecies of the Incarnation, from Adam onwards. The Prefatio follows the mode of a sermon, even though it contains only thirty-five lines. It is emphatically Protestant with its emphasis upon the Gospel as essential knowledge for all those who seek truth. Christ's teaching is indispensable for those chosen for heaven. The speaker dismisses "fantasyes fayned" and "gaudysh gere" (18), which may refer to Catholic or to purely secular drama. The Lutheran theme of Christ as sole justification is opened (20-21), and it is recalled in the conclusion (971). The end of the Prefatio gives a neat practical introduction to the actors, who will now show the certainty of salvation.

The conclusion recalls the names of the characters to whom God's promises have been made from Adam to John the Baptist, and it ends with a brisk condemnation of the Catholic doctrine of free will, God's grace being superior to the will of men. The last line of the play makes it certain that it was meant as the beginning of a sequence—"More of this matter conclude hereafter we shall" (982)—though it does not exactly say what. We may well recall that in his autobiographical *Vocacyon*, Bale mentions a performance at Kilkenny in 1553, in which this play was the first to be given in the morning, followed by *John Baptist's Preach-*

ing and *The Temptation of our Lord* in the afternoon (p. 59). However, this was nearly twenty years after the inception, and it is difficult to be precise about the text played. The function of the performance was deliberately polemical, since this was the day when Queen Mary was proclaimed in Ireland.

The immediacy of the Incarnation is picked up in the Prolocutor's first line of the next play, *John Baptist's Preaching*. The time of the Law and the Prophets is drawing to an end, and they are seen as but figures and shadows of the Incarnation. The emphasis is upon redemption and the reuniting of God's people, pagans and Jews. The themes used here do have a traditional ring about them, and they indicate that although there were essentials of Protestant doctrine, some elements were in common. We should also recollect that Bale's managing of this material occurred in the 1530s, when many of the later defining aspects of English Protestantism had not yet been laid down. The humility of Christ submitting to the baptism of John forms a link between the Prefatio and the conclusion, and it is presented as a contrast with the pride through which Adam fell. John's astringent mode of life must give way to the faith, and Bale moves swiftly on to condemn the hypocrisy he discerned in the religious orders, notably the Franciscans, and in the papist priests.

*The Temptation* begins with the Prolocutor's support for Christ's word and his coming defeat of the devil. But the key theme here is the inevitability of persecution, which all Christ's servants must expect: "If ye folowe Christ with hym ye must be beate" (28). This will be shown in the play that follows. In the conclusion, the same theme of the inevitability of persecution is laid out for the earthly life of man as a "profe or harde temptacyon" (406). Bale ends with a delicate defence of fasting—Catholic practice he could hardly condemn because of Christ's precedent. It must be seen as a "frute of fayth" (430).

Bale's practice, then, is to bring out a range of Protestant doctrinal themes and to concentrate upon what was to him the correct interpretation of the matter which was being presented with different intention in the Catholic mystery cycles. In doing this he may have been influenced by continental practice. Before 1530 and before his conversion, he travelled extensively on the continent, particularly in France, as far south as Toulouse. There would have been plenty of opportunity for him to encounter the *Passions* which were being widely performed throughout much of France. It is striking that he did this in the 1530s, when there is evidence that some traditional cycles in England were themselves going through a process of redefinition, especially at Chester and Coventry (Lumiansky and Mills, pp. 48,

182; King and Davidson, eds., pp. 23-25). Bale's approach to doctrine is thorough and determined, and the framework provided by Baleus Prolocutor gives a useful means of clarifying what is to be learned from his three biblical plays. Michelle Butler has noticed (p. 103) that although Bale's Prolocutor remains aligned with the players, he embodies a marked desire to refer to and rely upon an external authority in matters of doctrine. This effect is sustained in spite of the ambiguity of his relationship with the action of the play.

Bale's moral interlude *Three Laws* was printed at roughly the same time as the biblical plays, by Dirik van der Straten at Wesel, with the date 1548 on the title-page. It is mentioned in Bale's manuscript *Anglorum Heliades*, which means that a version of it was in existence before 1539. Baleus Prolocutor busies himself with the importance of law in the commonwealth, a gift of the Lord, and in the exposition of the allegory of the play. This derives from Bale's reading of the Book of Revelation (Fairfield, pp. 61-62). He explains that each of the laws is corrupted: Nature's by Sodometry and Idolatry, Moses's by Avarice and Ambition, and Christ's (Grace) by Hypocrisy and False Doctrine. But the arch-villain is Infidelity, who behaves like a forerunner of the Vice found in later interludes.

At the end of the play, there is no conclusion by the Prolocutor, but instead a prayer is given for the noble Prince Edward, Queen Katherine Parr, and the Lord Protector. Probably this is an alteration replacing the original conclusion with an update for the new times. However, there is a doubling list for five players from which it is evident that the Prolocutor is played by the same actor as Christian Faith, who speaks the last stanza of the prayer. The third part played by this actor is Infidelity, which raises the possibility that Bale himself played the Vice.

Thus the bulk of the Prolocutor's speeches in the four plays in which he appears is directly concerned with doctrinal matters, and Bale's attempt to use these plays to spread developing doctrines. It is likely that in doing so he initially had the support of Thomas Cromwell, but it is interesting that he also saw advantage in bringing out printed copies some time after the plays were conceived, and that the framework provided through the Prolocutor remained desirable to him. It is also interesting that there were Elizabethan reprints, largely unchanged and unrevised, of *God's Promises* (1562) and *Three Laws* (1577).

So there may be a line running from the French and German plays through to some English cycle plays concerning these Expositor figures. It is primarily a pastoral intention, one closely associated with preaching, and to a lesser extent with worship. There is also a practical usage, which connects, recalls and antici-

pates, supporting to some extent the notion of cyclic form (Happé, *Cyclic Form*, pp. 17, 323). But in most of the English examples the chief burden of such overall strategies is managed substantially by other means.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the material I have been considering here is the evidence that in the sixteenth century the use of an Expositor figure could help in the ideological conflicts of the time. This is apparent in the plays embodying or reasserting traditional Catholic teaching and worship, as well as in plays inspired by the doctrines of the Reformation.

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## *Mediation in the Towneley Second Shepherds' Play*

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**W**HAT EXACTLY does mediation involve in the context of medieval religious drama? “Intervene to produce agreement or reconciliation”; “be the medium for bringing about (a result) or for conveying (something)”; “form a connecting link between”. The definitions of the verb “mediate” in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* underline the dynamism of the process and its resulting state of harmony, both of which would seem to characterise mediation in a religious context. Yet the nature and the modalities of the phenomenon remain to be specified.

The theatrical transaction relies on a set of conventions and is based on a relationship between the performance and the audience which alternates between empathy and critical distance.<sup>1</sup> As an aesthetic device, mediation aims at creating a link between the two worlds, but the nature of this link is more complex in the context of religious drama, since mediation also serves a didactic mission which is directed both at performers and audience. Furthermore, as entertainment and as a founding myth, religious drama also aims at binding the Christian community together both on a social and on a meta-physical plane. Thus it seems that the modalities of

1. Elam, pp. 87-97, gives a detailed analysis of theatrical systems.

mediation are determined by the nature of the represented reality. In this particular context, the threshold is not located at the frontier between the dramatic world and that of the audience, but between the religious reality which the dramatic world stands for and the natural world. The represented world, far from being an illusion or a mere reflection of reality, constitutes a ladder to a religious reality which the audience shares and generally aspires to, whereas the material world is but an illusion.

Mediation occurs directly when the characters address the audience, but it can also function obliquely. Thus, the presence of an onstage audience within the dramatic world provides the extra-dramatic audience with an interesting mirror image and creates a link between the two worlds. The former kind of mediation is the most noticeable occurrence of the phenomenon in performance. It assumes the form of a punctual breach or a general flexibility of the boundaries between the dramatic world and that of the audience, generated by an oblique or direct address from a protagonist to the public,<sup>2</sup> or impersonated by a specific category of characters known as mediators,<sup>3</sup> who do not necessarily belong to the *diegesis*. The representation of numinous episodes such as the Annunciation, the Nativity or the Passion reveals the iconic quality of these highly symbolic scenes. The fascination they exert on the audience's mind rests mainly on the immediacy and the magical quality they acquire onstage through the use of religious symbolism and typological references. Simultaneously, the key role they play in the didactic mission requires a formal kind of mediation in order to optimise the audience's reception.

It is precisely because the *Second Shepherds' Play* lacks such scenes that we have chosen to take a closer look at the kind of mediation at work in this most unusual biblical play. Although the episodes of the Annunciation and the Nativity are central to the two Shepherds' plays by the Wakefield Master, the predominance of human characters and the apparent focus on human concerns, not

2. These cases of "breaking frame" are actually licensed means of confirming it. Indeed, they reduce the psychological distance between the extra-dramatic audience and the represented world in order to optimise the reception. (See Elam, p. 87.) In the case of biblical plays, such addresses or oblique speeches also serve a didactic function.
3. We find a number of such characters in the cycle plays. Some merely act as prologues or epilogues and assume mainly—but not solely—an explanatory and choric function, providing the audience with theological guidance, appealing also to their emotions, conjuring mental images and drawing their attention to certain details, parallels or contrasts in the action. Even when they are clearly identified, these characters do not take part in the plot.

to mention the absence of a Nativity scene,<sup>4</sup> are indeed striking.<sup>5</sup> And yet it seems that mediation plays a central role in this pageant. Indeed, religious—and theatrical—mediation does not merely function vertically, that is to say, between the spiritual sphere and the Christian community, via the artefact, with a view to creating a link, a connection between these two spheres. The spiritual link is also a horizontal one, which aims at binding the Christian community together. If this is less noticeable than the direct address, its presence within the dramatic world is nonetheless essential. As may be inferred from the first definition given by the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, reconciliation is the key message of biblical drama and of the event of the Nativity in particular, since they prefigure the reintegration of fallen mankind within the divine plan through the birth of Christ. In the *Second Shepherds' Play*, this reintegration first becomes manifest as a feeling of unity and harmony among the Christian community, as represented onstage by the three shepherds and the two thieves. Thus it seems that the kind of mediation at work in this pageant functions very subtly yet very efficiently, since it constitutes both its mainspring and its main theme. Furthermore, this pageant also stands out for the use of traditional features in a very unusual way. The grotesque mode, which affects numinous episodes in the other biblical plays, develops here into a grotesque allegory of a numinous episode which is not staged. And yet, despite the apparent absence of supernatural events, the powerful symbolism of this allegory provides the audience with a successful medium for representing spiritual concepts.

Mediation seems to rest on the main characteristic of the *Second Shepherds' Play*, which is both a structural and functional duality. Although human concerns seem to predominate, the play falls into two mutually mirroring episodes duplicating the general pattern of “birth and reconciliation”. The shepherds' encounter with Mak, who steals one of their sheep and tries to conceal the theft by means of a grotesque subterfuge, and the adoration of Christ the Redeemer by the shepherds are “two unequal but matching sides of a figural diptych” (Meredith, p. 155). We shall see that presenting the audience with parallel yet interrelated worlds, with many echoing images of restored unity, constitutes a very efficient technique indeed.

4. In all the other cycles, the Nativity scene is a carefully staged, highly visual scene.

5. Meredith has pointed out the specificity of the Wakefield Master's verbal and structural techniques, based on what he refers to as “individualised humanity” (p. 154; see also pp. 150–57).

Still, from a structural point of view, the embedded game—Mak and Gill's farcical plot to conceal the stolen sheep as their newborn baby—functions as a medium on two levels. As part of the human side of the diptych, the episode prompts the shepherds to generosity and forgiveness towards Mak. As a grotesque analogue of the Nativity, this embedded scene gives a particular depth to that episode which, although it is not staged, underlies the pageant at the core of the biblical play.

Furthermore, the game within provides the audience not merely with a symbolic image, however enlightening the latter may be, but with a spiritual experience they can share. Indeed, grotesque analogies—in particular, flesh and food images—express a mystical state of identification with Christ's sufferings or *imitatio Christi*. Thus, structural and functional duality characterise the pageant on several levels. At first, the embedded form only seems to replicate the complex interrelations between divine and human matters. But, the play within being also an illusion within, it acquires authenticity through this formal reduplication and imposes itself as a revelation.

Examining duality as the pageant's main feature first in the overall structure of the play and then in the play within will help to unveil a complex and pregnant symbolic mode which emerges as the main instrument of mediation.

### *Duality in Structure: A Mirror Image*

Peter Meredith's analogy between the *Second Shepherds' Play* and a figural diptych interestingly focuses on the play as a medium for representing and accessing the spiritual world, whereas human concerns seem to predominate in this play. Yet it is an image which we may have to reconsider after we have examined the mode of representation which is involved here. The biblical part of the pageant (the adoration of the Shepherds) is only 168 lines long. It starts at line 920 when the angel appears to the shepherds, after a long prologue during which each character voices his predicament, a quarrel takes place and is settled, and then a theft is committed and forgiven. Although they are unequal, the two parts are obviously interdependent. Both human and biblical narratives follow the same pattern, from discord to reconciliation: between men, and between humanity and God. This mirror effect is further intensified by the reiteration of this pattern in the first part, illustrating the biblical theme of the Redemption of humanity—pre-figured in the birth of Christ—on a human level.

Indeed, this pattern of reconciliation is repeated three times: it occurs between the three shepherds, between Mak and his wife, and finally between the shepherds and the thief. Each time, following an argument, the characters reach a state of harmony which culminates in a song. These echoes of the biblical pattern bear a striking resemblance to the extra-dramatic reality yet simultaneously function as reflections of the harmonious spiritual model of which music is a revealing allegory. Thus, the structural duality of the pageant is meant to convey the platonic idea that the Creation is a mirror of the divine which it is possible to decipher, and stresses the interdependence of the two spheres. It is through this mirror structure and its symbolic function that mediation is carried out, while its efficiency rests on the double reference of the representation, which also establishes a psychological link with the audience through allusions to the extra-dramatic world.

The presentation of the three shepherds as three individuals appears at first as a multiple occurrence of a single “actant”.<sup>6</sup> In the choric introduction to the play, the three shepherds, prompted by the weather, complain in turn about different inequalities and conflicts, and picture the material world as a fallen one. The themes of these complaints (social inequalities, marital conflict), as introduced by the shepherds, serve an individualising function, but, interestingly, they will also be developed in the Mak and Gill episode.

While the first shepherd introduces himself as an exploited farmer, he and his fellow, the second shepherd, are in turn accused by the third shepherd of exploiting their even poorer servants. Following his master’s refusal to give him food and drink, the third shepherd’s direct address to the audience, using the first person plural, could certainly have triggered some kind of empathetic response:

Sich servandys as I,  
That swettys and swynkys,  
Etys *oure* brede full dry,  
And that me forthynkys,  
We ar oft weytt and wery  
When master-men wynkys;

6. This term refers to one of the different functions assumed by the characters in the play considered as a actantial model: the subject, the object of the quest, the opponent, the adjuvant, etc. (See Greimas et Courtés, “actant” [p. 3] and “actancier” [p. 4]). Christ’s torturers and the three Maries are examples of such non-individualised characters, who are often unnamed.



Yit commys full lately  
 Both dyners and drynkys.  
 Bot nately  
 Both *oure* dame and *oure* syre,  
 When *we* have ryn in the myre,  
 Thay can nip at *oure* hyre  
 And pay *us* full lately. (ll. 222–34)

Unlike the farm-worker's subjection to the landlord or the shepherd boy's to his masters, the wedded man's subjection to his wife (as exemplified by the second shepherd) is more of a traditional literary theme than a fact of life. Still the emphasis is laid on men's suffering and oppression by women, who are pictured as hens full of sexual energy or monstrous creatures gulping down food and drink and plaguing their husbands with numerous children:

Sely Copyle, *oure* hen,  
 Both to and fro  
 She kakyls;  
 Bot begyn she to crok,  
 To groyne or to klok,  
 Wo is hym is *oure* cok,  
 For he is in the shakyls. (ll. 98–103)

She is browyd lyke a brystyll,  
 With a sowre-loten chere;  
 Had she oones wett hir whystyll,  
 She couth syng full clere  
 Hyr Paternoster.  
 She is as greatt as a whall;  
 She has a gallon of gall. (ll. 148–54)

The shepherds' complaints are meant to be understood both literally and symbolically. On the one hand, the picture drawn by these three soliloquies is bound to have been a familiar one for the extra-dramatic audience, whether it refers to their social, economic, or cultural background.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the physicality of the description calls for a psychological response from the audience. The words used to describe men's subjection to the elements or their social or marital conditions are particularly hard ones. The body is so severely affected by the cold that

7. Even if the link is more obvious for the members of the audience who identified with the oppressed, this picture of feudal society would still have held significance for landlords.

it seems to lose its integrity<sup>8</sup>; the world itself is changeable and unreliable, and its reality is questioned.<sup>9</sup>

Simultaneously, the overall sense of unbalance and of oppression conveyed by the shepherds' speeches refers to a post-lapsarian humanity, and the use of such concrete, vivid images gives body and strength to this symbolic representation for a contemporary audience. Thus the double referentiality<sup>10</sup> of the theatrical discourse and its oblique nature<sup>11</sup>—emphasized, furthermore, by the second shepherd's direct address<sup>12</sup>—cause the extra-dramatic reality of the audience and the biblical world to merge. Accordingly, the spiritual reality seems to acquire immediacy for the audience.

If these complaints indeed follow the general pattern from conflict to resolution, each of them does so in a particular way. The first shepherd finds relief in voicing his discontent; the second shepherd's plight sounds unresistingly comical and is thus deflated; the boy's complaint about his master is resolved through its enactment onstage. Finally, all conflicts are dissolved and harmony prevails,<sup>13</sup> as the three shepherds join together in a song in which each retains a distinctive voice, and which, as an expression of earthly harmony, foreshadows the angel's song:

<sup>1</sup> *Pastor.* Let me syng the tenory.

<sup>2</sup> *Pastor.* And I the tryble so hye.

8. "I am nerehande dold, / so long have I nappyd; / My legys thay fold, my fynghers ar chappyd" (ll. 3-6); "When my shone freys to my fete / It is not all esy" (ll. 90-91).
9. "Whoso couthe take hede / And lett the world pas, / It is ever in drede / And brekyll as glas, / and slythys, / This world fowre never so, / With mervels mo and mo, / Now in weyll, now in wo, / And all thyng wrythys" (ll. 174-82).
10. In a previous study, following Lascombes, we have referred to this phenomenon—which occurs when two different referents are assigned to a sign onstage—as "diaphora". In this episode, this device is affecting time and space. The shepherds are biblical characters, living in a corresponding background, but the striking individuality of these characters and their numerous references to an extra-dramatic reality make the material world and the biblical one coincide for the audience. Thus, the shepherds' choric speeches enable the audience to be aware of a spiritual dimension through the double interpretation—both symbolic and literal—of discourse, creating a psychological link between the extra-dramatic reality and the divine sphere.
11. Similarly, the addresses to God, Christ or St. Nicholas beginning each speech (ll. 1, 79-80 and 70-71) could be heard not merely as colloquial and anachronistic expressions, but as appeals to God's Mercy, which would then be answered by the blessing Mary gives them at the end of the play.
12. "Bot, yong men, of wowyng, / For God that you boght, / Be well war of wedyng, / And thynk in youre thought" (ll. 131-34).
13. Guinle has pointed out the importance of the integration of musical scenes in the dramatic text in general and particularly in the *Second Shepherds' Play*.

3 *Pastor*. The the meyne fallys to me.  
 Lett se how ye chauntt. (ll. 270–73)

This first stage of harmony is soon to be disrupted by the arrival of Mak, whose jarring voice mars their song and forebodes trouble: “Who is that *pypys* so poore?” (l. 283). Indeed, his arrival creates a new development in the action and introduces two kinds of conflict --marital feud, theft and deception—which echo the shepherds’ complaints.

The theme of marital discord is illustrated both by the verbal image projected by Mak of his relationship with Gill and by its enactment onstage. Mak’s description of his predicament echoes in many ways the second shepherd’s and sets him in a role which is recognised by the public as the well-known cultural figure of the hen-pecked husband plagued with a lazy, spendthrift and shrewish wife who, furthermore, is incredibly fertile:

1 *Pastor*. How farys thi wyff? By thi hoode,  
 How farys she?  
*Mak*. Lyys walteryng—by the roode—  
 By the fyere, lo!  
 And a howse full of brude.  
 She drynkys well, to;  
 Yll spede othere good  
 That she wyll do!  
 Bots ho  
 Etyes as fast as she can,  
 And ilk yere that commys to man  
 She bryngys furth a lakan—  
 And, som yeres, two. (ll. 339–51)

Following the disrupting effect of Mak’s appearance onstage, this description, however exaggerated, restores an impression of continuity and familiarity,<sup>14</sup> and the role is bound to appeal to the audience’s empathy, even if it is mitigated with farcical laughter. Furthermore, the verbal image thus created by Mak creates a context for the subterfuge he sets up with Gill to conceal the stolen lamb.

14. The only jarring note seems to be Mak’s reaction to the third shepherd’s attempt to remove Mak’s coat; he pretends to be the king’s messenger and asks for more respect in Southern English dialect: “What! Ich be a yoman, / I tell you, of the kyng, / The self and the some, / Sond from a greatt lordyng, / and sich / Fie on you! Goyth hence / Out of my presence! / I must have reverence. / Why, who be ich?” (ll. 291–99). This already betrays Mak’s capacity to play a role and undermines his self-built image of an unhappy husband.

Yet there is more in this theme than the familiar, comic aspect. Mak's return to his cottage and to his wife presents us with a burlesque version of Joseph's Return. The parallel is clearly made between Mak's second return home, following a dream of Gill giving birth—a parody of the Annunciation—and the moment of Joseph's arrival home, knocking at the door and impatiently asking to be shown in.<sup>15</sup> In the episode of Joseph's Return, the apparition of the angel puts an end to the argument opposing Joseph to Mary, and unity in the couple is restored when Joseph understands his mistake. Similarly, Gill soon puts her concern about the theft and its possible dire consequences<sup>16</sup> aside to help her husband disguise the sheep. When Mak returns home for the second time, Gill's complaints about her female status subside,<sup>17</sup> and the couple's unity is restored as they plan their subterfuge. As they play the part of a happy family brought together by the birth of their child, they hold a mirror—however deformed—to Mary and Joseph rejoicing over the coming of Christ, an image which is echoed by the jarring “harmony” of Mak's lullaby and Gill's faked groans:

3 *Pastor.* Will ye here how thay hak?  
Oure syre lyst croyne.  
1 *Pastor.* Hard I never none crak  
So clere out of toyne. (ll. 686–89)

Finally, the conflict opposing the shepherds to Mak the thief and its outcome offer a last example of earthly reconciliation which parallels the biblical theme of the pageant. This third occurrence of the pattern is the most developed, since it involves a parodic “annunciation” (Mak's dream), a mock birth and an “adoration” sequence. The latter is a moment of revelation for the shepherds, as they recognise their stolen sheep and eventually forgive Mak, an attitude prefiguring their biblical role. This final occurrence also seems to complete the shepherds' reconciliation with each other, then with Mak, and prefigures their spiritual transformation. Thus, the third shepherd's animosity towards Mak<sup>18</sup> is several

15. This parallel is particularly obvious in lines 582–87, which echo the first lines of “Joseph's Doubt”, Play 12 of the N-Town Cycle.
16. She warns him, “By the nakyd nek / Art thou like for to hyng” (ll. 445–46) and “It were a fowll blott / To be hanged for the case” (ll. 454–55). Mak replies, “I have skapyd, Ielott, / Oft as hard a glase” (ll. 456–57).
17. “Why, who wanders? Who wakys? / Who commys? Who gose? / Who brewys? Who bakys? / What makys me thus hose?” (ll. 599–602); “Full wofull is the householde / That wantys a woman” (ll. 606–7).
18. He removes Mak's cloak lest he should hide his spoils there: “Is he comen? Then ylkon / Take hede

times tempered by the other two shepherds, before they in turn start to suspect him:

- 3 *Pastor.* When we had long napt,  
Me thought with a gyn  
A fatt shepe he trap;  
Bot he mayde no dyn.
- 2 *Pastor.* Be styll!  
Thi dreame makys the wood. (ll. 534-39)
- 3 *Pastor.* Now trow me, if ye will  
By Sant Thomas of Kent,  
Ayther Mak or Gill  
Was at that assent.
- 1 *Pastor.* Peasse, man, be still  
I sagh when he went.  
Thou sklanders hym yll.  
Thou aght to repent  
Goode spede. (ll. 660-68)

Having unsuccessfully searched Mak and Gill's cottage for their sheep, the shepherds humbly admit their mistake, while Mak rejoices at their credulity in his asides to the public.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, when the shepherds return to Mak's cottage to present the newborn with a gift, their attempt at reconciliation is genuine, and it is precisely this genuineness that enables them to see through the couple's deceptive trick and to discover their sheep:

- 2 *Pastor.* Mak, freyndys will we be,  
For we ar all oone. (ll. 816-17)

This worldly revelation does not simply end with the discovery of the stolen sheep, but eventually leads the shepherds to forgive Mak and let him go. Their thirst for revenge seems to vanish with him and remain only as a trifling memory. Having thus reached a state of spiritual awareness—since they are able to see beyond worldly matters—the shepherds are ready to play their part as witnesses and messengers of the divine birth. The angel's apparition to the shepherds and his heavenly

to his thing / *Et accipit clamidem ab ipso*" (ll. 289-90). He also makes Mak sleep between them, lest he should escape: "Bot, Mak, com heder. Betwene / Shall thou lyg downe" (ll. 378-79).

19. 1 *Pastor.* We have markyd amis; / I hold us begyld. / 2 *Pastor.* Sir, don. / Sir—Oure Lady him save! (ll. 796-99).

song come not only as an annunciation of Christ's birth, but as a celebration of this accomplishment:

- 2 *Pastor*. Say, what was his song?  
Hard ye not how he crakyd it,  
Thre brefes to a long?  
3 *Pastor*. Yee, Mary, he hakt it:  
Was no crochet wrong,  
Nor nothing that lakt it. (ll. 946-51)

As the shepherds marvel at the perfection of the song—which they knowledgeably express in technical terms—they are now aware of how imperfect and comical their performance is. Since the divine is made flesh and blood in Christ's birth, man's reintegration in the divine plan is now complete, and there is no more need for human imitation:

- 2 *Pastor*. Let se how ye croyne!  
Can ye bark at the mone? (ll. 955-56)

Thus, the shepherds' experience offers a worldly counterpart to the biblical theme of the play. Furthermore, the sense of real situation created by the cultural and social references helps to establish a strong psychological link between the dramatic world and the audience. Although the latter are aware of the subterfuge, the shepherds' status of audience to Mak and Gill's farce provides them with an interesting mirror image which enables them to follow the experience closely. In this perspective, it seems that the biblical matter of the play actually predominates and even pervades the whole pageant. Indeed, the events of the first part of the pageant do not merely reflect the divine sphere or foreshadow the reintegration of mankind into God's divine plan. They provide an illustration of the new state of harmony initiated with the birth of Christ and culminate in three musical sequences, which come as moments of revelation and prepare for the angel's message, which is announced by the central song of the pageant. Thus, the two parts of the diptych present the audience with a tangible image of Redemption, as well as a carefully prepared medium for contemplation.

### *Functional Duality of the Play Within: Towards an Awareness of Symbolic Meaning*

The duality characterising the overall structure of the pageant affects its constitutive elements, as well as their function, in a most interesting manner. Thus, Mak and Gill's trick of concealing the stolen sheep from the shepherds has all the characteristics of a "play-within-a-play". Occurring on a human scale, it seems to belong to the first part of the pageant. Yet, as we have seen, it plays a crucial role in the shepherds' spiritual growth, and its farcical aspect is reminiscent of the grotesque mode, which affects numinous episodes in the biblical plays.<sup>20</sup>

The embedded structure appears as a meta-theatrical game directed by Mak and Gill. Indeed, Mak's verbal skill can conjure up an image of domestic despair, and Gill shows a particular ability to direct and act the "farce" she has created. This capacity to act and simulate ironically underlines the double frame of the action, and in doing so points at the serious aim of the illusion. The use of more-or-less direct address makes it clear that the grotesque game is set up for the extra-dramatic audience. Mak's soliloquy (ll. 387-425), however choric-sounding at first,<sup>21</sup> is directed to the public, and his speech soon becomes an actual performance. Indeed, Mak verbally comments on his actions, appearing as actor and director at the same time and with the mysterious ability to cast spells.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Gill's account of her stratagem to Mak is obviously directed to the audience:

*Uxor.* A good bowrde have I spied,  
Syn thou can none:  
Here shall we hym hyde,  
To thay be gone,  
In my credyll. Abyde!  
Lett me alone,  
And I shall lyg beside  
In chylbed, and grone. (ll. 478-85)

Gill's skills as a stage director soon outshine Mak's. Indeed, it is she who prompts him to go back to the shepherds and pretend to awake from a premonitory dream

20. Episodes such as Joseph's Return in the various Cycles, the *Nativity* in the *N-Town* and *Chester* cycles, and *The Trial of Mary and Joseph* in the *N-Town* Cycle show many occurrences of this grotesque mode.

21. In the first nine lines of the soliloquy, Mak's use of the third-person pronoun gives his speech a choric quality, which subsides when he switches back to the first-person pronoun in the following lines.

in order to return safely to his cottage, and get ready for another performance of her own devising. The audience witnesses a stage director's preparation for performance, as Gill comments on and directs Mak for the following scene:

*Uxor.* I shall swedyll hym right  
In my credyll.  
If it were a gretter slyght,  
Yit couthe I help tyll.  
I will lyg downe stright.  
Com hap me.  
Mak. I wyll.  
(ll. 623-28)

*Uxor.* Harken ay when thay call;  
Thay will com onone.  
Com and make redy all,  
And sing by thyn oone;  
Syng "lullay" thou shall,  
For I must grone  
And cry outt by the wall  
On Mary and John,  
For sore.  
Syng "lullay" on fast  
When thou heris at the last;  
And bot I play a fals cast,  
Trust me no more. (ll. 634-46)

This meta-theatrical game is particularly comical when the audience simultaneously witness the shepherds reaching Mak's cottage and the two actors' hasty preparations inside: Gill begins to groan and Mak "sings" a lullaby (ll. 686-89).

The functional duality of the episode becomes apparent when the performance fails to fool the shepherds. The intense involvement required from the audience by this burlesque plot (dealing with such trivial matters as sheep-stealing) clearly serves a purpose lying far beyond the comic effect.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the aborted performance shifts the emphasis on its very frame. Thus, the "play within", being also an "illusion within", seems to acquire the genuineness of an

22. This characteristic could be seen as a hint to the playwright and stage director, not to create a world out of nothing, since this does not apply to religious drama, but to recreate a world (that of the Bible) through theatrical illusion.

23. This involvement is ensured by Mak and Gill's oblique speech during the preparation of their trick.



inverted illusion,<sup>24</sup> and the meta-theatrical game would thus function as a revealing device, arousing the audience's awareness of a symbolic meaning.<sup>25</sup>

This revealing function is emphasised by the grotesque mode which characterises the trick directed by the two thieves. A traditional feature of numinous episodes in the mystery plays,<sup>26</sup> it occurs here in the absence of a numinous scene, so that we have little guarantee that the audience did not merely respond to this episode as a farce.<sup>27</sup> Yet the images used in the meta-theatrical game, being widespread in contemporary vernacular writings, seem to be part of the audience's cultural background and could be expected to ensure an appropriate response from the latter. The "game within" would then function as an enlightening analogue of the Nativity, and this ostension *in absentia* has a particularly strong theatrical effect.

Indeed, the play within and the action leading to it—the theft and the preparation of the subterfuge—are pervaded by pregnant images of hunger and food which can be read as an allegory of spiritual yearning and fulfilment.<sup>28</sup> Mak's

24. The *Second Shepherds' Play*'s use of meta-theatrical hints appears early in the play, when one of the shepherds tells the others about his nightmare. The frame of the nightmare ironically reflects the extradramatic reality, since he wakes up in a terrible state after dreaming that he was in England (ll. 504–11).
25. In the other cycle pageants or plays where this embedded structure can be found, sometimes as a short "game" in which secondary characters suddenly take on leading roles, the apparent diversion actually has a precise function in relation to the main theme. This is the case in *Passio Domini*, the second play of the Cornish *Ordinalia*, in which the jailor of Christ and a "boy" enact some sort of fight reminiscent of the sword dances. This episode occurs during the Judgment of Christ by Pilate (ll. 2239–2318) and despite the term "interlude", it has a precise function in the play, since it recalls the battle and victory of life against death, thus using a pagan motif to prefigure Christ's resurrection.
26. The grotesque mode implies the use of concrete images, sometimes referring to bodily functions, in order to provide a "safe" and efficient representation of spiritual concepts for a mostly unlearned audience. As theatrical representation is but the sign of a supra-reality beyond our understanding, these images, however inappropriate, provide a powerful allegory for events which cannot be conceived in logical terms. This propensity to resort to concrete images to convey spiritual truths for obvious didactic reasons can be found in medieval sermons and books written for the instruction of parish priests, such as Mirk's. The grotesque mode also reveals the essential role of the body to experience divinity, since this medium echoes the Incarnation of Christ or Mary's consent to conceive God's son. In this perspective, elements which tended to be seen as questionable accretions to the biblical matter of these plays are now acknowledged as enlightening cultural images.
27. In keeping with Woolf's reservations about the level of understanding of the audience, we may indeed wonder if the latter would not have failed to grasp the symbolic meaning of some hints or verbal images used by the two tricksters: "For, though the episode has a religious orientation ... it could easily be missed by the unsophisticated, who would then understand it only as simple farce" (Woolf, p. 192).
28. In the late Middle Ages, food is such an essential part of life that it is the most common gift of charity. Abstinence from food provides the most authentic form of ascetic practice, and hunger is a very significant symbol which metaphorically refers to the believer's desire to experience Christ's sufferings. This analogy can be found in many spiritual writings from the thirteenth century onwards and originates in

theft seems to be motivated by starvation, and his haste to see the sheep slain and roasted shows how severe his hunger is.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Mak and Gill's oaths, far from sounding blasphemous, express a desire to eat God and thus to be reunited with Him:

*Mak.* As I am true and lele,  
 To God here I pray  
 That this be the fyrst mele  
 That I shall ete this day. (ll. 751-54)

*Uxor.* I pray to God so mylde,  
 If ever I you begyld,  
 That I ete this chylde  
 That lygys in this credyll. (ll. 773-76)

Thus, the mock-birth of the lamb<sup>30</sup> offers a revealing image of the Nativity,<sup>31</sup> since this embedded image foreshadows Christ's sacrifice, through which regeneration is made possible. The unnatural birth of the sheep to Mak and Gill also parallels that of Christ into the natural world, providing an interesting analogue of the complexity of Christ's nature and revealing the didactic purpose of the theatrical game.<sup>32</sup>

one of Paul the Apostle's epistles to the Corinthians. Accordingly, and in reference to the last Supper, the act of eating the Host is a means to consume Christ, to become part of Him, another image of spiritual reintegration. Thus, beyond the comic element obviously generated by the situation, it seems reasonable to think that the audience would have grasped the spiritual dimension of the metaphor of hunger and recognised in the image of the lamb a direct allusion to Christ the Redeemer. Concerning the importance of the body and food in medieval religious thought and practise, see Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, as well as *Jeunes et Festins Sacrés*, pp. 18-19, and Beckwith, pp. 58-59. The second chapter of my doctoral dissertation provides a short summary of this system of spiritual symbols (pp. 134-48).

29. "I am worthy my mete, / For in a strate can I get / More then thay that swynke and swette / All the long day" (ll. 448-51); "I wold he were flayn; / I lyst well ete. / This twelmothe was I so fayn / Of oone shepe-mete" (ll. 465-68).
30. We can assume that the lamb used for the performance was a wooden doll, similar to that representing the new-born Christ. We may also wonder if this doll was meant to represent a real referent—a lamb—or if another prop, hinting at a spiritual interpretation, was used.
31. These remarkably concrete religious symbols, as well as the emphasis on emotion in devotional practice, betray a strong influence from Franciscan piety and from lay religious movements such as the *devotio moderna*. Since the latter originated and spread in modest, comparatively less learned backgrounds, the audience of the *Second Shepherds' Play* could be expected to share this spiritual disposition and grasp the full meaning of the apparently grotesque parody.
32. In this respect, the two thieves' insistence on their parenthood when the shepherds discover that the baby is their lost sheep offers another echo of Joseph's Return, which goes far beyond parody. Mary's

In this perspective, Mak and Gill's subterfuge actually brings to light the meaning of the Nativity, emphasising the redemptive role of the Christ Child through the image of the lamb, since this well-known biblical image stresses the humanity of Christ and the intensity of the suffering he undergoes to redeem mankind. In this light, Gill's prayer<sup>33</sup> and the shepherd's "lytyll day-starne" lose some of their comical quality and become reminiscent of the true Nativity. If the use of this image to qualify the "false child" grotesquely counterpoints the later address to Christ—the "true" child—by one of the shepherds (l. 10), it also acquires a particularly strong meaning when the lamb is perceived as a sacrificial figure of Christ. The role of the body as a medium to experience divinity<sup>34</sup> is further emphasised after the shepherds have beheld the Christ child and express their physical sense of blessedness<sup>35</sup> as a sign of Redemption. This spiritual well-being both counterpoints and responds to the shepherds' complaints about the physical sufferings inflicted by the weather in their introductory speeches. Indeed, these sufferings are both real and symbolic, since they are also reminiscent of Christ's suffering on the Cross.<sup>36</sup>

The analogy of the *Second Shepherds' Play* with a diptych unveils its function as a image of contemplation. The deliberately inadequate reflection of divine matters and the reduplication of the theatrical frame provide the audience with an enlightening illustration of the spiritual meaning and of the concrete consequences of Redemption in the natural world. The boundaries between the natural world and the divine sphere vanish, as supernatural events appear to be integrated into human life. Simultaneously, we can imagine that the pregnant mystical images used to refer to the experience of divinity would have called for an intense emo-

claim to Joseph that he, with God, is the father of the child she bears hardly sounds less unnatural to him than Mak and Gill's claim does to the audience: "I am he that hym gatt, / And yond woman hym bare" (ll. 870-71).

33. "No, so God me blys / Ang gyf me ioy of my chylde!" (ll. 794-95). Despite the obvious double meaning of the prayer—Gill is rejoicing about the feast to come—it retains a strong spiritual overtone: the Lamb of God will bring heavenly bliss to mankind.
34. Happé, pp 272-73, draws our attention to the punishment inflicted on Mak by the three shepherds, which is reminiscent of tossing a pregnant woman in a sheet to induce childbirth. This bodily image would refer to the expiation of sin and draw a parallel between the pains of labour and those of Hell.
35. "(2 *Pastor*.) Lord, well is me! / Now we go, thou behold. (3 *Pastor*.) Forsothe, allredy / It semys to be told / Full oft. / (1 *Pastor*.) What grace we have fun! / (2 *Pastor*.) Com furth; now ar we won! / (3 *Pastor*.) To syng ar we bun / Let take on loft!" (ll. 1080-88).
36. See esp. ll. 1-13 and 79-91.

tional involvement from the audience and have led them to experience an *imitatio Christi* by proxy,<sup>37</sup> giving another dimension to the mediating process.

The pageant itself stands as an image of mediation and reintegration. The manifestation of the divine will in the natural world leaves it transformed and yet undisturbed. This sign of restored harmony encompassing the natural world shows how tangible Redemption is. Similarly, the three shepherds' transformation enables them to live through a religious experience and integrate this experience into their everyday life. As Happé points out, this pattern "accords with the Wakefield master's concern with the substance and the difficulty of human experience" (p. 270). Indeed, this image of contemplation plays an essential part in the medieval audience's reception, inviting them to conduct their own spiritual experience in the same perspective.

37. Furthermore, the feeling of self-denial experienced by the Christian audience in this *imitatio Christi* would ironically counterbalance the apparent predominance of human matters.

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## *Play-Area as Mediation in the Digby Mary Magdalene*

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**O**VER other possible mediating functions in a play, I have decided to privilege the attempt to communicate to the audience the play's substance, significations and value, i.e., its *aesthetic* impact in performance. To that end I have selected one of the Saints' Plays, which by nature are essentially intent on communication, and will be studying the play-area, a central element in the making of the spectacle.<sup>1</sup>

Before I proceed I must make a brief point about my use of the term "aesthetic", too often vague or semantically empty. The Greek verb "aisthanomai" seems to have had two complementary meanings closely rolled into one: a) "to feel through the senses"; b) "to conceive, to understand" (Bailly, pp. 78-79). The semantic duplicity not only refers to the constant strategy of dramatists bent on pleasing and teaching at once, even when the play is not deliberately didactic, but also relates to the experience of audiences constantly exposed to the double appeal of distanced reflection and emotional investment. Ross Chambers, substantially opposing Artaud's and Brecht's views of reception, calls that emotional implication "une contagion" (p. 403).

1. See Jeffrey, p. 82.



My second introductory point is about the basic features of the play-area in pre-modern and modern Western theatre. I shall emphasize three which serve my present purpose.

The first one is about the paradoxical nature of the play-area, since its spatial closeness to and familiarity with daily life is contradicted by an utter alterity which severs it at once from the world of ordinary experience. The cultures secreting theatre nevertheless manage to meet the antinomic presupposition. In his study, *L'espace théâtral médiéval*, Elie Konigson analyses as follows this mixture of contraries in the medieval tradition: “Les théâtres jusqu’au xvi<sup>e</sup> siècle ne sont pas théâtraux ; ils sont urbains et théologiques”. Later, emphasizing their diverse functions (marketplace, traffic way, space devoted to civic, religious or festive ritual and ceremony), he remarks that “à l’occasion de la représentation qui s’y donne l’une de ces fonctions *surgit au premier rang sans toutefois occulter totalement les autres*” (pp. 78-79; my emphasis). Barely acknowledging the medieval tradition, however, one of the Prague School theorists more fundamentally relates the play-area’s composite image and flexibility to the general semantic transformability of the theatrical sign, or sign of a sign.<sup>2</sup>

This self-contradictory nature, born of the play-area’s intermediate position between two incompatible worlds, accounts for a second basic trait which is capital here: the play-area’s border-line is much more than a “limen”; it is a “limes”, or interval of functional significance. The limes has little to do with conventional taboos of trespass, but much more with the problematics of passing or transferring from one moment, or state, of life to the next. Arnold Van Gennep’s typology of rites describing such transfers and the ternary scheme attached to them is well known. More often questioned is the reading of the scheme put forth by Victor Turner in his several essays on the nature of play. In such a transition he sees a complex moment of creation, an opening towards newness and change, and, in his own words, an anti-structure, in which lies the essence of play (pp. 56-78). Passing over the complex history of the opposition to Turner’s concept,<sup>3</sup> I focus instead on another contemporary view of play as linked to the notion of growth and passage, which is derived from the study of cognitive and affective development in the young child. Donald Woods Winnicott,

2. See Fischer-Licghte, pp. 6-10, and Honzl.

3. For a review of the many objections to Turner’s views (centering on the notion and value of play and its relation to reality and nature), see Spariosu, pp. d1-d8.

a British psychoanalyst, emphasizes the vital role played by the appropriation, under the aegis of the mother, of an outer space and of objects which he calls “transitional” during the progressive conquest by the baby of his/her identity and transition from non-self to self (pp. 9-15). This process, which seems anthropologically rooted, since it is devoid of links with cultural factors, might easily fit Turner’s view of the “liminal”. It also sits easily, as Winnicott recalls, with man’s common experience in approaching and appropriating an aesthetic object (be it painting, music, discourse, film or theatrical spectacle). The artefact, whose unquestionable quality and profound function, as I view it, is to help define or re-define one’s relation to the outer world, is another sort of transitional object. As such, it offers a mediating surface (or interface), such as commentary, overture or coda, prologue or epilogue, or picture frame—in short, anything that, in the posture of “enunciation” implied by the contact, isolates the enunciated object from its surroundings, enhancing its artificiality or its status as otherness for our appropriation. Lisa Block de Béhar, in an approach of her own, underlines the importance of such a mediator, which she calls “un ‘cordon’ esthétique” (p. d3) of anaphorical function. It is clear to us all that the theatrical artefact, essentially societal, uses different resources to discharge that function. Quite a few papers in this collection show how this is done through characters of various standing. As implied in my introduction, I would myself argue that plays resort as well to other dramaturgical instruments—narrative, discursive, visual or spatial. More particularly, I hope to show that in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*, the play-area is an element eminently serving that function.

Before proceeding with the play, however, just a few words more about the third feature of the play-area already hinted at: its inherent plasticity. Élie Konigson devotes an article to what he calls “les objets de représentation au théâtre” (pp. 194-95). These, which are neither set nor properties, he sees as constitutive of the play-area proper. Three of them are remarkable, in his view:

- 1) the play-area’s own shape, and its relation to the surroundings;
- 2) the “sedes”, or place of power, either restricted to the seat or throne, or extending to the whole locus;
- 3) the “opening”, or space affording access and exit to and from the play-area.

I would myself add two more: the “central spot” and the “zone of approach or exchange”, which on today’s stage is the borderline between play and audience. It is to be noted that quite a few authors concerned with the mechanisms of theat-

ricality have found the study of the central and liminal portions of the dramatic text and play-area to be of interest.

### *The Play Area as Mediation in the Digby Mary Magdalene*

A long-time interest in the plays of the Digby MS and the staging techniques which are presumed or known to have been favoured for them is one reason behind my choice. Another is the memories I retain of Luca Ronconi's adaptation of *Orlando Furioso* seen in production in 1969 in Les Halles de Paris, Pavillon Baltard. Such memories of what was afterwards termed "une dramaturgie du lieu éclaté"<sup>4</sup> were powerfully revived by Bob Godfrey's account of three of his own recent productions, in particular the Digby *Mary Magdalene*, staged in the "Place and Scaffold" form. The editors of the text I am using here share the conservative view that the play, possibly travelling from place to place, may have been staged in variants of this form, with the "platea" possibly restricted to a section of the central round, while David Bevington, in his own edition of the play, conjectures that the staging may repeat that of *The Castle of Perseverance*.<sup>5</sup> While Jeffrey similarly admits such a possibility (p. 84, n. 16), Coldeway in his doctoral dissertation adds documentary support to the hypothesis (pp. 200-14).

Yet, in re-reading the play, I became convinced of the benefits, in terms of aesthetic effect, of the changes Godfrey had effectively introduced, and concentrated on his staging, as documented in the figure to the present article. My remarks are organised under two headings: 1) the layout and salient features of the play-area; 2) bits of evidence plus a set of assumptions about its possible effects on an audience.

### *Layout and Salient Features: Structural Aspects*

I totally share the instinctive feeling voiced by Bevington, among others, that its sheer size and adaptability make such a staging eminently congruent with the story.<sup>6</sup> The play, of epic dimensions, is a somewhat baffling, but romantic

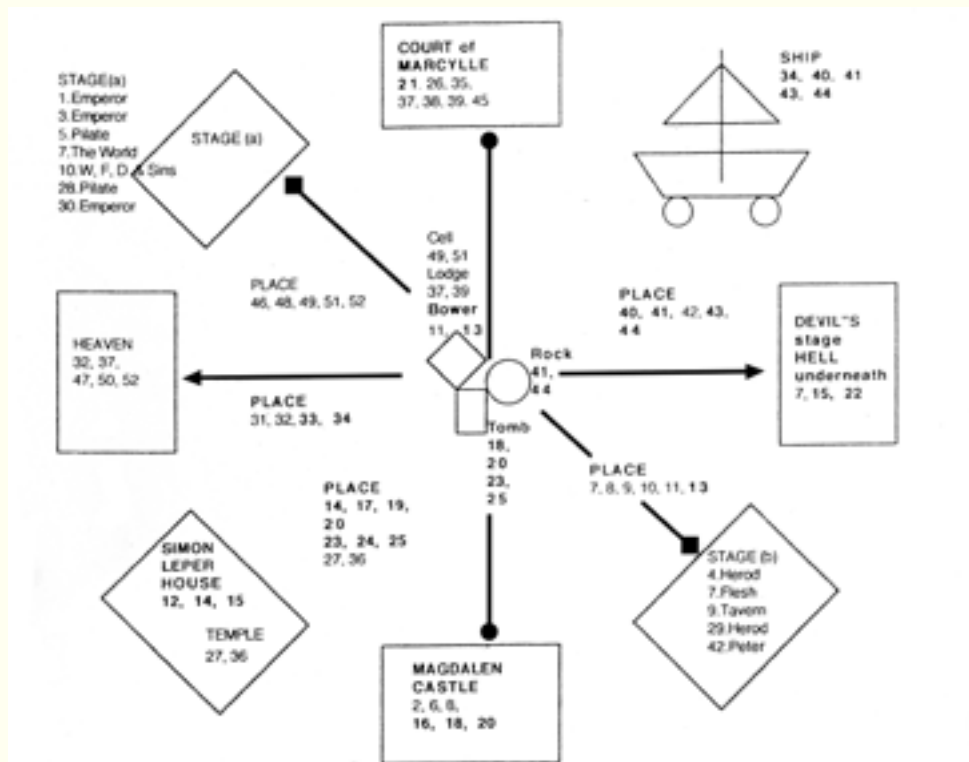
4. The term, used at the time of the production, is retained by Pauly, p. 220.

5. My quotations are from the edition of Baker, Murphy and Hall. For another edition, see Bevington.

6. I am unclear about the exact size of the place used by Bob Godfrey, but Southern's estimate is that the one used for staging *The Castle* must have been 125 feet across. And Eccles, p. xxiii, reminds us that the Cornish rounds did vary from 40 to 126 feet in diameter.

and alluring, complex of three narrative elements: the life of a saint of legendary status (a probable conflation of several evangelical characters and various material) relating her geographical and spiritual meanderings; the divine mission she is entrusted with (converting the King of Marcyllle); the saint's contacts with Jesus, before and after His Resurrection—contacts culminating in an Assumption which replicates that of the Mother of Christ. Without postulating any illusory quality in the expanse of the area, its ability to accommodate the many places in which the action is located certainly is a spectacular asset for audiences who might have heard of such distant places in sundry narratives, whether sermons, itineraries, relations of journeys to the Middle East, tales of romance or even rumours of the new sea voyages. Any mimetic suggestion in the “platea” of such places of fiction and wonder would effectively activate imaginations fed on so many by-products of contemporary history, romance and myth.

A second factor prominent here (as in *The Castle of Perseverance*) in securing spectacular efficiency is the inscription in specific habitats of diegetic elements of prime semantic value. In the Digby version of the story, these are six in number: 1) Paradise; 2) the seat of the Devil and Hell-mouth; 3) the Castle of Mary Magdalene in Bethany; 4) the Palace of the King of Marcyllle; 5) and 6) the two seats of terrestrial power: Rome (Tiberius) and Jerusalem (Herod). Clifford Davidson and Jean-Paul Debax have each remarked, practically at the same time, on the importance of the East-West axis in the symbolic orientation of medieval drama, insisting on the double tradition, Christian and classical, in which it is rooted. Reading the play (and, obviously, producing it too) leads to more specific remarks about the practical, symbolic and mythical significances with which the *Mary Magdalene* play-area is fraught. One easily notices on the ground-plan of Godfrey's staging that the six primordial seats are distributed around the *platea* in three axial oppositions: 1 <—> 2 (in red), 3 <—> 4 (in blue) and 5 <—> 6 (in green). Though differently oriented on the diagram, the three pairs of stages determine in real space the same geographical East-West direction. All three define one same territory across the Mediterranean, corresponding to the *oikoumene*, the space at once of the Christian myth and the Roman possessions in the Near East. But whereas the first axis (1 <—> 2) relates that space to the cosmic, the spiritual and the mythical, the second and the third (3 <—> 4) and (5 <—> 6) link it to the purely geographic aspects of Mary Magdalene's life, and to the world of mundane politics. Thus, the three pairs of stages spatially construct the triple dimension of



the play and its various significations, thereby giving visual prominence to the six springs of energy inspiring the whole drama. In an article entitled, “From Jerusalem to Damascus: Bi-local Dramatic Structure in Medieval Shakespearean Conversion Plays”, John W. Velz underlines the bi-local dramatic structure of some plays of conversion, ranging from the Digby plays to Shakespearean romances. I would rather suggest that the circular alignment of six fundamental scaffolds along three symbolic axes, as proposed by Godfrey’s staging, is a forcefully visual rendition of the complex make-up of the *Mary Magdalene* play. The primal forces at work on those stages overlook the *platea*, just as their characters overpower the action. Besides the fact that the six scaffolds (some of them standing very high, according to the stage directions) ensure visibility and audibility by most if not all in the audience, the peripheral forces they contain visually shut up the space of the fictional world. Lastly, this distribution achieves another major structuring effect at the notional and symbolic level: it opposes to the *platea*, mainly devoted to the representation of existential or historical events, a liminal belt of moral or spiritual forces spelling out the structure of the Christian myth. I am consciously accommodating here

Robert Weimann's remarks about "locus" and "platea" in the mystery Plays. So, while the three Mary Magdalene narratives based on heterogeneous material all take place in the *platea*, the mythical "limes" surrounding it imprints layers of different temporalities. These are generated by discrete sequences borrowed from the Christian myth and interfering with the original narrative at the risk of subverting and even disrupting it. It is best to take a closer look at such a transgressive structure from its first appearance in the play.

### *The Play Area as a Place of Spatio-temporal Liminality*

The first occasion for such transgression is when Mary, who has duly repented her juvenile errors and just been freed by Christ from her seven demons, discovers, while back home, that her brother Lazarus is about to die (l. 776). She goes to Christ for help, then prepares for the funeral of Lazarus, who has died in the meantime (ll. 774-818) and will be buried in the *platea* (ll. 819-68). Jesus arrives with his disciples, willing to make a public report of "his Passion to come" and show "a figure" of his future Resurrection by bringing back Lazarus to life (ll. 846-68). After Christ has recalled the inanimate body to life (ll. 869-925), the tale of Mary's earthly life is briefly resumed and the action transported to the Palace of the King of Marcyllle, whom Mary plans to convert (ll. 926-62). But this sequence is immediately interrupted when a devil, "in orebyll aray", as the text says, irrupts into the *platea* and relates the fight that has taken place with the Resurrected One, who, breaking into Hell, threatens to have his own justice prevail there too (ll. 963-92). At this point, the poor devil rushes back into the Hell-mouth, but his narrative inset, already twice removed from the main fiction's line, generates a new insert in its wake: the three Maries of the evangelical tradition (one of the three being our half-legendary, half-mythical Mary Magdalene, now jumping over the fictional "limes"), sail into the *platea* to narrate the Passion of Christ and, without a break, to undertake a Visit to the Tomb inspired by the *Quem Quaeritis* plays of old (ll. 993-1132). On top of this, Mary Magdalene, continuing to play truant in mythical time, *sees* Christ appear to her in the guise of a gardener (the *Noli Me Tangere* episode) (ll. 1133-48). Only at this point will she return without more ado to her "historical-legendary" status as the Mary of the Digby play, while the main action is resumed on the stage of Marcyllle (l. 1142).

This string of insets, branching off from the main line of narrative as offshoots of subsidiary or infra-subsidary status, technically belong to the category

of rhetorical (or narratological) devices which Gérard Genette, after Dumarçais and Fontanier, has called “narrative metalepsis.”<sup>7</sup> There is no need to comment here on the categories (diegetic, subdiegetic, metadiagetic, etc.) thus created, but the possible reasons and consequences of such narrative bifurcations are relevant to the thread of my argument. It may be that the thematic and generic kinship of Christ’s and Mary’s lives encourages permutations at particular moments, but it is also probable that the layout and functional uses of the play-area further help to trigger them off. It is more important still to remark that such commutations from fiction to fiction create for an audience simultaneous time-systems and concurrent levels of reality: that of the Mary Magdalene legend and that of the Christian myth, freely competing in the *platea*. The audience are in fact submitted to as many as three heterogeneous systems of reference, since the Mary Magdalene world of legend and the a-historical transcendent world of the Christian myth are both actualised in the theatrical re-enactment or *representation*, with a dual Mary-character effortlessly floating in between the two, and inhabiting both. What should be highlighted here is the *enunciation*-posture created by the presentation of the spectacle. It imparts bodily presence (and therefore factual relevance) to the aforesaid mix. The spectacle is actually seen, experienced, and felt to affect the existence and belief of those immediately present around it. Godfrey, quoting the reactions of his audiences, repeatedly implied that it is hard to discount such impressions on purely notional grounds. I would just add that such a concatenation of levels of reality may well approach what Turner calls the “liminality” of play, and also what Winnicott defines as his own main issue of study: “l’aire intermédiaire qui se situe entre le subjectif et ce qui est objectivement perçu” (p. 10).

Hereafter, since I never saw the production I foolhardily propose to comment on, I shall limit myself to exploiting some bits of textual evidence and, beyond these, what may be presumed of the audience’s response in terms of distanced or empathetic reception.

### *The Spectacular Efficiency of the “Place and Scaffold” Staging*

I shall build here on Godfrey’s remarks and, to some extent, in spite of obvious differences, on my own memories from Ronconi’s “mise en espace de l’action dramatique”. I fancy that the action of the Digby play in that staging would

7. See Genette, *Figures III*, pp. 225–78 (“Discours du récit”, Pt. 5, [“Voix”]), and, for an extended analysis, *La métalepse*, *passim*.

hardly compare with the hectic excitement created in the vast half-lit expanse of Les Halles by Ronconi's six or seven chariots transporting this or that protagonist and madly rushing through the crowding audience, at times avoiding them by inches only. Yet, if I read Godfrey correctly, I presume that, though not submitted to such hazards, the audiences at his production were similarly embarked on the demanding task of constant physical adjustment to the ceaseless shifts of fictional episode and place, and finding their way around if only to keep pace with the narrative. This, among other factors, surely entailed many changes in their position in the *platea* and in their physical distance from the actors. Though the moot question of "aesthetic distance" has never been satisfactorily clarified, the theatre-goer will probably agree that a relation exists between physical distance (or other proxemic elements) and the "aesthetic impact" of play. Surely, quite a few spectators would also admit that accident and unpredictability are additional parameters enhancing the sense of individual live experience.

Apart from that, however, the nature of the events considered certainly is a decisive factor. There must be, I imagine, few elements in the eventful narrative of Mary Magdalene that would not create emotional or intellectual surprise or interest. These include even ordinary actions, like the scene of seduction and surrender between the chaste young lady and the rogue Curiosity in the tavern, or Mary's decision to board an unknown ship for an adventurous passage, or again her visit to the King of Marcyllle by night as an envoy from King Jesus to negotiate Marcyllle's conversion. Simple as they seem, these acts, into which she boldly launches, might well produce in viewers at close range an emotional implication, possibly enhanced by the proximity of actress and acting.

For the very nature of some of the acts performed in the immediate and live presence of spectators entails much more than mere discomfort born of physical proximity. Meeting Jesus and his disciples in Simon's house, watching Mary yield to the unmentioned but probable magnetism of the young Lord, stooping in front of him, loosening her hair and wiping his feet, as well as the rest of the evangelical sequences, such as the *Noli Me Tangere* scene, must be impressive sights to consider from close-by, even if one never forgets that this is "representation". Later on, the same audience, more or less free to roam about, are invited to attend, and possibly join in, the moaning over the recent death of Lazarus and the collective preparation for a funeral in Mediterranean fashion, complete with bewailing by family and neighbours, and vociferous procession to the tomb. Text and stage directions here may be read as possibly implying physical participation of spectators joining in the action of the attendants:



*Primus Miles.* Gracyows ladyys of grett honour,  
Thys pepull is com here in yower syth,  
Wepyng and weylyng wyth gret dolour,  
Becavse of my lordys dethe. (ll. 838-41)

And the stage direction reads: “Here þe on knyght make redy þe ston, and other bryng þe wepars, arrayd in blak” (l. 841).

Immediately afterwards, the knight, in the role of funeral organiser, as the closest follower of the departed lord, orders the people about him:

Now, good fryndys sat here be,  
Take vp thys body wyth good wyll,  
And lay it in hys sepoltur, semely to se;  
Good Lord hym save from alle manyr ille! (ll. 842-45)

The stage direction confirms: “*Lay him in. Here, al þe pepyll resort to þe castell, þus seyying Jhesus [in the place] . . .*” (l. 845).

Again, when, moments later, Jesus arrives and inconceivably recalls the energy of life into the corpse, though this is witnessed in close relation to a figural recall of the *Quem Quaeritis* episode enacted earlier, the symbolical significance of the miracle would hardly wipe out the emotional impact of the sequence. The stage direction, here again, hints at the possible interaction of attendants and audience: “Here all þe pepyll and þe Jewys, Mari and Martha, wyth on woys sey þes wordys: ‘We beleve in yow, Savyowr, Jhesus, Jhesus, Jhesus!’” (l. 920).

As Godfrey has pointed out, some moments of immediate live experience of what may afterwards be sorted out as illusionary rendition left such a strong impression on audience’s minds that they would actually encroach on the “limes” and join in the action (push the “ship” along, for instance [Godfrey, pp. 179-80]), illustrating what Chambers calls “contagion”. One might account for the corporeal quality making such attendance experientially far weightier than ordinary theatrical reception by suggesting that the events represented are poised between two potent appeals. The funeral ceremony must for many be a pressing temptation to partake with the crowd in anthropological rites which, tracing their origins to the origins of human culture, grasp imaginations and minds.<sup>8</sup> Contrarily, for some in the audience at least, the mystic and ritual re-

8. In Chapter Four (“La voix du chagrin”) of a series of essays entitled *Les morts*, Robert Harrison, addressing issues related to the force of cultural links between the living and the dead, power-

enacting of the three women's Visit to the Tomb demands instant adjustment to another type of acceptance or refusal to participate that is difficult, if not disturbing, even for non-believers. At any rate, the close collocation (here, as at other moments when Mary's existence coalesces with figural equivalents in the dogma) seems meant to create in the audience an intermediary category of experience which is of a piece with the spectator's uncertainty as to his position in the manifold time-space of the play.

In a final set of remarks, I would like to point out that such moments of emotional/intellectual participation in the spectacular action are no accidental occurrences merely due to the joint presence of a particular play-area and bouts of narrative metalepsis, but the result of a conscious strategy of involvement on the part of the dramatist, pervading the whole play-text and its staging. In providing a few instances of that determination to keep audiences off their guard, caught between the antagonistic stances of investment and detachment, I shall briefly return first to the motifs of nourishment and dress in which Theresa Coletti, in a thoroughly convincing article, sees potent elements of the "structural design of the play" (p. 314). It is indisputable that the accumulation of these motifs throughout the linguistic and syntagmatic system of the play-text builds up a metaphor of intellectual force for the legendary sinner's conversion to hero and saint, especially for audiences extremely sensitive to the availability or want of those two commodities. But it surely makes that argument all the more convincing to remark the theatrical ostension of the two themes in spectacular scenes carefully set at commanding articulations of the long eventful story.

Thus, the isotopy of the festive repast shared in the harmony of a close friendly group (to take that theme only) certainly is a terrestrial figure of the fundamental symbol of Christian dogma, the rite of Communion. But it also proposes, three times over, that the audience (at least vicariously) participate in the royal family's actual festivity up there in their mansion. In the initial scene of the play, when Tiberius on his stage makes the usual tyrant's boast demanding instant silence and compliance, a cry of submission instantly comes from

fully underlines the functions of the funeral *planctus* and, borrowing from Ernesto De Martino's *Morte e piante rituale* (1975), based on material from Southern Italy, highlights its integrative and unifying effects upon the sympathetic crowd of attendants around those who, known as "les perdants" ("the bereaved"), were closely assisted by the neighbourhood in pre-1960 Southern France.

his soldiers and retinue: “*Here answeryt all þe pepul at onys: ‘3a, my lord, 3a!’*” (l. 44). Thereupon, the Emperor asks for a stately refreshment of wine and cakes to be brought, inviting *all* to share in the convivial exchange (l. 47). Though the wording does not explicitly include the audience, some of them may feel tempted to join in the unanimous cry and the feast-attending community. The very next scene, staged on Cyrus and Mary’s family castle in Bethany, has King Cyrus announce that he gives his possessions to his children and then similarly feast with his family in royal fashion and in full view of the crowd (ll. 49–113). Though the “wyn and spycys” served are explicitly meant for “þes ladys of jentylnes” (ll. 113–14), the direct addresses of the King confiding his plans and feelings to his subjects, as well as the intimacy of the responses of the three children to their father, surely strengthen here again a sense of togetherness in the audience. A third repetition of the scene takes place much later, when Marcyll, the third royal in the story, after boasting of his power and his wife’s beauty, calls his knights to a repast of wine and spices, similarly staged on one of the scaffolds at the periphery of the play-area (ll. 926–62). My assumption is that, in the “aesthetically oriented transaction of the play performance”, the motif, basically of semantic value, additionally functions in optical and acoustical terms as an *icon* of *paradigmatic* force, sending from the outset to the audience the signal of (get)togetherness that they must welcome as recognition of their attendance.

Lastly, one could argue the contrary case that the parody of a mass said at Marcyll’s by the heathen priest and his boy, asking the audience to go down on their knees and, minutes later, to adore the relic of Mahomet’s bones, is meant to entice the audience out of their spontaneous unanimity (ll. 1143–48). Just so, later still in the play, the successive accounts of Christ’s Passion, announced by Pilate to Herod, and then passed on by Herod to Tiberius as a fake (ll. 1248–80, 1281–92 and 1293–1335), are immediately denied by Mary, while the heavens’ opening and Jesus’s apparition to her instantly validate her version.

Such twisting of the spectators round the dramatist’s little finger as to their potential for participation in the fable represented is far from innocent. Possibly meant by the dramatist to keep on this side of reproaches that his play might encourage superstitious belief, and contradictorily to enforce audience-submission to the lesson of his play, the technique may also be intended to show that the constant game of seduction is an additional and deliberately conscious titillation provided by the knowledgeable dramatist to an audience which is thus made to race, at a moment’s notice, through the whole gamut of reception atti-

tudes comprised between Artaudian subservience to emotion and Brechtian alienation. If this is the case, such complicity between the efficient dramatist and the able spectator, those two sides of the same coin, surely sheds some light on the reasons behind the reputation of the Digby *Mary Magdalene* for being excellent theatre.

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## *The Function Called “Commentator” in Some Early Tudor Interludes*

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“Alas, that I had no good fellow here  
To bere me cumpny and laugh at thys gere!  
Thys game was well founde!”  
(*Nature*, II.883-85)

THIS REGRET is expressed by Envy in Medwall’s *Nature*, after he has played a very cruel practical joke on Pride, pretending that the latter was late turning up for the battle against Reason, and so was dismissed from the army of the vices and had consequently lost both his “office” and “fees”. Moreover he has made a fool of himself. In the lines just quoted, Envy passes an encomiastic and complacent comment on his own trick. We, as spectators, have also been witnesses of the same trick and have probably appreciated it for what it is worth. This commentary on a scene we have already been shown as part of the show we are watching is probably meant to set off this embedded game, which can be appreciated in isolation as a short self-contained comedy. It has another effect: to point to the presence of the spectators while pretending the character is alone. In fact, Envy is alone on stage, but not in the theatre or the hall in which the interlude is performed. This comic ambiguity is soon cleared up by Sensuality, who has just come in and declares:

Yes, and ye lust to play the knave  
Some maner of cumpany ye myght have  
Here wythin thys grounde. (II.886-88)

In fact, Envy has already played the knave, and is now going to play it again, but in a different mode: in the account he is going to give of the event we have already watched, he uses a device, frequent in Medwall's plays, and which Medwall is not the only dramatist to use, a device I have elsewhere described as *metalepsis*. This narrative about the same incident stands as another embedded piece, and can be construed as a commentary on the dramatic version we have just had immediately before. Now, it is Sensuality who is the addressee of this relation, and his reaction is a compliment that is another commentary: "Now on my fayth, thys was madly do!" (919).

This example illustrates the very close and subtle interweaving of dramatic, although in most cases purely verbal, action and commentary. This alternation between what one might call, on the one hand, active and, on the other, more reflective passages, seems to point to two different functions of language: performative language, most commonly used in drama, and descriptive or constative language, more typical of narration. The example quoted also shows that the passages of commentary do not mean a pause in the action; on the contrary, they may constitute a new start in the action, if performed by different means. If, in the first passage, Envy directly mocks Pride and so, by this explicit attack, tries to modify the relationship between himself and the other character, in the same way, in the second passage Envy tries to create complicity with Sensuality by telling him a story which he thinks this interlocutor will appreciate—which is the case, as Sensuality's positive commentary shows without ambiguity. At the end of the narrative their relationship is modified.

This effect may possibly be explained by the semiotic status of these discourses: the news reported in both cases has little value as information—Pride being absent from the battle, or Envy having chafed Pride by the said news—but rather for the impression made on the real addressee, that is, the eavesdropper. In each case the main effect of the utterance is in its perlocutory rather than illocutory value.

A related problem lies in what traditional editors call "asides". Let's take Haphazard's well-known entrance at the beginning of *Appius and Virginia*:

Very well sir, very well sir, it shalbe done  
As fast as ever I can prepare;  
Who dippes with the Divel he had neede have a long spoone. (175-77)

The Vice's monologue comes after the picture of perfect family bliss in Virginia's home, which culminates in the preceding scene. In the passage just quoted, whom is the Vice speaking to? The received analysis is that the "sir" he is addressing is the Devil mentioned in the third line, who remains hidden in the wings. So, the first two lines constitute an instance of a usual form of dramatic conversation with a hidden partner. Notice that the language used is performative in a double sense: first as dramatic speech, secondly in this particular case, because the character Haphazard formally promises to do something ("it shalbe done"), as one would do in ordinary life.

Two remarks may be made about the third line. First it is a proverbial saying, which could be paraphrased as "people say that . . .", and as such, needs no particularized enunciator. Secondly, who is the addressee? It is obviously a commentary on the situation created by the first two lines: the conversation with the invisible Devil. But it is no aside, because there is no main speech by whose "side" it would stand. And, being a proverbial saying, it is a particularly strong example of co-enunciation, because it voices a piece of common knowledge, here in the form of a warning perhaps directed at the characters (although they belong to the illusory world of the theatre), but chiefly meant as a guide, in order to facilitate the spectators' interpretation. This line serves as an introduction to the Vice's traditional self-presentation. It is not surprising that, after this neutral and almost enunciator-less utterance, a stronger presence of the enunciator should have been felt expedient. This type of set self-portrait can also be taken as a kind of commentary upon his illusory self and, owing to its ancient ancestry in the traditional rural plays (mummers' plays) it has a status comparable to that of the proverbial sayings; the source of enunciation is shared between character and audience.

Such phenomena as the commentary-like self-portrait (which has, by the way, nothing to do with introspection), or Envy's narration of the trick he played on Pride (in *Nature*), which are numerous in, and typical of, the English Vice-play, I would call dynamic commentaries. They can be considered as one of the springs of the plots and give the audience a structural part to play in such dramatic pieces (one could also cite Sensuality's symmetrical account of man's gallant bout in the Tavern in Margery's company).

I would like to consider now two main manifestations of the commentator: first, how he reinforces the structure of the interlude; secondly, how his commentary is the main motif in a number of late interludes (from the 1560s to the 1570s), in which dramatic action and characters are minimized and limited to the dimensions of short vignettes or *exempla*.

The commentary may be used to emphasize the different stages of the evolution of the plot hatched by mischievous, rowdy, boisterous or evil-minded characters—or by the Vice, if such a character appears among the *dramatis personae*. The commentaries are mostly explicit and take the form of a direct address to the audience. In spite of the variety of structures, most plots reach a climax preceded by an episode of preparation and followed by certain effects or changes in the situation.

The first stage is to be found before the action proper, when plans are being drawn up. I will call this stage the “titillation of anticipation”. Right from the beginning of Udall’s *Respublica*, Avarice appears as the head, or “founder”, of the group of vices, even if he pretends that he has delegated his authority to a follower of his, Insolence. By this delegation is manifested the power of both parties: that of the one at the origin of the delegation, and that of the beneficiary. Referring to their plans concerning the spoliation of *Respublica*’s goods, Insolence comments “this gear will right well accord” (258). He imagines that with *Respublica*’s money he will “have castles and towns in every shire” (274). This daydreaming is also a sort of commentary on an as-yet-unrealized situation, which nevertheless appears real to him.

Likewise, at the beginning of *Nature*, after the introduction involving Nature and World, Pride starts plotting with his friend Sensuality and intimates that if he can approach Mankind, and seduce him, he is sure to make him swerve from the path of virtue:

Aquaynt me wyth that man, and care not thou—  
The mater shall spede. (I.856–57)

After Pride has imparted to him the details of his plan, Sensuality rejoices at the prospect of man’s fall: “Surely thys conseyt ys well found” (886). Likewise, in Bale’s polemical history play, *Kyng Johan*, Usurped Power approves of Sedition’s plan to overthrow the king: “thys counsell ys good” (982). This commentary is the go-ahead signal, and is immediately followed by the return on stage of the conspirators in disguise, and so ready to realize their *coup*.

The most remarkable example of this titillation at the prospect of the undoing of virtuous characters is probably in *Like Will to Like*, by Ulpian Fulwel. After having organized the fall of his own friends and fellow-sinners, Nichol Newfangle alone on stage bursts into laughter at the idea of the fate that awaits his former accomplices, the sinister halter and the gallows. No other Vice is more explicit: “But mark well this game, I see this gear frame” (595). We may note the same reaction on the part of Inclination in *The Trial of Treasure* (743), attributed to William Wager, and Infidelity in Lewis Wager’s *Mary Magdalene* (910–13).

A last example: *All For Money*, by Thomas Lupton, treats this point in a slightly different way. This play has an intriguing structure, somewhat akin to that of John Heywood’s *The Play of the Weather*. The second part is constituted by a round of solicitors who ask All-for-Money for relief in their money problems. After a long introduction which consists of the half-allegorical, half-farcical births of Pleasure, Sin (the Vice) and Damnation, and of a debate in the medieval vein among Learning-without-Money, Money-without-Learning and Neither-Money-Not-Learning, Money and Sin set up in business All-for-Money, who hopes to make still more money as a corrupt judge. Unlike most Vices, Sin is rather pessimistic about his chances of success. All-for-Money finds that “suitors in coming are very slack” (946). This example of pessimism is not unique, however: in *Lusty Juventus*, the Devil also expresses his doubts about the success of his contrivances: “I trow this gear will come to nought” (325).

But is not this a comic trick intended to build up the suspense and so whet the spectators’ interest, and, as a consequence, underline the articulation between “phase one” and “phase two”?

## //

“Phase two” means success. I suggest we call it “the relish of realization”. One of the clearest and most spontaneous expressions of joy will be found in *The Trial of Treasure*, when Inclination has managed to convince Lust to come round to his views: “Now by my halidom . . . / better sport in my life I never saw” (443). In older plays, the same exultation signals the (temporary) success of Lucifer:

Off my dysyere now have I summe  
Wer onys brought into custume,  
Then farwell consyens, he wer clumme [i.e., silent]  
I xulde have all my wyll. (*Wisdom*, 519–22)

Another way of expressing satisfaction for Lucifer and the characters he has converted to his philosophy is through singing. Unfortunately, the text of the song is now lost, but the intention of such group-singing is clear, as is humorously expressed by Will: “The Devyll hym spede that myrthe exyled” (620). A more subtle and devious way of expressing such jubilation is the use of the interrogative form. Mind asks, “How be this trow ye now?” (621)—a question which may apply to the song or to the situation more generally, which belongs to the phase usually known as “life in sin”. Mind’s companions answer the question, which was perhaps also directed to the audience. Direct address, such as calls for cooperation, is the only device which can suggest the participation of the spectators, who are not supposed to answer or act in any way. As an illustration, one may quote the beginning of Medwall’s *Fulgens and Lucre*; when B knocks at the door, nobody opens, as is implied by his reaction:

A man may rappe tyll hys nayles ake,  
Or any of them wyll the labour take  
To gyve hym an answer. (II.78-80)

Similarly, when Worldly Affection in *Nature* asks the “pyld knave” (hairy bloke) to fetch a stool, he gets no answer:

Thou pyld knave, I speke to the,  
How long shall I stande? (II.518-9)

In *Common Conditions*, an anonymous play of a different kind, and with an unconventional structure for an interlude, success is highlighted by a commentary of self-satisfaction, first in the circle of the tinkers: “How say you my masters, how like you this device?” (75). The Vice laughs, “Ah, ah, ah”, and exclaims, “this gear cottons”, several times in the course of the play; he spends more time in announcing his tricks and expressing his admiration for his own wit, than in actually performing them.

### ///

The final phase may be termed “the reckoning”. In many cases, no time is left to the Vice to react to his final success or failure, as he is abruptly whisked off to prison or to Hell, or just disappears to escape punishment.

The most neutral and non-committal reaction is that of Covetous in William Wager’s *Enough Is as Good as a Feast*: “Farewell, my masters, our parts we have played”

(1427). A favourite commentary is that given in an interrogative form. In *Like Will to Like*, Nichol Newfangle never repents. A few lines earlier he is taken to Hell on the Devil's back. This is one of the pseudo-traditional exits for the Vice, remembered by Ben Jonson in the *Staple of News* and by other authors of the seventeenth century, but which in fact happens only twice in the extant corpus: in *Like Will to Like*, *Enough Is as Good as a Feast*, *Kyng Johan*, John Marston's *Histriomastix* and *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art*, also by William Wager. Nichol Newfangle's laughter also marks the last phase of the action—"Ha, ha, ha, there is a brace of hounds, / Behold the huntsman leadeth away" (Fulwel, 1168-69)—and his final words consist in two questions addressed to anonymous members of the audience: "Why then, good gentle boy, how likest thou this play?" (1176); "How say you, little Meg?" (1183). He had previously put the question to the audience in general (1123), then reproached them with their normal and structurally determined passivity: "Do all you hold your peace?" (1175).

A particularly interesting passage is situated at the end of *Enough Is as Good as a Feast*. Worldly Man pretends to be ill and asks for a doctor. The Doctor enters with the well known words, "stand back" and "give room", and finally asks to be paid, which immediately suggests the episode of the fool's death in the mummers' play. This mock-death here receives a grotesque treatment, which prompts the doctor to make this humorous tongue-in-cheek comment: "it is no time to jest". He then asks the audience, "Passion of me, Masters, count you this a play?" (1339). The traditional doctor episode constitutes, indeed, a play-within-the-play, with a strong flavour of co-enunciation, and can therefore be counted as a metadramatic commentary.

The hasty final commentaries offered by those who have provided most of the action and comedy, or even the complete absence of such commentaries in many plays, constitutes an awkward situation and makes for a real anticlimax, for totally passive preachers win the day against the amusers, musicians, singers and dancers who have (even if only partially) enlisted the spectators' sympathy and, sometimes, enthusiasm. Here again the comments reveal the inner meaning and ambiguities of such plays.

#### IV

Proverbial comedies are a special category of play in which the natural features of the interlude are exaggerated to their limits—plays in which commentary eclipses action. These plays usually have proverbial phrases as titles, such as the already mentioned *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art* and *The Tide Tarrieth no Man*.

In *The Longer Thou Livest*, a substantial part of the text is in majority made up of Latin quotations, each followed by an action which is explicitly conceived as an illustration of the corresponding moral sentence: “These verses I may on you signify” (134). A variety of the scene is to be found in the lesson given by Discipline to Moros, there mixed with a farcical element provided by the stupidity of the pupil. (The same scene occurs in John Redford’s *Wit and Science* [444-600].) In such a scene, language prevails over action; furthermore, the random and absurd language used by Moros is in total contrast with the organized argumentation of Discipline. The discourse of Moros is void of sense and unable to reflect an enunciator. Thus it has the same status as the wise sayings of the virtues: in both cases, the use of language hinders the constitution of an enunciator, and so fails to imply the existence of subjectivity behind the dialogues.

*Enough Is as Good as a Feast* contains at least eight occurrences of the saying used as a title for the play. The traditional episodes are included in the temptation cycle (decision to corrupt man, plans for that temptation, change of names, fall of man, illustrative vignettes with social overtones, death of man) and each episode is ended, as by a coda, with the same repeated saying.

In *Like Will to Like*, the proverb of the title is repeated ten times, and in the case of *The Tide Tarrieth no Man*, eighteen times! In the latter play, the commentator is the mock schoolmaster—in fact, Inclination, the Vice (173). The Vice has a particularly important part in *The Tide Tarrieth* and in similar plays, as he is the link between heterogeneous vignettes. The importance of commentary in the period of the late interludes is probably due to the polemical or didactic use that type of play was put to, chiefly by Protestant authors.

## V

In a previous study of the functions of the Vice, I distinguished six functions: three dramatic, and three metadramatic. The latter three were: messenger, manipulator and commentator. Since then, I have had many opportunities of re-working the subject, and the more I pry into these subtle and recondite distinctions, the weaker and more uncertain they appear to me. The categories may perhaps be of some use for the purpose of analysis, but it must be admitted that they constantly overlap and fade into one another. These interferences reflect the close structural proximity of language and action in drama—a literary genre in which language is certainly action, and action may be a language.

In this context, and with reference to the theme of this collection of essays, it is consequently worth considering the question: who is in, who—or what—is



out? Are the manipulators and commentators—i.e., those who come under the generic heading of mediators—more, or less, “at home” in such a play than the more fully represented characters, endowed with social, historical or legendary backgrounds? I think the question worth asking, when one can find, in a piece of modern criticism, the story of Lucres and her suitors described as the *main* plot of *Fulgens and Lucres*, while A, B and Joan’s actions are relegated to the *underplot*. I would like to ask: who opens and closes each half of the play? Who manipulates whom? What must one think of Lucres’ willingness to step down from her socially superior position to join in a bawdy farcical exchange with B, a member of the “underplot”?

In view of these uncertainties, it seems more reasonable than ever to consider the mediating role played by the agonist, and perhaps to go further and suggest that, in Tudor drama, the mediator can play an agonist’s part—then, finally, to imagine that Tudor plays (or, rather, our view of them) can be turned inside-out like Feste’s cheveril glove (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, III.i.12).

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## *Intradramatic Mediation: The influence of Terence*

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IN THIS PAPER I should like to make a few comments concerning the possible influence of Roman comedy, particularly Terence, on the mediation function of two plays, *Ralph Roister Doister* by Nicholas Udall and *Gammer Gurtons' Needle* by Mr. S. As has been tirelessly pointed out by theatre historians, although these two plays are rival contenders for the title of “first regular *English* comedy”, they are also among those which bear the most clearly discernible *Roman* influences.

Terence's plays and their graphic commentaries, written by Donatus and Charnius,<sup>1</sup> were studied with such intensity in grammar schools, and the plays were performed so regularly at Cambridge, particularly from 1548 to around 1575, that it seems hardly surprising to note such influences even in such a highly original corpus as the Tudor drama. But whilst the Roman influence on the structure and superficial strata of the two plays is obvious and without question, what I should like to try to discover is whether the deeper level—perhaps I could even say the “spirit” of the plays—bears traces of Terentian influence. One of the ways of reaching this deeper level may be to examine some aspects

1. See Altman, chap. 5 (“Terence and the Mimesis of Wit”), pp. 130–47, for an enlightening account of these commentaries.

of mediation in these plays and particularly the use of one or more mediating characters, variously known as plot-movers or stage-manager characters.

I shall not refer to any of the straightforward extradramatic mediation that occurs both in Terence and also in these two plays. There are a number of examples of direct and oblique audience address but I prefer to concentrate here on mediation actually within the plays. The main aspects to be examined will be, first, how a mediating character can be used as a focaliser for plot management, and, secondly, how such a character enables the organisation of stage action. Obviously, “intradramatic” does not necessarily mean “introspective”, and much of this kind of mediation reaches out to the spectators even if not directly addressed to them.

### *Intradramatic Mediation: Plot Management*

It is common knowledge that in Terence’s plays the pattern consists of a basic plot founded on an error or a misunderstanding, which is fanned into life and made intricate by the use of a mediator. This mediator is usually a clever slave character engaged in knife-edge plotting, planning and scheming. He is endowed with the aim of furthering his young master’s love interests whilst preserving him from paternal wrath. Such plot management usually involves havoc almost being wreaked but averted through a number of narrow escapes. Through a rigorously established three-part structure, the initial misunderstanding soon becomes a knot of errors before being finally unravelled. In most cases, the mediator starts out as a much-decried rascal, who takes infectious pleasure in weaving the plot ever closer to danger. The tables turn, however, and at the end he receives a general pat on the back for having steered the play into its benign resolution, bathed in Terentian conviviality and magnanimity.

The influence of Terence’s play *The Eunuch* on Udall’s *Roister Doister* has been much discussed. Interestingly, though, Udall does not choose to adapt Terence’s prime plot-mover, the slave Parmeno, preferring for that task a character who can be more easily anglicised. So the parasite and flatterer, Gnatho, is chosen as the basis for Udall’s Matthew Merrygreek. In the same way, Gnatho’s patron Thraso, a lovesick, cowardly braggart soldier provides the basic outline for the character of Ralph Roister Doister. (Obviously, there is also some Plautine influence here, and, as Howard Norland has pointed out [p. 136], the character of Roister Doister incorporates a number of features from folk drama, chivalric

romance and conventions such as the lovesick knight.) Close similarities can be observed between the Roman and the anglicised versions of the characters. For example, Gnatho and Merrygreek both have an introductory monologue which takes the form of a sponger's boastful audience address. They both cover the topics of foolishness and wisdom, but Merrygreek puts the accent on being merry (a feature obviously inherent in his name and which can be linked with the numerous mentions of "mirth" in the Prologue). Both characters refer to the type of people they sponge from, but whereas Gnatho mentions social types, such as fishmongers, butchers, and poulterers, Merrygreek quotes a whole list of shady characters with thoroughly English-sounding alliterative names—for example, Lewis Loiterer, Watkin Waster, Davy Diceplayer and Tom Titvile. This list, and especially the last name, immediately connects Merrygreek with the English Vice character (often also a plot-mover). This authoritative position is further accentuated by the fact that Merrygreek's monologue is in a key place, just after the Prologue, whereas Gnatho's is in the middle of the play.

It must be said that Udall's plot is a great deal less complex than Terence's, and therefore Merrygreek does not have as much to do as Parmeno. As well as being a fully-fledged comic character, in his quest for mirth and entertainment, he functions as a means of foregrounding and accentuating Roister Doister's natural foolishness. As in the case of Gnatho with Thraso, sequences of asides are used to illustrate these aspects. Another feature common to both plays is that the parasite gives advice to the soldier concerning his love affair, thereby manipulating him into foolhardy situations. But whereas Gnatho remains very much the inactive flatterer, Merrygreek spurs Roister Doister into action. The plot includes musical entertainment recommended by Merrygreek to help with the courtship, a mock requiem when Roister Doister becomes despondent, and a battle scene when he is rejected. In both plays, the braggart soldier issues threats when spurned: *Thraso*. "First I'll storm the house" (p. 201); *Roister Doister*. "Nay, dame, I will fire thee out of thy house/And destroy thee and all thine, and that by and by" (IV.iii.98-99). Thraso's threatened attack fizzles out to nothing, whereas, by secretly collaborating with the enemy, Merrygreek makes sure that Roister Doister engages in a full-scale battle, albeit a comic one, with kitchen utensils for weapons. This is a further ploy by the plot-mover to make Roister Doister into even more of a comic spectacle. The household character of the warfare seems, however, to have been inspired by Terence's play, where there is mention of fighting with a sponge, a kitchen squad and saucepans.

The plots of both plays end in a similar way, when both Gnatho and Merrygreek plead in favour of their respective benefactors in front of the whole company and play an active role in preventing them from becoming outcasts. Both Thraso and Roister Doister are sent out of earshot while their cases are discussed. Gnatho makes no bones about his main mercenary purpose but also points out the fun to be had by all from mocking Thraso. Merrygreek also uses the argument of mockery and mirth but, in the end, seems to have some genuine affection for Roister Doister. In both cases the soldier begins bragging once more: *Thraso*. “I’ve always found myself exceedingly popular wherever I’ve been” (p. 218); *Roister Doister*. “For why no man, woman nor child can abhor me long” (I.vi.8).

*Gammer Gurton’s Needle* has often been described as a competent blending of Roman and English elements. Its structure is an almost perfect accomplishment of an academic exercise in classical playwrighting, with its division into acts and scenes, its rhetorical demonstration in three parts and its respect for the classical unities. Its subject matter, on the other hand, is totally English. Immediately, from the first line of the Prologue, the play is steeped in English peasant life and this remains so until its concluding Latin-style request for applause.

As with *Roister Doister*, what I should like to try to determine is whether the Latin influence goes any deeper than the structure and, more particularly, whether any Latin influence be found on the level of mediation in the play.

Unlike Merrygreek, the mediating character, Diccon, does not appear to have been inspired by any one particular character from Terence. It is perhaps a commendable achievement on the part of Mr S. that he did not resort to direct borrowing but was able to fashion a completely new plot-manager from an almost seamless blending of influences.

Diccon is certainly as quick, as clever, and as thorough in his plot management as a Roman slave, even though the motivations he is endowed with, in particular the production of sport and mirth, remain typically English. Diccon is far-sighted in his plot management and able to plan ahead. He does this so thoroughly that when the moment is ripe, he can commandeer from a distance with what amounts almost to a “look, no hands” approach. In fact he is never present at any of the spectacular moments he has organised. His main achievement and the high point of the plot is the perfectly symmetrical confrontation between the neighbours Dame Chat and Gammer Gurton which takes place at the exact centre of the play. He achieves this by telling a carefully graduated set of lies to each neighbour, thereby setting them against each other.

As well as this aptitude for careful planning, Diccon is also endowed with the Roman slave's capacity to deal with unforeseen situations and to seize opportunities. This is what happens when he meets Hodge and realises he can influence him. It also happens when Dr Rat is called in to settle matters between the neighbours. Diccon is able to endow the plot with a new feature by setting up a trap for Dr Rat to receive a beating.

The plot ends with a confrontation which achieves a similar philosophical and humorous quality to that of the final moments of Terence's *Adelphi*. In both plays the conflict dissolves into Terentian benevolence, and the characters of both houses decide to be lenient with one another's faults. The good humoured blow administered to the slave Syrus in order to mark his newly granted freedom is imitated in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. This gesture seems to have inspired Mr S. with a simple but rather ingenious and spectacular plot resolution, when, to the astonishment of the full gathered cast, Diccon's blow to Hodge's buttocks comically reveals the presence, in the seat of the servant's trousers, of the much sought-after needle.

### *Stage Management*

Another aspect of intradramatic mediation could be described as stage management. A mediating character can be the means of organising the stage action from the point of view of movement, gesture, use of space and timing of actions. In the case of the two plays examined here, it is interesting to note how far each of them makes use of the potentialities offered by the Roman stage set.

Although, as Charles Whitworth points out, *Roister Doister* was almost certainly written for a royal performance and would therefore probably have benefited from a lavish stage production, the play text requires only one house façade on stage, that of Dame Custance, which is first pointed out deictically by Roister Doister "She dwelleth in that house" (I.ii.78). The house is used for connoted exits and entrances and for the servants to sit outside performing their household tasks, but it never serves in the same way as in a play by Terence. In *Roister Doister*, the stage management is chiefly organised by means of stylised character groupings, rhythmic exchanges, synchronised movements—almost choreographic in fact—interspersed with song and dance. These aspects are strengthened by the fact that Merrygreek has a whole squadron of characters to marshal



around. Merrygreek is the chief mediator here (though not the only one—for example, Dame Custance is used to organise the proxemics of the servants).

Merrygreek's intradramatic mediation produces a number of effects. In a similar way to Terence's mediating slaves, Merrygreek is used to create the effect of split staging (usually by pretending not to see someone or by spying). This technique is often accompanied by asides (usually disparaging comments). In this way, Merrygreek is used to help shape the character of Roister Doister for the benefit of the audience. These techniques also involve the use of gesture, voice modulation in order to bring out Roister Doister's vanity, his cowardice and his general foolishness. A similar result is obtained through Merrygreek's hyperbolic flattery, which in fact has the effect of further disparaging Roister Doister—for example, when he likens him to great legendary heroes such as Sir Lancelot, Hector, or Samson (I.ii.114-36).

In his mediating capacity, Merrygreek is also used to bring out the full comic benefit of certain stage iconography, as when Roister Doister takes the toothless old servant Madge Mumblecrust in his arms and whispers in her ear. The stage direction ("*Here let him tell her a great long tale in her ear*") insists that this pose should be held across the break between two scenes (I.iii-iv), so that when Merrygreek enters he can reap full comic benefit from it by pretending to take Madge for Roister Doister's fiancée. He augments the effect by calling her pet names like "sweet lamb and cony" (I.iv.24) and "pigsnye" (42).

Another technique is to push Roister Doister around physically whilst feigning solicitude for his well-being—for instance, when Merrygreek officiously and ostentatiously pretends to flick off specks of dust and pluck hairs from Roister Doister's clothing. He also uses the opportunity to throw in a few insults for good measure, saying that he has found a fool's feather that fell from Roister Doister's head or a lousy hair from his beard (I.iv.96-98). Merrygreek becomes more aggressive when he combines pretending not to see him with an aside and a push: "I will not see him but give him a jut indeed. *Bumps Roister Doister*. I cry your mastership mercy" (III.iii.8-9 and SD).

Merrygreek becomes positively violent during the battle, when, as he feigns to attack Dame Custance, his blows land each time on Roister Doister, who responds with a chorus of "thou hittest me" (IV.viii.29-31)).

Another way Merrygreek underlines Roister Doister's foolishness is by giving him advice—for example, on how to speak: "But up with that heart and speak out like a ram/Ye speak like a capon that had the cough now" (I.ii.28-29).

There is more advice on how to act: “Up with that snout man” (III.iii.127). Similarly, when he supervises Roister Doister’s conversation with Dame Custance, he begins by giving him an order, “Look partly toward her and draw a little near” (III.iv.5), and gradually ends up taking over the whole discussion, which culminates with his masterstroke of reading Roister Doister’s love letter with the wrong pronunciation. (This device is used for teaching rhetoric, as an example of ambiguity, in Thomas Wilson’s *Rule of Reason*.)

The character of Merrygreek is also used to provide the cues for music and song. He does so in Act I, Scene ii, lines 177–78, supposedly to enhance Roister Doister’s “wooing force”. In Act I, Scene iv, he upbraids Roister Doister’s men for leaving him without music for so long, saying, “Whoso hath such bees as your master in his head/Had need to have his spirits with music to be fed” (I.iv.93–94). He ends this scene with the order, “Then sing we to dinner” (140). Merrygreek also organises the bell-ringing ceremony in another of his masterstrokes, the mock requiem (II.iii.48ff).

*Gammer Gurton’s Needle* provides a very different exploitation of the Roman stage set. The setting is much more highly connoted than in *Roister Doister*, and both houses are required, as is generally the case in Terence plays. Diccon deictically indicates Gammer Gurton’s house in line 10 of his first monologue and then Dame Chat’s at the end of Act I, Scene ii. In fact, in true Terentian manner, Hodge and Diccon disappear simultaneously into the respective houses at the end of that scene.

In Terence, the houses are used for characters to dodge in and out of or to be quickly hustled into by a mediating slave in order to avoid trouble. They are also used for the technique of teichoscopy. An example of this is when a character in the street looks in at the door or window and points out, or speaks to, a character inside. In this way, also, young women are heard but not seen when giving birth. This technique reaches new heights in *Gammer Gurton’s Needle*, when sequences are actually played out in the interior of the house, which is brought to the spectator’s mind’s eye by means of word pictures—for instance, the game of cards which can be heard taking place inside Dame Chat’s house. The most “spectacular” example of this technique is when Hodge and Cock are noisily searching for the needle on the upstairs level of Gammer’s house. Suitably terrified by Diccon’s talk of evil spirits, Hodge mistakes the cat’s eyes in the dark for sparks of bewitched fire. The result is an ingenious piece of stagecraft whereby the spectators are riveted to stage action which they do not actually see.

Again controlling from a distance, Diccon sets up a sequence of teichoscopy with Dr Rat in the hole in the side of Dame Chat's house. This way the spectators hear Dr Rat being beaten inside whilst still being kept in suspense as to the identity of the culprit. Though it is used in a completely different way, Mr S. could have found the inspiration for this idea in Terence's *Adelphi*, where Demea suggests making a hole in the wall in order to join up the two houses and live as one family.

One of the most vital elements of both the plot and stage management in Terence's comedy is timing. For example, in his *Andria*, the slave Davos says, "No time for slackness and go slow methods; I must look out and look sharp" (p. 48). Later Simo says to Davos: "There's something wrong with your timing, Davos, your pupils don't seem to know their parts" (p. 61).

Timing is also of the essence for Diccon's planned battle. Sometimes the characters he is stage-managing become impatient. For example, he has to hold Dame Chat back when she wants to rush off and fight before Diccon has prepared Gammer:

Well, keep it till she be here, and then out let it pour;  
In the meanwhile get you in, and make no words of this.  
More of this matter within this hour to hear you shall not miss. (II.ii.74-6)

The same thing happens with Gammer Gurton ("Dame Chat, Diccon! Let me be gone, chill thither in post haste!" [II.iv.24]) and with Hodge:

*Diccon.* By the morrow at this time, we shall learn how the matter  
goeth.  
*Hodge.* Canst not learn tonight man? Seest not what is here? (II.iii.28-34)

Diccon goes as far as to let the audience in on the secret of his timing:

Ye see, Masters, that one end tapped of this my short device;  
Now must we broach t'other too, before the smoke arise.  
And by the time they have awhile run, I trust ye need not crave  
it,  
But look, what lieth in both their hearts, ye are like, sure, to  
have it. (II.iii.1-4)

The technique is as finely honed as that of a Terentian slave, but, once again, the main difference is the purpose. Just like Merrygreek, Diccon seeks mirth, sport and pastime from his stage management.

Given the known and presumed scholarly pursuits of Udall and Mr S., it is not surprising that their plays in a general way, and their stage-manager characters in particular, bear the stamp of Latin theatre. Each playwright used this influence according to his own individual style and considerations and with different results. Diccon is above all a finely-tuned instrument of planning and timing, a means of organising all the play's characters into patterned proxemics involving full use of the twin-house stage set. Merrygreek is endowed with a more fully developed character showing a marked talent for irony. He, too, ends up mobilising the entire cast into diverse stage spectacles, but this effect is obtained chiefly through his manipulation of a single character, Roister Doister.

However, if the similarity of these two “sister” plays to Latin comedies is apparent, the differences which can be noted are equally remarkable. Both plays feature a predominant proportion of “low” characters, masculine and feminine, often in key roles. Nearly all of them engage in physical action, which ranges from the synchronised and stylised to knockabout farce, clowning and down-right brawling. In both plays, the rhetorical demonstration is not an end but rather a means. It is therefore more loosely constructed and less bent on achieving a sparkling intellectual result for its own sake than in, say, a Terence play.

But in my view, this has nothing to do with what would be designated somewhat colloquially today as “dumbing down”. It rather has to do with using the Latin techniques, neither as a variant nor as a new style, but as a means of boosting or providing a new slant on successful stage formulae—in other words, adopting some new techniques without radically altering the spirit of English theatre. This almost boils down to employing Latin techniques to enhance the Englishness of mid-century theatre. And this meant using them to boost the impact of all the spectacular effects so popular with English audiences.

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## *A New Interlude of Vice: Generic Experimentation in Horestes*

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IN THIS ESSAY, I want to look at the way John Pickering experiments with dramatic genre in his interesting play *Horestes*, printed by William Griffiths in 1567 and probably written and performed that same year.<sup>1</sup> I am going to argue that he introduces two main changes to the basic genre of vernacular dramaturgy in sixteenth-century England: the interlude. The first of these is quite simple: he adds a death-scene—still quite a novelty in the late 1560s. The other is more complex: he alters the Vice’s part so that his traditional roles in the merry scenes of the interlude and in soliloquy are reframed as “turns”, rather than a sequence of episodes integrated into the fabric of the play. I am not sure that either of these experiments actually works, but they offer a very interesting insight into the generic complexity of Tudor drama. And here I wish to place my remarks on *Horestes* in the context of what needs to be a relatively lengthy theoretical

1. A play of “Orestes”, which is surely Pickering’s piece, was performed at Court in 1567. It used to be objected that a play of this “popular” kind could not have found favour at court; Chambers thought it was “too crude to be of the Court” (3: 466); the same was said about *Cambyeses* (see, e.g., Adams, ed., p. 638n1, but cf. Hill). But we now think less reverently of the exalted tastes of the Tudor court, and the idea that there were two independent plays on the Orestes theme written in the same year seems a highly unlikely coincidence.

Behind my analysis of *Horestes* lies the belief that the terms *tragedy* and *comedy* are really not much use in trying to grasp the complex generics of Tudor drama. I do not say that we should discard the terms, but we need to treat them with a certain amount of disrespect. I know this will be hard: we are, on the whole, the dutiful heirs of the neo-classical tradition when it comes to questions of genre. But we need to remind ourselves from time to time that the terms *tragedy* and *comedy* have less to do with the history of Tudor drama than with the history of Tudor dramatic theory. Throughout the Tudor century, most dramatists wrote plays which were, as Philip Sidney observed in his *Apology for Poetry* around 1580, “neither right Tragedies, nor right Comedies” (p. 199). Sidney was quite right in his perception that Tudor plays were not written according to neo-classical rules, and quite wrong in his insistence that they should be. You cannot apply neo-classical terminology to plays written to the principles of early modern vernacular dramaturgy. But, of course, critics like Sidney did—and critics like us still tend to do the same.

I propose that we should experiment with new genre-systems which do not rely on the complementary pair of tragedy and comedy promoted by neo-classical aesthetics, yet still bear witness to the fact that these terms have not simply been imposed arbitrarily on the drama we study. They do have some purchase; but they are not subtle enough to cover the ground in all its complexity. So I have come up with two new terms and will apply them to *Horestes* to see what happens. For *comedy* I propose *Vice-play*; and here I take my cue from the “advertisement” of the play we now know as *Horestes*, which calls the play “A Newe Enterlude of Vice.”<sup>2</sup> In fact, *Horestes* is the only surviving Tudor play to be called an “interlude of vice”—and I will talk about that a little later. But it seems to me a useful phrase, although I have substituted the word *play* for *interlude* because it is so much more transparent.

This etymological opacity is one of the great problems of neo-classical terminology: the terms *tragedy* and *comedy* are both derived from Greek via Latin, and they do not really tell you anything about the kind of play to which they refer. Now compare them to the German words for *tragedy* and *comedy*, namely, *Trauerspiel* and *Lustspiel*: “mourning-play” and “pleasure-play”. Much better! You get something similar in Hungarian: *szomorújáték* and *vígjáték*, or “sad play” and “merry

2. By “advertisement” I mean the description of the play on its title-page, which is often rather more than the title itself.



play". These terms really tell you something about the plays they refer to in a way that *tragedy* and *comedy* do not.

This is not an idle point. I want to suggest that our new genre-labels should be regarded as experiments in neo-Formalism of the (East) European kind. The German and Hungarian terms are indices of what the Russian Formalists called the "dominant", that is, the most important component in any particular genre, here regarded either as the representation or excitement of a certain emotion.<sup>3</sup> For my Vice-play, the "dominant" is obviously the Vice; and to add a spurious element of quantitative exactitude here, I shall define the Vice-play as one in which the Vice has the largest part as reckoned in spoken lines. As for tragedy, we have the *death-play*. And by this I mean a play in which one or more violent deaths are enacted upon the stage. This is Shakespeare's idea of tragedy—and it has the added advantage of cutting out early neo-classical tragedies such as *Gorboduc*.<sup>4</sup>

Here let me explain that I do not offer these terms as new genres for old. Genres tend to be rather more entrenched in the literary system than the generic entities I am proposing, which have yet to prove their usefulness. Perhaps we could call them generic *formalisations*. Genre is traditionally considered to cover the entirety of a literary work; it is based in a notion of formal unity. But these formalisations do not claim to cover every detail of the work; they only marshall parts of it—perhaps quite a lot of it—around a dominant. This seems to me a useful way forward. The pedantic notion that tragedy and comedy are somehow "opposites" has impeded literary theory and literary criticism for centuries; it makes it hard for the neo-classicist to accept that a play can be both tragic and comic, since it cannot be both entirely a tragedy and entirely a comedy. But who would think to question whether the same play might not be at once capable of being formalised as a Vice-play and also, by shifting the dominant, as a death-play? This is why I like the idea of this new kind of genre-label. One play can exhibit many formalisations *at the same time*. One may be more "dominant" than the others; and again this is a notion expounded by Formalism in its insistence on

3. In his essay on "The Dominant", Roman Jakobson defines it as "the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components" (quoted in Duff, p. 41).

4. Of course, Shakespeare probably had a more complex idea of tragedy than this, though a glance at the way he uses the word *tragedy* and its cognates in his own work might suggest otherwise. All but one (from *Othello*) of the almost thirty instances of these words belong to the Elizabethan half of his career, sixteen of them to the five years 1590–94. The connection between tragedy and violent death is made several times in these early works (e.g., 2 *Henry VI*, III.ii.194; *Lucrece*, 766; 1 *Henry VI*, I.iv.76–77).

systemic hierarchisation. Indeed, according to the new dispensation, individual texts are microcosmic versions of the entire genre-system at large.

By way of concluding these remarks, I would like to draw attention to a brilliant but little known essay of 1986 by Werner Habicht called “Englische Tragikomödie im 16. Jahrhundert?” Here Habicht argues that the rise of tragicomedy in the Tudor period is the history not so much of a fusion of these two elements but of their separating out from the relatively homogeneous dramaturgy of the interlude:

... die in den einzelnen Dramen—von den Interludien des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts bis zu (etwas) den Stücken von Robert Greene—tatsächlich anzutreffende generische Gemischtheit ist eben nicht von vornherein eine solche von Tragödie und Komödie, sondern sie besteht in der vielfältigen Überkreuzung und Verschmelzung von traditionell vorgegebenen Dramenmustern, in denen allen das Ernste und das Lächerliche untrennbar aufeinander bezogen sind.

[... the generic diversity we actually encounter in individual plays from the interludes of the early sixteenth century up to, say, the plays of Robert Greene, is not primarily a mixture of tragedy and comedy, but consists rather in a multifarious intersection and blending of traditionally prescribed dramatic models, in all of which serious and ridiculous elements are inextricably bound up with one another.] (p. 18; my translation)

In some ways, this paper is just a footnote to Habicht’s essay; but I hope it may still pose some interesting questions.

### Horestes as a Vice-Play

Let us start with some charts (see Appendix). We should not place too much faith in these visual aids, perhaps, but they do help us “see” things which remain invisible when we merely read or watch the plays, relying on our well-trained aesthetic intuitions as to their formal structure. Chart 1 shows a break-down of the Vice’s part in three quite similar plays from the 1560s: Thomas Preston’s *Cambyeses*, R. B.’s *Appius and Virginia*, and Pickering’s *Horestes*. The analysis is based on five different types of scene: A is a “merry” scene without the Vice; B is a merry scene with the Vice; C is a soliloquy in which the Vice alone is on stage; D is a “sad” scene—in the old sense of “serious”—with the Vice; and E is a sad scene without the Vice. The charts show what percentage of the Vice’s part falls into the three divisions of soliloquy, merry scene, and sad scene, and also what these

figures represent as percentage of the total number of lines in play (TLN). We cannot press these figures too hard, of course; but they do allow us to make some interesting observations and ask some searching questions about the role of the Vice in each of these three plays.

At first glance, it might look as if the Vice in *Horestes*, Revenge, is “stronger” than his counterparts Ambidexter in *Cambyzes* and Haphazard in *Appius and Virginia*. After all, he has a greater share of the lines than they. All three weigh in at about a quarter of the total; in other words, every fourth line is spoken by the Vice (as it were). Revenge noses ahead with 27%; and so—we might think—that is why the new term “interlude of vice” was invented: to draw attention to the fact that here we have an unusually strong performance from this already well-established favourite of the Tudor stage. However, I shall argue that these charts show that Revenge is actually “weaker” than either Ambidexter or Haphazard because he has lost touch with the supporting cast of merry characters.

Again, at first sight, the contrary would seem to be true. After all, more of *Horestes* is given over to the merry scenes: nearly a quarter, as opposed to *Cambyzes* and *Appius and Virginia*, which have only roughly a fifth. Revenge also just edges ahead of Ambidexter and Haphazard when it comes to the percentage of his own lines spoken in these merry scenes, which is again closer to a quarter than a fifth. But look once more at the scenic analysis, and you will see that Revenge only appears in one of the three merry scenes, the one where Revenge stirs up trouble between two clownish peasants called Rusticus and Hodge. It is the simple fact that he says so much in this one scene—97 of his 317 lines—that pushes up all the scores for his share of the TLN, the fraction of the TLN devoted to the merry scenes, and the fraction of Revenge’s own part spoken in these scenes—that is, in this one scene.

But after this long scene with Rusticus and Hodge, Revenge has no more to do with traditional forms of mirth. There are still merry scenes: one features two young roisters on their way to war; another a “Girls On Top” gag where a woman captive turns the tables on her captor. Both these scenes look as if they may have been borrowed from *Cambyzes* (although in these Ambidexter plays a vital and vigorous role). However, after his first encounter with the small-holders, Revenge leaves this merry world behind him, and devotes himself entirely to the serious action of the play involving Horestes’s cruel revenge. In doing so, he cuts himself off from one of his main supplies of theatrical energy without an adequate alternative.

The other source of energy for the Vice is soliloquy; but here again Revenge's high score is due to one 84-line speech at the end of the play, a speech which is exactly the same length as the scene which follows it, and in which Horestes is crowned and blessed by his new bride, by the Nobility and the Commons of Mycenae, and also by Truth and Duty. Of his two other far shorter soliloquies, only one is a true speech, the one that introduces the scene with the peasants; but the other is actually a song, not a speech, without the force of direct address to the audience. Compared to Ambidexter and Haphazard, Revenge begins to look weak in this area, too. Ambidexter has no fewer than seven short soliloquies, and Haphazard has four equally snappy interventions; but Revenge hardly draws on this resource at all until he exhausts it all in one draught at the very end of the play, where, as we have seen, he indulges in an immensely long speech where other Vices would say a few words and slip off quietly.

Pickering simply seems to get the Vice *wrong*. He does not seem to realise that the Vice is the most "actorly" role in the old interlude. To carry off the soliloquy, the actor playing the Vice must have charisma: he must be able to captivate and manipulate the audience. In the merry scenes, he must be able to make people laugh, and he also needs considerable physical strength and agility, for these scenes generally involve a rough-and-tumble scuffle—which must, of course, be carefully choreographed in order not to descend into mere confusion. This is why Vices tend to be rather "roisterish" in conception. Pickering must have known what a traditional Vice was like because Revenge does all the right things in the long scene with Rusticus and Hodge: after a short soliloquy, he spies, he ruffles, he laughs, he withholds his name, he stirs up trouble, he pretends to be innocent, and finally he thwacks the hapless clowns and is off. But he does not return to this source of dramatic energy, and, ultimately, of his own dramaturgical identity. That first scene is a good "set-piece" of Vice performance; but Pickering does not follow it up at the same regular intervals as Preston and R. B.; he relies on one or two "turns", whereas they keep the Vice constantly before us, a welcome intrusion, popping up again and again to entertain us in his traditional fashion.

Why does Pickering do this? On the whole, I agree with critics who see his main interest in Revenge as a projection of Horestes's own will to vengeance—a sort of alter ego. This does look plausible when we consider the sad scenes: for example, the only person we may be sure actually speaks to Revenge is Horestes.<sup>5</sup>

5. Revenge speaks *at* people, witness his scolding of the condemned Clytemnestra or the mocking of Fame, but they so not reply to him or even seem to know that he is there. In this respect, Revenge

Maybe this is why Pickering does not concern himself so much with the scenes in which Revenge is represented as an independent character—that is in the merry scenes and in his soliloquies. Perhaps it is also why Pickering’s merry scenes seem so closely to follow those in *Cambyse*, as if he were not so interested in these and relies on what looks like close imitation of a successful predecessor instead of making up new material here. However, let us return to what we know Pickering *did* do, rather than what we may think he did not.

We noted earlier that there was something a little odd about the phrase *interlude of vice*. Interludes almost always had a Vice, so it seems rather suspicious that the advertisement should have to draw attention to the fact that the play has a good role for this figure. It is as if the advertisement is actually trying to hide the fact that Revenge is, on the whole, a “weak” Vice. But who actually wrote this advertisement? It is impossible to tell whether this description is the work of the author or the printer, but scholars have generally plumped for the latter.<sup>6</sup> And I would add that there is a distinctly commercial mind at work here, since the writer seems to be dimly aware of the imminent demise of the interlude even at the height of its glory in the 1560s. Or, to be more precise: the 1560s saw the highest point of the *reputation* of the interlude as a dramatic form.

Chart 2 shows that the term *interlude* was popular as a trade term—that is, amongst printers, book-sellers, and the officials of the Stationers’ Companies—from the earliest days right up until the end of the 1560s, but that it then starts to lose ground in the 1570s, and virtually disappears thereafter. It was most popular in the 1560s, when the term seems to have kept at bay combinations with other terms, especially *play* or *comedy*, which had been much more common in the pre-Elizabethan period.

On the other hand, there was some discrepancy between the way a play was described on its title-page and when it was entered in the Stationers’ Register. A quarter (five out of twenty-one) of the plays advertised during the 1560s as “interludes” were entered under the more general term “plays”.<sup>7</sup> This would

resembles the Good and Bad Angels of *Doctor Faustus* more than the traditional morality Vice, and anticipates complex psychological apparitions such as Gil-Martin in James Hogg’s *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). However, see Norland, pp. 177–78, who suggests that textual interpolation may explain Revenge’s “non-dialogue” with other characters.

6. See Craik, p. 36, and Axton, p. 96.

7. These five plays are: *Godly Queen Hester* (1561), *Lusty Juventus* (1563), *King Darius* (1565), *Like Will to Like* (1568), *The Marriage of Wit and Science* (1569). Other discrepancies during this decade are as follows: *Oedipus* (1563) = tragedy (on t.p.) < history (in S. R.); *The Longer Thou Livest* (1569) = comedy < ballet; *Patient Grissel* (1569) = comedy < history.

seem to indicate that printers and book-sellers used one term amongst themselves and another when it came to selling their books to the public. Moreover, it is interesting to note that as *interlude* starts to lose out to new terms in the wording of the advertisement, especially to *comedy*, the situation is reversed: two plays in the late 1570s advertised as “comedies” are entered as “interludes”.<sup>8</sup> And several later plays are entered as “interludes” despite being advertised otherwise right up to the end of the century: *Jack Straw* (1594), *Mother Bombie* (1594), *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (1594), *The Old Wives’ Tale* (1595), and *George A Greene* (1599)—plays which may be said to represent the whole gamut of Elizabethan drama.

What I am suggesting here is that somehow Griffith was instinctively aware that this particular commodity—the interlude—was at the very height of its popularity, at the point of market saturation, as it were, on the very crest of the rise-and-fall pattern of its career as a “brand”. And to add speculation to speculation, let me proceed by saying that he recognised that one threat—maybe *the* threat—to the continued dominance of the interlude was tragedy. He was well-placed to have at least an idea of the explosion of interest in neo-classical tragedy at the Inns of Court during the 1560s because his shop at St. Dunstan’s in Fleet Street was right across the way from the Inner Temple. Indeed, it was no doubt this proximity which led to his printing the unauthorised first edition of Sackville and Norton’s *Gorboduc* in 1565, whose manuscript, as John Day tells us in the authorised edition of 1570, was smuggled out to him by “some yongmans hand that lacked a little money and much discretion” (quoted in Adams, ed., p. 503).<sup>9</sup> And Griffith presumably had some inkling of the vogue for the new English Seneca, since Heywood’s *Troas* and *Thyestes*, Neville’s *Oedipus*, and Studley’s *Medea* and *Agamemnon* were all published in Fleet Street in the years leading up to 1567. Now Griffith was no scholar-printer, but he must have had a businessman’s eye open to the market for such wares.

8. These are *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* (1578) and *All for Money* (1578). Other discrepancies are as follows: *Damon and Pythias* (1571) = comedy < tragical comedy; *Appius and Virginius* (1575) = tragical comedy < tragedy; *Gammer Gurton’s Needle* (1575) = comedy < play; *Godly Susanna* (1578) comedy < ballet (1563) and play (1569).
9. If, as seems almost certain, the author of *Horestes* was indeed John Puckering, later Speaker of the House of Commons and Lord Keeper, then Griffith would have had this play, too, from the hands of a youngish member of the Inns of Court. Puckering was admitted to Lincoln’s Inn in 1559, at the age of 25, and was called to the bar in 1567, the year of *Horestes*. See Phillips, who strongly urges that *Horestes* is an anti-Marian play. However, cf. Hasler for a more recent and more sceptical view of Puckering’s antipathy towards Mary.

This is one reason, I suggest, for his emphasis in the advertisement of the what must have struck at least some of his original readers as the “tragic” element of *Horestes*: “the cruell revengment of his Fathers death upon his one naturall Mother”. Tudor tragedy has its own lexis, and this brief phrase contains some key tragical terms: *cruel*, *revengement*, *death*, and—via “naturall”—*unnatural*. They can be found in the productions of elite neo-classical tragedy, but they also occur in other kinds of tragedy, such as popular ballads and broadsheets, where domestic violence of the kind exemplified by the events of *Horestes* was a popular staple. And this is the other reason why Griffith draws his readers’ attention to *Horestes*’ revenge on his mother: he must have known that there was a popular demand for such material and is making sure his readers know that they can satisfy their appetites for it in this new book. But there are generic problems here as well, and let us turn to another critical voice for a moment to broach this issue.

### *Horestes as a Death-Play*

“The first revenge play of the English renaissance is John Pickering’s *The Interlude of Vice (Horestes)*”. So Robert S. Knapp in his interesting essay, “*Horestes*: The Uses of Revenge” (p. 205). Here we have another and more familiar genre-label: *revenge-play*. But why does he not say “revenge-tragedy”? The answer lies in the sentence that follows: “Unlike most revengers, *Horestes* ends his career alive . . .”. Or, as we might say, unlike most *later* revengers. Knapp’s idea of tragedy, I suspect, is based on the work of later writers such as Shakespeare, and comparisons between *Horestes* and *Hamlet* are not uncommon. So the truly tragic revenger dies: Hamlet, Hieronymo, Vindice—and so many others. The logic seems to be that if you kill, you must die. There are exceptions: Lucius in *Titus Andronicus* comes to mind. But there will always be exceptions; so long as there are not too many, the “rule” remains intact. Yet *Horestes* does not exactly offend against this rule, because he does not really take revenge against his mother.

This may need some explanation, and it is time now to bring in our formalisation of the death-play. When we read of *Horestes*’ “cruell revengment of his Fathers death upon his one naturall Mother” in the advertisement of the play, we are not told explicitly that *Horestes* will kill his mother, but we assume that this is the case because revenge requires a death for a death. So the play can be considered in terms of two very closely related but not identical formalisations: the revenge-play and the death-play. For Knapp, if I read him aright, these



two formalisations do not quite match, because his idea of the revenge-play is dominated by the death of the revenger as a kind of *telos*. But this is perhaps a “late Elizabethan” structure, and my problem with *Horestes* is rather different. My death-play is dominated by violent death *on stage*—it is the spectacle that counts. And my intuitions tell me that what really counts here is the exemplary spectacle of righteous execution (understood with all the tedious complexities of the relationship between the words *justice* and *revenge* in this period). In other words, the emphasis is on the revenger’s victim—in this case, Clytemnestra.

But we do not see Clytemnestra die. She is merely led off-stage by Revenge at the end of the second of the play’s three dramatic sequences—and there is a good four hundred lines to go before we reach the final prayer. Why is this? One reason might be that Pickering was alarmed at the violence of Horestes’ revenge in his source in John Lydgate’s *Troy Book* (itself adapted from Guido della Colonna), which had been reprinted just a few years earlier by Thomas Marsh in 1555:<sup>10</sup>

... he make fyrste his swoorde to byte,  
On his mother with his handes twayne,  
And ouermore to do his busy payne,  
Without pytye and no mercye shewe  
On smale peces tyll she be to hewe  
And dismembred a sonder ioynt from ioynt. (Guido della Colonna, sig. 2C2’)<sup>11</sup>

Obviously, Pickering could not have staged this scene in all its appalling ferocity (although Preston had managed a few years earlier to present the on-stage flaying of the wicked judge Sisamnes). Still, one feels he could have toned down the violence and presented Clytemnestra’s execution one way or another. But he balked at this opportunity because, I suspect, he felt that it would be simply *too* indecorous to have a son kill his mother on stage.

I do not wish to appear too ghoulish, but I think this is all rather disappointing. All along we have been led to believe that Horestes will kill Clytemnestra, but in the end we are fobbed off with Egistus instead. This is still a decent spectacle, as we see from this graphic stage-direction: “Fling him [Egistus] of the lader, and then let on bringe in his [Horestes’] mother Clytemnestra, but let her loke wher Egistus hangeth” (790.SD1-4). Egistus’ death—he is hanged from the walls of Mycenae—is

10. For Pickering and Lydgate, see Merritt.

11. These lines correspond to 5.1637–44 in Lydgate, ed. Bergen.



presented as an awful spectacle for Clytemnestra to gaze upon. After he has been cut down and taken off, Clytemnestra once again begs for mercy, but Horestes once more requires her to remind herself of what she has done:

So call to minde thou wast the cause of Agamemnons death;  
For which, as death is recompence of death, so eke with the:  
For kyllinge of my father thou now kyled eke shault be.  
This thinge to be accomplyshyd, Revenge with the shall go.  
Now have her hence, sieth that you all my judgment here do kno. (816-20)

And Clytemnestra leaves, weeping, with Revenge mocking and scolding her.

*Horestes* does not quite work as a revenge-play because we do not *see* the enactment of revenge upon the person of Clytemnestra: it is not *dramatised*. Still, this does not mean to say that it is not a tragedy in our slightly adjusted variation on that term: the death-play. I know it may seem offensively simplistic to reduce tragedy to violent death on stage, but that, I think, is how most Elizabethans—the young Shakespeare as well as Pickering—would have thought of tragedy. So, although in terms of the revenge-play inflection of *Horestes*, Egistus is a kind of scapegoat for Clytemnestra, the promised victim of Horestes' cruel revengement, yet he is the somewhat unexpected centre of *Horestes* in its formalisation as a death-play.

Indeed, this dislocation may reveal the superior importance of yet another formalisation: the "succession-play". After Agamemnon is murdered, Clytemnestra remains queen of Mycenae, but not its monarch, which position is occupied by the usurper Egistus. In other words, Clytemnestra does not come in the way of Horestes' succession to the throne, but Egistus does, and must be removed. But because Pickering invests so much of his resources on the psychomachic drama of Horestes' conflict as to whether he should revenge his father's death upon his mother, critics tend not to give much emphasis to the perhaps more routine relationships between young prince Horestes and *ersatz* father-figures such as Idumeus and Menelaus—and his adulterous stepfather Egistus. It is through these relationships that the main plot of the play is worked out, ending not with the deaths of Clytemnestra and Egistus, but—much later—with the coronation of Horestes as the rightful king of Mycenae. In terms of traditional generics, the tragic play of murderous revenge is enacted within a larger structure more closely related to the "romance" plot of the restitution of the dispossessed heir to his rightful place. It may be that we tend

to place a higher value on tragedy than romance, at least as a dramatic form, and so find it awkward and perverse that the much-vaunted revenge upon Clytemnestra should not be given priority over the romantic succession-play. It is easy to feel impatient with the scenes which intervene between her death and the final prayer, especially since the threat by Menelaus to revenge the death of his former sister-in-law seems so empty and perfunctory. But Pickering clearly considered it important to establish Horestes' credentials in the face of a potential challenge from his uncle and so elaborates this sequence at some length. And yet—one is still disappointed.

It seems unfair to end by concluding that Pickering's experiments do not quite work in *Horestes*. So let me say that this is still a goodish play and worth revival. Moreover, we have to place it within the larger panorama of evolutionary generics as applied to Tudor drama.<sup>12</sup> Now it is not uncommon to find the language of Darwinism applied to Tudor drama, but it is rarely applied correctly—at least in my view. I would argue that critics generally give us teleology rather than evolution; they see Tudor drama as a development *towards* something else—Elizabethan drama, for example, or Shakespeare. Here is an example from the pen of Norman Rabkin (1985): “how did the tragic theatre of Shakespeare and his colleagues climb with such lightning rapidity out of the unpromising slime of mid-sixteenth-century tragedy?” (p. 28). An interesting question; but the gesture towards the evolutionary process is misleading. Rabkin wants us to see plays like *Horestes* as primitive creatures which bear the same relation to *Hamlet* as our protozoic ancestors do to us. It is a conceit, but not merely a conceit. Rabkin's essay is called “Stumbling Towards Tragedy”, and this very nicely points up the problem with pseudo-evolutionary literary history. On the one hand, Rabkin's “stumbling” does indeed capture the random, aleatory nature of evolution; but

12. Perhaps the first phase of this evolutionary approach to mid-Tudor drama was a little too easy. Writing in 1965, Peter Happé noted that it was “only recently” that *Horestes* and the other two plays (he calls them “moralities”) were crucial to an understanding of the later tragedy of Shakespeare and his contemporaries (p. 207). And several books and articles in the post-war decades bear witness to the excitement of a new idea. Rossiter, for example, makes the evolutionary principle the “working hypothesis” (p. 11) of *English Drama* (1950), though it remains a pretty conceit rather than a fully developed idea in his study. Similar gestures, not always couched in Darwinian language, are frequent in other writers, such as when Bevington (in 1962) calls the comic figures of *Horestes* “strange vestiges in an alien environment” (p. 181). But we may need to go back to the Darwinian drawing-board and start afresh. For a salutary retheorisation of literary evolution, see Moretti's essay “On Literary Evolution” (1997).

his “towards” gives the game away. Species do not evolve *towards* anything; they only evolve *away* from what they already are. I think it is true to say that *Horestes* does not quite “work”: the important thing is to try to explain why. It cannot be that Pickering is trying but failing to write *Hamlet*. This is not to deny that *Horestes* and the other two plays we have more briefly touched on are irrelevant to the development of later Elizabethan stage-tragedy, but merely to point out that, whilst *Horestes* may tell us something useful about *Hamlet*, it is less obvious that *Hamlet* will tell us much about *Horestes*.

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## Appendix

Chart 1

	<i>Camb.</i>	<i>Appius</i>	<i>Hor.</i>
Vice's part as % of TLN	23	24	27
% of Vice's part spoken as soliloquy	58	35	45
% of Vice's part spoken in merry scenes	21	21	23
% of Vice's part spoken in sad scenes	21	45	32
Vice's soliloquy as % of TLN	13	8	12
Merry scenes as % of TLN	21	19	24
Sad scenes as % of TLN	64	72	66

N.B. These % figures will not necessarily add up to 100 because of rounding up and rounding down.

Chart 2: The Term "Interlude" on the Title-Pages of Tudor Printed Drama

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1500-59	33	11 (33)	7 (22)	18 (55)	8 (24)	7 (21)
1560s	41	21 (51)	3 (8)	24 (59)	14 (34)	3 (7)
1570s	18	3 (17)	2 (11)	5 (28)	13 (72)	0
1580s	16	1 (6)	0	1 (6)	11 (69)	4 (25)
1590s	98	0	0	0	87 (89)	11 (11)

### Key

- A Total number of printed editions (including reprints)
- B Title-pages which only mention the word *interlude* only
- C Title-pages which mention *interlude* and some other term
- D Title-pages which mention *interlude* alone or in combination
- E Title-pages which mention other terms but not *interlude*
- F Title-pages with no mention of any generic term at all

The number in parenthesis is a percentage of A.

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## *Spoiling the Play?: The Motif of Dramatic Intrusion in Medwall and Lindsay<sup>1</sup>*

Greg WALKER  
Leicester University

In 1491 (or thereabouts), after what one imagines was an impressive Christmastide dinner in the household of Cardinal John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, one of the diners began loudly and unexpectedly to berate the assembled diners over their seeming lack of gratitude for the meal that they had just enjoyed. Soon a second man, apparently a household servant, approached him, and they talked about a play that was going to be performed in the hall. There was initially some confusion, as the first man, our source calls him simply “A”, seems to have initially thought that the second (let us follow the source and call him “B”) was one of the actors, given that, as he said, “Ther is so myche nyce array/Amonge these galandes now aday/That a man shall not lightly/Know a player from a nother man” (Medwall, 53-56). But, after some discussion, they stood back to watch the play’s opening scene. After no more than a couple of minutes, however, B could apparently contain himself no longer and declared loudly his intention to approach one of the actors onstage for a job, as the latter

1. The opening paragraphs of this essay draw upon the introductory material in an earlier essay, “Fulgens and Lucre and Early Tudor Drama”; I am grateful to the editors for the chance to revisit that material here.



had just announced his intention to look for a servant. This seeming confusion of the play world with reality evidently horrified A, who warned his fellow,

... Pece, let be!  
Be God, thou wyll distroy all the play. (362-63)

But B's response was dismissive. His intrusion, he confidently asserted, would improve the play not spoil it:

"Distroy the play", quod a? Nay, nay,  
The play began never till now!  
I wyll be doing, I make God avow,  
For there is not in this hondred myle  
A feter bawde than I am one. (364-68)

Such confidence might seem misplaced. But on this occasion B turned out to be right. His intervention did improve the play. For A and B were, of course, themselves actors—or rather, *are* dramatic characters—and their "intervention" in the action, moving fluidly from audience to stage, from *platea* to *locus* in Robert Weimann's useful terminology (and subsequently back and forth),<sup>2</sup> initiates the subplot of the play that they are a part of, Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucres*.

It is worth foregrounding the strangeness of the play's opening in this rather coy way because it is easy to forget just how subtle is the interplay between what is seemingly real and what is overtly performed in Medwall's opening dialogue. And the teasing complexities of the play, and of A and B's parts in it, do not end here. For, if Meg Twycross is right, then the names "A" and "B" in the script are not the given names of characters at all, but flags of convenience indicating that the two roles were allotted to individuals in Morton's household (or perhaps to a regular member of the acting company [A] and a member of the household [B]), who would have effectively been playing themselves, and bringing their own names with them.<sup>3</sup> Notably, the script makes a point of never naming either character, having them rather refer to each other as "what calt" ("whatever your

2. See Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition*, pp. 73-84, and *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice*, pp. 180-207.

3. See Twycross, p. 79. I am very grateful to Bob Godfrey of University College Northampton for the chance to discuss the dynamics of these scenes with him on a number of occasions. His contention that A and B are rather signalled as members of the acting company from the first has prompted me to reconsider the scenes afresh. The suggestion that A may have been a professional actor and B a member of the household (perhaps More himself) combines the virtues of Twycross's reading with those of Godfrey's suggestion.

name is”), and making the noble characters address them vaguely as “thou”, “syr”, “Mayster Gayus[’s] man” (865), or “he/That I have sought” (1003–4). And at one point A even claims to have forgotten his own name, and offers to go and ask “som of my company” what it is (1782).

The point about names is not incidental, particularly if it prompts us to reconsider a well known and well roasted chestnut of a tale concerning a young and highly precocious servant in Morton’s household at about this time: Thomas More. In his son-in-law William Roper’s *Life of More*, the author famously relates how More’s interest in drama and talent for mimicry prompted him at times to make impromptu interventions into plays performed at Lambeth. “Though he was younge of yeares”, Roper noted,

yeat wold he at Christmas tyde sodenly sometimes steppe in among the players and, never studying for the matter, make a parte of his owne there presently among them, which made the lookers on more spote than all the plaiers beside. (p. 5)

Scholars have proved remarkably reluctant to accept the association of this story with the subplot of Medwall’s play; but this seems unnecessarily severe. Admittedly we have precise dates neither for the first performance of the play in the Cardinal’s house, nor for More’s period of service there. But the coincidence seems too strong to ignore, and the application of, if not Morton’s fork, then certainly Ockham’s razor would suggest that a recollection of a young boy who would apparently step in among the actors during a Christmastide play in the Cardinal’s great hall; and a play written for performance in that hall at roughly the same time, in which a couple of characters do indeed seem to step in among the players and make parts of their own (thereby providing more sport for the spectators than the rather dour events of the main plot), might very plausibly refer to the same event. Roper’s account may well, therefore, be an only slightly fanciful reconstruction of More’s own recollection of having played one of the comic servants in Medwall’s play—most plausibly B, who does indeed, as we have seen, promise to improve the play through his involvement.<sup>4</sup>

The possibility that the otherwise anonymous “B” was in fact the very clearly identifiable Thomas More, apparently playing the “role” of himself improvising in a play, is of more than simply biographical interest, however. For play-

4. See Nelson, pp. 17–18.

acting, and just such moments as A and B enact, stepping across the boundary between audience and actors and thereby threatening to “distroy the play” were to prove abiding images for More, and for a number of his fellow humanists in the early sixteenth century.

The humanists regularly rehearsed the stoic commonplace that all the world was a stage and all the men and women merely players. For the comparison between theatre and reality offered a favourite vehicle for criticisms of the hypocrisies and vanities of everyday life, and the collusive deceptions upon which the political sphere in particular relied for its operation. In *A Treatyce (unfynished) upon . . . the last thynges*, More gravely compared the *hubris* of the actor to that of the human subject *tout court*:

If ye shouldest perceive that one were earnestly proud of the wearing of a gay golden gown, while the losel playeth the lord in a stage play, wouldest ye not laugh at his folly, considering that ye are very sure that when the play is done he shall go walk a knave in his old coat? Now ye thinkest thy self wise enough while ye art proud in thy players garment, and forgettest that when thy play is done, ye shall go forth as pore as he. No, ye remembrest not that thy pageant may happen to be done as soon as his. (p. 84)

Plays and real life were, then, very similar, but with the important difference that actors and real people were not the same at all. And in that difference lay the didactic value of many a comparison. In *The Boke Named the Governor*, Sir Thomas Elyot, discussing the difference between bragging and true courage, claimed that,

All though they whiche be hardy, or persones desperate have a similitude [of courage], and seme to be valiaunt, yet be they nat valiaunt, no more than kinges in May games and interludes be kinges. . . (sig. Miii)<sup>5</sup>

But what seems to have created the most interest for More and his friend Erasmus in particular was actually not so much the similarities or differences between drama and reality, but the boundary between the two spheres, and what hap-

5. In *The Education of a Christian Prince*, Erasmus tried to clarify the issues at stake: “If all that makes a king is a chain, a sceptre, robes of royal purple, and a train of attendants, what after all is to prevent the actors in a drama who come on stage decked with all the pomp of state from being regarded as real kings? // Do you want to know what distinguishes a real king from an actor? It is the spirit that is right for a prince: being like a father to the state. It is an understanding that the people have sworn allegiance to him.”, p. 17.

pened if one tried to cross it. For it is not drama's imaginative or political power, but its fragility, its vulnerability to the merest hint of intrusion from its audience that emerges on a number of occasions in their writings. And it is this idea of intrusion into a dramatic fiction, foregrounded by the example of A and B in Medwall's play, that I want to look at more closely here.

The best known account of an intrusion into a stage-play world is probably Thomas More's sardonic description in his *History of King Richard III* of the charade surrounding Richard III's unwilling acceptance of the crown:

Men must sometime for the manner sake not be aknownen what they know. . . in a stage play all the people know right wel that he that playeth the sowdayne [sultan] is percase a sowter [shoemaker]. Yet if one should can so lyttle good [be so naive] to shewe out of seasonne what acquaintance he hath with him, and calle him by his owne name whyle he standeth in his majestie, one of his tormentours might hap to breake his head, and worthy, for marring of the play. And so they said these matters be kynges games, as it were stage playes, and for the more part played upon scaffoldes. In which pore men be but lokers on. And thei that wise be, wil medle no farther. For thei that sometime step up and play with them, when they cannot play theyr partes, thei disorder the play and do themselves no good. (p. 83)

The imagined lines of force—and violence—at work here are complex. On one level the audience are powerless, “but lokers on”, whose only role is to witness the event and validate it by their presence. Any attempt to go beyond that passive role will result in violent expulsion and retribution, whether from the political pageant of Ricardian government, or the dramatic pageant itself. And yet there is also a hint of the dangerous power that such spectators might possess if they were unwise enough to forget the protocols that compelled their powerlessness and interrupt the proceedings. Simply by calling an actor by his real name, the illusion is punctured and the play thereby marred and disordered.

That More, who himself was famed for his ability precisely to step up and play with actors and not disorder the play but miraculously improve it, should be so aware of the perils of intruding into the actors' space is itself revealing. It was a conceit to which he was to return, of course, in his *Utopia*, when advocating the merits of his favoured, less obtrusive model of counselling kings, which tailored its message to the mood of its recipient. There is, “Morus” claims,

another philosophy, more practical for statesmen, which knows its stage, adapts itself to the play in hand, and performs its role neatly and appropri-

ately. Otherwise we have the situation in which a comedy of Plautus is being performed and the household slaves are making trivial jokes at one another, and then you come onstage in a philosopher's attire and recite the passage from *Octavian* where Seneca is disputing with Nero. Would it not have been preferable to take a part without words than by reciting something inappropriate to make a hodge podge of comedy and tragedy? You would have spoiled and upset the actual play by bringing in irrelevant matter, even if your contribution would have been superior in itself. (*Utopia*, pp. 48–50)

In *The Praise of Folly*, More's friend and ally Erasmus, drawing upon Lucian's *Menippus* (Baker-Smith, p. 53), made a similar point about the vulnerability of plays to spoiling intrusions from offstage:

If someone should unmask the actors in the middle of a scene on the stage and show their real faces to the audience, would he not spoil the whole play? And would not everyone think he deserved to be driven out of the theatre with brickbats as a crazy man? For at once a new order of things would suddenly arise. He who played the woman is now seen to be a man; the juvenile revealed to be old; he who a little before was a king is suddenly a slave; and he who was a god is now a little man. Truly to destroy the illusion is to upset the whole play. The masks or costumes are precisely what hold the eyes of the spectators. Now what else is our whole life but a kind of stage play through which men pass in various disguises, each one going on to play his part until he is led off by the director? And often the same actor is ordered back in a different costume, so that he who played the king in purple now acts the slave in rags. Thus everything is pretence: yet this play is performed in no other way. (pp. 381–82)

And anyone who points out the pretences of everyday life will, he adds pointedly, be thought equally crazy.

But the intrusion, and the violence, could work the other way too, and with equally unsettling results. If actors relied upon their audiences to know their place and remain in their seats, their disbelief duly suspended for the duration of the show, so too did audiences rely upon the actors to know theirs, and to restrict themselves to the playful art of representation. If the performance became too real, this too might threaten the violent end of the pageant. Hence the effectiveness of Lucian's anecdote in *The Dance* (a favourite of both More and Erasmus). An actor, Lucian relates, identified so closely with the role of the mad Ajax that during one performance he grabbed a flute from one of the musicians and beat the actor playing Odysseus over the head with it. He then ran amok into

the audience, belabouring two consuls sitting in the front row with his makeshift weapon (Branham, pp. 18-19).

When actors intruded into a non-dramatic situation, “bringing in” their play to a great hall or communal space full of people, they created a temporary ludic space—a playing place—in what appeared to be an otherwise earnest world. When non-actors (and here we might follow Tom Stoppard and call them “real people”, actors being, in his memorable formulation “the opposite of people” [Stoppard, p. 45]) intruded into a dramatic space, however, or actors were forced to respond to such an unscripted intervention in real-time, the results threatened to be wholly more serious. And as a consequence the aesthetic and dramatic rewards for successfully simulating such an event were all the greater.

On one level, of course, every entrance in a play is, or at least purports to be, an intrusion from outside, a “coming in” of a character from elsewhere with news, intentions, or attitudes that will change the dynamic of a scene. But those entrances that appear to break the barrier between the play and reality are distinct and special. Such intrusions, as with all crossings of boundaries, carry great power, and great threat, and the two are intimately connected. Part of the popularity of the device of bringing in the vices or devils as if from among the audience lay, no doubt, in the didactic value that it offered the playwright, suggesting as it did that the spectators all share in the sins that the play will seek to exorcise: that we are all sinners, and the devil and his minions are always among us. It also flagged in a very immediate way the relevance of the play-world to the concerns of the audience, suggesting that the one is merely an enhanced reflection or extension of the other. Such deliberate confusion and obfuscation of the notionally clear line between play and audience, fictional and real worlds, was endemic to the household plays, in which, to borrow Weimann’s terms again, the stage is at times all *platea* and no *locus*. But as the humanists’ comments cited earlier reveal, these crossings of the boundaries between stage and hall, scaffold and street, seemingly in earnest rather than game, were dangerous because the stakes involved, the forces released, and the potential consequences for all concerned were unexpectedly powerful and compelling.

The figure who steps up from the crowd and onto the stage was thus an especially powerful one for the writers of this period. For none more so than the Scottish dramatist Sir David Lindsay, who in his *Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* created a play that explored, and in some cases pushed close to their limits, each of the concerns highlighted so far. In 1552 and 1554 he presented Scottish audiences with a

play in which not only do sowntars (metaphorically at least) play kings, but actors (possibly the same ones) also play sowntars, tailors, housewives and whores. In *The Thrie Estaitis* the discursive space of the play finds room for the whole community, and Lindsay allows the lookers on to intrude into the action (or at least appear to do so) not once but on many occasions, most notably when John the Common-Weil and Pauper step up from among the audience and into the playing space on separate occasions, although to very different effect, as we shall see in a moment.

The *Satyre* is a play that habitually blurs the boundaries between dramatic entertainment and other forms of spectacle. It reproduces some at least of the rituals and processes of a parliamentary session, and of a legal trial, before an audience many of whom would have been familiar with one or the other, if not both. It contains two sermons, one serious the other parodic, and the gruesome spectacle of three public hangings, the last of which, at least—the hanging of Falset (Falsehood)—deliberately mixes highly stylised elements, such as the release of a black bird symbolic of the deceased’s sin-blackened soul at the moment of his death (as specified by the stage direction following line 4271), with moments of grotesque realism. (The stage directions make clear that the actor playing Falset should be raised in person, and not in effigy, presumably so that he can provide convincing convulsions at the moment of death, as well as releasing the bird at the key moment.) But the most dangerous intrusion of realism in the play, and the most relevant for my concerns here, is the character of Pauper and his entrance into the action.

To the point where Pauper enters, the play had been largely conventional in its use of entrances and exits to and from the playing space. And the audience had been effectively marshalled to play its role as respectful “lookers on”, quietly attentive to the entertainment presented to them. Diligence begins the play with an injunction to “Tak tent to me, my frends, and hald yow coy” (14), and then instructs the spectators, with only a little more deference,

Thairfoir, till all our rymis be rung,  
And our mistoinit sangis be sung,  
Let everie man keip weill ane toung,  
And everie woman tway. (74–77)

Thus the audience is set up to be all the more susceptible to shock when one of their number seems to break those injunctions when Pauper enters the playing

space. It is worth briefly contrasting his entrance with that of John the Common-Weil, a character with whom he shares many similarities, in order to see just how deliberately striking Lindsay makes it. John the Common-Weil, as I have argued elsewhere (Walker, *Politics*, pp. 154–62), is a representation of the common people of Scotland within the play; and within the play he resolutely stays. He comes into the place only when invited to do so by Diligence’s proclamation, and so, following the obvious cues, offers no threat to the boundaries of the production. And, once onstage, he is easily integrated into the dramatic and political fabric of the *Satyre*, precisely because he has never really threatened it. The only real risk entailed in his performance concerns the possibility that the actor may not be able to make the leap across the water-filled ditch dividing the audience from the parliament area, and even this is catered for by the eminently pragmatic stage-direction: “Heir sall Johne loup the stank or els fall in it” (following 2437).

Pauper, on the other hand, appears to threaten boundaries from the outset. His entry happens during an explicitly extra-dramatic moment, in what appears to be an interval in the play. Arguably, for those of us looking at the play through the printed text, the striking nature of this disruption is disguised by the fact that Pauper’s lines appear set out before us in regular stanzas and with their rhyme-scheme evident on the page. Moreover, they appear in a section of the text headed “Interlude”, a title that, while it signals difference from the body of the play, nonetheless implies integrity with it. This is just another part of the play that we are reading, albeit a special one. During the original performances audiences would have been allowed no such comforting markers by which to orientate themselves. All the signals would have directed them to believe that the play was in abeyance for the time being, and that they were now operating once more in real-time and real-space. The actors playing all of the characters in the first half had left the playing area, and Diligence had enjoined the audience to get up, have a drink and (where necessary) use the loos in preparation for the second half. What follows would thus have been not only unexpected but profoundly unsettling. It might, of course, be objected that an audience from a predominantly oral culture would be more attuned to the cadences of the spoken word than modern spectators, and so would quickly detect the fact that Pauper was speaking in rhymed verse. Hence his inauthenticity as a “real” inter-loper would have been discovered. But this is not, I think, a decisive objection. In performance a range of strategies might have been employed to elide the fact that Pauper’s lines were metrical. The actor might disguise the regularity of the



rhymes and stresses by speaking them as prose (his opening speeches are, after all, relatively short—hence, the regular patterns would not have time to declare themselves definitively to even the best trained ears), especially if he was also pretending to be drunk and slurring his speech, as the subsequent action suggests. Alternatively, he might actually have stressed the rhymes mockingly, drawing attention to the fact with gestures to the audience, suggesting that he was mocking the formal qualities of the actors' speeches through his own "improvised doggerel". Either way, the audience could be misdirected to miss the crafted nature of the lines.

Once the playing area has cleared, a man in ragged clothes and of wild appearance enters the central space begging alms from the spectators "for gods love of heaven"—probably a common occurrence at any public gathering of this sort. Rather than address him in dialogue, the actor playing Diligence calls to members of the audience, the marshals and the civic authorities who control the playfield in real-time, to deal with him, threatening that if the situation is not quickly dealt with the play may have to be abandoned:

God wait gif heir be ane weill keipit place,  
Quhen sic ane vilde beggar carle may get entres.  
Fy on yow, officiars, that mends not thir failies!  
I gif yow all till the Devill, baith Provost and Baillyes.  
Without ye cum and chase this carle away,  
The Devill a word yeis get mair of our play. (1940-45)

The kind of situation that Lindsay is recreating here—and the dangerous social and dramatic energies which it released—can be suggested through reference to an analogous incident recorded by James Melville in his *Diary* and analysed brilliantly in a recent essay by John J. McGavin. This was the case of Skipper Lindsay, "a known frenetic man", who "stepped in" to an arena set out for a play to be performed before James VI in 1580 and began to harangue the assembled spectators "with grait force of sprit and mightie voice" concerning his own spiritual failings, ending with what was interpreted by some to be a prophetic warning of the downfall of the Earl of Morton, who was present in the royal party.<sup>6</sup> Such potent, disruptive intrusions in public gatherings and spectacles by private individuals

6. I am very grateful to Dr. McGavin for his generosity in sending me a copy of the relevant reference, and for discussing Skipper Lindsay's performance and its implications with me.

with their own agenda to pursue may well have been a quasi-regular form of political protest in Scottish political culture, as McGavin's paper suggests. If so, then Lindsay's use of it in the *Satyre* would have been all the more resonant and troubling in its implications for the original spectators.

When no one in the crowd moves to help Diligence remove the interloper—and Lindsay was clearly confident that no one would, whether because there had been a prior warning to the officials not to, or, more plausibly, because social embarrassment would leave everyone paralysed in (or half out of) their seats, Diligence is seemingly forced to deal with the intruder himself. But his high-handed rebuke only exacerbates the situation. The man stops begging and climbs up onto the scaffold that represented the throne of King Rex Humanitas, the play's central prop and principal seat of authority—and there he begins defiantly to drain a bottle of ale, thereby adding credence to the possibility that he is dangerously drunk and unstable. Once the man has leapt down once more, Diligence seeks to reason with him and, like Medwall's A before him, tries to awe a would-be gatecrasher with the thought that his intrusion threatens to spoil the whole dramatic enterprise:

Swyith, beggar boggill, haist the[e] away!  
Thow art over pert to spill our play. (1962-63)

But the stranger's response is even more defiant than B's had been:

I wil not gif for al your play worth an sowis fart;  
For thair is richt lytill play at my hungrie hart. (1964-65)

In Medwall's play the possibility of spoiling the play had been sustained just long enough for the audience to experience a frisson of awkward excitement, before the playwright allowed the dramatic structure to absorb A and B within itself, signalling that there was no real problem, and everyone could safely relax and enjoy the added pleasures that these characters brought to the play. Lindsay, on the contrary, chooses to extend the period of danger beyond the initial moment of Pauper's entrance and seeks to retain the figure's power to shock and unsettle much longer. His success in this, and the way in which the situation itself and the conventions of playmaking finally contrive to render Pauper "safe", have much to tell us about the nature of dramatic illusion and the capacity of a play—or perhaps an audience—to sustain its capacity for belief in such situations.

Part of Pauper's danger resides in the fact that he, unlike John, is never named in the play. (The issue of John's name is quickly raised and just as quickly resolved; Diligence's first question to him is "Quhat is thy name, fellow?", to which he promptly replies "Forsuith, they call me Johne the Common-Weil" [2430-31], a process repeated eight lines later when Rex asks the same question.) Hence, so long as Lindsay pointedly refuses to give the character a name, he can keep the idea of his dangerous separateness from the world of the play alive. For in this play, as in allegory generally, names are crucial in telling audiences how to respond to a character.

Rather than allow the play to claim Pauper for its own and draw him into the audience's comfort zone, Lindsay accentuates his differences and separateness from what has gone before. He asserts a set of concerns that transcend the interests of the players and audience. As we have seen, he is too hungry to care about spoiling a play and too angry to be pacified by the thought that he will mar the enjoyment of all these wealthy, well-fed people if he does not sit down. Lindsay gives him an ostensibly real history and identity that endorse his claim to a level of our attention different to that we have offered to the players so far. He lives locally, in Lothian, about a mile from Trannent, to the east of Edinburgh. He is on his way to seek justice in St. Andrews, for his mother, father, and wife have all died, and he has been ruined by the clergy's demands for mortuary dues. This story takes the hitherto highly allegorical drama to a new level of realism. This individual seems to represent nothing but his own extreme and compelling case, and even Diligence (again, are we yet sure that it is not the actor who has earlier been playing Diligence?) forgets his concerns for the props and begins to be drawn into his story. "How did the person, was he not thy gude friend?" (2008), he asks, only to have Pauper launch into a further series of anguished denunciations, this time against his parish priest.

By introducing Pauper in this way, and having Diligence respond to him, not as a character in play-time, but as an actor in real-time, Lindsay is able to make a series of social points amounting to a protest on behalf of the rural poor, while the audience's defences are down. He can talk to them as if in earnest, rather than through the medium of drama, thus forcing them to respond in earnest in their turn. This is precisely the liminal territory of dramatic experience explored in the stories of More and Erasmus cited earlier, and most directly in Lucian's account of the actor running amok among the spectators. This is the territory in which plays are spoiled and heads are potentially broken. It is the

space in which spectators are at their most uncomfortably alert and volatile, and so their responses are at their most intense and dangerous. Such moments cannot be sustained for long, at least not comfortably, as Medwall (whose aim was simply to entertain and amuse) realised. So it is to Lindsay's credit that he was willing and able to sustain the "Pauper effect" for so long.

But eventually even Lindsay has to dilute the adrenalin and return to more conventional modes of stagecraft. And he does so with a signal gesture: the introduction of the highly stereotypical figure of the corrupt Pardoner, who enters with his formulaic greeting to the audience of "*Bona dies, bona dies.*/Devoit peopill, gude day I say yow!" (2044-45). And from this moment onwards the conventional tones of drama begin to take over once more, and the audience can become aware that they are watching another section of the scripted entertainment rather than an interruption of it. No one could fail to note from the comic business that follows that they are once more watching a play, and so Pauper's role (given that he remains, lying in the field, ostensibly sleeping through the action) can be retrospectively fitted into that pattern too. The secret is out, as it would inevitably have to be if Pauper was to have any role once the play itself had resumed. Hence, it is no surprise that when he does speak again, having seemingly been woken up by the Pardoner's shouting, it is in a recognisably more "theatrical" medium. His stretching, and his carefully timed direct address to the audience—"Quhat thing was yon that I hard crak and cry?" (2227)—are much more obviously impersonations: actions in bad faith, part of a performance. And he begins to act, not as an intrusive voice, but as a player with parts to play in other character's stories. Hence, he falls quickly into the role of the rustic dupe of the Pardoner's patter, handing over his last coin in the hope of a pardon that he neither understands nor really trusts.

The moment of maximum disruption has passed, and the play quickly begins to reassert its own protocols and ethos upon the newcomer. The apparently dangerous intrusion proves capable of integration into the *Satyre's* dramatic textures after all. But Lindsay makes one last attempt to sustain our uncertainty as to Pauper's status. He and the Pardoner fall to fighting over the disputed coin, and when he, Christ-like, overturns the Pardoner's table of relics into the ditch, Diligence returns to the place and orders both to be apprehended and kept in ward until the play is over, at which point they will both, he says, be hanged. But this last gesture towards an extra-dramatic, real-time existence is no more than a gesture, for Pauper's capacity truly to disturb the audience has gone. Dili-

gence's very ability to restore order so swiftly, given his apparent difficulties with Pauper earlier, highlights the perfunctory nature of this conclusion. But, more importantly, the fight itself must be conducted, the stage-directions state, "with silence" (following l. 2297), a phrase used elsewhere to indicate the stylised, unrealistic modes of dumbshow or broad comic business. Thus the capacity for real violence inherent in Pauper's entry has already been absorbed within a purely theatrical form of "fighting" that threatens nobody beyond the confines of the play.

All is well again, and an end to the period of apparent disruption of dramatic protocols is further signalled by Diligence's renewed call for audience decorum at the start of the second half:

I mak yow supplicatioun,  
Till ye have heard our haille narratioun,  
To keep silence and be patient, I pray yow. (2304-6)

Thereafter the audience is allowed to settle back into its contracted role of "lookers on", and Pauper is integrated fully into the action of the play. It is, notably, the virtuous figure of John the Common-Weil who spots him in the crowd (where he is perhaps being held in ward awaiting his execution) and asks that he should be permitted to join him in guarding the (imaginary) "doors" of the Parliament chamber. And Correctioun's agreement tacitly ends the possibility that Pauper will face any real punishment after the play has ended, signalling his acceptance as a fully-fledged character—albeit still a somewhat volatile one—within the structures of the drama.

A comparison of Medwall's and Lindsay's use of intrusive characters prompts some interesting conclusions. Despite the fears expressed in More's and Erasmus' anecdotes, it does not seem to have been simply the case that realism and dramatic illusion are inimical. Arguably the "realism" inherent in the intrusion of A and B into *Fulgens* is more obvious and sustained than that in Lindsay's *Satyre*. A and B would have been known and recognisable individuals to many if not most of the audience in Morton's household, and the fact that they were "real people" probably increased the pleasure created for the audience by their intrusion into and subsequent involvement in the action. The fact that they had a part in the play while also remaining recognisably themselves made for a sophisticated, layered set of dramatic pleasures for the audience. Lindsay's Pauper, on the other hand, while less recognisably a "real" individual (probably no one in

the original Edinburgh or Cowper audiences would have identified him as a known poor man from Trannent), is nonetheless more “authentic”, and more authentically unsettling. The fusion of awkward laughter, anxiety and embarrassment felt by the audience at his first entrance is a product of the fact that he does indeed appear to come from outside the charmed circle of the community of actors and spectators, and does not recognise or accept the conventions of the event—the implicit contract between actors and audience. Like Skipper Lindsay half a century later, whose “stepping in” upset the decourum of a royal spectacle, he threatens both to spoil the play and to bring violent retribution upon himself in the manner of More’s unwise “lookers on” until the play finally claims him for one of its own. As Lindsay’s “experiment” effectively reveals, the dramatic stakes are set very high when a character walks the high wire between earnest and game in this way—and the audience’s response is correspondingly intense and potentially conflicted. (Might we not have felt a moment’s prim pleasure as well as sympathetic remorse, for instance, if Pauper had been instantly and violently expelled from the playing place on his entrance? After all, he probably hadn’t paid to get in.) But, as the experiment also demonstrates, the potential rewards for both playwright and audience were correspondingly high too.

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## *Commentators, Mediators, Subversives Within and Without John Bale's Nonconformist Play World*

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THE AGON of good and evil that lies at the centre of John Bale's nonconformist plays is presented in the same form in his treatises and pamphlets: as an attack on the religious orders, which he saw as the principal breeding grounds of religious deviancy. His quarrel was with the admissibility of the vow, and with the Roman Catholics' fondness for the accoutrements of the traditional religion. The ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church were considered to be man-made observances intended to conceal the pure unmediated word of God that the Bible conveys. Although written within the morality convention and on religious subjects, Bale's plays are more sectarian than religious. A zealous, militant theologian, he produced a drama whose conscious standards are overwhelmingly homiletic, in which an ardent hate of popery, portrayed through the satiric jesting of his stage villains, is countered by the earnest nonconformist declarations of his virtuous figures. The nonconformists considered the world of play to be a barrier between the believer and his God. Although Bale overcame the nonconformist reluctance to write stage plays, anxiety about the dangers of theatrical representation can still be detected in his drama.

This paper will focus upon what may be considered as John Bale's ambivalent attitude towards the theatre: the dramaturgist himself can be seen to be an insider of the theatrical community who at the same time has reservations about the propriety of theatrical representation. Fears that in the heat of performance the audience might mistake the dramatic world for the spiritual world it figured haunted his nonconformist mind, and pressure from nonconformist outsiders undermines the play world he creates. An examination of the way in which commentators, mediators and subversives function inside and outside *A comedy concerninge thre lawes, of nature, Moses, and Christ, corrupted by the sodomytes, pharysees and papystes* (1538; hereafter *Three Laws*) will reveal how the Reformer was enabled to overcome his Lollard-tainted reservations about the drama in order to exploit its potential for religious and political propaganda.

It is useful to be reminded of the fact that John Bale (1495–1563) was formed by traditional religion and spent more than twenty-five years as a Carmelite friar until his conversion to the reformed view in the 1530s. When he looks back on his youthful days as a votary, he is full of resentment and anger. His own published account of his conversion in his 1557 *Catalogus* reveals the grudge he bore against clerical life. The following entry explains, in part, his viciously satirical stance:

I, a boy of twelve years, was thrust by my parents, who were both weighed down by numerous offspring and deluded by the tricks of pseudo-prophets, into the abyss of the Carmelite order in the city of Norwich. . . . There and at Cambridge I wandered in complete barbarism of scholarship and blindness of mind, having neither mentor nor Maecenas: until, with the word of God shining forth, the churches began to be recalled to the purest springs of true theology. But in that splendour of the rise of the new Jerusalem, called not by monk or by priest but by the distinguished Lord Wentworth, as though by that Centurion who said that Christ was the Son of God, and earnestly aroused, I saw and acknowledged my deformity for the first time. . . . And lest henceforward in any way I might be a creature of so bestial a nature I took the faithful Dorothy to wife, listening attentively to this divine saying: let him who cannot be continent marry. (trans. Peter Happé; *Complete Plays*, 1: 147)

Here we see Bale describing his personal conversion as a shift from monastic scholasticism (“the barbarism of scholarship”) to the new learning, a change that is motivated by the secular patron of humanist learning, Lord Wentworth, and not by any spiritual revelation mediated “by monk or priest”. At the same time, it will be noticed, Bale brings up the subject of his own incontinent sexuality, which he made innocuous by marrying the “faithful Dorothy”. Bale places in a problematic nexus sexual impropriety, the English Reformation, the new learn-

ing and patronage, all of which are dramatised in his plays, pamphlets and own personal narrative.

Visibly emerging in the work of Bale and other Tudor nonconformists is an attempt to create a new type of Biblical play in opposition to the plays performed at the time: Roman Catholic miracles, mystery cycles, moralities and the more secular interludes. Using the drama, and dramatic discourse in his pamphlets, Bale strove to demolish previous views about sacred history through satire and iconoclasm, as well as to assign new meaning to, and impose a new shape on, ecclesiastical, liturgical and dramatic tradition. Bale's in-depth knowledge of traditional religion enabled him to construct a mirror image of what he rejected. Out of a system of oppositional differences, a new system was evolved which defined aspects of the traditional truth as heresy and elements previously considered heresy as truth. What is new for the drama is the identification of traditional religion itself with the devil, the enemy of Christ and of Christ's followers. In all of Bale's five extant plays, the Roman Catholic clergy are presented as players within the context of a play. This conscious use of theatricality to parody the abuses of Catholic observance masks the deeper anxiety he shared with Lollard predecessors about the use of drama for theological ends.

Such anxiety tended to cluster around the experience of the cycle plays: the transfixion of the spiritual imagination in a realm of unsanctified symbols, the re-enactment in public of spiritually significant events which tended to demystify the unfathomable deity. As Ritchie D. Kendall has pointed out in a stimulating analysis of the poetics of nonconformity, "The history of nonconformity is an attack on the fixed and solidified image, whether carved in stone, voiced in metaphor, or enacted upon a stage. In the fusion of a transcendent truth to its temporal signifier, the artist seduced his audience into loving the human over the divine" (p. 62).

The mystery plays were considered to be demonic creations because they had the power to transport their audience out of the present and into a timeless universe of the artist's creation, thereby blurring the distinction between the fictional and the historical. For the reformers, the reduction of the universal and mysterious to the human and familiar was anathema. For them, the only reliable vehicle for divine revelation was the Gospels—all the signs and symbols man needed were given by God in His book of truth. Simply by committing his heart to an understanding of God's words, man was assured of finding the path to the deity, unaided by unreliable human escorts, but aided by the Holy Ghost, the

only reliable guide. Other reasons why Corpus Christi plays came under attack included the fact that they promulgated the Catholic vision of sacred history and mixed moments of transcendent seriousness with comedy, thereby cheapening the divine message transmitted by Christ's redemptive sacrifice.

How could Bale make use of the dramatic medium when his Reformist convictions warned him of the dangers of compromising the authenticity of his spiritual vision? The Prologue of *Three Laws* is spoken by Bale himself, Baleus Prolocutor, the godly playwright who announces the play's theme and the happy outcome of the struggle between good and evil, represented here as a *psychomachia* between the true and the false church. At the outset, Bale intervenes to control the audience's reception of what unfolds on the stage. He explains the nature of law, with learned references to Cicero, and then outlines the first four acts of the play, in which the three laws are to be corrupted by Infidelitas, an incarnation of false doctrine. Bale stresses the fact that the role of God will be played by an actor and gives him his cue: "He is now in place" (35). But he then stresses the importance of the words the actor will speak, not that of the visual representation: "marke therfor what he sayth" (35). Deus Pater comes onto the stage and presents himself, insisting first of all on the purely abstract quality of his deity, and warning the audience against any carnal understanding of the entity impersonated: "I am Deus Pater, a substaunce invysyble, / All one with the Sonne and Holy Ghost in essence. / To Angell and Man I am incomprehensyble" (36-38).

Bale uses the convention of self-representation to drive a wedge between the actor and the God represented, in order to destroy any delusion on the part of the audience. The tensions are only partially dissipated, however, since a human actor necessarily evokes responses in human terms from the audience. One of the central aspects of the divine is its unseen nature, and a visual representation necessarily perverts its substance.

In the first act of the play, God reminds the laws of their true commission and then sends them all out to guide Mankind along the path of righteousness. The ensuing three acts demonstrate how each law in turn is corrupted by different, paired Vice figures. The pattern is repeated in each act: the law concerned describes his nature and function, and is then interrupted, ridiculed and driven out by Infidelitas, the chief Vice character. The Vices then devise new plans to pervert the law until the latter returns in a pitiful state to report on the misdeeds of his enemies and to appeal to the audience, and especially to the Christian prince (Henry VIII), to redress his wrongs.

We witness here a series of variations on a theme, the repetitions being devised in order to make the interpretation of the action unambiguous. This does not necessarily make for good drama, but it does enable Bale to hammer his message home, and, as we will see, through the framing drama of the virtuous characters, Bale is able to contain the negativity associated with the theatre within the demonic play of the Vices, who represent deceit, delusion and a world that rivals God's universe. The Vice characters are definitively driven out of Bale's purified drama at the close of the play.

Infidelitas, the chief of the Vice characters, as a demonic product of Roman Catholicism provides Bale with a convenient commentator on the drama. He also serves Bale's purpose as an incompetent, fraudulent commentator of Roman texts. In keeping with Bale's binary way of thinking, the virtuous characters are mouthpieces for Bale's reading of a reformed subtext in the Roman texts. His Virtues represent the competent, correct interpreters of the Scriptures, who uphold the true faith on the somewhat humourless, conceptual stage of Bale's sacred drama of nonconformity.

As in the interludes and morality plays of the previous decades, the Vice figures are gamesome and readily display their evil nature; they constantly boast of their deceitful ways, and of their irreligious nature, thereby providing a commentary that enables Bale to paint the portraits of both churches, one in white, one in black.. His Vices differ from those of previous plays, in that their aggressiveness is motivated and in that they are identified as the minions of Antichrist. Evil now sits in the seat of Peter himself, and the true followers of Christ are exhorted to join in the struggle against the archenemy—the Roman Church, the Whore of Babylon, the Antichrist.

For details of the Protestant Antichrist myth, we can turn to Richard Brightwell's (that is to say, John Frith's) *A Pistle to the Christen Reader The Revelation of Antichrist* (1529) This polemic, based on Luther, fixed for the whole century the characteristics of the myth. Behind the outward show of piety of the Roman Catholic church, Frith says, are hidden corruption, idolatry and deceit. Rome's true nature lies in the abuses she fosters—greedy, lecherous clergy, multiple sacraments, auricular confession, the cult of saints, prayers for the dead, costly altars and vestments, pardons, privileges, and disputations.

*Three Laws* is steeped in the Antichrist myth, and the influence of the author of the biblical Revelation is also clearly present in Bale's impassioned rhetoric, which is studded with apocalyptic imagery. To St. John the Divine, pagan Rome-

Babylon was the great harlot drunk with the blood of saints. Under her rule, idolatry, immorality, false prophesy, and persecution were allowed to flourish. However, it was promised that the sufferings of the faithful would be short. The martyrdom of two witnesses to the truth would presage the final engagement, when God's archangel Michael would come, with the terrible rider on the pale horse, and cast the beast of Antichrist into the pit. The true prophets would be vindicated and Christ would claim the true church as His Bride. Echoes of this myth abound in *Three Laws*, testifying to the importance Bale accorded to the Revelation of St. John the Divine.<sup>1</sup>

Bale works many of the abuses of the clergy into *Three Laws*, not only those that were attacked by numberless medieval predecessors like Chaucer, but also, as Ruth Blackburn (p. 44) has pointed out, many of those attacked by Luther in the Ninety-five Theses. Bale also weaves into the fabric of the play two of Luther's most strongly recommended arms against abuse: the power of the Christian ruler and the power of the Bible. Two scenes in *Three Laws* close with appeals to the king to destroy idolatry and clerical celibacy, and to curb the greed and ambition of the clergy. Thereby revealed is Bale's use of the subversive ideas of Luther's *To the Christian Nobility*, an exhortation to the German princes to establish a more Protestant Christian order. Bale's virtuous Laws also borrow from the subversive Luther, when they use the Scriptures as a weapon against the false church. When Infidelitas and his acolytes are outraged by Evangelium's "preaching", they arrest him and mock him, despoiling him of his robe, treating him in the manner in which they claim they had treated Christ. But it is shown that the Gospel cannot be destroyed, and Bale encourages his spectators to read and follow it, "For non other waye there is unto salvacyon / But the worde of God in every generacyon" (1614-15).

Bale treats the hotly debated issue of the celibacy of the clergy with particular vehemence in all his works. The Carmelite hagiographer who wrote several saints' lives turned into the Reformist gossip columnist of *The actes of Englysh votaryes*, giving all the inside information about sexual activity behind monastery walls. This type of gossip pervades the second act of *Three Laws*, in which Natu-

1. In the preface to *The Image of Both Churches* (p. 255), Bale considers it to be his «bound duty, under pain of damnation, to admonish Christ's flock by this present revelation of their perils past», the admonishment taking the form of a detailed commentary on the Book of Revelation, into which Bale weaves much of his contempt for the Roman Catholic Church and clergy.



rae Lex is subjected to the viciousness of Idolatria and Sodomismus, who are represented as being inseparable. The paired Vices boast of their exploits, which encompass the abuses the early radical reformers targeted. The damning lines Bale gives to Infidelitas merely elaborate with propagandistic license on a well-known and much-loved medieval *topos*—the lecherous and sodomitical clergy:

Within the bowndes of Sodomye  
 Doth dwell the spirytuell clergie,  
 Pope, cardinall and pryst,  
 Nonne, chanon, monke and fryer,  
 With so many els as do desire  
 To reigne under Antichrist. (728-33)

Pederastic prelates had for centuries been an object of anti-clerical satire, which created reservoirs that, during the 1530s, when *Three Laws* was being performed, Henry VIII and Cromwell could tap in their campaign to curb the power of the clergy. Reports made after visitations to ecclesiastical houses testify to the fact that the criticism was, in some cases, justified.

The plot of the second act of *Three Laws* is conveniently summarised by Naturae Lex when he comes back on stage, afflicted with leprosy, as the stage directions indicate, to explain how he has been outwitted by man and suffered a double-pronged assault on the flesh and on the soul by Sodomismus and Idolatria:

I wrought in hys hart, as God bad earnestlye,  
 Hym oft provokynge to love God over all  
 With the inner powers. But that false Idolatrye  
 Hath hym perverted by slayghtes dyabolycall,  
 And so hath Sodomye through hys abuses carnall,  
 That he is now lost, offendynge without measure,  
 And I corrupted, to my most hygh dyspleasure. (759-65)

Alan Stewart (pp. 56-57) has recently pointed out that a clear association exists between the two characters: Sodomismus does not exist as a stage-entity without Idolatria (and vice-versa). One of Sodomismus' self-commentaries makes the relationship explicit:

In the fleshe I am a fyre,  
 And soch a vyle desyre,  
 As brynge men to the myre  
 Of fowle concupyscence.

We two togyther beganne  
To sprynge and to growe in manne,  
As Thomas of Aquyne scanne  
In the fort boke of hys sentence. (563-70)

Idolatria further defines the relationship when she boasts to Sodomismus:

Within the flesh thou art,  
But I dwell in the hart,  
And wyll the sowle pervart  
From Gods obedyence. (687-90)

Bale uses costume to underscore the nature of Idolatria: stage directions indicate she is dressed as a necromancer. Furthermore, she can tell men's fortunes, cure toothache, fever and the pox. By listing all her skills, Bale economically collapses Catholicism and its image worship with superstition, witchcraft, and women in general into the body of Idolatria, which is coupled with that of Sodomismus.

When Infidelity instructs Sodomismus on how to fight against Naturae Lex, he encourages an attack during confession:

Here is a stoole for the  
A ghostlye father to be  
To heare Benedicite,  
A boxe of creame and oyle. (675-78)

Here Bale plays on the traditional sexual reputation of the confessional. The merchandising of devotional aids also comes under attack; it is presented as a means to lead the Christian believer astray when Infidelitas gives to Idolatria "beades, rynges, and other gere" to "deceive Man properlye" (664-66). A subversive portrait of the traditional religion as one of false piety and organized deception is created on stage by means of the exchanges between this unholy pair of middlemen.

In the third act, Avaritia boasts of how widows and orphans are exploited, thereby embedding a commentary on the ruthlessness of the Roman Catholic clergy in their collection of tithes. He is paired with Ambitio, who is proud of corrupting the Scriptures. Moseh Lex is attacked in this act, and, in lines 1109-34, we find systematic perverting of the ten commandments. One telling inversion—"God hath inhybyted to geve false testymonye, / Yet we wyll condempne the Gospell for heresy" (1125-26)—reaches out beyond the play-world to the courtroom scenes of the heresy trials and prepares us for Avaritia's list of clerical

and doctrinal aberrations. It is recommended that “The byshoppes must holde their prestes in ignoraunce / With longe Latyne houres, least knowledge to them chaunce” (1145-46), and that English be introduced into the services only if this engenders increased financial gain for the clergy: “If they have Englysh lete it be for advauntage / For pardons, for dyrges, for offerynges and pylgrymage” (1157-58). The demonic speeches of these Vice figures, in which they recite their litany of unholy, deceitful practices, provide a subversive account of what the Reformist playwright considered to be the false religion of Antichrist.

As Greg Walker (p. 190), has pointed out, Bale gives his Reformers all the best arguments and makes the Roman Catholics falter and admit their fraudulence, ignorance, and shortcomings. The dramatist has the advantage of being able to control both sides of the debate enacted on the stage, but when the “truth” is in dispute, one wonders how we are, in the phrase of Thomas More, “to fynde out whyche chyrche is the very chyrche” (p. 480), given that we have only Bale’s passionate assertions about which is the true and which is the false one.

At the end of the third act, the controlling presence of the playwright is clearly felt in *Infidelitas*’ commentary on the offstage action. He explains how a veil has been cast over Moseh Lex in order to hide him from view to stop him spreading the word of God. *Infidelitas* provides Bale’s textual gloss on the future appearance of Moseh Lex, who mimes blindness and lameness, so that there can be no doubt in the spectator’s mind of what the transformation signifies. Bale leaves nothing to chance and carefully polices audience response. Fear that the play-world of the imagination might usurp earnest instruction stands foremost in his mind. Bale will not let *Infidelitas*’ words speak for themselves, nor will he trust his spectators’ apprehension of them: he constantly directs and controls the spectator’s perception, to an exasperating degree. It is as if we are privy to the director’s heavily annotated prompt-book in which all thoughts about staging are recorded alongside the dialogue. The interpretative scope of the spectator is restricted and his imaginative freedom repressed. Here Bale’s drama demonstrates that, in spite of the Reformers’ insistence that the Scriptures were “open”, it was presumed that God’s word was often not plain and needed an intercessor to interpret it. Tyndale attacked allegories for being the source of blindness in which the nation found itself, maintaining that scriptural meaning was always the literal sense. As Bale amply illustrates, however, this literal sense was regularly signified by proverbs, similitude, riddles, and allegories which made it necessary to negotiate its meaning.

In the fourth act of *Three Laws*, Evangelium is persecuted for his pulpit oratory and, in a re-enactment of Christianity's primal drama, the Vices treat him as Christ was once treated by the Pharisees. Infidelitas first interrogates him, feigning to misunderstand the doctrinal points he expounds and turning them in typical Vice fashion—by mistaking the word—into grotesque travesties. Bale uses the chief Vice character to demonstrate that the false church provides incompetent interpreters of the holy texts. The following exchange illustrates the way the Vice's mistaking of the word becomes a game played in deep earnest:

*Evangelium.* The Corinthes first epystle hath thys clere testimony:  
*"In Christo Jesu per Evangelium vos genui —*  
 I have begote yow in Jesu Christ", sayth Powle,  
*"By the Gospel preachynge to the confort of your sowle."*  
*Infidelitas* Than are ye a cuckolde, by the blessed holy masse! (1370–73)

The dialogue between Evangelium and his tormentor Pseudodoctrina invokes the experience of the heresy trials, versions of which Bale was to publish at a later date when his career as a dramatist abruptly halted. In fact, by the time he was writing *Three Laws*, he had already had a hand in editing *The Examination of Master William Thorpe*, an autobiographical account of one Lollard's appearance before Archbishop Arundel in August 1407. Kendall explains how "The violence of the archbishop's language becomes at once the hallmark of unregenerate speech and, in its sputtering incoherence, an emblem of the impotence of evil in the face of godliness" (p. 60). In *The Examination*, Kendall notes, Thorpe comments on the way that he felt himself aided by the Holy Ghost, who furnished him with the words to answer the hostile archbishop (*Examination*, p. 112). Bale's play seems to be informed by the account of such a trial. Evangelium finds the words to defend his faith in the course of his trial but is condemned as a heretic when the Vices, expressing their anger in loud, unregenerate speech, drag him off to the stake because he refuses to abjure.

In the final act, when Infidelitas boasts to Vindicta Dei that his victory over divine law has cleared the way for his gaming—"And now I persever amonge the rank rable of papystes, / Teachyng ther shorlynges to playe the Antichrystes" (1835–36)—Bale once again uses an evil character to point out the rectitude of his own dramatic vocation, thereby demonstrating how a play can be the purveyor of the devil's teaching if it is only loosely controlled by the playwright. Bale's fear that game might usurp earnest is shown clearly through the tight structure

adopted for the play. The representatives of nonconformist virtue control the stage in the first and last acts, and within the central body of *Three Laws*, their pious interventions are made to frame the demonic sport of the Vice characters. Thus Bale's purified drama can be seen at all times to restrict the boundaries of unholy drama. Throughout the play, self-commentary is used to clarify any ambiguity, and to prevent the spectator from forgetting himself by sharing in the vice-characters' demonic pleasure.

The conventional morality play, then, is subverted by the Reformer Bale: the entertainment quotient is reduced in order to give priority to the didactic propagandist element, which was intended to serve Henry VIII and Bale's patron, Thomas Cromwell, in their campaign to rid the country of papal control in secular affairs. The subversive potential of the theatre was fully recognised by Bale and Cromwell, but the former proved to be too radical in his undermining of traditional religion and, after the downfall of his patron, was obliged to flee to the continent for fear of reprisals on the part of more conservative Reformers.

Bale's divided drama, with its carefully demarcated ideological zones, is emblematic of the ambivalence that lies behind the playwright's attitude towards the dramatic medium on the whole. *Three Laws* attacks playing and exposes the dangers of commonly held conceptions of drama, whilst trying to offer a safer alternative. Bale boasts of his own theatre as being capable of bringing men to Christ, "From ceremonyes domme / As to their heavenly gyde" (1246-47), but his figures of mediation, commentators and subversives are all too vociferous and tend to transform the stage into a pulpit for preaching what Bale calls in *King Johan* "the lyvyng wurde of the Lorde" (1119).

With such a divided approach to the drama, Bishop Bale did not produce memorable, living theatre, and he has gone down in literary history mainly as a Protestant propagandist whose "bilious bark"—fortunately for the English drama—proved to be worse than his bite.

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## *The Curtained Stage: Inside and Outside the Elizabethan Playing Space*

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**F**OCUSING on the use of props in the designing of a playing space implies the consideration of several visual and material perspectives at the same time. This paper is a quasi-archeological attempt at recovering both Renaissance playwrights' and actors' strategies through a study of the use of curtains. Curtains, like other props, cannot be considered as redundant ornaments. Props illuminate words not by illustrating them but by suggesting them. Curtains participate in a meaningful creation and deformation of the stage space. Their impact can be felt on several levels. Curtains direct the spectator as outsider within the theatrical space and act as landmarks by which he positions himself regarding the stage. The arras helps in organising the playing space, opening and closing it at will, reducing it or multiplying it according to plot requirements. It turns the stage into an interior around which the audience gathers. The spectator is alternately kept at a distance from or invited within this playing shell. The creation of a curtained playing shell underlines the problematic communication between the inside and the outside of the newly-defined playing zone. If, at first, the audience is cast as the outsider, scenographic strategies enable the transfer of this role onto both the actors and the arras. In illustrating these points,



I will try to show how the Elizabethan and Jacobean playing spaces rely on the relationship between the margins and the centre, between the outer-stage and the main stage.

### *The Tragic Playing Shell*

The arras in Renaissance drama keeps its medieval characteristic of indicating and limiting the playing space. The particularising power of the curtain was already emphasised in texts such as *Le Mystère d'Adam*. The description of the setting for the first section of the mystery defines the curtain as a spatial landmark and a boundary for both the players and the spectators:

Paradise shall be constructed on a raised place, with *curtains and silk hangings* surrounding it at such a height that the persons who are in Paradise can be seen from the shoulders upwards; there shall be ferns and sweet scented flowers and varied trees with fruit hanging from them, so it appears a pleasant place

Specially built theatres retained the use of such a prop as a symbol for the break between the outside and the inside of the dramatic world. Entering an Elizabethan theatre meant moving from the general to the particular space, from the theatre as building to the playing area.

Spatially speaking, we move from an architectural perspective to architectonics. The general architectural design with its protruding stage and the arras at the back of the same stage attracts and concentrates the audience's attention on a single thing, the playing space. Playhouses were built in such a way that the space would be self-allusive and direct the spectators' eyes to the stage, its organisation and its ornamentation. This architectural strategy becomes obvious when examining the setting for tragic plays. Tragedy as a highly coded genre seems to require a specific space to be played in. Hence, the stage, already the focal centre of the theatre, has to be set in such a fashion that the audience can enter the tragic world by simply looking at the playing zone.

In his notes to Shakespeare's *Complete Works* (1790), Edmund Malone (pp. 55-56) pointed to a scenographic tradition of hanging the tragic stage with black draperies. Shakespeare himself refers to a "Black stage for tragedies" in *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594):

O comfort-killing Night, image of hell,  
Dim register and notary of shame,

Black stage for tragedies and murders fell,  
Vast sin-concealing chaos, nurse of blame,  
Blind muffled bawd, dark harbour for defame!  
Grim cave of death, whisp'ring conspirator  
With close-tongued treason and the ravisher! (ll. 764-70)

The creation of a tragic playing shell using hangings is a recurrent strategy in several of John Marston's plays, such as *The Insatiate Countesse* (1607-8) and, above all, *Antonio's Revenge* (1600-2). In the former, we hear that "The stage of heav'n, is hung with solemne black,/A time best fitting to Act Tragedies" (III.i.65-66). The latter is the sequel to the lighter *Antonio and Mellida*, and the Prologue stresses the change in atmosphere by pointing to the meaningful dressing of the stage: "let such/Hurry amain from our black-visaged shows" (Pro.19-20). The audience is thus visually warned of the turn from comedy to tragedy. Marston sets up a scenographic strategy preceding the actual performance and thus prepares the audience to perceive the plot in a particular context.

Still resistant to the dynamics of the "fourth wall", the Renaissance English stage used the arras not as a distancing prop but as an illumination of an open, inclusive stage. In most public playhouses, the stage was built in such a way that it penetrated the spectators' space and was offered to the audience's eyes from the pre-show jests to long after the actors were gone. The Elizabethan and Jacobean stages were open spaces constantly inviting the audience within the playing space. If on the continent, the audience was permanently kept at a safe distance from the playing zone, the English Renaissance stage relied on the spectators' inclusion to achieve a successful dramatic performance. Such a strategy becomes all the more obvious when considering the relationship between props and the audience. Theatrical objects contribute to creating the dramatic space and can, according to directorial goals, put the subject at a distance from the onlookers or bring them closer to it.

Curtains as scenic ornaments do not close the theatrical space; they summon the audience within this space. Once included within the tragic shell, spectators are even offered a part in the creative process. The end of the Prologue to *Antonio's Revenge* stresses the absorption of the audience within the general scenography by the final assimilation of the attending crowd to stage properties: "Yet here's the *prop* that doth support our hopes:/When our scenes falter, or invention halts,/Your favour will give crutches to our faults" (31-33; emphasis added). This statement reasserts the playwright's intention to set his words and

action within a significant frame. Marston leads the audience to cross the boundary between the inside and the outside of the dramatic world and to integrate the newly circumscribed playing space. The prop is now simultaneously the means to comment on the action and the link among playwright, audience and act.

This model for tragedies recurs in the Jacobean era in both a concrete and a metaphorical perspective. In Thomas Dekker and John Webster's *Northward Hoe* (1605), Bellamont, an amateur playwright, explains to Captain Jenkins, an enamoured soldier, the stage frame of the tragedy he is writing for the Duke of Orleans's wedding: "As I was saying/the stage hung all with black veluet, and while tis acted, my/self wil stand behind the Duke of *Biron*" (IV.i.52-54). The convention of a specific stage model for tragedies is confirmed here, though transferred to a court entertainment. In William Alexander's *The Tragedie of Croesus* (1604), the tragic curtain will play its part but in a more symbolic fashion. The prop is dematerialised and used textually as the frame for a bloody narrative. Act IV, Scene i, shows Croesus, in mourning for his lost son Atis, being convinced by Sandinis, his counsellor, to wage war against Cyrus, King of Persia. The scene starts with the lamentations of the wounded father, tired of bloodshed and trying to resist Sandinis by recounting illegitimate wars:

Then *Cyaxare*, Monarch of the Medes,  
 To prosecute those fugitives to death,  
 In indignation of my fathers deeds,  
 Did bragge them both with all the words of wrath;  
 My father thinking that his Court should be  
 A Sanctuarie for all supplicants,  
 Did levie men, that al the world might see,  
 He helpt the weake, and scorn'd the mighties vaunts.  
 Thus mortall warres on every side proclaim'd,  
 With mutuall damage did continue long,  
 Till both the Armies by *Bellona* tam'd,  
 Did irke t'avenge or to maintaine a wrong.  
 It chanc'd whil'st peace was at the highest dearth,  
 That all their forces furiouslie did fight,  
 A suddaine darknes courtain'd up the earth,  
 And violently dispossess the light.  
 I thinke for *Phaeton* the Sunne lookt sad,  
 And that the bloodie obiects that he saw  
 Did wound his memorie, with griefe gone mad,  
 He from the world his wagon did withdraw.  
 Yet *Ignorance* the mother of confusion,

With wresting natures course found cause of feares,  
 Which well edg'd on by wiser mens illusion,  
 Was cause of concord and of truce from teares.  
 Then straight there was a perfect peace begunne,  
 And that it might more constantly indure,  
 Astiages the King of Medias sonne,  
 A marriage with my sister did procure. (IV.i.127-55; emphasis added)

In this rhymed cue, the emphasis is laid on the spiralling violence. Lines 135 to 142 rely on a meaningful aural interlace. The rattle of weapons and fighting bodies is conveyed by the hammering of hard consonants ([t]/[k]/[d]). The battle spreads through the rhyming pattern (long/wrong), but also through a continuous pattern of acoustic expansion within the lines. The musical crescendo is a strategy all the more significant because it is stopped by the image of the tragic veils curtaining this bloody *amplificatio*. The eclipse of the sun ending the battle is materialised in the dark curtain falling upon the world: "A suddaine darknes courtain'd up the earth". The acoustic pattern of this line emphasises the transition from the clamour of war to the gods' darkening of the world. The sibilants and the hard consonants at the beginning of the line are metamorphosed within the verb "courtain'd" into softer muffled sounds. The transition from din to silence occurs within the very verb "courtain'd", which starts in a hammering way and ends on a vocalic expansion and an apocope. This phenomenon strengthens the liminal nature of the metaphorical tragic hanging. The veil drawn by a sorrowful Phaeton is a symbolic landmark. Alexander seems first to create an aural frame for the slaughter, then metaphorically to add a visual frame to it. The night-like curtain circumscribes chaos within a defined inner space. Veils contain the tragic vortex of war until the end of the bloodshed. This metaphorical image of the dark hanging is rooted in the conventional use of tragic curtains. The hangings focus the gaze and the imagination of the audience on the chaos they circumscribe. The end of Croesus's cue stresses the paradoxical nature of the threshold embodied in the dark veils. Those tragic hangings concentrate chaos until its final smothering and metamorphosis into its contrary in lines 143-46. The tragic modelling is now transferred from the visual level to the spectator's imagination, though retaining its power to frame the action within a specific interior. The tragic veils become the expression of a chaotic inside. Curtains allow the setting of a specific space and enable the development of a dysphoric mechanics.

This type of stage modelling—whether concrete or metaphorical—is only the first step. The audience, initially cast outside the playing space, is invited within a dramatic inside by the tragic curtains. Now I wish to consider the capacity to transgress this newly designed playing shell by using the very curtains limiting the dramatic space.

### *Spying Scenes: The Problematic Margins*

Renaissance drama is grounded on the invasion of the action by its margins, metaphorical or concrete, and the other way round. What is hidden in this marginal space is the key to the dramatic act. Curtains, as boundaries between the main stage and the margins, are the material outcome of this problematic relation. They help to build an unstable playing frame, as well as to facilitate the positioning of the actors. Still exemplifying the ambivalent relation between inside and outside, hangings enable the materialising of a particular character, the observer. Regardless of the genre of the play, Renaissance playwrights include those marginal characters whose spatial ambiguity allows the audience to reassert its silent participation in the dramatic creation. Indeed, observing characters act as spectatorial surrogates causing the audience to be drawn further within the playing space. Marginal characters link the inside and the outside of the visible act. The fragmentation of the playing space by means of curtains allows the audience to enter the performance but also suggests the possibility of using the inner non-visible structure of the theatrical building, i.e., the backstage area. The curtains hung in front of the wall at the back of the stage enable the expansion of the main stage by adding the transitory space of the tiring-house.

It may seem paradoxical to refer to this space as an outer stage and not an inner space, as it is often termed. The alternative space in the tiring-house is indeed an inner space when it stands for the closed world of a bedroom, a study or a tomb. Yet such alcove scenes remain outside the main action both diegetically and physically when considered from the audience's perspective. The alternative space appears not only as an intimate stage and a scenic doubling but also as the intrusion of a hidden outside within the action. There is a particular context in which the concept of the inner stage is overtaken by the intrusive dynamics of threatening and/or comic margins: spying scenes.

The observer is a powerful outsider whose perspective alters the action on the main stage without disrupting its continuity. This process of hiding some

observer behind the arras is repeated in many Elizabethan and above all Jacobean plays. In the prelude to *The Careless Shepherdess* (1618-29), Thomas Goffe chooses to hold a mirror to the audience while symbolically pointing at the organisation of the theatrical space. This prelude stages mock spectators arguing about theatrical genres and practice. They are gathered around the character of the porter on the threshold of the imaginary theatre in the same way the real audience is waiting on the threshold of the play. Pleading for the audience's gentle hearing, Goffe stresses the diversity of the playgoers:

*Landlord.* Why I would have the Fool in every Act,  
 Be't Comedy, or Tragedy, I 'ave laugh'd  
 Untill I cry'd again, to see what Faces  
 The Rogue will make: O it does me good  
 To see him hold out's Chin hang down his hands,  
 And twirle his Bawble. There is nere a part  
 About him but breaks jests. I heard a fellow  
 Once on this Stage cry, Doodle, Doodle, Dooe,  
 Beyond compare; I'de give the other shilling  
 To see him act the Changling once again.  
*Thrift.* And so would I, his part has all the wit,  
 For none speaks Craps and Quibbles besides him:  
 I'd rather see him leap, laugh, or cry,  
 Then hear the gravest Speech in all the Play.  
*I never saw Rheade peeping through the Curtain,*  
 But ravishing joy enter'd into my heart. (Praeludium; emphasis added)

Goffe chooses a nearly allegorical onomastics for his characters, all standing for a peculiar social category: Spruce is the courtier, Sparke the law-man, Thrift the citizen, Landlord the gentleman from the country, and Bolt the Porter. The excerpt chosen here enhances the average audience's taste for the trivialities of clowns and fools. Archeologically speaking, this passage is most significant, as it is grounded in the reality of Renaissance drama. Both characters constantly allude to existing venues, plays and actors. The reference to the clown and his habit of peeping at the main stage from behind the arras is a piece of theatrical history. "This Stage" refers actually to the Salisbury Court Theatre. Hence, when Thrift comments on and reinforces Landlord's praise of the Fool, he refers to the resident Fool at the Salisbury Court, Timothy Reade. The latter was famous for popping his head out from behind the arras and disrupting the main stage action. Thus this actorial technique is more than a vague allusion to the buf-

foons of the *comedia dell'arte*; it was familiar to Renaissance spectators. Yet this prelude also establishes that the comic use of curtains was considered a hackneyed device by contemporary connoisseurs, as is shown in Sparke's reply: "Your judgments are ridiculous and vain,/As your forefathers, whose dull intellect/Did nothing understand but Fools and fighting". If Goffe thus puts into question the audience's irrational attachment to hackneyed devices, he encourages modern readers to wonder about this scenographic strategy in a less literal fashion. The Fool's curtain-peeping, inherited from medieval and pre-Shakespearean staged jests, is often transferred to other characters in the Renaissance. Thus the traits of the Clown reemerge in characters apparently not designed to be comic or not belonging to a comedy. The best case from surviving plays is that of Polonius in *Hamlet*. Though participating in the comic relief strategy, such characters do not bear the visual attributes of the Fool, and their function belongs more to tragedy than comedy.

Observation is a paradoxical event in the relation between the main stage's visible action and the possible margins. The status of the character in hiding is rather unstable. He can be a tool used by a character belonging to the main stage, or he can escape from the familiar shell, gathering the main protagonists and the audience so as to empower the margins. *Northward Hoe* gives an instance of the controlled margins breaking free and disrupting the action. This play stages Mayberry, a gentleman, whose faith in his wife is questioned by a pair of ungente gallants. Bellamont, an amateur playwright, helps Mayberry to trap both the villains in a dramatic scheme. Act IV is a sort of rehearsal for Bellamont, who shows all his staging abilities. In the first scene of Act IV, Bellamont is solicited by Captain Jenkins to woo Doll, whose entrance eventually disrupts their conversation on theatre:

- Bellamont. This falls out pat, my man tells mee, the party is at my Dore, shall she come in Captaine?
- Captain Jenkins. O put her in, I pray now.  
[Exit Seruant]
- Bellamont. The letter saies here, that she's exceeding sick, and intreates Me to visit her: Captaine, lie you in ambush behind the Hangings, and perhaps you shall heare the peece of a Commedy [emphasis added]: She comes, she comes, make your selfe away.
- Captain Jenkins. Does the Poet play Torkin and cast my Lucræsies water Too in hugger muggers if he do, Styanax Tragedy was neuer so Horrible bloody-minded, as his Commedy shalbe,—Tawsons Captaine Jenkins.  
[Enter Doll] (IV.i.118-28)

Captain Jenkins has interrupted Bellamont's writing of a court entertainment. Hence, the tone is set for the rest of the scene. Bellamont will direct the other characters in what appears to be a parody of a city-comedy. Doll's entrance precipitates a conversation grounded on comic equivocations and asides into a further comic bawdy situation. Bellamont plans to expose Doll's dubious virtue to Captain Jenkins through a "piece of Commedy", for which he redesigns the playing space. The marginal space behind the arras will be the mirror for Doll's inconstancy. Bellamont casts Captain Jenkins as a forced observer whom he keeps under his control. The metatheatrical quality of this episode is clearly asserted, given the similarity of the staging of this scene to that of traditional adulterous discoveries. When Bellamont urges, "lie you in ambush behind the Hanging, and perhaps you shall heare the peece of a Commedy", he is addressing Captain Jenkins, but also the audience. The ironic tinge in the adverb "perhaps" strengthens the comic effect from the point of view of the audience. Jenkins becomes the pretext for a play being staged between Bellamont and the audience. Bellamont, the aspiring director, takes control of the theatrical space, for which he designs both the main stage and the margins. But this scene also relies on the scenographic choice of the observer's curtain. Bellamont's directorial role and the domestic misunderstandings troubling Mayberry's relation with his wife are reflected in this stereotypical scene, which achieves the status of a low-key play-within-the-play. This piece of comedy is a significant moment in the general economy of the play, for it summarises the main plot with its argument over a possible adultery, its complexification and its cunning anagnorisis. Once hidden behind his curtain, the forced observer does not remain passively silent for very long. He starts a direct play between the margins and the audience, while Bellamont remains the directorial presence on the main stage. Doll's cues trigger the asides of Captain Jenkins, who is compelled to play as do the intrusive comic Fools behind their arras. The forced observer is caught up in a predictable dynamic climaxing in his final reintegration in the main playing area. This farcical interlude designed by Bellamont relies on the creation of a scenic margin whose grotesque parasiting is still controlled by one of the main stage insiders. Renaissance scenography relies on such reworking of traditional codes in unexpected situations. The dramatic rhythm is ensured by the to-and-fro movement between the margins and the main stage, between the invisible and the visible.



## *Dramatic Reminders: Curtains and Stage Rémanence*

Curtains on the Renaissance stage are material thresholds endowing the stage with an ever-evolving plasticity. Never confined to the representation of one space, the ornamented stage can expand or retract thanks to curtains. Curtains enable the audience to be presented with several spaces or characters simultaneously without any breach in the continuous action. Curtains allow marginal spaces and characters to repossess the main playing area. Until now, we have considered the relationship of the characters and the curtains as playing on semi-visibility. Yet the ultimate question would be: what happens when the body of the actor disappears completely behind the arras?

The curtained stage's most challenging strategy is the complete merging of the prop with the actor. Sometimes hangings do not merely conceal a character; they become the only visible image of that character. Assessing the impact of curtains on stage movements leads us to consider the possibility that the theatrical artefact may absorb the characteristics of the body it constrains. The prop progressively turns into a "performing object". When the actor's body retreats behind the arras so as to achieve a complete disappearance, the prop replaces it, so as to maintain the dramatic impact of the character on the audience and to prevent a saturated playing space. The arras becomes a material reminder. This play on the phenomenon of *rémanence*, or after-imagery—a concept I use here to enhance the primarily visual nature of the prop—allows the intrusion of a character, though confined to the invisible margins, onto the main stage. Here, the playwright is relying on spectatorial gaze to maintain the dramatic dynamics. In the previous examples, characters caught in the liminal space of the curtains were stage surrogates for the audience. Now curtains as anaphorical props are surrogates for a character turned invisible for both the audience and the other characters. James Shirley uses this device in *The Traylor* (first performed in 1631)—"Let not the arras heare us" (I.i.79)—and *The Coronation* (first performed in 1635): "Take heed the Arras may have eares" (I.i.62). The scenography thus established allows what was rejected outside the action to remain inside the dramatic development. The anaphorical nature of the arras enables the direct visual modification of the ongoing action by a preceding act. The arras recalls these sometimes comic, often threatening, margins, turned into symbols for parallel developments. The prop replaces the actor in the narrative of a troubled harmony.

The performing capacities of the curtains are used significantly by Shakespeare in *Othello* (1603–4), Act V, Scene ii. Here, Othello hides the murdered Desdemona behind bed-curtains before Emilia enters:

*Othello.* I had forgot thee: O, come in, Emilia;  
Soft; by and by. Let me the curtains draw.  
Where art thou?  
[*Unlocks the door*]  
[*Enter Emilia*]  
What's the matter with thee now?  
*Emilia.* O, my good lord, yonder's foul murders done!  
*Othello.* What, now?  
*Emilia.* But now, my lord.  
*Othello.* It is the very error of the moon;  
She comes more nearer earth than she was wont,  
And makes men mad.  
*Emilia.* Cassio, my lord, hath kill'd a young Venetian  
Call'd Roderigo.  
*Othello.* Roderigo kill'd!  
And Cassio kill'd!  
*Emilia.* No, Cassio is not kill'd.  
*Othello.* Not Cassio kill'd! then murder's out of tune,  
And sweet revenge grows harsh.  
*Desdemona.* O, falsely, falsely murder'd!  
*Emilia.* Alas, what cry is that?  
*Othello.* That! what?  
*Emilia.* Out, and alas! that was my lady's voice.  
Help! help, ho! help! O lady, speak again!  
Sweet Desdemona! O sweet mistress, speak!  
*Desdemona.* A guiltless death I die. (V.ii.112–32)

The title page of the 1622 First Quarto stresses that the play was performed at both the Globe and the Blackfriars, both venues that supposedly possessed an alternative space in the tiring-house. In this scene, it was possible to confine Desdemona's bed in the tiring-house space or to use a mobile curtained bed. In both cases, we are faced with a precise choreography of the playing space as determined by stage properties. Othello's and Emilia's movements are conditioned by both the arras and the spectatorial gaze. Emilia's entrance disrupts the preceding murderous ceremony. The latter is put on hold by the closing of the curtains—textually, but not visually. Bed-curtains become the visual epicentre of the scene. Othello, Emilia and the audience are all positioned with regard to the morbid cloths. Cur-

tains as dramatic objects play the anaphorical part of Desdemona's grave. The metonymical power of curtains thus produces an after-image effect contributing to the creation of a specific meaning.

This *rémanence* corresponds to the coincidence of two temporal levels: Desdemona's death and Emilia's entrance. Curtains are the visual hub bringing both events together on the same level. The deed Othello desperately attempts to reject in the margins contaminates the playing space by means of the persisting visible nature of the curtains. The latter are substituted for Desdemona's martyred body to the point where props are confused with the body. If, in other plays, curtains are used metonymically for body parts (a hand, a head), in *Othello* the object absorbs the aural potentialities of the actor, who transfers his/her voice to the arras. The audience's attention is focused on the closed curtains in expectation of a discovery. Nevertheless, Shakespeare chooses to renew the discovery trope, stressing how the action in the margins can overtake the main stage. Emilia's account of Cassio's fight is suddenly interrupted by Desdemona's voice from within. The marginalised character becomes the significant centre of the action through a prop now resounding with her voice. Until Emilia draws the curtains to reveal the dying Desdemona, Othello's unfortunate wife was only embodied by the curtains. The relation between the dramatic inside and outside effected by means of the curtains reaches its apex with the choice of a liminal scenography whereby bodies and props are confused. Such a fusion of the animate and the inanimate is meant to illustrate the lethal invasion of the visibly orderly main stage by a chaotic morbid margin.

From this point on, the margins take over the familiar visible inside of the action. The dramatic object enabling this dynamic is not there to comment on the action anymore, but to subvert it, and to transform its meaning.

The observer's curtain is the symbol of a turning of drama on itself, of a mirror effect dynamising the action through stage design. The link between observers and objects of the intrusive gaze is getting more and more problematic regarding the coexistence of both sides. The relationship between the inside and the outside of the dramatic act is made unsteady by the presence of these hesitatingly open or closed curtains. This visual imbalance is the very means to renew the traditional scenography and to invigorate the action. In *What is Scenography?*, Pamela Howard describes stage properties as illustrating the complex association of on- and off-stage action: "In a stage composition, the object is much more than its literal self. It becomes an emblem for the hidden world of the play,

something that lies behind but supports the player's words" (p. 51). The theatrical object is the very tool by which the outsider invades or reconquers the main playing area. Renaissance theatrical curtains are not distancing walls but porous membranes, significantly filtering what the main stage struggles to reject in the margins. Props play a controversial role in Renaissance drama. Yet they are not meant to substitute for speech; rather, they participate in the recovery of what the text leaves in the margins, in the in-between of the tiring-house, thus helping to convey a fuller sense.

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### Date de création

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## *De la marge au centre: les personnages populaires des comédies de cour*

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Le point de départ de cette étude, comme son point d'arrivée, concerne deux comédies de cour, *Damon and Pithias* de Richard Edwards (c. 1565), et *Gallathea* de John Lyly (c. 1585). Mon intérêt pour ces deux textes porte sur ce que l'on a coutume d'appeler l'intrigue secondaire ou mineure (*sub-plot*), qui met en scène soit des serviteurs (*Damon and Pithias*), soit des gens du petit peuple (les apprentis de *Gallathea*). Entre mon point de départ et mon point d'arrivée, mon chemin me conduira non pas dans la forêt de Diane de *Gallathea*, mais dans celle des branches et feuillages des marges des manuscrits enluminés du Moyen Âge, principalement ceux datant du XII<sup>e</sup> au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, puis sur les chars et tréteaux des cycles des mystères de la Fête Dieu, ou encore dans les méandres des différentes voix qui construisent la polyphonie naissante. À mon retour, j'espère pouvoir mieux comprendre certains éléments des comédies de cour, éléments que la critique a souvent laissés pour compte.

À titre d'exemple, voici ce que disent les critiques de *Damon and Pithias* :

The play has for some time been regarded as important for its early use of a comic element along with the serious main plot — *the two are unrelated* — and for the contribution Edwards makes in it to the theory and practice of tragi-comedy. (Mills, p. 3 ; c'est moi qui souligne)

Ailleurs, L. J. Mills parle de « disconnected comic element » (p. 11). Lester Bradner, dans *The Life and Poems of Richard Edwards* déclare:

Next we have the three servants. Jack and Will, the boisterous pages, maintain with their pranks and their deception of the collier, the traditional buffoonery of English comedy. Stephano, the faithful servant of Damon and Pithias, is a very different type, but he too, by his dry humor, and the beating he gives Carisophus, carries on to a certain extent the old traditions. And then there are Grim and Gronno, collier and executioner, each contributing his bit of amusement. (p. 62)<sup>1</sup>

Les épisodes concernant ces personnages sont clairement perçus comme n'ayant aucun lien avec l'intrigue dite principale. Ils sont marginalisés dans le discours critique par rapport au propos central sur la pièce. Tout au plus sont-ils bons pour distraire, pour amuser, alors que l'essentiel du discours de la pièce est sérieux et édifiant. De quelles anciennes traditions s'agit-il, et à quoi Lester Bradner fait-il référence lorsqu'il parle de « the traditional buffoonery of English comedy », cela n'est ni clair, ni expliqué dans l'ouvrage. Cependant, Lester Bradner (p. 64-65) note un intérêt supplémentaire de la scène intitulée « The Shaving of The Collier » : elle donne au spectateur la perception du temps qui passe, c'est-à-dire les deux mois nécessaires à Damon pour son voyage. Les diverses apparitions des serviteurs ne serviraient donc qu'à introduire cette scène, qui n'aurait elle-même pour objet que de divertir, et de combler une déficience de l'espace scénique Tudor dans son rapport avec l'auditoire.

Lorsque G. K. Hunter analyse les pièces de John Lyly dans un célèbre ouvrage, *John Lyly, The Humanist as Courtier*, il semble bien vouloir faire un lien entre tous les groupes de personnages qu'il perçoit comme étant des aspects différents d'une même situation centrale :

We find in the boys' plays little or no evidence of a concern with the tensions of human relationships. The scenes tend to be short (in Lyly's plays they average less than a hundred lines), and to be distinct from one another, often with completely different characters. Their relationship to one another is, at the most, that of different facets of a central situation. (Hunter, p. 101)

1. J'ai conscience que les études de Mills et Lester sur Richard Edwards sont anciennes, mais en l'absence d'analyse récente, elles font encore autorité.



Hunter donne également une image musicale, celle d'un ensemble de voix : « They [the plays] concentrate instead on the consort of voices, the quick and witty dialogue where voice chimes with voice, idea picks idea and image begets image » (p. 103). Cependant, lorsqu'il analyse les pièces une par une, il laisse de côté une de ces voix qu'il relègue plus loin, dans une section indépendante consacrée aux intrigues secondaires. Ainsi, l'intrigue de *Gallathea* est présentée comme une fugue, mais l'analogie ne concerne que l'intrigue concernant les dieux, les villageois et les deux héroïnes, Gallathea et Phillida<sup>2</sup>. Cette analogie avec la fugue étant un pur anachronisme, il n'est pas surprenant, peut-être, que certaines voix soient laissées pour compte. Je reviendrai là-dessus après le voyage et la quête de ces traditions anciennes mentionnées par Lester Bradner sans qu'il les nomme vraiment.

G. K. Hunter fournit cependant des pistes très intéressantes lorsqu'il établit un rapport entre des arts en apparence distincts, mais qui pourtant participent d'un même imaginaire, d'une même conception du monde. Parlant de l'aspect parodique il fait un rapprochement avec les images de la marge des manuscrits médiévaux, et avec les cycles de mystères, en particulier l'épisode de Mak dans la *Seconde pièce des bergers* du cycle de Towneley (Hunter, p. 136). Refusant de voir dans cette pièce et son épisode comique un antécédent pour les pièces de cour, à juste titre semble-t-il, G. K. Hunter préfère parler de communauté de pensée et introduit ici le concept de la critique médiéviste, la « multiplicité » :

I suggest, in short, that the formal parody of a serious main plot (the adoration of the shepherds) by a comic sub-plot (second shepherds' play) can be seen as an outcrop of a general late medieval and Renaissance aesthetic, to which art-historians have given the name of « multiplicity ». (Hunter, p. 136-37)

Préférant aux termes forgés par la critique des termes qui ont cours au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance, je parlerai plutôt de polyphonie et de contrepoint. C'est donc à partir de tous ces éléments que j'aimerais aborder cette question de la marge et du centre. Dans cette problématique de la marge et du centre, le manuscrit médiéval est un élément fondamental. La page, en effet, se constitue à partir d'un texte qui occupe le centre, et d'une marge qui n'est pas définie par l'absence de texte, mais par un bord, un cadre qui, loin de la séparer de ce texte, marque un

2. La citation est trop longue pour apparaître ici ; on la trouvera aux p. 198 et 199 du livre de Hunter.

passage et constitue pour le lecteur une sorte de médiation. Le bord et la marge sont des lieux où viennent s'inscrire d'autres textes, les *marginalia*, qui constituent soit une explication, un commentaire, ou une illustration, soit une réfutation du texte au centre de la page. Assez rapidement, mais surtout à partir du xii<sup>e</sup> siècle, les manuscrits enluminés voient leurs marges envahies par des figures que l'on a pu appeler « monstres », « grotesques », « hybrides », figures animales ou humaines, ou encore une combinaison des deux, mais parfois aussi des figures et des scènes de la vie quotidienne, dont on peut se poser la question des rapports qu'elles entretiennent avec le texte, généralement en latin, des manuscrits. Que l'on utilise le terme « marge » (*margin*), ou « bord » (*edge*)<sup>3</sup>, nous sommes toujours dans le même concept de « liminalité ». À partir du bord ou de la marge, le lecteur bascule soit dans le texte, soit dans le hors-texte. On pourrait alors dire que c'est cet aspect liminal, « marginal » qui, regardant à la fois vers le manuscrit et son texte, et vers le lecteur et son monde, permet la transition de l'un à l'autre. Si l'on considère que le manuscrit n'est pas seulement le texte (par exemple les *Psaumes* ou les *Heures*), ni même la marge et le texte, mais un ensemble constitué du texte, de sa marge, et de son lecteur, alors on peut remettre en question l'idée du texte seul comme centre. Dans cette configuration, ce qui est considéré comme « à la marge » (« on the edge ») constitue bien un centre. De plus en plus, la critique tente d'établir le lien entre les images en bordure et le texte. Comme pour les personnages marginaux des pièces de théâtre, on a longtemps voulu y voir un simple divertissement sans aucune connexion avec le texte, sérieux par définition puisque le plus souvent religieux. En général, les critiques se contentent de décrire ces images et, dans le meilleur des cas, de faire un catalogue raisonné des thèmes et des figures. Comme pour le théâtre, chez les premiers critiques à s'intéresser à ces images en bordure du texte, on trouve de nombreuses déclarations telles que celle de E. Maunde Thompson, parfois empreintes d'un jugement moral :

Why should the margins of devotional books of the fifteenth century, for example, be loaded with incongruous distortions of natural or fabulous forms of life, and why did not the sense of propriety in the possessors of such books revolt at the ill-timed, and even indecent, merriment of the artist? The only answer to be given to this question is that the ornamentation of a manuscript must have been regarded as a work having no connection whatsoever with the character of the book itself. (p. 309)

3. Voir l'excellent livre de Camille.

Il faut attendre les grandes études des années 1950 et 1960 pour voir apparaître des idées nouvelles sur le rapport entre images de la marge et texte au centre de la page<sup>4</sup>, idées qui conduiront à l'investigation plus poussée de Michael Camille dont le but est clair dès le départ :

Rather than looking at the meaning of specific motifs, which are often reproduced as isolated details, I shall focus on their function as part of the whole page, text, object or space in which they are anchored. (p. 9)

Considérant le débat actuel entre centre et périphérie comme anachronique, (« we must be careful not to think of the medieval margins in Postmodern terms » [p. 10]), Michael Camille le replace dans le contexte médiéval :

Things written or drawn in the margins add an extra dimension, a supplement, that is able to gloss, parody, modernize and problematize the text's authority while never totally undermining it. The centre is, I shall argue, dependent upon the margins for its continued existence. (p.10)

Parmi les motifs des images de la marge des manuscrits, le singe, dans sa fonction mimétique (*aping*), tient une place fondamentale, si bien que toute une étude a pu lui être consacrée<sup>5</sup>. L'imitation, l'art mimétique se retrouvent dans tous les arts : ici la peinture, mais aussi la musique où l'imitation devient, en occident, le procédé fondamental de composition et, bien sûr, le théâtre. En Angleterre, la prolifération des images de la marge est concomitante avec le développement de la polyphonie et du contrepoint, ainsi qu'avec celui des grands cycles de mystères<sup>6</sup>. C'est dans cette perspective que je voudrais réexplorer la seconde pièce des bergers du cycle de Towneley.



Pour de multiples raisons, *The Second Shepherds' Play* (*Secunda Pastorum* dans l'édition de Cawley) a fait l'objet de nombreuses études, alors que peu d'autres pièces,

4. Voir, en particulier, les études de Randall et de Janson.

5. Voir Janson.

6. En ce qui concerne la polyphonie, c'est surtout à partir du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle qu'elle prend vraiment son essor. Si les images de marge apparaissent assez tôt (X<sup>e</sup> siècle), c'est principalement entre les XII<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles qu'elles prolifèrent. Quant aux cycles de mystères, en Angleterre, il sont en partie la conséquence de l'instauration de la Fête Dieu (*Corpus Christi*) au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. On continue de les jouer de façon sporadique jusque vers 1570. Les textes datent, en général, des XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles.

parmi les mystères, ont été autant étudiées dans le détail. Si le comique est très souvent présent dans les mystères, il est rarement aussi développé que dans cette pièce. D'une certaine manière, elle représente bien un analogue des manuscrits enluminés, avec le texte religieux, connu, générant des images à travers le texte verbal, et les figures marginales, générant un texte à travers des représentations picturales, texte qui se trouve en position d'imitation du texte principal.

On peut se poser la question de savoir où se situe la marge et où se situe le centre dans cette seconde pièce des bergers. Si l'on se fie au titre, ce sont bien les bergers qui sont le sujet principal du texte. Or dans une pièce qui dramatise un épisode des *Évangiles*, l'Adoration du Christ par les bergers, on peut difficilement « marginaliser » l'Enfant Jésus. Cette scène étant placée dans le contexte plus vaste de la Nativité, dont l'événement principal est l'Annonciation, on pourrait tout aussi bien mettre l'accent sur l'Ange annonciateur et son apparition. D'autant que l'Annonciation aux bergers est au centre d'une triple annonce dans l'épisode de la Nativité : l'Annonce faite à Marie, l'Annonce faite aux bergers, et l'Annonce faite aux Rois Mages<sup>7</sup>.

Que se passe-t-il dans la pièce elle-même ? Nous avons, d'une part, les éléments invariables : les bergers gardant leur troupeau, l'étoile, l'Ange, l'adoration des bergers ; et d'autre part, les éléments variables : le dialogue des bergers entre eux, l'épisode de Mak et du vol de l'agneau, la réaction des bergers à l'Annonciation et au chant de l'Ange. Chacun de ces éléments variables, absent des *Évangiles*, représente une interpolation comique dans le récit évangélique, qui en permet justement la dramatisation, avec une mise en place de la situation, une péripétie, et un dénouement, l'ensemble constituant plus de la moitié du texte. La centralité de cet ensemble d'éléments paraît alors inévitable, tout comme le lien étroit qu'il entretient avec le récit évangélique. Ainsi, l'épisode de Mak et du vol de l'agneau constitue une imitation parodique de la crèche, un contrepoint au thème de l'adoration des bergers. L'analogie et le contrepoint sont possibles grâce à la métaphore centrale de l'agneau. Cette métaphore, qui fait de Jésus-Christ l'Agneau de Dieu, se matérialise sous la forme de l'agneau volé que Mak place dans un berceau pour le faire passer pour un nouveau-né : présence tout aussi miraculeuse puisque la femme de Mak aurait produit ce rejeton sans avoir

7. En fait l'Ange n'apparaît pas aux Rois Mages pour leur annoncer la naissance du Christ, ils l'infèrent de la présence de l'étoile et des différentes prophéties. En revanche, l'Ange leur apparaît après la visite à l'Enfant Jésus, pour les prévenir du danger qu'ils courent à cause de la colère d'Hérode, et leur conseiller de rentrer chez eux par une autre route.

été « grosse ». Dans la protestation contre l'accusation de vol, Mak jure ainsi, en montrant le bébé dans le berceau : « As I am True and lele, to God here I pray/  
That this be the fyrst mele that I shall ete this day » (521-22). Et sa femme Gill renchérit :

I pray to God so mylde,  
If ever I you begyld  
That I ete this childe  
That lygys in this credyll. (535-38)

Dans cette évocation parodique, l'Eucharistie se trouve en quelque sorte inversée, si bien que l'on a pu voir dans la figure de Mak une représentation satanique. L'épisode, loin d'être marginal se trouve au cœur de ce que la pièce dans son ensemble tente de révéler. Par le faux, la fraude — « It was a hee frawde » dit l'un des bergers (594) — par l'illusion et l'imitation qui passent par une véritable mise en scène, la pièce produit un spectacle d'elle-même, révélant l'extraordinaire vérité miraculeuse de la Nativité. Dans son article intitulé « «High Fraud» in the English Shepherds' Play », Margery M. Morgan donne une explication de cet épisode :

the presentation of the sham serves a sublime purpose, leading the mind through created things up to God, as that other sham — the play itself — offers a distorted shadow of the divine event. Gill's assertion that the sheep in the cradle is a changeling underlines the miraculous transformation whereby the familiar animal, on which the livelihood of the mediaeval English audiences depended so largely, becomes the symbol of the spiritual redemption: the Lamb of God, still to be found in the cattle shed, between the ox and the ass. (p. 687-88).

Si Mak peut se définir comme annonciateur parodique de l'Ange, en revanche, les bergers, par leur imitation du chant de l'Ange<sup>8</sup>, en viennent à prendre la place de ce dernier dans l'annonce et la diffusion de la Bonne Nouvelle. En effet, ils quittent la scène en chantant, après avoir reçu leur mission de la vierge elle-même :

Maria. [...] Tell furth as ye go,  
And myn on this morne.

8. J'ai déjà analysé cet épisode de l'imitation du chant de l'Ange dans un article intitulé : « "Exceeding measure", la mesure dans les interludes moraux ».

<sup>1</sup> *Pastor.* Fare well, lady, so fare to beholde,  
 With thy childe on thi kne.  
<sup>2</sup> *Pastor.* Bot he lygys full cold.  
 Lord, well is me! Now we go, thou behold.  
<sup>3</sup> *Pastor.* Forsothe, allredy it semys to be told  
 Full oft.  
<sup>1</sup> *Pastor.* What grace we have fun!  
<sup>2</sup> *Pastor.* Come furth; now ar we won!  
<sup>3</sup> *Pastor.* To syng ar we bun —  
 Let take on loft! (744-54)

Cette voix des bergers ne remplace pas celle de l'Ange, elle en complète l'harmonie. Comme dans une composition polyphonique, le *Gloria* de l'Ange représente la teneur grégorienne, l'élément liturgique invariable lié à l'Annonciation aux Bergers. La voix de ces derniers, loin d'être marginale, représente la seule voie possible à l'homme, celle de l'imitation, comme pour répondre aux paroles du Christ au moment de l'institution de l'Eucharistie : « Faites ceci en mémoire de moi » (*Luc* XXII, 19). Les bergers sont ainsi à la fois au centre d'une intrigue sérieuse, et d'une intrigue comique qui la parodie, mais leur position centrale tient au fait qu'ils constituent un lien qui les conduit d'un espace extérieur vers un espace intérieur devenu centre du monde. Leur intégration dans ce centre est le résultat d'une série de médiations (l'Ange, puis la Vierge). Devenus eux-mêmes médiateurs, ils permettent la diffusion de ce centre au reste de l'espace.

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Dans son ouvrage sur les sermons, G. R. Owst établit un parallèle entre les sermons émaillés d'anecdotes comiques, et le théâtre religieux avec ses nombreux personnages et scènes comiques. Ainsi, il voit dans les figures comiques des miracles et des mystères, puis des moralités, des avatars de l'aspect anecdotique des sermons. Les termes « anecdotes » et « anecdotique » font, bien sûr, penser non pas au centre, mais à la marge. Pourtant, si l'on considère qu'un sermon est, avant tout, didactique, alors l'anecdote se situe au centre de la stratégie du prédicateur. Dans les manuscrits ou dans le théâtre religieux, l'histoire réputée centrale est connue, d'une manière ou d'une autre, du lecteur ou du spectateur ; de la même façon, le message du sermon n'est qu'une répétition de mises en garde bien connues. L'essentiel réside donc dans l'anecdote, comme médiation indispensable entre le message du sermon et l'auditoire. Elle propose une variation originale, toujours nouvelle, qui devient le véritable centre d'intérêt afin de

renouveler l'impact du message qui, pour le temps de l'anecdote, est rejeté à la marge, avant de reprendre sa place centrale.

Les comédies de cour auxquelles je reviens à présent après ce long détour, me semblent user des mêmes stratégies. Leurs personnages comiques, anecdotiques, pourraient figurer comme des avatars des anecdotes comiques des sermons, des images de la marge des manuscrits, et des personnages comiques du théâtre médiéval.

Revenons, dans un premier temps, à *Damon and Pithias* de Richard Edwards. La pièce est construite selon le principe de voix parallèles sur le mode polyphonique, avec la présence d'un sujet et d'un contre-sujet, auxquels vient s'adjoindre un déchant. Dès la scène d'ouverture, le thème, à la fois du sujet et du contre-sujet est annoncé : l'amitié (*friendship*). Le terme et ses compagnons — *friend*, *friendly* — apparaissent 21 fois entre les vers 69 et 138 qui constituent le dialogue entre le philosophe-courtisan Aristippus, et le vil courtisan Carisophus. Mais le contexte dans lequel le thème se développe est vicié, l'accord entre les deux courtisans étant faussé, comme Aristippus s'empresse de nous le dire une fois que Carisophus a quitté la scène : « Then how can this friendship between us two come to pass ? » (103). Il s'agit d'une amitié intéressée, de circonstance, dans une cour rongée par la corruption, la flatterie et le mensonge.

Le contre-sujet est introduit avec l'amitié de Damon et Pithias dont l'accord est parfait. La fausse amitié implique une fausse relation entre les sujets du royaume de Sicile et le tyran Dionysus, maître de ce royaume. Dans ce contexte, des voix intermédiaires, telles que celles de Stéphanos et Eubulus, tentent de rétablir l'harmonie en éliminant les voix qui constamment viennent la fausser. Ainsi, la bastonnade infligée à Carisophus par Stéphanos (925) est reprise en imitation par celle que lui inflige Eubulus (1725). Le thème annoncé par le sujet, puis contrecarré par le contre-sujet, prépare et favorise un déchant qui, en imitation, propose un lien parodique entre les deux. Ce déchant est pris en charge par les voix de Jack et Will, respectivement les serviteurs de Carisophus et d'Aristippus.

Dans une première scène, Jack et Will se montrent proches l'un de l'autre, commentant de façon ironique la nouvelle amitié qui lie leurs maîtres. En accord sur tous les points, ils quittent la scène ensemble. L'ironie procède du fait que c'est Will, le serviteur d'Aristippus, qui, peut-être naïvement, tente de rassurer Jack sur la nature de cette amitié, alors que Jack se montre plus réservé :

*Jack.* ... Aristippus alone  
Now rules the roast with his pleasant devices,

That I fear he will put out of conceit my master Carisophus.  
*Will.* Fear not that, Jack ; for, like brother and brother,  
 They are knit in true friendship the one with the other.  
 They are fellows, you know, and honest men both;  
 Therefore the one to hinder the other they will be loth.  
*Jack.* Ye, but I have heard say there is falsehood in fellowship.  
 In the court sometimes one gives another finely the slip. (189-97)

Nous nous trouvons ici dans l'inversion du sujet, toujours en imitation. Cette inversion conduit à la scène où les voix se mêlent puisque Stephano fait entendre et sentir à Carisophus la voix de la bastonnade, tout en procédant à l'inversion de son propre nom (« Onaphets »). Pendant ce temps, Jack, valet de Carisophus, regarde passivement la scène, ironisant ensuite lorsque son maître se plaint de cette passivité<sup>9</sup>. À son tour, ce déchant conduit à la querelle entre Jack et Will, scène au cours de laquelle quelques vérités sont bien assénées en ce qui concerne Aristippus et Carisophus. Chacun des valets déchante sur le thème du premier sujet, et prend la défense (ironique pour le spectateur) de son maître, en des termes qui laissent peu de place à l'équivoque : Aristippus et Carisophus sont bien de faux amis et des courtisans de la pire espèce. Lorsque Jack et Will en arrivent aux coups, le spectateur comprend qu'il s'agit là de la mise en spectacle de la fausse amitié entre Aristippus et Carisophus. Devant l'arrivée intempestive de Snap (personnage qui procède aux arrestations, symbole du pouvoir arbitraire de Dionysus), les valets se reconcilient sous le signe de l'amitié : « Let us agree like friends, and shake each other by the fist » (1088).

L'expression utilisée ici (« shake by the fist ») marque bien toute l'ambiguïté de cette amitié de circonstance qu'ils vont s'empresse de mettre à l'œuvre en s'alliant contre Grim, le charbonnier. C'est cette longue scène (283 vers) que l'on a souvent considérée comme superflue, déconnectée du reste de la pièce, ou servant de « bouche-trou » en quelque sorte. Pourtant, si l'on considère que les voix de Jack et de Will reprennent en imitation les autres voix de la composition, la scène prend une toute autre résonance et une toute autre place dans la pièce. De nombreux éléments relient la scène au reste de la pièce. D'une part, les différentes allusions aux événements récents : l'arrestation de Damon, l'accusation

9. Le motif du maître battu devant son valet sans que celui-ci ne lève le petit doigt, puis ensuite joue l'innocent est repris par Shakespeare dans la scène de la Nourrice et de Mercutio dans *Romeo and Juliet*.



d'espionnage, la condamnation à mort. Sous l'effet du vin apporté par Jack, la langue de Grim se délie et il prononce des paroles qui pourraient bien le faire arrêter. Jack et Will se comportent ici de la même façon que Carisophus lorsqu'il veut faire parler un suspect ; ils mettent Grim en confiance, puis « dirigent » la conversation. Si le thème de l'espionnage ré-apparaît ici c'est que Carisophus n'hésite pas non plus à employer son propre serviteur comme espion ; du reste, lorsque Will aperçoit Grim, il utilise le terme « spy » : « 'Tis Coals, I spy, coming yonder » (1091). Toutes les couches de la société de Syracuse se trouvent affectées par l'ambiance générale qui règne à la cour et, selon le principe d'analogie, la corruption du plus haut degré de la chaîne implique celle de tous les autres degrés. Si Damon et Pithias ne sont pas corrompus, mais victimes de la corruption, c'est parce qu'ils sont étrangers à la cour. De la même façon, Grim se pose comme élément extérieur, bien qu'il soit sujet de Dionysus, et devient victime de Jack et Will, tout comme Damon est victime de Carisophus. Le thème de l'amitié est également repris dans l'échange entre Jack, Will et Grim : « Friendship is dead in court ; hypocrisy doth reign » (1220), dit Grim.

L'épisode qui conclut la scène, « The Shaving of the Collier », est relié à l'intrigue autour de Dionysus en particulier par la description que fait Aristippus du régime tyrannique. Rappelant l'histoire bien connue concernant le climat de méfiance et de peur qui entoure le tyran, Aristippus introduit ainsi la scène :

The king himself museth hereat ; yet is he far out of square,  
That he trusteth none to come near him. Not his own daughters  
will he have  
Unsearch'd to enter his chamber ; which he hath made barbers his  
beard to shave,  
Not with knife or razor — for all edge-tools he fears —  
But with hot burning nutshells they singe off his hair. (1041-45)

On se souvient, d'ailleurs que le thème de la fausse amitié et la duperie a déjà été associé à la « barbe » par Aristippus au tout début de la pièce, lorsqu'il commente la nature de son amitié pour Carisophus : « Yet I have played with his beard in knitting this knot./I promised friendship ; but you love few words — I spake it, but I meant it not » (123-24). Au moment où Jack et Will font la barbe de Grim, l'histoire est de nouveau mentionnée. En effet, Grim, complètement en confiance à présent, cherche à avoir confirmation des rumeurs au sujet de Dionysus :

*Grim.* But tell me, is it true that abroad is blown ?  
*Jack.* What is that ?

Grim. Hath the king made those fair damsels, his daughters,  
To become now fine and trim barbers?

Jack. Yea, truly, — to his own person.

Grim. Good fellows, believe me, as the case now stands  
I would give one sack of coals to be wash'd at their hands!  
If ich came so near them, for my wit chould not give three chips  
If ich could not steal one swap at their lips!

Jack (*aside*). Will, this knave is drunk. Let us dress him;  
Let us rifle him so, that he have not one penny to bless him,  
And steal away his debenters too.

Will (*aside*). Content; invent the way, and I am ready. (1251-63)

La séquence qui suit, avec la chanson, constitue une véritable mise en scène de l'anecdote des filles de Dionysus, l'imitation d'une action par ailleurs non-dramatisée. Elle fonctionne aussi selon le mode de l'intertextualité, puisqu'elle s'inspire des séquences qui marquent la chute du protagoniste dans les interludes, chute accompagnée d'une chanson. Les serviteurs, ici, héritent de la fonction des vices des interludes, et Grim participe à sa propre duperie en prêtant sa voix à leur chanson. Le jeu de mots sur « shave », raser et voler, implique que si Grim peut être ainsi dupé, Dionysus, malgré toutes ses précautions, n'est pas autant en sécurité qu'il le croit.

Un lien ferme ayant été établi avec le reste du texte, la scène peut alors servir un autre but. Comme dans une composition polyphonique, chaque voix se déploie horizontalement, mais entre aussi en consonance avec les autres. Les points de consonance permettent plusieurs niveaux de lecture. La scène de Jack, Will et Grim peut être vue comme un intermède comique à part entière, mais ce qui se dit et ce qui se fait dans cette scène permet un nouvel éclairage sur le reste de la pièce, et en élargit le sens. Ainsi, les nombreuses réflexions sur la situation à la cour de Dionysus peuvent être interprétées comme une critique et une satire de certains aspects de la vie à la cour, y compris à la cour d'Elisabeth I<sup>re</sup>. Le discours qui compare les courtisans et les charbonniers<sup>10</sup>, la critique de la tenue vestimentaire des courtisans, représentent des variations sur un thème bien connu et repris dans de nombreuses pièces. La pièce qui, jusque là, portait sur une allégorie morale ou éthique, à partir du concept de l'amitié tel qu'on le trouve chez les philosophes classiques, puis ceux de la Renaissance, devient plus

10. Le débat peut prendre plusieurs formes dont l'une, « *Court vs. Country* » est développée par Shakespeare dans *As You Like It*.

résolument satirique et politique, annonçant la mise en garde finale au souverain. En ajoutant leur voix à la polyphonie initiale, Jack, Will et Grim médiatisent le passage d'une allégorie somme toute assez générale, à une allégorie politique plus actuelle, et leur voix explicite cette allégorie pour les spectateurs.

Ce rôle de médiation est tout aussi important dans la pièce de John Lyly, *Gallathea*.

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Revenons brièvement sur l'analogie avec la fugue que propose brillamment certes, mais peut-être un peu hâtivement G. K. Hunter. Toute son analogie ne concerne, en fait, que l'intrigue des jeunes filles, leur escapade dans la forêt, la rivalité des dieux, la colère de Neptune, et la réconciliation finale. Elle exclut totalement l'intrigue de Rafe, Dick et Robin, intrigue qu'il traite à part sous l'intitulé « Sub-plot ». Or, les divers épisodes qui la constituent représentent plus d'un quart de la pièce, et devraient au moins être intégrés dans la structure fugale comme sujet ou contre-sujet. Peut-être le problème vient-il de l'anachronisme de l'analogie. On ne peut comparer que ce qui est comparable, et l'analogie entre structure dramatique et structure musicale ne fonctionne que si les deux sont présentes au temps de la composition. Dans le cas de l'analogie que propose G. K. Hunter, la structure musicale à laquelle il se rapporte n'existe tout simplement pas au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>11</sup>. En revanche, d'autres formes musicales existent, formes qui rendront possible l'avènement de la fugue, et qui peuvent sans difficulté intégrer toutes les voix de la pièce.

La question de la marge affecte plusieurs aspects de la pièce. Dans la mesure où la forêt représente à la fois le lieu de l'exil et celui de l'initiation, elle peut être considérée comme se situant à la marge<sup>12</sup>. Le centre serait alors le village et ses habitants, encadré, d'un côté par la forêt avec ses créatures (dieux et nymphes), de l'autre par la mer (avec le monstre). Dans la mesure où tous les personnages se retrouvent dans ce lieu où se déroulent l'intrigue principale et l'intrigue secondaire, on observe un déplacement du centre vers la marge. Ce déplacement est d'autant plus marqué que le dieu de la mer, Neptune, rejoint aussi la forêt. Les

11. Le terme « fugue » existe bien, au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, dans un sens musical. Thomas Morley dans son traité, *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music* (1597), l'utilise à plusieurs reprises, mais dans le sens de « contrepoint » ou simplement d'« imitation ».

12. Selon Arnold Van Gennep, les rites d'initiation impliquent toujours une mise à la marge de l'initié.

glissements qui s'opèrent de la marge au centre, nous incitent à relativiser ces deux notions. Un schéma initial simple pourrait placer les humains au centre du dispositif suivant : Dieux — Humains — Monstres. Mais le contraste entre les personnages, définis autant par leur fonction théâtrale et dramatique que par leur humanité ou non-humanité, renvoie à un autre schéma d'images en miroir, avec ce qu'il faut de déformation pour qu'une fausse relation s'établisse entre les différentes voix. On aurait ainsi, d'un côté les dieux (et les nymphes) et les deux héroïnes, de l'autre les jeunes apprentis et leurs « maîtres » qui représentent les faux dieux. L'initiation des jeunes apprentis se présente comme une imitation de l'initiation des deux jeunes filles. La relation de la marge et du centre s'explique également par la disparition des limites, comme l'indique Tityrus au tout début de la pièce :

Then might you see ships sail where sheep fed, anchors cast where ploughs go, fishermen throw their nets where husbandmen sow their corn, and fishes throw their scales where fowls do breed their quills. Then might you gather froth where now is dew, rotten weeds for sweet roses, and take view of monstrous mermaids instead of passing maids. (I.i.28-34)

Ces « monstrous mermaids », cantonnées dans la marge comme les monstres hybrides des manuscrits, occupent à présent le centre, et seul le sacrifice rituel d'une jeune vierge (« maid ») peut contenir le monstre qui envahit le centre une fois par an, pour rester dans la marge le reste du temps. L'action de la pièce consiste donc à faire disparaître à jamais le monstre du centre pour l'enfermer dans la marge. Dans cette action, la forêt devient, pour un temps fixé (un an) le lieu d'un rituel initiatique qui va permettre de replacer les limites, et de resituer le centre et la marge. Selon les formules de Michael Camille, on peut parler de « sacred liminality », et voir dans la forêt « A place where ritual purity [comes] up against worldly corruption » (p. 57)<sup>13</sup>.

L'apparition dans la forêt de personnages qui, par leur statut dramatique se situent en marge des dieux et des deux héroïnes, et contrastent avec eux, fait penser à cette invasion du centre par la marge, du lieu sacré du rite par le Monde et ses préoccupations matérielles. Un analogue frappant se trouve dans les « miséricordes »<sup>14</sup> et leur sculptures marginales dont Michael Camille dit : « Here in the

13. L'auteur parle ici du cloître de l'abbaye bénédictine de la Daurade à Toulouse.

14. Il s'agit des sièges sculptés du chœur des églises et des cathédrales.

very centre of the sacred space, the marginal world erupts » (p. 94). Du reste, il établit une comparaison avec le théâtre et les mystères:

Although some misericords do display religious subjects, such as the Judgement of Solomon at Worcester and Noah's Ark at Ely, these are not the central Christological subjects, but scenes that allow, like the Mystery plays, anecdotal details and the depiction of social manners. (p. 95)

Les épisodes des apprentis Rafe, Robin, Dick et Peter, dans *Gallathea* participent de cette même notion. Notons, tout d'abord, que les trois frères, fils d'un meunier, déboulent sur scène rejetés par la mer à la suite d'un naufrage. Ils se retrouvent doublement à la marge, d'une part à cause de leur statut de naufragés, d'autre part car le rivage est, par définition, un bord, un entre-deux, si bien que le marin leur conseille de rejoindre un espace qui leur est familier :

You are now in Lincolnshire, where you can want no fowl if you can devise means to catch them. There be woods hard by, and at every mile's end houses, so that if you seek on the land you shall speed better than on the sea. (I.iv.12-15)

Le marin, quant à lui, par sa connaissance des points cardinaux, par son utilisation de la boussole et autres instruments, peut se situer dans l'espace dont, finalement, il occupe nécessairement et continuellement le centre. Mais son jargon est parfaitement incompréhensible pour les trois frères qui se révèlent incapables de mémoriser les données qui pourraient les resituer dans l'espace. Ils en sont réduits à errer dans la forêt pendant un an, à la recherche d'une fortune qui leur échappe toujours. Comme le signale G. K. Hunter, le jargon prétendument scientifique des trois « maîtres » constitue une des cibles de la satire :

Seamanship, alchemy and astrology are presented as crabbed mysteries, only fit to be made the target of the deflating wit of the boys. This largely takes the form of ridiculing the specialized jargon of these « mysteries ». (p. 233)

Tour à tour apprenti d'un alchimiste, puis d'un astrologue, Rafe se rend compte que leur prétendue connaissance passe par un texte abscons qui écarte la plupart des gens du centre de la connaissance, afin d'en conserver le supposé mystère, comme le signale Peter, premier serviteur de l'alchimiste :

It is a very secret science, for none almost can understand the language of it : sublimation, almagation, calcination, rubification, incorporation, circination,

cementation, albification, and frementation, with as many terms impossible to be uttered as the art to be compassed. (II.iii.9-14)

L'astrologue n'est pas épargné qui émaille son discours de citations latines. Leur art est ainsi entouré d'un mystère qui pourrait faire d'eux des dieux au yeux des apprentis. Le marin se targue de dominer les éléments, et Peter définit son maître l'alchimiste en ces termes : « A little more than a man and a hair's-breath less than a god » (II.iii.37). Au sujet de l'astrologue Rafe s'exclame : « I hope, sir, you are no more than a god » (III.iii.45). Or, le vrai mystère, s'il existe, se situe là où les « vrais » dieux, Diane, Vénus et Neptune, agissent. Les apprentis et leurs « maîtres » fonctionnent en imitation et en parodie du rite central d'initiation. Ils représentent les images de la marge singeant le rite initiatique qui se constitue autour de l'intrigue des dieux et des villageois. L'imitation est d'autant plus frappante qu'elle reproduit en interne le schéma des figures de la marge, les apprentis qui tentent d'imiter leurs maîtres, et du texte central, l'inaccessible et supposé mystère des maîtres. Les analogues des images de la marge foisonnent. Ici la nature hybride des maîtres, mi-hommes, mi-dieux, et les démons que suscite leur art selon Rafe (« Nay, I have done if you work with devils » [II.iii.49]), là l'apparition du gryphon dans le texte de l'alchimiste : « O my child, gryphes make their nests of gold though their coats are feathers » (II.iii.11-12).

Ici encore, le bestiaire de l'astrologue, lié aux signes du zodiaque — « Ram » (III.iii.51), « Bull » (56), « Capricornus » (57) — et raillé par Rafe (« ewe » [55], « cony » [64]) ; jusqu'à la description de la forêt par Rafe, qui ressemble étrangement aux bordures de feuillage des pages des manuscrits, grouillante d'animaux de toute espèce :

Call you this seeking of fortunes, when one can find nothing but bird's nests ?  
Would I were out of these woods, for I shall have but wooden luck ; here's  
nothing but the screaming of owls, croaking of frogs, hissing of adders, bark-  
ing of foxes, walking of hags. (II.iii.1-5)

La liste ne serait pas complète sans le singe, image favorite de la marge qui fait son apparition sous les traits de Peter : « Let me cross myself. I never heard so many great devils in a little monkey's mouth » (II.iii.15-16). Le contraste est frappant entre ces figures et les créatures qui peuplent effectivement la forêt pour le spectateur : dieux, nymphes, cerfs et jeunes vierges. Marge ou centre, tout est question de perspective, et en ce sens, les créatures de la marge que représentent aussi les apprentis et leurs maîtres expliquent et explicitent, en médiateurs,

l'allégorie du texte, sans pour autant en détruire la portée. Ce qui fonctionne au niveau du mythe est replacé dans un contexte social, mais le mystère reste inviolable.

Un point particulièrement intéressant de l'aspect social introduit par les apprentis trouve un écho dans la scène finale, lorsque Vénus décide d'arranger les choses et de rétablir l'harmonie. En effet, une des préoccupations des trois frères concerne l'aspect matériel et économique de la filiation, et le principe de primogéniture : qui des trois frères héritera du moulin du père ?

*Robin.* Why, man, I served a fortuneteller, who said I should live to see my father hang'd and both my brothers beg. So I conclude the mill shall be mine, and I live by imagination still. (V.i.33-35)

Quant à Dick, Peter apprend à ces deux frères qu'il cherche à les déposséder :

*Peter.* He hath gotten a master now that will teach him to make you both his younger brothers.

*Rafe.* Ay, thou passest for devising impossibilities. That's as true as thy master could make silver pots of tags of points.

*Peter.* Nay, he will teach him to cozen you both and so get the mill to himself. (V.i.65-70)

Or, lorsque Vénus décide de changer l'une des deux jeunes filles en garçon, le problème se pose, pour Tityrus, en terme d'héritage :

*Melebeus.* Tityrus, let yours be a boy, and if you will, mine shall not.

*Tityrus.* Nay, mine shall not, for by that means my young son shall lose his inheritance. (V.iii.154-56)

Vénus tranche, tout en maintenant le mystère :

*Venus.* Neither of them shall know whose lot it shall be till they come to the church door. One shall be. (V.iii.173-74)

Enfin, l'intégration des voix supposées de la marge passe par leur participation vocale à l'harmonie finale. Le déchant qui contribuait à la polyphonie des voix par un contrepunt ironique, se trouve, par la volonté de Vénus, replacé au centre de la composition, alors même que Diane tentait de le rejeter :

*Diana.* Let them alone, they be but peevish.

*Venus.* Yet they will be as good as minstrels at the marriage, to make us all merry.

*Dick.* Ay, ladies, we bear a very good consort.

*Venus.* Can you sing?  
*Rafe.* Basely.  
*Venus.* And you?  
*Dick.* Meanly.  
*Venus.* And what can you do?  
*Robin.* If they double it, I will treble it.  
*Venus.* Then shall ye go with us, and sing Hymen before the marriage. Are you content?  
*Rafe.* Content? Never better content, for there we shall be sure to fill our bellies with capons' rumps or some such dainty dishes.  
*Venus.* Then follow us. (V.iii.189-202)

Par les jeux de mots qui marquent ces personnages comme appartenant à l'imperfection (« basely », « meanly ») et par leurs préoccupations charnelles, la marge qu'ils représentent envahit le centre, jusqu'au cœur/chœur même de l'église mentionnée par Vénus, lieu du mystère et de la transformation, tout comme la crèche de la *Seconde pièce des bergers*.



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## *Shakespeare's Richard III as a Choric Subversive*

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RICHARD III's character as a duplicitous villain, established by Thomas More in his uncompleted Latin and English versions of his *History of Richard III*, was reinforced by the chroniclers Hall and Holinshed; however, Richard's first dramatic representation, which occurred in Legge's Latin trilogy *Richardus Tertius*, performed at Cambridge in 1579, makes him an archetypal tyrant. Offering an alternative image of the last Plantagenet, this academic tragedy modelled upon Seneca<sup>1</sup> was recognized for its dramatic effectiveness, but because it was not printed until the twentieth century, its contemporary influence was limited. Shakespeare may have known about Legge's dramatic version, though it is unlikely that he had access to the text. More's characterization was, on the other hand, readily available in both Hall and Holinshed, and it was a natural choice for a playwright because of the vividness of More's portrait.

Richard's deformity, which for More manifests his evil nature, is introduced in his first appearance on Shakespeare's stage. Near the beginning of Act V in Part 2 of *Henry VI*, Richard, along with his father, the Duke of York, and his brother Edward, the future

1. See my article, "Legge's Neo-Senecan *Richardus Tertius*".

king, confront the Lancastrian forces led by Queen Margaret and Clifford. In response to the queen's threatened arrest of York, Richard indicates he will use force to defend his father, to which Clifford replies, "Hence, heap of wrath, foul indigested lump,/As crooked in thy manners as thy shape!" (V.i.157-58). Richard does not answer this taunt, but before the act ends he proves his valour in battle. The youthful Richard kills the Duke of Somerset in the Yorkist victory at St. Albans just as Part 2 ends. Shakespeare begins Part 3 with Richard presenting the Duke of Somerset's head as he requests recognition of his heroic action. It is significant that, although Shakespeare calls attention to Richard's deformity, his achievement on the battle field is also emphasized. As a matter of fact, Richard is singled out by York as having "best deserv'd of all my sons" (I.i.17). Richard's reputation as a fierce warrior, which More and the chroniclers include in spite of their negative depictions, is thus linked with his deformity at the beginning of Shakespeare's creation of Richard's role.

Richard's devotion to his father is highlighted by his attempts to rescue him in the next battle; when York and his youngest son, Rutland, are captured and humiliated by Queen Margaret and Clifford, it is Richard who vows revenge, and it is Margaret who denies Richard's patrimony and by implication his noble birth, as she identifies his deformity with his destiny:

... thou art neither like thy sire nor dam,  
But like a foul misshapen stigmatic,  
Mark'd by the destinies to be avoided,  
As venom toads, or lizards' dreadful stings. (3 *Henry VI*, II.ii.135-38)

This is the first of several occasions on which Margaret and Richard trade insults, and it implies that a higher power determines the actions of the participants in the drama. Margaret's role as a prophet and choric interpreter is thus linked with Richard from their first encounter, where he is represented as an outsider rejected by the nobility. Although his honour is reaffirmed a short time later by his appointment as the Duke of Gloucester, he says he would prefer the title of Duke of Clarence because of the ominous associations with Gloucester.<sup>2</sup> Again the element of destiny is made apparent.

2. Holinshed represents a common view on the title's associations: "Some thinke that the name and title of Gloucester, hathe bene unluckye to diverse, which for their honoures have bene erected by creation of princes, to that stile and dignitie, as Hughe Spenser, Thomas of Woodstocke, son to Kyng Edward the thirde, and this Duke Humphrey: whiche iij persons by miserable deathe finished their dayes, and after them king Richarde the thirde also, Duke of Gloucester, in civill war was slaine and brought to death" (p. 1257).

It is at this point that Richard reveals his true nature and his plans to gain the throne. Following immediately upon the newly crowned Edward's proposal to Elizabeth Woodville to become his queen, Richard in a lengthy soliloquy examines his situation. Recognizing that Edward's marriage may increase the number of heirs that would stand between himself and the crown, Richard briefly considers love as a consolation. However, he quickly rejects this alternative as impossible because of his physical deformity, which he angrily blames on Nature: "love forswore me in my mother's womb" (3 *Henry VI*, III.ii.153). The details of his deformity make him a pitiable victim of destiny:

To shrink mine arm up like a withered shrub;  
To make an envious mountain on my back,  
Where sits deformity to mock my body;  
To shape my legs of an unequal size,  
To disproportion me in every part,  
Like to a chaos, or an unlick'd bear-whelp  
That carries no impression like the dam. (3 *Henry VI*, III.ii.156-62)

His withered arm, hunchback, and unequal legs suggest a grotesque appearance that sets him apart from society and shows, as Queen Margaret had earlier charged, that he bears no resemblance to his mother. Shakespeare significantly expands on More's depiction of Richard's deformity. In comparing Richard to his brothers, King Edward and George Duke of Clarence, More notes that "in witte and courage" Richard was equal to his brothers, but in "bodye and prowesse farre under them bothe, litle of stature, ill fetured of limmes, croke backed, his left shoulder much higher then his right, hard favoured of visage, and suche as is in states called warlye, in other menne otherwise" (p. 7). Polydore Vergil's and other contemporary accounts mention some of the same physical details, but the withered arm and the legs of unequal size appear to be a later elaboration. More also relates Richard's physical deformity to his evil nature: "He was malicious, wrathfull, envious, and from afore his birth, ever frowarde"; the fact that he was a breach birth (his mother "coule not bee delivered of hym uncutte; . . . hee came into the worlde with the feete forward") and also born, according to rumour, "not untothed" (More, p. 7) pointed in the contemporary view to demonic associations.

After considering his options, given the limitations imposed by his physical deformity, Shakespeare's Richard determines his course of action:

Then since this earth affords no joy to me  
 But to command, to check, to o'erbear such  
 As are of better person than myself,  
 I'll make my heaven to dream upon the crown,  
 And, whiles I live, t'account this world but hell,  
 Until my misshap'd trunk that bears this head  
 Be round impalèd with a glorious crown. (3 *Henry VI*, III.ii.165-71)

His goal to attain the crown is clear, but the means to achieve it offers a special challenge. It is at this point that Shakespeare represents the real nature of Richard's role as the subversive. Using classical archetypes to highlight his position, Richard declares that he will attain his end by adopting a deceptive role, by appearing to be a wise counsellor like Nestor, while in fact he is emulating the sly deceiver Ulysses. He takes for his basic model Machiavelli, who had by the late sixteenth century become the epitome of the deceiver, an embodiment of the archetypal seducer, Satan. The tradition of the subversive force in drama had been firmly established in the figure of the Vice in the morality play, earlier in the sixteenth century, and by the early 1590s, he had been manifested in a variety of forms, particularly by Marlowe. Mephistopheles in *Doctor Faustus* complicates the role of the Vice through irony, while Barabas in the *Jew of Malta* is a victim of social injustice who develops the qualities of the Vice into a way of life. Barabas may be an obvious precedent for Shakespeare's Richard III, as John Jowett claims (p. 28), but the recasting of the historical king into a Machiavellian villain required careful manipulation of source materials, as well as the embellishment of certain factors associated with his history.

Shakespeare represents the consolidation of the Yorkist victory over the Lancastrians at the end of 3 *Henry VI* by staging the killings of Henry and his son; Richard joins his brothers in stabbing the unarmed Prince Edward, but Richard alone kills the passive deposed king. Again Shakespeare introduces Richard's deformity, as Henry VI prophesies Richard's violent future, which he links to evil omens at Richard's birth:

The owl shriek'd at thy birth, an evil sign;  
 The night-crow cried, aboding luckless time  
 Dogs howl'd, and hideous tempest shook down trees;  
 ...  
 Teeth hadst thou in thy head when thou wast born,  
 To signify thou cam'st to bite the world. (3 *Henry VI*, V.vi.44-54)

Richard silences him by stabbing him and then responds to the rumour that he was born with teeth, which he claims “signified/That I should snarl, and bite, and play the dog./Then since the heavens have shap’d my body so,/Let hell make crook’d my mind to answer it” (V.vi.76–79). He concludes his soliloquy by denouncing his bond of brotherhood and threatening his brothers’ lives. Linking physical deformity to his destiny, he justifies his evil designs, which he now will pursue. The role Richard projects for himself is symbolized in the final scene of 3 *Henry VI* by Richard’s kissing King Edward’s infant son, the new heir to the throne—a kiss which he compares to Judas’s in the betrayal of Christ (V.vii.33–34).

In the latter half of his last *Henry VI* play, Shakespeare thus prepared his audience for Richard’s role in the sequel he had probably already begun. Richard’s character was now fully developed, and as he launches the continuation of the historical action, he reiterates the connection between his deformity and his destiny. Francis Bacon in his *Essays* succinctly describes the relationship between deformity and character that underlies Shakespeare’s creation of Richard III:

Deformed persons are commonly even with nature; for as nature hath done ill by them, so do they by nature; being for the most part (as the Scripture saith), “void of natural affection”; and so they have their revenge of nature. . . it is good to consider of deformity, not as a sign, which is more deceivable; but as a cause, which seldom faileth of the effect. . . all deformed persons are extreme bold. First, as in their own defence, as being exposed to scorn; but in process of time by a general habit. Also it stirreth in them industry, and especially of this kind, to watch and observe the weakness of others, that they may have somewhat to repay. (pp. 99–100)

The perception that deformity is not so much a sign of character as the cause of particular behaviour implies that deformity determines one’s actions. Extreme boldness results from being subjected to scorn, but also the industry stirred may be manifested in ambition, and the weakness observed in others may be readily exploited to redress a perceived injustice. Bacon’s reflections on the nature of deformity may shed light on Shakespeare’s Richard III, but his dramatic portrayal is somewhat more complex.

Richard emerges as a major player in 3 *Henry VI*, and in the tragedy that follows he dominates the action from the beginning to the end. He also serves as a choric commentator, interpreting and emphasizing aspects of the action as the play proceeds. His choric introduction to the English world after the Yorkists have gained control contrasts an idyllic peace with the violence of war. However,



it is a world from which he sees himself excluded by his deformity. His self-pitying mode is quickly succeeded by anger, as he justifies his intended villainy:

Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,  
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time  
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,  
And that so lamely and unfashionable  
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them—  
...  
And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover  
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,  
I am determined to prove a villain  
And hate the idle pleasures of these days. (I.i.19-31)

His perception is completely self-oriented, and, as he goes on to explain, he means to reconstruct the world to suit his desires. It is at this point that Richard adopts the role of formulator of the action of the drama; his manipulation of others' lives affords him particular delight. The figure upon which Shakespeare models Richard appears to be the Vice from the early sixteenth-century morality play. However, unlike the Vice, Richard is motivated, not by mischief or even evil in itself, but rather by selfish political and personal ambition. The glee he displays when his plotting appears successful evokes self-congratulation, as it demonstrates the self-conscious nature of Shakespeare's character. The fact that Richard's initial success leads him to over-estimate his power and to succumb to the lure of hubris distinguishes Shakespeare's tragic hero from the morality play Vice.

Richard's first manifestation of his skill as a manipulator of the action occurs immediately after his initial soliloquy in his plot to kill George, Duke of Clarence. Given that Richard had been shown in 3 *Henry VI* particularly devoted to his father and his brothers, now he seems especially treacherous, as he puts his personal ambition before family loyalty. What Shakespeare does not allude to at this point is Clarence's historical treachery in conspiring with the Earl of Warwick to gain the crown. Instead, Shakespeare turns the occasion into a comic moment, in which Clarence becomes the naive butt of Richard's trickery. Richard's dismissal of his brother, as the latter is ushered off stage by his guards, illustrates the underlying ironic tone of the scene and Richard's essential attitude: "Simple plain Clarence, I do love thee so/That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven/If heaven will take the present at our hands" (I.i.118-20). However, it is

Richard's second action after his opening soliloquy, the seduction of Anne, that most fully reveals his character and the art of his role-playing.

We must remember at the beginning of our examination of this scene that the historical Richard would have known Anne, the second of the Earl of Warwick's daughters, very well. He had stayed at the Warwick family home on several occasions, and his brother Clarence was married to Anne's sister.<sup>3</sup> Warwick's betrothal of Anne to Prince Edward, Henry VI's son and heir, was apparently part of "the Kingmaker" Warwick's plan to gain royal power. No contemporary historical evidence indicates Anne's personal feelings about her arranged marriage with the prince or her attitude toward her father-in-law, whose corpse she is following when she is introduced. Shakespeare has, in fact, created this scene for the major purpose of illustrating the character of Richard. It has been argued that the scene may have been inspired by Legge's *Richardus Tertius*, where Richardus behaves in a similar manner when his wooing of his niece is rejected (Churchill, pp. 287-89; Bullough, pp. 236-38). The offer of suicide by the rejected suitor is, of course, not uncommon in love stories, but Shakespeare's adoption of the motif here may indicate that Legge's portrayal was well known in theatrical circles, even if a text of the Latin play was not available to Shakespeare. However Shakespeare may have known about this portrayal of Richard III, the dramatic intuition of the playwright led him to adapt the scene with greater intensity and flamboyance than his Latin precedent offered.

This is the first of many scenes in this play in which Richard is identified with hell and the devil; when he first appears to Anne she identifies him as a "fiend" (I.ii.34) and first addresses him as "thou dreadful minister of hell" (46), then as a "foul devil" who has "made the happy earth thy hell" (50-51). This association of Richard with evil and her accusation that he has murdered both her husband and her father make Richard not just her personal enemy, who has robbed her of happiness, but the very source of the evil that has transformed her world. She is also the first of several characters to link Richard with wolves, spiders, toads, and creeping venomous things (19-20), but the fact that she puts these repulsive creatures in a curse on Richard that comes to incorporate a

3. Oestreich-Hart comments: "We know that Richard and Anne probably played together as children and that they may have loved each other for years. We know that he actually courted her for two years, remained married to her for over a decade, and fathered her son Edward, over whose death as a child both he and Anne grieved" (p. 243).

future wife turns the power of the curse back upon herself. Thus, through irony, Shakespeare undercuts Richard's victims while enhancing his power. Although Richard is called a hedgehog by Anne, he himself never alludes to his physical deformities when he is with her, and when she contemptuously spits at him in response to his proposal of marriage, he turns her insult into compliment. She declares, "Never hung poison on a fouler toad" (146), and, ordering him away, she accuses him of infecting her eyes as if casting a spell on her. Of course, the most audacious action on Richard's part is to bare his breast and offer her the sword with which to kill him, as he admits to having killed both her husband and her father. Richard claims that it was Anne's beauty that provoked him, which suggests that she must share his guilt, insofar as she accepts his praise of her body. She allows Richard to place his ring on her finger, thus demonstrating her capitulation, and she also abandons her mission to accompany the corpse of her father-in-law and former king.

On the surface, Richard has accomplished the impossible, and he serves again as the chorus to herald his skill and celebrate his amazing feat:

Was ever woman in this humor woo'd?  
 Was ever woman in this humor won?  
 I'll have her, but I will not keep her long.  
 What? I, that kill'd her husband and his father,  
 To take her in her heart's extremest hate,  
 With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,  
 The bleeding witness of my hatred by,  
 Having God, her conscience, and these bars against me,  
 And I no friends to back my suit [at all]  
 But the plain devil and dissembling looks? (I.ii.227-37)

In summarizing his achievement, he points to all of the factors that make his seduction seem unbelievable—a demonstration of the power of his words and his oratorical skill. He has just proven that, in spite of Nature's marking him with deformity, he can amble with a lady, perhaps not in her chamber, to the pleasing notes of a lute, but in a solemn funeral procession. Richard then elaborates on his physical unfitness for the role of seducer he has just played by comparing himself to the young prince Edward, whom he has supplanted. His self-satisfaction has fed his vanity, as it has removed his justification for his villainy—it appears that he can be a villain and a lover at the same time—but most important it contributes to his hubris, which leads him to believe that if he can deviously cause

his brother's death, and can woo and win a widow in mourning, he is capable of reshaping the world to his own satisfaction.

Richard seems to be remarkably successful at the beginning of his endeavours, but Shakespeare quickly introduces both old adversaries and new contenders to complicate Richard's struggle for the crown. The death of his brother Edward IV creates a crisis for the monarchy but also an opportunity for Richard to forward his plan of kingship. His new opponents, the queen's family, intend to use the child heir to the throne to gain power in the kingdom, and the young Prince Edward becomes a pawn in the struggle. Richard ultimately outflanks the queen's brother, Earl Rivers, and her sons, Lord Grey and the Marquess of Dorset, by seizing control of the prince on his way to London after the death of his father. Richard's manoeuvres are attested by contemporary accounts and by the chroniclers, but Shakespeare adapts a scene that was added by Thomas More to make Richard's role in the transfer of power more suspect. In his representation, Shakespeare, using the dying king to provide the context, brings together the queen's faction and their opponents, Richard and Lord Hastings. Richard reiterates his role as an outsider when he blames his lack of success upon his inability to be devious and dishonest:

Because I cannot flatter and look fair,  
Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive, and cog,  
Duck with French nods and apish courtesy,  
I must be held a rancorous enemy.  
Cannot a plain man live and think no harm,  
But thus his simple truth must be abus'd  
With silken, sly, insinuating Jacks? (I.iii.47-53)

Feigning indignation that the corrupt world will not tolerate a simple, plain-spoken man, Richard charges his enemies with the very qualities that he most obviously exhibits and frequently brags of possessing. He makes no allusion at this point to his own physical deformity; rather, from a position of royal superiority, he scorns the queen's family as ambitious "wrens": "Since every Jack became a gentleman,/There's many a gentle person made a Jack" (I.iii.70-72). Jack, of course, is synonymous with knave, a term which connotes both a member of the vulgar lower class and an evil dishonest fellow.

The tone changes altogether when Richard's old adversary, Queen Margaret, makes her appearance. Historically, Margaret had returned to France after the Lancastrian defeat and therefore was not present at the Yorkist court; in

fact, she preceded Edward IV in death.<sup>4</sup> However, Shakespeare, who had made Queen Margaret the leader of the Lancastrians in the *Henry VI* trilogy, retains her in the sequel as Richard's mighty opposite and a counterpoint to his role as choric subversive. She takes on other dimensions as the tragedy moves to its conclusion, but at this stage of the action she emerges as Richard's major challenger. Queen Margaret focuses first upon Richard as the murderer of her husband and her son; identifying Richard as a "devil" (I.iii.117) and a "cacodemon" (143), she reminds her courtly audience of the personal losses she has suffered—losses which, as Richard reminds her, fulfilled his father the Duke of York's curse on her for mocking him with a paper crown after his capture and for murdering Rutland, Richard's youngest brother. Shakespeare thus connects the events of the preceding play to the enfolding action by recalling Queen Margaret's previous villainy. The cycle of revenge begun in her court continues in the world of her successors, the Yorkists, but, as she points out, the pattern is made particularly striking by the repetition of names such as Richard (in three generations) and Edward (her murdered son, the dying king, and the heir-apparent). Margaret's revenge extends to Richard's new rivals (Queen Elizabeth and her faction), as well as Richard's allies, particularly Hastings and Buckingham, but she reserves her most deadly curse for Richard.

After dooming Richard to suffer from sleeplessness and pangs of conscience, Margaret focuses upon Richard's deformity as symbolizing his evil:

Thou elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog!  
 Thou that wast seal'd in thy nativity  
 The slave of nature and the son of hell!  
 Thou slander of thy heavy mother's womb!  
 Thou loathed issue of thy father's loins!  
 Thou rag of honor! thou detested— (I.iii.227–32)

Richard cries, "Margaret", before she can conclude the curse, comically turning Margaret's curse back upon herself. Momentarily silenced, Margaret is a comic butt very briefly; she returns immediately to her cursing vein and to Richard, "this poisonous bunch-back'd toad" (245), whose supporters, Hastings and Buckingham, are next doomed by Margaret. Richard ends the scene by ordering Clarence's execution, but before commanding the murderers, Richard

4. Queen Margaret left England in 1476, after spending five years in captivity. She died on 25 August 1482. Edward IV died on 9 April 1483.

manically delights in his own duplicity. Again recalling the choric Vice, Richard describes how he can “clothe my naked villainy/With odd old ends stol’n forth of holy writ,/And seem a saint, when most I play the devil” (335-37). The first three scenes of Shakespeare’s *Tragedy of Richard III* clearly set out Richard’s essential character, as well as the roles he will adopt to achieve his goal.

What is not revealed is the degree of success Richard achieves with his *modus operandi* or the discrepancy between his perception of events and their reality as Shakespeare represents them. An ironic effect is conveyed by Richard as choric subversive and by his adversarial counterpart, Queen Margaret. Once Richard puts his plot in motion, we discover that matters do not proceed as simply as he had planned. The imprisoned Clarence suffers a bout of conscience before he sleeps such as Margaret had wished upon Richard, establishing a pattern for the Yorkists as they meet their fates. The murderers engage in macabre comic word-play before awaking their victim, who is naively unaware of Richard’s duplicitous part in ordering his death. Anticipating the later murder of the young princes, these murderers are contrasted in their reactions to their guilt: one is struck by pity, while the other is preoccupied by the promised reward. Richard accomplishes his plot to remove Clarence from the line of succession, but his control of the plotters appears tenuous.

Shakespeare devotes most of Acts II and III to Richard’s progress toward the throne. His plotting appears successful, as he uses Clarence’s death to spoil the reconciliation between the Queen’s family and the Yorkists that Edward had hoped to achieve in order to ensure the succession of his son. Again building on More, Shakespeare adapts a fictional event to demonstrate Richard’s duplicity. Richard’s choric soliloquies are somewhat reduced, and in their place Shakespeare creates choric scenes that develop emotional dimensions of the action and provide reactions to Richard’s actions. The first of these scenes is the second scene of Act II, where the Duchess of York, Queen Elizabeth, and the children of Clarence are brought together to mourn the deaths of Edward and Clarence from the perspectives of mother, wife, and offspring. Their shared grief is highlighted by the melancholy repetition of the mourners:

*Queen Elizabeth.* What stay had I but Edward? and he’s gone.

*Children.* What stay had we but Clarence? and he’s gone.

*Duchess.* What stays had I but they? and they are gone.

*Queen Elizabeth.* Was never widow had so dear a loss.

*Children.* Were never orphans had so dear a loss.

*Duchess.* Was never mother had so dear a loss. (II.ii.74-79)

Richard's insensitivity to the mourners' sorrow is demonstrated by his breezy interruption of the reverential mood, after which he abruptly turns his mother's requested blessing into a joke. The following scene represents three citizens registering their concerns at having a child-king and expressing their fears for the future conflict between Richard and the Queen's faction. This choric scene is designed to extend the canvas to the effects of the impending action on society.

Richard sets the tone at the beginning of Act III for a series of variations on the relationship between appearance and reality. Warning his nephew Edward, the heir to the throne, that the world is a deceitful place, and that men's "outward show.../Seldom or never jumpeth with the heart" (III.i.10-11), Richard seeks to destroy the prince's trust in his maternal uncles, but moments later, in a sinister allusion to the prince's early death, Richard identifies himself with "the formal Vice, Iniquity", in moralizing two meanings in one word (III.i.82-83), thereby demonstrating that in reality it is he himself, the prince's paternal uncle, whom the prince should be most wary of. The discrepancy between appearance and reality is played out in a more striking key with Richard's allies, Hastings and Buckingham. Shakespeare emphasizes the theme especially through Hastings, who claims to know Richard's mind, which he declares is reflected in his face; Buckingham more cautiously admits to knowing only Richard's appearance, while his true nature remains hidden. The climactic conclusion to this sequence is again drawn by Shakespeare from More's imaginative account of a confrontation between Richard and his followers, during which Edward IV's widowed queen and his former lover, Mistress Shore, are accused of witchcraft (2: 48). Proving their guilt by showing his withered arm, Richard represents his deformity as having been created by malevolent forces directed by his adversaries. The audacity of Richard's preposterous accusation is topped only by his charge of treason against Hastings, who is implicated by his association with Mistress Shore. It appears that, for Richard, reality is what he seeks to make it.

The next stage of Richard's progress toward the throne involves his more complicated manipulation of reality to create an appearance that is designed to destabilize the kingdom and cast him in the role of saviour of the realm. Richard's attempts to control the action become increasingly bolder as his subversive plot is revealed. His undercutting of the legitimacy of Edward IV's heirs on the grounds of the king's dubious formal and informal relationships with various women is compounded by Richard's suggestion that Edward himself is illegitimate because of his mother's adultery. The doubts cast on the previously accepted

reality prepares for Richard's assumption of the throne through a series of staged scenes in which citizens demonstrate the discrepancy between reality and the illusion created by Richard, Buckingham, and their co-conspirators. Epitomizing this segment of Richard's subversive plot is the context, again first provided by More (2: 77-81), of the public appeal to Richard to accept the kingship: appearing as a pious penitent between two priests in Shakespeare's version, Richard is made more hypocritical in his reluctance to assume the role portrayed as his royal obligation, the goal for which we know he has been striving almost from his first appearance on Shakespeare's stage.

Shakespeare gives Richard little time to enjoy his triumph. His success appears to have given him a false sense of his own power but an uneasy sense of security. When Richard determines to eliminate the major challenge to his rule by having Edward IV's sons killed, he not only loses the support of his major ally, Buckingham, but also he loses control of the action. Shakespeare's representation of the murder of the nephews through the narrative of the hired killers may remind us of the henchmen Richard sent to kill Clarence, but there is no comic dimension in the smothering of the children; instead, it is played strictly for pathos. The hardened criminals emphasize the innocence of the children with their prayer book on their pillow, which almost causes the killers to abandon their mission. Any sympathy with Richard as a witty underdog that the audience might have developed as he moves toward the crown must be completely dispelled by Richard's response to the criminals' report. Expressing not a shred of pity or remorse for the infanticide he commanded, he looks forward to the death of his wife Anne, who he implies is leaving this world through his help, and to the wooing of his niece in order to thwart his impending rival, the Earl of Richmond. However, Richard's control of events has dissipated, and he is no longer capable of supplying reliable choric guidance to the action that follows. His wooing of his niece becomes a parody of the seduction of Anne which demonstrated his power at the beginning of the play, though his incestuous design is muffled by being directed through the adversarial former queen, rather than made directly to her daughter, the young Elizabeth. His justification of murder because of his love for his intended new bride may remind us of his earlier defence for killing the father-in-law and husband of Anne, but it rings even more hollow here because of its repetition, and it becomes absolutely disgusting when he promises to father brothers to replace those she has lost. The scene regresses into verbal combat between old enemies, which becomes increasingly ironic as Richard



assumes that he is being successful again, when he is not. His conclusion that he has triumphed, as he had with Anne, leads him, not to self-congratulation, as earlier, but rather to contempt for his sister-in-law: "Relenting fool, and shallow, changing woman" (IV.iv.431).

A further indication that Richard is losing control of the action is his striking of the messenger who brings him the bad news that Richmond is gathering his forces to challenge Richard's rule and that Buckingham has deserted Richard's cause. Reports that Richard's forces are dropping away, while Richmond's are gaining strength, signal the doom that Richard must face. Stanley's announcement that Edward's widowed queen has consented to her daughter's marriage to Richmond underlines how futile Richard's wooing for his niece's hand has been. Shakespeare focuses in the final act on Richard's crumbling subversive design and his confrontation with forces that prove superior to the power he believed he could command. In the latter part of the tragedy, as Richard's power proves to be illusory, the strength of the curses of his counterpart, Queen Margaret, is enhanced. She appears to be a Nemesis to those she had cursed, as they meet their fates; Rivers, Hastings, Queen Elizabeth, Buckingham, and others remember Margaret's curses as they are fulfilled. Other curses, such as Anne's ironical cursing of herself when she first confronts Richard, and the prophecies of Richmond's victory highlight the role of providence in the historical tragedy Shakespeare has drawn from Thomas More and the chronicles.

The final act of *Richard III* represents the ultimate failure of Richard's subversive plan, as providence emerges as the dominant force in the play. Casting the concluding action allegorically, Shakespeare dichotomizes the contending forces into groups of good and evil. Placing the camps of Richard and Richmond on opposite sides of the stage, the drama offers a simultaneous contrast between the leaders, as they interact with their soldiers and the spirits of Richard's victims. There is no question of the outcome of Richard's last battle because providence has joined Richmond's side, as Shakespeare portrays the action. However, it is significant that Richard, like Margaret's other adversaries, in a momentary bout with conscience recognizes his guilt, even though he does not reform; instead, his nightmare of the morrow's battle leads him to desperation and the rejection of conscience as cowardly. His isolation from supporting forces almost brings him to despair, but his self-orientation and pride provide the strength that lead him to his valiant but ironic end. Richard calls for a horse, for which, in his desperate plight, he is willing to exchange the kingdom he has spent his life attain-

ing. However, he is also determined to fight to the end: "I have set my life upon a cast,/And I will stand the hazard of the die" (V.iv.9-10). Ironical to the end, Richard seems in these last words to have accepted the fate that awaits him. Unable to create the outcome he had intended, he receives the retributive justice providence has determined. Shakespeare may simplify the tragedy of Richard III in the final act, but he nevertheless allows Queen Margaret to accomplish her revenge upon her old adversaries and new enemies. Queen Margaret triumphs by merging her role with providence.

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### Date de création

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## *“A shrewd knave and an unhappy”: The Fool in All’s Well that Ends Well*

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### *The Status of Shakespearean Fools*

According to Juri Lotman’s typology of culture, a great divide separates symbolic and syntagmatic models of society. The former, medieval society, is characterised by a strong sense of hierarchy, according to which individuals are worthy only so far and so long as they occupy a position in the hierarchical scale. The latter, modern society, is marked by greater consideration for the biological person whose social existence is no longer linked to any hierarchical status.<sup>1</sup> Starting from this division, which of course has no pretension to being chronologically precise, we can try to define the position and the stature of the court-fool.

The fool works at a king’s court because the king wants to be amused, or wants to divert the “evil eye” from his sacred person. The fool is thus called from the outer world into the inner world, from the land of darkness into the light, from a chaotic reality into *the* order. A person is asked to play a role: that of the king’s jester. Those who come from the mobile world outside,

1. See Lotman. In the first part of the present article I make use (with changes) of some paragraphs from a previous work of mine, “Playing the Fool”.

from the liminal culture of the anti-model, are asked to live in an immobile world, that of the model and of the static hierarchy.<sup>2</sup> And to the outside they still belong, even when acting in the inside, still bringing with themselves the legacy of their origin. Part of this legacy is the continuous harping on the body, on its physicality and on sexuality. If *order* is the epitome of what is high, closed, inside, immobile, finished, ordered and spiritual, its contrary—*disorder*—is made up of what is low, open, outside, mobile, unfinished, disordered and bodily.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the two polarisations are accompanied by further contraries connected to what is serious/comic, wise/foolish, officially true/extra-officially real, respectively.

However, once inside the high space of the court, the fool's chaotic significance is subjected to the influence of the power of symbolic society: his freedom is a sign of the power which calls him to life; his liberty finds expression through and is limited by the licence given by authority. If this licence is withdrawn, the court-fool is no longer himself and has to go back to the world from which he came. He neither belongs to the symbolic model, nor has any place in the hierarchy: he is accepted by this same hierarchy because the king wants a sort of speaking and tumbling toy, and a comic double of his royal person. The bauble and the coxcomb are comic copies of the king's sceptre and crown.<sup>4</sup>

So the court-fool is at the same time at the top and the bottom of the social scale, yet cannot be considered part of it: when his licence is revoked, the fool is sent back to the world of prostitutes and petty crime, back to the roads and the market-place. (Considering Shakespeare's plays, it is not difficult to see Pompey in *Measure for Measure* and Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale* as such displaced fools.)

According to Robert Armin's division, fools can be considered either natural or artificial, but in Shakespearean drama it is hard to distinguish between the two. Armin himself writes that Will Sommers was "the Kings naturall iester",<sup>5</sup> but the episodes he narrates from Sommers' life reveal him as an artificial fool rather than a natural one. In practice, many people put on the mask of folly in order to earn their living at court, thus creating a first level of simulation. And it is at this point that other cultural cross-currents meet in the figure of the court-fool, the tradition of carnival buffoons and of marketplace players being grafted onto the insane children of nature (or onto those who feign a degree of lunacy).

2. See Corti.

3. Cf. Corti, pp. 14-15.

4. See Duvignaud.

5. Cf. Armin, sig. E'.

The clerical condemnation of *histriones* and their exclusion from the Christian community also combine to enrich a figure who lives outside society, far from any accepted norm, blamed and feared because of both his behaviour and his possible connection with supernatural powers. All this is summed up in the typical costume of court-fools: the “disorder” of the motley colours; the bauble as the sceptre of a nowhere bordering on an everywhere, and as a reminder of an excessive sexuality (the sin of lechery); the pig’s bladder as the icon of a foolish mind, and simultaneously of the sin of gluttony; the coxcomb or the cap with ass’s ears as the parodic crown of the king of the feast, and, together, as a link to two animals recorded in the Gospel as being near Christ at the time, respectively, of his death and birth.<sup>6</sup>

The humanistic view of the fool—that of Erasmus’ *Praise of Folly* rather than Brant’s *Narrenschiff*—evaluates the figure as the mouthpiece of truth. Fools, says Erasmus, can provide

the very thing a Prince is looking for, jokes, laughter, merriment and fun. And, let me tell you, fools have a gift which is not to be despised. They’re the only ones who speak frankly and tell the truth, and what is more, passionately the truth . . . . The fact is kings do dislike the truth, but the outcome of this is extraordinary for any fools. They can speak truth and even open insults and be heard with positive pleasure: indeed, the words which would cost a wise man his life are surprisingly enjoyable when uttered by a clown. (Chap. 36)

But it must be emphasised that hierarchical society permits the fool’s truth precisely because it is told by someone who this same “wise” society considers to be a fool. The truth of the fool’s discourse cannot be utilised to change the situation because, as Michel Foucault (pp. 10–12) reminds us, it has no value: it belongs to the time-off period of games, and the sender of the message is licensed only so long as his satirical comments do not intrude into the sphere of action. “Truth’s a dog must to kennel”, as Lear’s Fool laments (I.iv.109). As Richard Hillman writes, “his [the Fool’s] marginality simultaneously signifies the limits of his power” (p. 15).

6. Zucker observes that “The clown . . . plays the role of the outsider, the one who is outlandish in costume, mores, and manners” (p. 315). For a more detailed study of both court- and stage-fools, see Welsford, Willeford, and Billington. Among the many articles on the subject, see particularly that of Evans for its stress on the actor/character and stage/audience relationships.

Games have their own rules, which do not affect the level of reality. When the game is over, the players resume their daily activities: the fool, however, who constantly signifies play, is not allowed a proper time for serious activity. He is allowed no activity at all outside the game, unless he steps out of it. But in this event the fool turns into a man, and is therefore useless to the court games. While playing the game, the fool enjoys his particular licence to address anybody, anywhere. His word is tolerated as a warped comment on reality. And it is exactly within the boundaries of his own licence—nearly always on the borderline of being whipped—that the fool has to make a profit from his discourse.

Shakespeare, once again, is ready to exploit this global and multi-faceted tradition when building his fools, drawing from both his own cultural history and the previous (and also contemporary) dramatic tradition in which the Vice was the leading role of many plays.<sup>7</sup> In the plays Shakespearean fools live as striking dramatic outsiders, for at least three main reasons: first, because they are the heirs of a culture of exclusion; secondly, because they are given no power to act on the events of the plot; thirdly, because they are meta-characters mediating between the play and the audience through what is their specific power: their discourse.

### *Lavatch in All's Well That Ends Well*

By the time he wrote *All's Well That Ends Well* (1603-4<sup>8</sup>), Shakespeare had already given life to several fool characters—from Launce to Launcelot Gobbo, from Touchstone<sup>9</sup> to Feste—and, starting around 1599-1600, he had a new clown in the Chamberlain's/King's Men. Robert Armin had replaced Will Kempe, and the playwright had to tailor his personage to both the physical aspect and the performance qualities of the new actor. Besides all that, this is the period in which, after *Hamlet*, Shakespeare wrote the so-called “problem plays”, in which he inserts fool figures reluctantly. In the unsettled and disordered societies of both *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*, there is no room for a court fool, and only a Pompey and a Thersites find a place for their decayed humour and

7. For the main differences between Vice and fool, see Bourgy; also Mullini, *Corruttore di parole*, pp. 75-80.

8. According to Hunter, ed., p. xxv.

9. Wiles, p. 145, is convinced that this role was played by Armin and not by Kempe. I agree with him, not accepting the arguments of Nielsen in favour of Kempe's longer staying with the Chamberlain's Men. Cf. Mullini, *Il fool in Shakespeare*, pp. 27-29. See also Sutcliffe.



cynicism, respectively. A fool proper—the Fool—will arrive only with *King Lear* some time later, but he will leave the play “at noon” (III.vi.83), nearly recognising his inefficacy in solving his king’s tragic troubles. In the court of Rossillion, where *All’s Well That Ends Well* is largely set, an intermediate figure is to be found: Lavatch is a “leftover”, so to say, of a previous political and social order, an antiquarian relic hardly tolerated in the new unstable situation. Power has passed from the deceased count to a woman—the Countess; Bertram, the heir, does not want to get married according to his king’s and his mother’s wishes and thereby threatens to disrupt the socio-political system. When forced to marry Helena, he leaves her “unbedded”, a means of stressing that Rossillion will have no legitimate lord in a future child of his. Actually, there will be no child begotten of Bertram and Helena—until, of course, the comedic ending of the play, after the bed-trick, which reverses non-comic expectations about the plot.

Lavatch has survived his own lord and seems out of joint in the new *milieu*. He still lives inside the main action but is ready to step out of its borders, as little involved as possible, since his function as stage fool makes him a stranger in the court, an external element to which the court gives a limited licence but, paradoxically, a powerful voice with which to comment on events.

Bitterer than his “brethren”, Lavatch often works as a servant and a messenger for his lady, but it is to his comments that Shakespeare gives the power to create the character, so that, as he is part of a “bitter” story, his word mirrors the most disquieting aspects of a decaying world. His ubiquitous word is condemned by the Countess in the last scene of Act IV, when, after the fool’s exit, she comments on Lafew’s judgement of Lavatch:

*Lafew.* A shrewd knave and an unhappy.

*Countess.* So ‘a is. My lord that’s gone made himself much sport out of him; by his authority he remains here, which he thinks is a patent for his sauciness; and indeed he has no pace, but runs where he will. (IV.v.60–4)

But already, at the beginning of the play during their first on-stage encounter, the Countess deplores her fool’s behaviour, calling him “knave” rather than “fool”, his actions “knaveries”, and stressing his intrusions into the life of the court:

What does this knave here? get you gone, sirrah. The complaints I have heard of you I do not still believe; ’tis my slowness that I do not; for I know you lack not folly to commit them and have ability enough to make such knaveries yours. (I.iii.7–11)

Later in the play, the Countess admits to her own role as a lady “playing” with a fool during her time-off activities,<sup>10</sup> thus recognising Lavatch as part of the court’s games, unable to act on the serious events taking place there: “I play the noble housewife with the time,/To entertain it so merrily with a fool” (II.ii.54–55). She is nonetheless ready to dismiss him soon afterwards, tired of the game itself: “An end, sir! To your business” (57).

Lavatch’s “sauciness” mainly concerns bawdy, but this is not by chance, since the play’s whole action focuses on sex: lawful sex denied to Helena after the marriage but got by her through the bed-trick, and sex sought by Bertrand from Diana in Florence. The fool’s word cannot but reproduce, at his highly sophisticated or debased level, what he sees and perceives around him—that is, decadence—and echo the main themes of the plot.<sup>11</sup> Actually, the fool’s commenting power transfers the atmosphere of the play to his own level: Bertram’s unwillingness to marry Helena is contrasted with Lavatch’s desire to marry Isbel (I.iii); Bertram’s contract with Diana—that is sex outside marriage, adumbrating cuckoldry—is already ambiguously foreshadowed in the fool’s speech to the Countess in I.iii, especially when Lavatch declares that he hopes “to have friends for my wife’s sake... for the knaves come to do that for me which I am weary of” (I.iii.38–41). In his words, the fool anticipates both Bertram’s “weariness” and his search for illicit sex, and Shakespeare gets his fool to say that he is “A prophet I, madam” (I.iii.56) as an answer to the Countess’s reproach: “Wilt thou ever be a foul-mouth’d and calumnious knave?” (55). When, later in III.ii, he brings Bertram’s letter to the Countess, Lavatch anticipates its content by his own arguments about his allegedly decaying love for Isbel, so that when his mistress asks him, “What have we here?”, he answers only, “E’en that you have there” (III.ii.17–18), signalling a striking parallel between the two “love stories”.<sup>12</sup>

These aspects of the play, and of the fool’s role in particular, have been seen as simply parodic of the main action.<sup>13</sup> G. K. Hunter, the Arden Shakespeare

10. Here I make use of the concepts of “time-on” and “time-off” activities as introduced by Goffman.

11. I disagree, therefore, with what Goldsmith writes about him: “He is unlike Shakespeare’s other fools in that his role bears no significant relationship to the play’s meaning” (p. 60).

12. I had already jotted down these observations (in *Corruttore di parole*) when Roark’s article was published. Roark, besides analysing insightfully many points of the play, also stresses the relevant role of Lavatch’s words, especially their anticipation of complex moments of the plot. Some of his conclusions are very similar to mine.

13. Bennett maintains that many of the fool’s comments are due to “parody”, as “preparation” of the action to come. This view of Lavatch is strongly biased by the critic’s opinion that he is “a shallow

editor, though insisting on parody, speaks of its function as “the addition of [a] parallel [perspective]” to the main plot, with “disintegrating effect” (p. xxxv, n. 1). In my opinion, however, even if the purpose of the fool’s words in the previously quoted instances is parodic, this stems from his ability in observation and his capacity for foreseeing events. In the case of Lavatch, I would accept the words “parody” and “parodic” only if they are taken to point to Shakespeare’s use of this character as a real “genius” of “analogical probability”, not only to control the audience’s responses, but also, on the contrary, to highlight the prophetic power of the fool’s discourse.<sup>14</sup>

Even in his interaction with Parolles (II.iv) Lavatch’s word is “prophetic”. Once more called “knave”, the fool very promptly answers:

*Clown.* You should have said, sir, “before a knave th’art a knave”; that’s “Before me, th’art a knave”. This had been truth, sir.

*Parolles.* Go to, thou art a witty fool; I have found thee.

*Clown.* Did you find me in yourself, sir, or were you taught to find me?... The search, sir, was profitable; and much fool may you find in you, even to the world’s pleasure and the increase of laughter. (II.iv.28-35)

Here Lavatch seems to foresee Parolles’ destiny in the future of the play, with the ambush in Italy and the laughable episode of which he is victim. But at the same time, the fool’s comment on Bertram’s disreputable friend is totally negative, since Lavatch unmasks Parolles’ knavery. Being a mirror of society, the fool imitates the world he lives in; therefore, he is a knave in front of a knave only because he reflects what stands before him. The fool, from his privileged standpoint of “le spectateur non-concerné qui énonce la moralité du jeu” (Klein, p. 18), is able to observe and interpret the society he lives in, even if his word is still powerless to change events.

malcontent, seeing only the surface and understanding nothing, an utterly superficial observer” (pp. 345-46). By contrast, I consider Lavatch’s verbal behaviour as deriving from his deep, though detached, foreknowledge of events, from his power of commentator as “fou glossateur” and “fou démystificateur” (Klein, pp. 18-19). In his volume devoted to the clown figure, Starobinski entitles the first chapter, “Le double grimaçant” (p. 7), thus interpreting the character as a powerful instrument of self-knowledge. Snyder also stresses the fool’s power of mirroring his surroundings (“The King’s not here”, p. 22).

14. Cf. Pearce.

### Lavatch as “corrupter of words”

Lavatch has been defined in a variety of ways. Hunter talks of his “boorishness” and understands his discourse as bawdy yet theological (p. xxii)<sup>15</sup>; Lawrence calls him “a thoroughly unsavoury fellow”, whose comedy is limited to “poor comic relief” and to “vulgar cynicism” (pp. 69, 70). As already noted, Bennett sees him as “an utterly superficial observer”, while Evans underlines that he is “more cynic than jester” (p. 148). Brooke also points to the fool’s “cynical bluntness” (p. 81).

I find it strange that, among the many pages I have re-read on this occasion, very few critics accept Shakespeare’s judgement on Lavatch as “A shrewd knave and an unhappy”. Robert H. Goldsmith simply defines these words as “apt” (p. 59), while David Scott Kastan stresses the “unhappiness” (p. 587), the melancholy of the figure, thus refraining from any disparaging attribute and aligning himself with Shakespeare’s own words. But it is Geoffrey Hutchins, an actor and not an academic, who performed this fool for the first time in 1981 with the RSC under the direction of Trevor Nunn, who fully subscribes to the playwright’s words, which are—in his opinion—“the most accurate description of the character” (p. 89).

However, I think that what is relevant in the character of Lavatch (as it is for all fools, actually, in various degrees), beyond any description of the modes of his wit, is the use he makes of language, for, as stated above, his influence *qua* fool on the plot is limited by his licence. In a previous study devoted to Shakespearean fools, I labelled Lavatch’s discourse as “reticent” because of the rhetorical strategies he employs in his comments and transactions with the other *dramatis personae*.<sup>16</sup> This fool defines himself as “a poor fellow” (I.iii.12), a phrase which allows a comparison with Pompey in *Measure for Measure* (who declares that he is “a poor fellow that would live” [II.1.220]). Pompey does not belong to a noble family, is no fool proper, is degraded to the despicable role of bawd and pimp in the world outside order. Lavatch, as already noted, lives in a court whose head—the count—has been dead for some time: he is just tolerated there as a reminder of

15. Lavatch’s theological aspects are also stressed by Simonds, pp. 47–49.

16. Brooke, pp. 75–76, uses this same word, “reticence”, to define *All’s Well That Ends Well* as a whole. After commenting on the “uniquely bare language which excludes decoration” in the play, he shows how the play displays a special kind of “naturalism” that “is not simply bluntness. It has the quality too of the reticence of natural speech”; he adds, “It follows that reticence is as characteristic of the play as bareness is of language”.

the past. As I said, he is a “relic”, reluctantly kept by the Countess. Things are changing in the society of Rossillion and seemingly running towards disaster: in this situation Lavatch survives, is “a poor fellow”, observes the changes and comments bitterly upon them. In such a society it would be difficult to provoke pure laughter and sweet mirth, because the times of “much sport” have gone; the fool’s discourse reflects these changes, the decay of old values, and, accordingly, he is often named “knave” rather than “fool”.

Despite being reproached by the Countess at the very beginning of the play for his “knaveries”, Lavatch does not hesitate to externalise what he thinks, but he proceeds by riddles and paradoxes—rhetorical screens able to protect him from whipping and, simultaneously, to allow him to vent his sour and prophetic perception of reality. He claims to have “an answer will serve all men” (II.ii.13), but soon after he paraphrases his own words by making reference to the body (and, we can imagine, also by using bodily language): “It is like a barber’s chair that fits all buttocks” (16). When the Countess continues by asking him, “Will your answer serve fit to all questions?” (19), Lavatch replies with the first of his long and elaborate sentences, whose main characteristic is accumulation:

*Clown.* As fit as ten groats is for the hand of an attorney, as your French crown for your taffety punk, as Tib’s rush for Tom’s forefinger, as a pancake for Shrove Tuesday, a morris for May-day, as the nail to his hole, the cuckold to his horn, as a scolding quean to a wrangling knave, as the nun’s lip to the friar’s mouth; nay, as the pudding to his skin. (20-26)

The fool’s list of comparisons draws, significantly, from a vast semantic area including satire against lawyers and religion, venereal disease, popular folklore, carnival, sexuality, prostitution, and food. Once more he touches on themes which pertain either to his origin as a dramatic character (such as carnival, mock marriages, and morris dancing), or to topics dealt with in the play (such as sexuality, cuckoldry, and prostitution). The theme of mock marriages also hints at the unsuccessful wedding between Helena and Bertram, while food is often associated with both sex and feasting,

Another famous speech, besides that in Act I, Scene iii, mentioned above, where, via a stringent syllogistic logic, Lavatch explains to the Countess why he hopes to have “friends for my wife’s sake”, soon follows in Act II, Scene iv, when the fool speaks with Helena:

- Helena.* My mother greets me kindly; is she well?  
*Clown.* She is not well, but yet she has her health; she's very merry, but yet she is not well. But thanks be given she's very well and wants nothing i' th' world; but yet she is not well.  
*Helena.* If she be very well what does she ail that she's not very well?  
*Clown.* Truly, she's very well indeed, but for two things.  
*Helena.* What two things?  
*Clown.* One, that she's not in heaven, whither God send her quickly! The other, that she's in earth, from whence God send her quickly! (II.iv.1-12)

In this case, the fool's reticence is particularly strong: it is not that Lavatch refuses to co-operate on the most superficial level of conversation. Actually, he is "pragmatically correct"; only, his obliqueness is such as to oblige Helena to a progression of questions, and when he finally answers, his words are just a semantic complication, a vicious circle, and not a double answer, as he has promised. His first speech follows the scheme, "yes, but . . .", repeating it three times and also muddling its rhetorical construction with a chiasmus where positive and negative meanings get entangled. His two last sentences appear verbally different exclusively because of the reverse semantics of their terms: "not in heaven" is different from "in earth"; "whither" is not "from whence", but their use makes them similar, thus reducing the meaning to univocity in spite of the great expense of (colloquial) spirit. In other words, Lavatch transfers meaning from the worldly to the heavenly, deferring his answer through rhetorical difficulties.

That he is a master of speech and a "corrupter of words" similar to his "brethren" is clear from the beginning, when he changes the words of a popular ballad. In fact, the Countess reproaches him, "You corrupt the song, sirrah" (I.iii.77-78), but—as happens with other fools—Lavatch is only adapting somebody else's discourse (proverbs, sayings or, as now, a song) in order to advance his own meaning (here that, in spite of his misogyny, one woman, i.e., Helena, is good).

"A shrewd knave and an unhappy" is, as it is well known, the definition Lafew gives of the fool. Certainly Lavatch is shrewd, able to comment and observe reality, capable of recognising real knaves such as Parolles, ubiquitous for his licence ("he has no pace, but runs where he will", says the Countess), ready to turn his speech to religion and make himself pass for a "woodland fellow" (IV.v.44). But he is "unhappy", feeling that it is not true that "all's well that ends well", perceiving—like the playwright, perhaps—that the "happy ending" is strained, i.e., not

just happening but made to happen, artificially built and not deriving “naturally” from the sequence of events.<sup>17</sup> Yet, as the “fou glossateur” of the piece, he adapts himself to his surroundings, showing and concealing, grimacing and stressing corruption, touching on all the topics that underpin the play. Shakespeare keeps him far from the comedic solution, that happy ending so difficult to achieve, and this, too, is not by chance: after Parolles’ exposure in Act V, Scene ii, he leaves the stage never to appear again. His task *qua* fool is done: he has triumphed in the public recognition of Parolles’s knavery (which he had already foreseen), has been called by his name (the only instance in the play),<sup>18</sup> but cannot accept what is ahead, that is, simply, that “all’s well that end’s well”.

Lavatch remains a dramatic outsider within the performed story, ready to step out of it, detached, pointing like a chorus to what is worthwhile considering and thinking about. Like a “voice-over” throughout the affairs of the play, he has constantly reminded us of the equivocal issues of gender, sexuality, war, honour and nobility, and, given his previously mentioned dialogue with Helena about the Countess’s “being well”, he has already demonstrated that “well” and “not well” are ambiguous contraries, leaving us to think about the disturbing results of the plot. On the latter’s outcome he cannot work, and so he does not take part in it but remains once more liminal, as a now silent and sadly blurred mirror on the wall of the court of Rossillion.

17. Only the intervention of the bed-trick and ring-exchange conventions, specifically linked to comedy, allows the happy ending. See Mullini, *Corruptore*, p. 105. Kastan writes that “the fragility of this comic plot is obvious” (p. 582).

18. Cf. Snyder, “Naming Names”, pp. 268–69.

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## *John Marston's The Fawn, the "Other" Self, and the Problem of Belief*

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"To know the people well one must be a prince,  
and to know princes well one must be,  
oneself, of the people"  
(MACHIAVELLI, *The Prince*)

JOHN MARSTON's *Parasitaster* or *The Fawn* is what it is, a competent, entertaining duke-in-disguise plot—formulaic, but not to a fault, if a good theatre troupe were to take on the challenge. The work is convention-laden to be sure, but for that very reason it is the perfect literary laboratory for reinvestigating the mind-teasing topic of "personhood" in dramatic representations. Personhood denotes that quality of ontological status our minds accord to agents manifesting complex states of belief and desire as a precondition for assessing those states. This play has been chosen because the protagonist passes through contrasting mental and social modes as insider and outsider in relation to the action, thereby creating dissonances in the representation of the self. The topic under investigation is not whether we believe him to be a real person—much of what he does of a formulaic nature reminds us that he is not—but the qualities of personhood typically invested in him as a condition for assessing his intentional stances. The question is a "tease" because minds receive characters simultaneously

as artistic and performative constructs and as representations of psyches, the states of which are understood according to the limited cognitive resources available to human minds—including categories of an ontological kind.

Ferrara's Duke Hercules is a schematic depiction of the ruler on holiday, anxious to flee the burden of office with all its constraints in exchange for a life of freedom, passionate spontaneity, and self-actualization at the neighbouring court of Urbino. To adapt the words of Machiavelli, he was a prince who knew his people too well, and therefore chose to become one of the people, not only to punish them incognito, but to know himself better through these new experiences. To assess this character is tantamount to examining the design of the play because of the efficiency with which he imposes his will and point of view upon the entire action. In making the move to another court, Hercules redesigns his social strategies, turning himself into "Fawn", a flattering courtier who ingratiates himself with all those in his adopted entourage while working his way into the inner circle of Duke Gonzago. As his new name implies, his *modus operandi* will consist largely of encouraging others in their respective follies, the better to hail them before the court of public opinion and its reproving laughter. Fawn thereby becomes the play's agent satirist, its trickster-*animateur*, and a master of deceptive language. The action moves toward a ceremonial closure, as he draws the entire court into a compromising theatrical inset through which all are indicted as fools. Then, at that potentially dangerous moment, Fawn escapes all retaliation by staging a discovery scene in which he returns to his former princely self.

Such theatrical transformations—through the conventions of disguise whereby protagonists generate inside-outside relationships to society—are well-known in the plays of the period. The "selves" of such protagonists are plastic and adaptive, as conventions dictate. Hercules is a "schematic" duke and a mediating figure of whose machinations we are entirely conscious. Nevertheless, it is through the bonds we make with such figures as "persons" through memories of their previous modes of existence that the norms are established against which the outsider escapades are measured. The study to follow pertains not only to the adventures of Marston's duke, but to the cognitive mechanisms whereby we represent him as a cogent person to our own minds—as seemingly we must—while at the same time remaining cognizant of the artifice and play of a self-constructing agent. That, of course, is to have it both ways concerning the reception of character—namely by acquiescing, at least partially, to what has been called "the anthropomorphic fallacy", which is "the tendency

to treat dramatic characters as ‘real’ people rather than highly mediated representations” (Traub, p. 4). This hermeneutic “sin” has been replaced by “cultural negotiations” played out at social sites in which characters are mere ciphers. But there may exist, nevertheless, those default operations of mind that interpret all human representations possessing a modicum of interiority as persons rather than ciphers, in or out of literary representation. Marston’s play is a “workshop” because his Duke Hercules exists, arguably, on the cusp between such mediated representations and an interiorized person whose belief states can be read only through the operations of “folk psychology”. This response to personhood may, in fact, be dictated by our own phylogenetic human nature—a response that remains fundamental to our orientation within environments constituted of other minds.

The informing “idea” of this play, the product of several years of experimentation in the Elizabethan theatre, is a compound structure in which the trickster operator enjoys high social station, yet moves throughout the play’s society in complete anonymity, now as the duke-in-disguise. Hercules is a product of that moment in the history of English drama when certain “pattern” characters were enjoying experimental upgrading to more complex states of psychological agency and inner thought, without shedding their residual typologies, and placed in more fully realized contemporary social settings. The formula invests a stock trickster figure with both a public and private identity, bouncing the audience’s attention between the concerns of a suffering ruler and the machinations of a social prankster, thereby linking political with social issues, and doubling the representational perspective of the protagonist because he seeks flight from one draft of the self in order to invent another. Such plays call upon our capacities to distinguish between the conduct patterns of modified social levels, between minds in confessional modes and ironic play modes, and, more challengingly, to differentiate between characters who simulate psychological competence and those who enact structural paradigms, and to determine whether such characters represent ontologically distinct categories to the spectator.

The dual nature of this protagonist, as ruler and as trickster, was the by-product of structural developments in the early English theatre. Marston’s *The Fawn* appears at that very moment at which the configuration of elements constituting the duke-in-disguise plot reached its apogee. That date was 1604, and it coincides with the earliest productions of Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* and

Middleton's *The Phoenix*.<sup>1</sup> The inability to date these plays more precisely leaves the matter of priority and directions of influence beyond assured demonstration.<sup>2</sup> Given their differences, and the degree to which the generic idea of the disguised ruler was already established in the Elizabethan theatrical milieu, there is good reason to think that these plays may, in fact, have arisen independently of one another. Rulers enjoying an incognito status in order to go courting, or to escape the burden of office, or to spy first-hand on the affairs of ordinary citizens were already manifest in such plays as *Fair Em*, *A Knack to Know a Knave*, *George-a-Greene*, and the first part of *Sir John Oldcastle*. Of even greater pertinence, perhaps, is Barnabe Riche's *Adventures of Brusanus* (1592), which features a pioneering version of the motif. Riche's protagonist prince disguises himself as a merchant in order to examine in person the prevailing conditions of his realm, only to find himself falsely accused of treason. That the ruler against whom the alleged treason is committed is himself leads, of necessity, to a recognition and reversal scene, in which Brusanus reassumes his true identity before turning upon the maligning Gloriosus.<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare modifies this motif in *Measure for Measure*, making Lucio the epitome of the corrupted attitudes of citizens toward their rulers. Marston's duke, by contrast, does not fall prey to such a menace, and manages to work his satiric exposures in a more holiday atmosphere, although there are intimations

1. Revealingly, the protagonist of this play is also a Duke of Ferrara who takes a travel leave, but unlike Hercules, and like Shakespeare's Vincentio, returns to his own court in disguise to examine all the ills and enormities there, before making a recitation of all he has seen at the play's end.
2. In these matters I am relying on the critical introduction by Smith to *The Fawn* and the introduction by Lever to *Measure for Measure*. As Smith states, "*The Fawn* was first played sometime between February 4, 1604, and March 12, 1606" (p. xi), the first date the earliest that the acting company was called "The Children of the Queen's Majesty's Revels", and the latter date that of its registration for publication. Evidence that it was written during the 1604 season or just prior is merely circumstantial, as Smith explains. The first confirmed date for the acting of *Measure for Measure* is December 26, 1604, but "a number of allusions in the dialogue suggest that the play was composed and probably acted in the summer season of 1604" (Lever, p. xxxi) for reasons then explained in great detail, including the probability of James I's own incognito visit to the Exchange, or at least his attempt to make such a visit (on March 15, 1604). Lawrence concurs regarding the unlikelihood of establishing influences among these plays, "especially since the dates of composition and production are in most cases so uncertain" (p. 188).
3. Lever mentions these and several other sources for "The Disguised Ruler" motif (pp. xlv-li), including the story of the Roman ruler Alexander Severus, prominent in Guevara's *Décadas de las vidas de los x. Cesares* (1539) and Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Image of Governauce* (1541). Lever cites Marston's *The Malcontent* and *Fawn* in this regard, together with Middleton's *Phoenix*, stating that all three "presented fictitious Italian dukes who put off their conventional dignity with their robes of state and gave strident expression to the contemporary questioning of values" (p. xlvii).

of an awakening among his victims regarding his duplicity that could have led to reprisals. Hence, Fawn, too, under modest constraints, reverts to his former self at the play's end—to that residual and inviolate political identity that serves as diplomatic immunity for the duke as *eiron* (for which there is a definition to follow).

The English plays of that era—of which the duke-in-disguise plays were a subset—would have been greatly impoverished without these and related experiments with trickster protagonists cast in a variety of guises up and down the power echelons of society.<sup>4</sup> Not only was the character type instrumental in creating efficient episodic plots from within the action, but these crafty intellects were also inserted into a variety of cruel and competitive worlds to confront their own momentary blindnesses and sometimes to fall prey to superior intriguers, as in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* or Jonson's *Volpone*—two plays that bracket the historical period in which the formula was most experimentally developed. These plays, at the same time, form part of a continuum that originates in the slaves and lackeys of New Comedy and medieval folk pranksters, passes through the fore-period of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, re-emerges in Chapman's gentleman knaves and salon intriguers, and comes to its apogee in the Jacobean revengers and usurpers in their respective political environments. Hamlet represents the final transformation of the trickster from tool character to western literature's epitome of the interiorized hero, the man of anguished deliberation, inner searching, and political disillusionment. Overwhelmed by his own vulnerability, this protagonist chooses strategic dissimulation but finds himself unable to sustain the role of Machiavellian practitioner inaugurated in his handling of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Duke Hercules, with his modest show of interiority, belongs to this same equivocal configuration of anxiety and escape through a disguise that requires all the competence and expertise of an alien self. If we entertain both Hercules and Hamlet as persons, one might wonder if there can be a qualitative difference between them. That is to say, the portrait of Marston's Duke Hercules may seem minimal in this regard, but in that very minimalism the problem of

4. In order to move expeditiously through these preliminary points, I have taken the liberty of borrowing ideas from three of my own articles on these and related topics, articles containing fuller bibliographical information on the trickster phenomenon: "The Courtier as Trickster in Jacobean Theatre"; "Intriguers and Tricksters: Manifestations of an Archetype in the Comedy of the Renaissance"; and "The Sense of an Ending: John Marston and the Art of Closure".



the personhood of the trickster lies more clearly before us. If he, too, attains personhood as a mental representation, we may well ask if the mind allows for greater and lesser versions of that ontological category.

Important to our sense of the selfhood of Marston's protagonist are the few details concerning his frustrations with the life of the ruler. Hercules was annoyed with courtiers. Back in Ferrara they had been his bane and the reason for his pressing need to get away. He had been contained by their obsequiousness and by his own sense of duty. Office had made him servile and base in his own eyes, while the "appetite of blood" was calling him to fulfil "wild longings" and tasks of "exorbitant affects". The change he sought appears to be a permanent one, given his promise that "these manacles of form" will never regain control over him (I.i.39-45). One impetus to the forward direction of the play is our desire to know what could satisfy that "appetite of the blood". In Urbino he manages only to set up a few eccentric courtiers for light mockery, while coaching his own son incognito to disoblige him by courting for himself the girl he had been sent to woo as his proxy. We relish the situational irony in spite of the transparent formula. As a man of three-score-and-five, his pretensions to a "lady of fifteen" had already been cut short by the courtiers as "an enforcement even scandalous to nature" (I.ii.196, 201-2). If his quest for excitement could not be found in young love, then it could be found in social manipulations based upon an efficient exploitation of the *eiron's* skills. He would find excitement, and perhaps a little revenge against courtiers, by slipping into an adopted social mode. In a word, our protagonist becomes a self and its other—a playful transformation to which we have been made party. The question is whether these transformations and functional adaptations of a theatrical "self" are understood in the same way that we decipher the intentional stances of autonomous selves in everyday social life.

All this is to say, for the present debate, that Hercules' "selfhood" (to the extent he has one) functions at multiple mimetic levels. As Fawn, he is clearly the playwright's "internal maker", while at the same time he is a "man" with private causes born of conscious awareness, suffering, and deliberation. One question is how complete a man we recreate in our imaginations around a figure who is simultaneously driven by design agency, as well as by interior beliefs and desires. Presumably, all readers and viewers will see him as something beyond caricature. His caper abroad is preceded by an enigmatic meditation upon his discontentment over his lot as a prince, as defined by the expectations imposed by the flattery of his subjects—in short, by public opinion and politic restraint.

We know that initially he had entertained the prospects of a romantic fling in his old age, the folly of which he recognized in time, settling, instead, for a turn as a self-made satirist, whereby he succeeded in transforming the court of Urbino into a “purgative” playground, while at the same time furthering the romantic interests of his once reticent son Tiberio. Frail as Hercules seems as a psychological portrait, we nevertheless expect him to conform to a certain range of human behavioural probabilities, in light of the propositional and contingent mind states provided to him by the playwright. Once a character representation achieves such a level of complexity, we attribute, in this case to Hercules, not only the facts of his career—his disillusionment as ruler, his paternal concerns, and court-trickster ploys—but the mental competence to perform in all of these capacities. Presumably, this is to grant to him a status tantamount to all that constitutes personhood. The crux, as it is expressed here, is a cognitive one concerning our own mental predisposition for according a “complete” state of mind to all entities manifesting intentional states, no matter how much another part of our consciousness recognizes them to be mimetic creations or artistic simulacra. Arguably, this impasse can never be entirely resolved, given that the hierarchies of cognitive processing pertaining to the “reading” of “other minds”—and in light of the importance of such readings to our survival—may take precedence over the analytical deconstruction of those minds as mimetic representations.

Fawn plays the trickster, more particularly, in adopting the rather gentle strategy of the *eiron*, the calculating underdog whose innocence of manner and disarmingly unassuming ways lead braggarts and pedants to confession. His victims are induced to supply the information by which they are exposed. Strictly speaking, the *eiron* relies upon tendentious questioning, whereby his interlocutors are led into self-exposing stupidities. In pedagogical exercises of this nature, the student is induced, in Socratic fashion, to perceive the inadequacies of his answers. Through the devious intentionality of the method, however, the pedagogue elides into the trickster who turns questioning into baiting or flattery. In *The Fawn*, the moment of truth is an elaborate courtly entertainment featuring a “Ship of Fools” of literary inspiration, to which those who have been singled out for their folly willingly consign themselves. If the play has any particular defect, it is the mono-dimensionality of the vices manifested by these fools and their inability to pose any serious challenges to Fawn’s design. Even Duke Gonzago, for his pedantic mismanagement of his daughter’s amorous escapades, is made

to join the ridiculed. Such interactions translate readily into themes concerning the categorical boasting, sexual predation and licence, jealousy, insipidity, and derelict silence that characterize the respective gulls.

As with Marcolphus, or the folk-magus Faust, or Tyl Eulenspiegel, the role of Fawn, at this juncture, seems pure agency. His identity is the sum of his trickster performances. He is talkative and has inventions for every occasion; he is affable, engaging, yet private, able to keep counsel, quick to seek his advantage, politic in building alliances with the court fool, and managerial in coordinating the final dramatic inset. His mind is contained within his capacity to induce others to betray themselves through his action scenarios leading to physical injury, public humiliation, or the loss of personal property in an economy of wit and ignorance, expectations and reversals, trust and exposure. If Fawn is mentally represented strictly in terms of his vocation as *ieron*, then his identity is adequately circumscribed by the rules of his performance; he, like Volpone, is defined by the outsider logic of the confidence game.

In this regard, the tool-trickster is born, rather than emergent, and functions as a “psychologem”, to use the Jungian term — which I understand to be an allegorized projection of a single mental capacity functioning independently of a fully integrated psyche. The trickster psychologem is a frame of mind seeking entry into society merely to find social contexts for carrying out a penchant for practical joking. He is a human-like creature, yet so signally intent upon writing his entire biography in deeds of a kind, that he has no other self-reflexive interiority. Jung explains such a mind-set as an emblematic depiction of dawning consciousness endemic to eras past, when men were uncertain even of the parts of their own anatomies, much less of possessing a full ethically and logically constituted mind (pp. 200ff).<sup>5</sup> The entire life of the trickster is composed of *beffe* based on the inventive opportunism whereby he creates his victims. This he performs by preparing the conditions for exploiting their fatuousness, largely through their vulnerability to his blandishments. His single mental advantage is his virtuosic employment of a fundamental human survival trait, namely the ability to rehearse, in the imagination, a number of potential scenarios for future action before choosing the best. But in making such choices, he employs his own brand

5. Jung goes on to say that “the trickster is a collective shadow figure, an epitome of all the inferior traits of character in individuals. And since the individual shadow is never absent as a component of personality, the collective figure can construct itself out of it continually” (p. 209).

of folk psychology in reading the misplaced beliefs and goals of others in order to deceive them. Jung's psychologem is about the emergence of personhood in its primitive states—just at the dawn of psychological integration. A secondary skill is the trickster's capacity to follow events from a safe distance, yet remain proximate enough to control and redirect interim contingencies, by which he manifests intimations of metaconsciousness—an awareness of himself thinking and choosing. Trickster is merely the incarnation of this singular adaptive measure, namely the human capacity for mentally constructing multiple versions of the future in order to control the environment to his own advantage. Such creatures are loners and egoists, motiveless or motivated by hostility. Nevertheless, they work to the ultimate benefit of the group, insofar as their tricks eventually provoke an equivalent level of provisional thinking in members of the target community, thereby teaching skills that will benefit the survival of the collectivity. That is why Fawn is a crafty loner, even the angry *eirón*, and yet remains a public benefactor. Ostensibly, then, the trickster, as a character reduced to his trickery, is of a lesser category, as it were, and proof that intentional states can be assigned to medial characters, existing between construct and mind.

The difficulty is that the dukes-in-disguise, as tricksters, differ from the folk trickster in one essential and troubling way. The latter has no life outside of his trickery; his biography is the sum of his exploits in that specific mode. The former moves in and out of that mode, carrying with him memories of a former phase of life. This is a mental tease, for Fawn, to an extent, typologizes himself in the guise of a more primitive mental being, willingly suspending his duties of office as duke, yet never forgetting his identity as duke. The reversal of the plot depends upon the fidelity of his memory, and hence the assurance that the trickster is a superimposition upon a residual psyche. Spectators, likewise, pass through the trickster phase with him in full cognizance of his former identity and promise of return. Hercules gives us something more of himself than the portrait of a single-minded prankster. His memory, anticipated and revealed, is an integral part of the mind states we are challenged to attribute to him.

This must complicate the cognitive frame of reference by which the Hercules-Fawn sequence is processed. The question restated is how spectators deal with such configurations of data. Two issues arise. The first is the degree to which the self-metamorphosis paradigm, as represented in the play, constitutes an essential alteration, insofar as selfhood inheres largely in the continuity of attributions, desires, goals, and social techniques invigilating consciousness at

any one time, and directing volition in accordance with those desires and goals. The answer is not self-evident, but for our purposes the conventions governing disguising as a form of temporary self-othering must fill in. Our folk psychology—that default process, evolutionally prepared, of empathy and reasoning by which we seek to know what others are thinking and intending through every available sign—permits us to maintain a single identity across these conflicting behaviours to the degree that survival depends upon our sophisticated means for decoding acts of social dissimulation. That leads to the second issue. How much psychological competency must we accord to the duke-in-disguise, as part of his ontological package, in order to process our understanding of such compound intentional states? Is there a critical threshold of complexity that can be decoded only by the same processes used in everyday life in dealing with real persons, and will the very activation of those processes impose upon theatrical characters the same properties attributed to autonomous minds? At stake here is the degree to which our cognitive habits induce us into belief states concerning theatrical representations.

The argument to this point has allowed that there are caricatures and characters, tricksters as the mediating creatures of myth and trickster agents circumscribed by memory of former states. In these terms, Fawn can function allegorically as the embodiment of a satiric scheme in action, yet be the designer of that scheme as a form of self-expression and actualization. His soliloquies, in particular, take us to contrasting levels of awareness of the self-conscious outsider in which Hercules, the mental insider, always has both a latent and a strategic part. In particular, the Duke persona is never absent in his nourishing of the romance plot, with its implications for the dynastic future of Ferrara. Fundamental to our folk psychology, whereby we represent the minds of others as intentional stances in relation to their passage through social time, is an ability to posit coherent personhood for all but the most deceptive and hypocritical of psychologically mobile individuals. This is a precondition to all social understanding, one that is carried out with intuitive reliability.<sup>6</sup> The dyad of the insider- outsider is there-

6. The current thinking among cognitive philosophers, developmental psychologists, and primatologists is that we take a “commonsense approach”, one that accounts for the behaviour of others in terms of their desires, intentions, hopes, preferences, and phobias, and that moreover, for many, this procedure constitutes a valid theory of mind. Nevertheless, this default approach to knowledge has been assigned the term “folk psychology”, because it establishes the propositional states attributed to others either

fore a way of stating the change of registers in the duke's conduct, or his position within social groupings, but only in relation to those unable to perceive the continuity of his personhood. In Hercules' case, acting is an extension of being. We can question whether he was an insider or an outsider to his own court, or whether, as an upstart intruder in the court of Gonzago, he finished as an insider or an outsider. But the outsider in relation to the self is a contradiction in terms. Hercules, through the provisional planning of the trickster, epitomizes

on the basis of dubious empathetic simulations or dubious norms. There is, in fact, a heated debate between the intentional realists like Jerry Fodor and the eliminative materialists like Paul Churchland as to whether the mind actually functions in terms of beliefs and desires at all, and whether the tenets of folk psychology will ever be validated by research in neurobiology and the cognitive sciences. The essence of Fodor's thought on these topics can be read in two of his articles: "Why there Still has to be a Language of Thought" and "Banish DisContent". These appear in the same collection as "Stalking the Wild Epistemic Engine", co-authored by Paul Churchland and Patricia Smith Churchland. For a commentary on Fodor's thoughts see Phillipps. Churchland is at his most accessible in *The Engine of Reason*: see, in particular, "The Neural Representation of the Social World" (pp. 123-50) and "The Puzzle of Consciousness" (pp. 187-226). For a commentary on Churchland, see Phillipps, pp. 118-24.

Our best option for the moment will be to join with Dennett, who maintains that probably common-sense psychology as a theory of mind will not stand up to scientific scrutiny, but that it will remain the operative approach to the evaluation of personhood in everyday life, perhaps indefinitely, simply because we have no capacity to imagine what could replace it, apart from trying to reduce all of our mind operations to neurobiological equivalents. In this direction lies the huge debate over materialist reductionism, and the menace of a new dualism that brings back distinctions between mind content as having its equivalent in the functions of the brain, yet producing thoughts and sensations of a different order that cannot in themselves be reduced to neurobiological happenings. See Dennett, *The Intentional Stance*, esp. "Folk Psychology as a Source of Theory" (pp. 43-57), in which he states: "There are different reasons for being interested in the details of folk psychology. One reason is that it exists as a phenomenon, like a religion or a language or a dress code, to be studied with the techniques and attitudes of anthropology. It may be a myth, but it is a myth we live in, so it is an 'important' phenomenon in nature" (p. 47). Baker likewise holds that in spite of recent cognitive and neurobiological investigations, the commonsense approach to the mental attitudes and mind states of others will remain in effect (p. 319). This is to accept for the discussion to follow that some form of functionalism will prevail, and that a kind of explanatory dualism will allow us to endorse as legitimate phenomena those qualia-like features of propositional states so difficult to imagine in neurobiological terms. This is one of the most debated aspects of the entire folk theory, whether in attempting to know other minds we proceed fundamentally by theorizing about other minds, or whether we simply assume that other minds are like our own, and that hence we can know them by introspection, in short, by asking ourselves what we would be doing or thinking in their place. I have looked at numerous articles on the topic, including those of Tambiah and Brunner. There is a more extensive investigation in Stich, whose book devotes major sections to the topic, such as "Connectionism, Eliminativism, and the Future of Folk Psychology" and "How do Minds Understand Minds? Mental Simulation versus Tacit Theory"; these contain terms that will reappear in the body of this article. Also enlightening is the article by Johnson.

the intentional stance at work in a complex mode. The attendant ambiguities are every spectator's invitation to become absorbed in the hermeneutics of intentionality. The argument here is that such an absorption entails the wholesale engagement of a modular mind system designed by evolutionary selection, long before the conventions of theatrical representation were devised.

How, then, can the anthropomorphic fallacy be avoided, if theatre spectators are driven back upon the same cognitive mechanisms that pertain to everyday life in the divining of intentional states? It would appear that they can do no other, insofar as characters, even in their simplest manifestations, do the things which minds and limbic systems alone allow them to do: believe, reflect, intend, will, feel, and act. Stated otherwise, the phylogenetic means by which we know other minds, whether by empathy or by the logic of mental operations, deems, of necessity, that other minds possess the same properties as our own. We can know them only in our self-image. The logistics of folk psychology suggest, moreover, that implicit norms are in place by which the ontological category of personhood is assigned to literary characters. This is true of Jonson's humour characters, as it is of speaking animals in the beast fables, each type, up and down the mimetic scale, a reminder, by its respective conventions, of those negotiations necessary between psychological competence and schematic character structures that necessitate revisions "downwards as circumstances dictate" (Dennett, "True Believers", p. 155). Our working premise is that people will live up to preconceived expectations of reliability, honesty, cogency, timeliness, collegiality, until proven otherwise. Just such expectations abet the trickster, who plays the satirist among the unsuspecting, and who prevails only until his victims make that downward revision.

Hence, there would seem to be no entirely satisfactory resolution to this debate, in which the epistemic categories of the human are imposed upon the imitations of the human in the theatre. It is a delicate crux, for characters are not "case studies". Their makers are not psychoanalysts. They do not have lives outside of their theatrical representations. What we have of their minds is made of words, selected, contrived—yet, paradoxically, contrived to the end of representing states of will and desire that our judgments recognize as human. Plot is, functionally, the conflict of human desires socially expressed and evaluated by the only mechanisms at our cognitive disposal, namely those transactions collectively referred to as "folk psychology". The question is what this analytical mode systemically does to our reading of character.



The opposite of the epistemic categorizing of folk psychology is not reading others merely as social constructs, or as functional agents (as though they could operate by non-human belief states), but the solipsistic predicament in which we may doubt that anything at all can be known about other minds. The most pragmatic answer to the solipsistic argument is that if our ancestors' capacities to know other minds had been seriously compromised at any point along the way, we wouldn't be here to ask the question. We know that they were efficient in maximizing liabilities and opportunities in relation to the agency of others through observation and negotiation, reading causes into events, predicting by norms, and placing themselves by simulation into the circumstances of others in order to calibrate what they would do in those same situations. Our lives are absorbed by these same operations, inside as well as outside the contexts of art. Not only do we have a capacity to read other minds, although imperfectly and in contingent fashion, but that capacity may well be hard-wired into the human genome. Evolutionary psychologists such as Steven Pinker and Peter Carruthers will argue that throughout our prehistoric past, humans have made progress in linking more and more complex belief states and desires to given ends, barring accident, contingencies, or competitive opposition.<sup>7</sup> Two areas in particular in which we display a certain virtuosity in reading other minds pertain to mate selection and group selection. Pressures in these domains undoubtedly did much to hone our skills, acting as powerful incentives to develop reasoning concerning social norms and the need to comply with them, for "with norms and norm-based motivation added to the human phenotype, the stage would be set for much that is distinctive of human cultures" (Carruthers, p. 75).<sup>8</sup> By such reverse

7. Pinker's *How the Mind Works* is suffused with the idea that man is what he is by a long process of selection and adaptation, and that the equipment we have today for computation, perception, the appreciation of beauty, social management and much more is based on the specialized uses of more basic operations to create interim states and processors. Thus "our organs of computation are a product of natural selection" and "natural selection is the only evolutionary force that acts like an engineer, 'designing' organs that accomplish improbable but adaptive outcomes" (p. 36). His references are to Richard Dawkins and George Williams. The importance, for our purposes, is that folk psychology, too, is selective and adaptive, prioritizing our attentions to those aspects of others of greatest relevance to our own survival.
8. As Hacking points out, we do possess a kind of theory of others based on social norms, for without such norms there would be a far less efficient basis for predicting behaviour. Norms are, of course, a philosophical minefield, but on the same basis that folk psychology asserts itself by the logic of what we must cognitively perform to the ends of social survival, "normalizing attitudes" emerge as the basis for making social attributions, predictions and moral evaluations. So much of society is based on regulariz-



engineering, Carruthers came to believe that “there may be a ‘mind-reading’ module charged with generating beliefs about other people’s mental states”, by which he means the special neural clusters that perform these functions, or that at least organize the “all-over” networks for attending to them (p. 73). This is merely to say that we are dealing with a deep-seated cognitive operation, one that is pervasive in dealing with the interpretation of intentional states, and one that posits assumptions about other minds by dint of the fact that we can know them only by analogy with our own. The problem is no longer whether we have the capacity to know other minds, but whether we can process that information without according the ontological status of the human to the mind being read.

That we commit a “fallacy” in mentally processing theatrical representations of persons as “real” persons may express a critical ideal, but perhaps not an epistemological fact. It acknowledges the constructed autonomy of the reader or spectator in keeping with the Cartesian myth that consciousness is in complete selective command of its content according to pre-chosen terms. It delivers the theatrical experience over to aesthetic determinations and social agendas, on the assumption that the reading mind is itself entirely blank in nature, a *tabula rasa* to be programmed by the schematics of social and aesthetic engineering through which the meanings and sensations of art are understood according to consciously approved agendas. But such theories of the critical act must turn a blind eye to the default modes of cognition determined by evolutionary selection, which impose their own epistemic operations. Arguably, however, the assessment of the intentional states of other minds is just such an operation—a drive in the mental main-frame that posits its own terms of being and expectation. Folk psychology may intrude upon the reading of theatrical characters in ways rather more profound than the cultural constructivists could wish. This is not to say that mental conditioning cannot imprint deeply upon the spectator of theatre the plasticities of a double mimetic representationalism, whether as text or as performance. But one may well ask whether the modes of our folk psychology can be altered in reading the intentional states of theatrical characters, as though their beliefs and desires differ in essential ways from those

ing practices, and while, in the postmodern world, we may have convinced ourselves that deviancy and subversion are the forces of progress and liberation, nevertheless, man as a social animal will continue to conform in order to insure inclusion. Normalcy is a mode of thought in its own right, a mental habit human minds resort to as a theorized base for social orientation. Concern about being abnormal is a driving human preoccupation (Hacking, p. 61).

encountered in the social world around us. If the values of theatrical representationalism cannot be superimposed upon the cognitive processes for the reading of other mind states, because there is no generic difference between jealousy in and out of the theatre, let us say, then we are compelled, in this regard, to perform for art what we perform for life; the mind has no categories for making the distinction. To that extent, characters will always be real, because psychological competence is a precondition to having intentional states, and if theatre is about anything that really matters, it is about the dynamics of reading mind states in a community of persons.

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## Élisabeth ou le personnage impossible : la figure d'Élisabeth I<sup>re</sup> dans Chapman et Heywood

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S'IL EST VRAI que le dernier monarque Tudor n'est jamais apparu sur scène de son vivant<sup>1</sup>, il n'a suffi que de quelques mois après sa mort pour qu'Élisabeth I<sup>re</sup> devienne matière à théâtre, mais une matière si dense qu'elle en est fort peu malléable, et dont l'existence singulière se révèle très vite problématique. Les deux dramaturges envisagés ici en ont fait l'expérience mais en ont tiré des conclusions différentes quant au mode de représentation qu'ils ont choisi. Absente en tant que personnages à part entière dans *The Tragedy of Bussy D'Ambois* (1607) et dans *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron* (1608) de George Chapman (1559?-1634), elle apparaît de manière centrale dans *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* (1605-6)<sup>2</sup> de Thomas Heywood (1573-1641). Ce

1. Voir Ribner : « Queen Elizabeth did not appear upon the stage during her own lifetime » (p. 219).
2. Cf. Doran dans son édition : « Neither the date of the original performance nor that of the revival at the Cockpit can be precisely determined. But the former is unlikely to have been before the death of Elizabeth, and the theatres were closed almost throughout 1603. Since both parts had been entered for publication by the autumn of 1605, we may reasonably assume 1604-5 as the date of production » (vol. I, p. xiv). Ribner dit à peu près la même chose : « The dates of composition are uncertain, but the subject matter of the plays would suggest that they were written shortly after the succession of James I in 1603 » (p. 219). C'est aussi l'opinion de Baines, p. 26.

simple fait montre qu'à partir du même matériau, si l'on peut dire, les deux auteurs développent deux stratégies d'écriture différentes : tandis qu'Heywood, en transformant la reine défunte en personnage de théâtre, la place au centre de l'action d'une manière quelque peu naïve et univoque, Chapman ne semble, en apparence, lui réserver qu'une place marginale, mais qui s'avère indispensable à la structure idéologique et dramatique d'une pièce comme *Byron*. Ces deux approches sont en parfaite adéquation avec le portrait hagiographique fait par Heywood et le portrait politique fait par Chapman de la même figure historique. Au-delà de l'évocation du monarque idéal qui est commune aux deux auteurs et au-delà du culte dont elle est l'objet, Élisabeth est ou devient un médium, une figure de médiation. Alors que le processus se fait presque à l'insu d'Heywood, au fil du temps, Chapman l'utilise immédiatement et consciemment à cette fin.

D'abord princesse dans la première partie de *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*, Heywood présente ses déboires jusqu'à la mort de sa fort méchante sœur ; il l'utilise ensuite comme reine, dans quatre scènes (xiii, xv, xvii et xviii) sur dix-huit de la seconde partie de la pièce. Tandis qu'Heywood concentre surtout son attention sur la jeunesse d'Élisabeth I<sup>re</sup>, Chapman se préoccupe exclusivement du rôle politique de la souveraine.



Fixée dès le début de *If You Know Not Me*, première partie, sous-titré *Or the Troubles of Queene Elizabeth*, dans un rôle de princesse protestante en butte aux persécutions d'une reine, Marie Tudor, et d'un entourage catholique, l'Élisabeth d'Heywood tient d'abord davantage de la sainte que de la reine. En cela il suit, voire amplifie, le récit que fait John Foxe, dans *Acts and Monuments*, de la jeunesse d'Élisabeth. Sa présence en scène en tant que personnage à part entière et en tant que princesse participe de ce choix, dans la mesure où les spectateurs peuvent s'identifier facilement avec elle, et de ce fait avoir de la sympathie pour elle. On voit d'emblée qu'Heywood privilégie ainsi l'émotion sur la réflexion politique, obéissant par là au précepte horatien qui s'ajoute au *docere* et au *placere* de son *Art poétique*.

Dans cette première pièce, Heywood présente donc Élisabeth en tant que princesse, prisonnière de sa sœur, qui l'accuse d'être à l'origine des complots dressés contre elle, victime innocente des persécutions catholiques manigancées par la reine et par ses conseillers zélés (Stephen Gardiner, évêque de Winchester, et Beningfield) et enfin comme la championne inflexible de la foi anglicane.

Dès le début de la pièce, Marie est présentée comme parjure, puisqu'elle



refuse d'honorer la promesse faite aux hommes du Suffolk, qui l'avaient protégée de la rébellion de Wyatt, de leur permettre de vivre dans la foi canonique du temps d'Édouard VI, c'est-à-dire la foi protestante<sup>3</sup>. C'est donc dans ce climat qu'est décidée l'arrestation d'Élisabeth, accusée par Winchester d'avoir pris part au complot de Wyatt (ii, 98-103) et jugée dangereuse du fait de sa position d'héritière du trône (ii, 105-6). Commence alors pour Élisabeth ce qui est présenté comme un calvaire par Heywood. Enfermée à la Tour de Londres, puis consignée à Hampton Court jusqu'à ce que la reine daigne la recevoir, Élisabeth est présentée comme la victime sacrificielle de l'État catholique voulu par sa sœur.

Pour nous convaincre de la sainteté de son héroïne, Heywood insiste sur l'innocence de la princesse : de la scène v à la scène xviii, elle ne cesse de la clamer et refuse avec constance de reconnaître les fautes dont sa sœur et ses persécuteurs l'accusent : « My Inocence yet makes my hart as light,/As my front's heauie » (v, 332-33) dit-elle à ses gens. Elle se défend fermement d'avoir été complice de Wyatt et déclare que son seul tort est d'être la fille d'Henri VIII et l'héritière du trône :

Treason Lords, if it be treason to be the daughter  
To th'Eight Henry; Sister to Edward, and the next of blood vnto  
My gracious soueraigne now the Queene I am a traytor: if not, I  
Spit at treason. (v, 409-12)

En face de Beningfield, elle réitère sa position : « Should they submit that neuer wrought offence,/The lawe will alwayes quit wrong'd Innocence » (xiv, 1071-72). Et finalement, devant sa sœur et souveraine qui lui demande si elle est prête à se soumettre, sa réponse ne varie pas d'un pouce : « My life madam I will, but not as guilty,/Should I confesse/Fault done by her, that neuer did transgresse » (xviii, 1268-70).

Fortifiée par la conviction intime de son innocence, elle résiste ainsi à la cruauté de ses ennemis, qui, sans tenir compte de sa santé précaire (cf. scène iii), l'envoient à la Tour, dont le lieutenant s'acharne à lui refuser le moindre accom-

3. « that faith/Which in king *Edwards* daies was held Canonically » (ii, 85-86). Marie, conseillée par Winchester, rappelle fermement leur devoir d'obéissance à ses sujets :

They shall know,  
To whome their faithfull duties they doe owe,  
Since they the lymbes, the head would seeke to sway,  
Before they gouerne, they shall learne t'obay:  
See it seuerely ordred Winchester. (ii, 88-92)

modement pour son séjour. Il refuse de lui donner une chaise lorsqu'elle se sent mal en y entrant (vii, 593-94), n'accepte pas qu'elle se promène, ni que ses gens la servent (scène ix). Il donne lui-même la raison de cette inhumanité quand il déclare :

She is my prisoner, and if I durst,  
But that my warrant is not yet so strickt,  
Ide lay her in a dungeon where her eyes,  
Should not haue light to read her prayer booke,  
So would I danger both her soule and her body,  
Cause she an alyen is to vs catholiques,  
Her bed should be all snakes, her rest dispayre,  
Torture should make her curse, her faythles prayer. (ix, 716-23)

Ainsi Heywood parvient à faire d'Élisabeth une martyr de la foi protestante. Ne reculant pas devant les outrances de la caricature, il fait même de cet officier une sorte de vampire : « Oh that I could but draine her harts deare blood,/Oh it would feede me, do my soule much good » (ix, 755-56) ! L'autre ennemi caractérisé de la princesse est Stephen Gardiner, évêque de Winchester, qui tente par ruse de faire signer son arrêt de mort par Philippe d'Espagne (xv, 1130-32), le tout nouvel époux de la reine. Après l'échec de cette tentative, il essaiera encore de dresser un complot contre elle, à la scène xviii.

De princesse exemplaire Élisabeth devient icône de la foi anglicane, dont elle se proclame « vierge et martyr », à la scène v : « all that heauen sends is welcome/[...] If I miscarry in this enterprise, and aske you why,/A Virgin and a Martyr both I dy » (v, 333, 341-42). Son martyre, s'il est permis de l'appeler ainsi, qui commence vraiment à son arrivée à la Tour<sup>4</sup>, se transforme rapidement, selon son propre point de vue, en calvaire puisqu'aux domestiques qui demandent de ses nouvelles elle fait répondre : « Say to them *tanquam Ouis* » (xi, 879), comme l'agneau mené au sacrifice. Mais dans le même temps, elle se sait protégée par Dieu, en qui elle place toute sa confiance. La pantomime de la scène xiv la montre en effet

4. Elle y débarque les pieds dans l'eau (vii, 580-84), par la porte réservée aux traîtres (vii, 560-65) et où, faute d'une chaise compatissante, elle doit s'asseoir par terre tandis qu'il pleut (vii, 595-97), ce qu'elle interprète comme un signe du chagrin divin : « See gentle men,/The pittious heauen weepes teares into my bosome » (vii, 602-3).
5. « Enter *Winchester, Constable, Barwick, and Fryars*: at the other dore 2. *Angels*: the *Fryar* steps to her, offering to kill her: the *Angels* driues them back. *Exeunt*. The *Angel* opens the Bible, and puts it in her hand as she sleepes, *Exeunt Angels, she wakes* » (xiv, 1049-53).

miraculeusement sauvée de l'assassinat par un ange<sup>5</sup>. Lorsqu'elle se réveille de son rêve, elle constate avec surprise que sa Bible est ouverte entre ses mains, et elle y lit la phrase suivante : « *Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, / Shall not be confounded* » (xiv, 1064- 65)<sup>6</sup>, citation tirée des secondes *Épîtres de Pierre*, chapitre 2, verset 6.

Enfin, lorsqu'elle fait son entrée solennelle dans la capitale, le maire de Londres lui remet une Bible en anglais<sup>7</sup> — en quoi Heywood est fidèle à l'histoire. Les derniers vers de la pièce y sont consacrés, Élisabeth y déclare :

We thanke you all : but first this booke I kisse,  
 Thou art the way to honor ; thou to blisse,  
 An English Bible, thanks my good Lord Maior,  
 You of our bodie and our soule haue care,  
 This is the Jewell that we still loue best,  
 This was our solace when we were distrest,  
 This booke that hath so long conceald it selfe,  
 So long shut vp, so long hid ; now Lords see,  
 We here vnclaspe, for euer it is free :  
 Who lookes for ioy, let him this booke adore,  
 This is true foode for rich men and for poore,  
 Who drinke of this, is certaine nere to perish,  
 This will the soule with heauenly vertue cherish,  
 Lay hand vppon this Anchor euery soule,  
 Your names shalbe in an eternall scrowle ;  
 Who builds on this, dwel's in a happy state,  
 This is the fountaine cleere immaculate,  
 And in our populous Kingdome this booke read :  
 For them as for our owne selues we humbly pray,  
 They may liue long and blest ; so lead the way. (xxiii, 1578-98)

6. Voici la citation complète :

Then 'twas by inspiration, heauen I trust  
 With his eternall hand, will guide the iust.  
 What chapter's this? *Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord,*  
*Shall not be confounded:*  
 My sauiour thanks, on thee my hope I build,  
 Thou lou'st poore Innocents, and art their shield. (xiv, 1062-67)

7. Beningfield, après avoir touché la Bible personnelle d'Élisabeth, se lavera les mains, de peur d'être contaminé par l'hérésie : « *whats here an English bible? / Sanctum Maria pardon this prophanation of my hart, / Water Barwick, water, Ile meddle with't no more* » (xiv, 1039-41).

Heywood ne laisse aucune ambiguïté quant à savoir de quel côté le bien se trouve ; même Winchester, après que son subterfuge pour la faire exécuter a échoué, doit reconnaître qu'elle bénéficie sans doute d'une protection particulière du ciel : « Her life is garded by the hand of heauen,/And we in vaine pursue it » (xv, 1150-51)<sup>8</sup>.

Dans la seconde partie du diptyque<sup>9</sup>, Élisabeth, devenue reine, tout en se montrant très soucieuse des bonnes relations qu'elle entretient avec la corporation des marchands de Londres, reste évidemment fidèle à ses engagements religieux en attribuant la victoire sur l'Armada espagnole à la Providence divine, épisode toutefois ajouté par Butter, mais écrit par Heywood :

And to the Audience in our name declare.  
Our thanks to heauen in vniuersall Prayer :  
For tho our enemies be ouerthrowne,  
Tis by the hand of heauen, and not our owne. (xviii, 2682-85)

Sa stature désormais royale est marquée par Heywood du sceau de la clémence, en particulier lorsqu'elle se dit prête à pardonner une seconde fois celui qui a voulu l'assassiner, le Dr Parry (scène xv). C'est donc bien une icône littéraire qui nous est présentée dans la pièce de Thomas Heywood, icône qui ne peut, à son tour, renvoyer qu'aux représentations picturales de la jeune princesse ou de la jeune reine. On pense en particulier au portrait d'Élisabeth fait par William Scrofts vers 1546-47 (elle a donc entre 13 et 14 ans), où on la voit poser avec entre ses mains un livre, ou bien à celui d'un anonyme où la reine tient un livre dans sa main droite (portrait daté de 1560-65)<sup>10</sup>.

## //

Chez Chapman, au contraire, Élisabeth, tout en restant l'image même du monarque idéal, apparaît uniquement comme la « reine incomparable » citée par Henri IV dans *The Conspiracy of Byron* (III, 2, 275). Mais par choix, ou par contrainte, comme dans le cas de l'acte IV de *The Conspiracy of Byron*, probablement victime de la cen-

8. Le même se désole du retour en grâce de la princesse, comme il s'en ouvre à la reine, à la scène xix :  
[...] this confirmation I doe greatly dread,  
For now our true religion will decay,  
I do diuine who euer liues seauen yeare,  
Shall see no Religion here but heresy. (xix, 1322-25)
9. Sous-titrée : *With the Building of the Royall Exchange: And the Famous Victorie of Queene Elizabeth, in the Yeare 1588.*
10. Voir Strong, *Gloriana*, p. 48, 52, 58-59.

sure, Élisabeth ne paraît pas en scène. En ce sens, Chapman laisse aux spectateurs le soin de se forger eux-mêmes une image personnelle de leur ancienne reine et en appelle davantage à leur raison qu'à leur émotivité. Élisabeth est hors champ visuel mais toujours présente à l'imaginaire et aux oreilles des spectateurs.

Pour Henri III comme pour Henri IV, qui se font ici commentateurs de l'Angleterre, elle représente un monarque exemplaire, dont l'excellence doit servir de modèle à ses contemporains. Dans *Bussy D'Ambois*, le roi fait un éloge dithyrambique de la Cour anglaise :

Assure you Cosen Guise, so great a Courtier,  
So full of maiestie and Roiall parts,  
No Queene in Christendome may boast her selfe,  
Her Court approoues it, That's a Court indeede;  
Not mixt with Rudenesse vs'd in common houses;  
But, as Courts should be th'abstracts of their kingdomes,  
In all the Beautie, State, and Worth they hold;  
So is hers, amplie, and by her inform'd.  
The world is not contracted in a man,  
With more proportion and expression,  
Than in her Court, her Kingdome: Our French Court  
Is a meere mirror of confusion to it:  
The King and subiect, Lord and euerie slaue  
Dance a continuall Haie; Our Roomes of State,  
Kept like our stables; No place more obseru'd  
Than a rude Market place [...]. (I, 2, 14-29)

Ici, et c'est la spécificité de Chapman, le compliment se double d'une comparaison avec la France, pays où se déroulent les tragédies considérées ici. Henri établit ainsi une hiérarchie à laquelle préside celle qui est la quintessence de la perfection de sa Cour, et par conséquent, de son royaume. Elle est débarrassée de la grossièreté ordinaire de la roture, parée de qualités vraiment royales, telles que la beauté, la majesté et la valeur.

Cet éloge trouve une suite et un écho amplifié dans *The Conspiracy of Byron*, où son « bon frère » Henri trouve en elle un refuge de loyauté bienvenu pour dissuader Biron de comploter sa chute avec l'Espagne :

I therefore mean to make him change the air,  
And send him further from those Spanish vapours,  
That still bear fighting sulphur in their breasts,  
To breathe a while in temperate English air,

Where lips are spiced with free and loyal counsels,  
 Where policies are not ruinous, but saving ;  
 Wisdom is simple, valour righteous,  
 Humane, and hating facts of brutish forces ;  
 And whose grave natures scorn the scoffs of France,  
 The empty compliments of Italy,  
 The any-way encroaching pride of Spain,  
 And love men modest, hearty, just and plain. (II, 2, 46-57)

Élisabeth est donc la clef de cette cure que le souverain français se propose d'administrer à son maréchal félon<sup>11</sup>. Ici encore, la reine est parée de toutes les vertus possibles et placée bien au-dessus, non seulement de l'Espagne — l'ennemi commun de la France et de l'Angleterre — mais aussi de l'Italie et de la France même. L'essentiel des qualités anglaises se résument par la loyauté et la simplicité, avec ce qu'elle implique d'honnêteté. Face à Byron, qu'il suspecte de trahison, Henry réitère son éloge de l'Angleterre et de sa reine au moment où il lui annonce qu'il va partir en ambassade en Angleterre :

And now for England you shall go, my lord,  
 Our lord ambassador to that matchless queen ;  
 You never had a voyage of such pleasure,  
 Honour, and worthy objects ; there's a queen  
 Where nature keeps her state, and state her court,  
 Wisdom her study, continence her fort ;  
 Where magnanimity, humanity,  
 Firmness in counsel and integrity,  
 Grace to her poorest subjects, majesty  
 To awe the greatest, have respects divine,  
 And in her each part, all the virtues shine. (III, 2, 274-84)

On peut remarquer tout d'abord que Chapman se sert ici de pentamètres rimés, ce qui n'est pas le cas en général dans la pièce, écrite en vers blancs. Au début, le discours du roi n'est pas rimé (à partir du vers 215), puis peu à peu, à partir du vers 270, les vers riment par distiques. C'est le moment où Henry commence à parler de l'Angleterre. De cette façon Chapman insiste sur le caractère harmonieux du règne, du royaume et de la personne d'Élisabeth, la « reine incomparable ».

11. L'idée que l'air anglais serait meilleur que le Français se retrouve aussi sous la plume d'Aubigné, dans son *Histoire universelle*, lorsqu'il relate l'ambassade de Biron auprès de la reine : « Mais, en effet, il [Henri] l'avoit choisi [Biron] pour le destourner de ses chagrins en menees et pour essayer de lui faire changer l'ame avec l'air » (t. 9 [1594-1602], p. 307).

Élisabeth, qui n'était jusqu'à présent qu'une référence, va, à l'acte IV, quitter les marges de la scène pour entrer au cœur de la pièce, mais d'une manière détournée. En effet, cet acte, consacré à la relation de l'ambassade de Biron en Angleterre, est assez bizarrement construit et le texte en est assez corrompu pour qu'on puisse soupçonner une forme de censure : il est probable que Chapman avait l'intention de faire une vraie scène de cette ambassade, avec les personnages de Biron et d'Élisabeth<sup>12</sup>. Au lieu de cela, le courtisan Créqui raconte l'événement à un autre courtisan, d'Aumont. C'est l'occasion de nouveaux compliments transmis par Byron de la part de son roi :

And his [Henry's] will to be here must needs be great,  
 Since heaven hath throned so true a royalty here  
 That he thinks no king absolutely crowned  
 Whose temples have not stood beneath this sky,  
 And whose height is not hardened with these stars,  
 Whose influences for this altitude,  
 Distilled, and wrought in with this temperate air  
 And this division of the element,  
 Have with your reign brought forth more worthy spirits

12. Dans l'état actuel, l'ambassade est rapportée par Créqui, un courtisan qui accompagnait Byron en Angleterre, à un autre courtisan, d'Aumont. Il s'agit donc davantage d'une narration que de théâtre à proprement parler, narration au style indirect évidemment, mais qui souffre d'incohérences, puisqu'au vers 107 on passe brusquement au style direct : « He [Byron] said he was no orator but a soldier, / More than this air in which you [Élisabeth] breathe hath made me, *etc.* » en outre, au vers 156, on peut lire : « Then spake she to Créqui and Prince d'Auvergne », ce qui révèle l'incohérence d'écriture de cette scène. Enfin, il est curieux que la scène (et donc l'acte) se termine abruptement au milieu du vers 223 : « To this blest isle » et qu'aucune didascalie ne mentionne la sortie de scène des deux personnages. Il est donc probable que cette partie de la pièce (tout comme la fin de l'acte I et le début de l'acte II) a été censurée par Sir George Buck, l'adjoint du Maître des Plaisirs (Master of Revels) Edmund Tilney. On sait que l'ambassadeur de France (Antoine de La Boderie) a fait censurer la pièce à cause d'un passage mettant en cause la reine Marie de Médicis, mais là n'est pas le problème. Ce qui est intrigant ici est que le contenu de ce passage est d'une orthodoxie politique irréprochable : outre les compliments d'usage, la reine met Byron en garde contre l'ambition et la tentation de désobéir à son prince souverain (138-43). Au début du siècle, le critique allemand Emil Koeppl avait suggéré que la reine, dans une version originale de la scène, désignait du doigt la tête d'Essex et de ses complices. Malheureusement, pour aussi séduisante que cette idée soit, la scène ne figure pas chez Edward Grimeston, la source indubitable de la double pièce de Chapman, bien qu'elle apparaisse chez Pierre Mathieu, un des auteurs compilés par Grimeston (Margeson, p. 9-10). Quoi qu'il en soit, même si on peut comprendre, comme le fait remarquer John Margeson, que Sir George Buck n'ait pas accepté que la reine Élisabeth fût représentée sur scène, cela ne résout pas tout. C'est peut-être que sa présence sur scène était de nature à porter ombrage au souverain régnant, à lui signifier de manière trop visible l'écart qui le séparait de la perfection incarnée par la « reine incomparable ».

For counsel, valour, height of wit and art,  
Than any other region of the earth,  
Or were brought forth to all your ancestors. (IV, 1, 74-85)

Il cite à nouveau les vertus du royaume anglais déjà évoquées par le roi. Les mêmes mots reviennent : « counsel », « valour », « worthy » et les mêmes idées : « majesty » (III, 2, 282), « royalty » (IV, 1, 75). Dans l'esprit d'Henri, le royaume anglais, instauré par Dieu (vers 75), est donc l'un des plus authentiques. Pour parachever cette peinture idéalisée, Chapman passe rapidement au thème impérial, si étroitement lié à l'époque élisabéthaine, comme l'a montré Frances Yates<sup>13</sup> :

Your empire<sup>14</sup> is so amply absolute  
That even your theatres show more comely rule,  
True noblesse, royalty, and happiness  
Than others' courts ; you make all state before  
Utterly obsolete, all to come twice sod. (IV, 1, 110-14)

Les deux portraits idéalisés de la reine anglaise faits par Heywood et Chapman ne manquent pas de soulever la question des fins idéologiques auxquels ils répondent plus ou moins explicitement. Derrière la simple mais profonde nostalgie d'un âge élisabéthain que les deux dramaturges se plaisaient à imaginer doré, il est tentant d'essayer de trouver l'expression d'une opposition au nouveau souverain, en l'occurrence Jacques I<sup>er</sup>, et au nouvel âge qui s'ouvre avec son règne. Or, les choses ne sont pas si simples, même avec la pièce d'Heywood, qui pourrait sembler inoffensive d'un point de vue idéologique, précisément, pour le nouveau roi et son règne. C'est ce que je vais voir maintenant.

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Dans *The Troubles of Queene Elizabeth*, l'hagiographie ne doit pas faire oublier la dimension politique du personnage : son attitude soumise face à l'arbitraire dont elle est victime est une illustration frappante de la doctrine Tudor<sup>15</sup>, qui prône pour les sujets une obéissance absolue à leur souverain et, s'il s'avère tyrannique, une patience à toute épreuve, car bon ou mauvais, le magistrat, pour reprendre le

13. Voir en particulier, « Elizabethan imperialism », p. 38-59.

14. Cf. le terme de « imperial monarchy » introduit dans le langage politique en Angleterre par l'« Act in Restraint of Appeals » de 1533, comme le note Burgess, p. 33.

15. Sur la doctrine Tudor telle qu'elle apparaît chez Heywood, on se référera utilement à Grivelet, p. 127-34.



terme utilisé par Calvin dans son *Institution de la religion chrétienne* (1541)<sup>16</sup>, est institué par Dieu, et donc intouchable. Ainsi la princesse Élisabeth obéit aux ordres de sa sœur, dont elle reconnaît l'autorité légitime, sans jamais résister ni se révolter : « The Queene is kind, and we will striue with death/To tender her our life,/We are her subiect, and obay her hest » (iii, 232-34), déclare-t-elle à Chandos. Cette obéissance procède d'un acquiescement naturel à la théorie du droit divin des rois, comme elle l'exprime à la scène v :

Thou power eternall, Inocents iust guide,  
That sways the Scepter of all Monarchyes,  
Protect the guiltlesse from these rauening lawes,  
That hidious death presentes, by Tyrants Lawes,  
And as my hart is knowne to thee most pure,  
Grant mee release, or patience to endure. (v, 425-30)

Face à la tyrannie la seule réponse autorisée est donc non seulement l'obéissance politique de la sujette mais aussi la patience chrétienne de la martyr. Par deux fois, on la voit s'agenouiller en signe de soumission et d'allégeance totales à la reine. « My duty with my fortunes do agree,/And to the Queene in you I bend my knee », dit-elle à Winchester (v, 368-69). Quand elle rencontre enfin Marie, elle proteste à nouveau de sa parfaite soumission : « I am as true a/Subiect to your Grace, as any liues this day,/Did you but see,/My heart it bends, farre lower than my knee » (xviii, 1263-66), Heywood faisant ici écho aux paroles de Richard II envers Bolingbroke (*Richard II*, III, 3, 194-95)<sup>17</sup>. Enfin, une fois devenue reine, Élisabeth I<sup>re</sup> complète la doctrine Tudor en rappelant, au détour d'une phrase, que toute obéissance est due, *in fine*, à Dieu, y compris par les rois : « And now to *London* Lords lead on the way,/Praying that King, that all Kings els obay » (xviii, 1569-70)<sup>18</sup>.

16. En particulier dans son chapitre 16 sur le « Gouvernement civil ».

17. Cf. l'article de Forker.

18. La parfaite soumission d'Élisabeth envers sa sœur (ainsi que ses protestations d'innocence) se retrouve, cette fois de manière historique, dans une lettre qu'elle lui adresse le 16 mars 1554 :

If any ever did try this old saying — that a king's word was more than another man's oath — I most humbly beseech your majesty to verify it in me, and to remember your last promise and my last demand: that I be not condemned without answer and due proof. Which it seems that now I am, for that, without cause proved, I am by your Council from you commanded to go unto the Tower, a place more wanted for a false traitor than a true subject. [...] And to this present hour I protest afore God [...] that I never practiced, counseled, nor consented to anything that might be prejudicial to your person any way or dangerous to the state by any mean. [...] Therefore once again, with

À la différence de George Chapman, Heywood n'assortit pas cet élément dramatique des critiques plus ou moins directes distillées par son contemporain contre Jacques I<sup>er</sup> dans certaines de ses pièces. Aussi, il me semble que le portrait d'Élisabeth, d'abord comme sujet, puis comme reine à la fin de la première partie de *If You Know Not Me*, ne fait que conforter les positions absolutistes développées par le premier Stuart concernant le droit divin des rois et les questions liées à l'obéissance, telles qu'il les avait abordées dès 1598 dans *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*<sup>19</sup>. Quant à la deuxième partie de *If You Know Not Me*, qu'y voit-on ? Une reine en parfaite harmonie avec son peuple, et en particulier avec la corporation des marchands de Londres, représentée dans la pièce par Thomas Gresham et Hobson le mercier, symboles de la prospérité londonienne, de l'essor du commerce anglais et de la richesse bien employée des citoyens de ce royaume. Pour montrer l'immense crédit — aux deux sens du terme — dont jouissait Élisabeth auprès des marchands londoniens, Heywood met en scène la générosité d'Hobson, à qui un messenger de la reine vient emprunter, au nom de sa maîtresse, £100. Le mercier lui répond alors :

How, bones a mee, Queene know Hobson, Queene know Hobson?  
And send but for one hundred pound : Friend come in ;  
Come in friend, shall haue two, Queene shall haue two :  
If Queene know Hobson, once her Hobsons purse,  
Must be free for her she is Englands Nurse. (vii, 1115-19)

Ce qui lui permet de dire à Élisabeth, qui lui demande qui il est lors de l'inauguration de la Bourse : « Knowest thou not mee Queene? Then thou knowest no body » (xiii, 2071), réplique qui sert désormais de titre à la pièce. C'est à cette occasion qu'il lui renouvelle ses services financiers : « When thou seest money with thy Grace is scant,/For twice fiue hundred pound thou shalt not want » (xiii, 2088-89). S'ensuit alors ce dialogue :

humbleness of my heart because I am not suffered to bow the knees of my body, I humbly crave to speak with your highness. Which I would not be so bold as to desire if I knew not myself most clear, as I know myself most true. And as for the traitor Wyatt, he might peradventure write me a letter, but on my faith I never received any from him. (Elizabeth I<sup>st</sup>, *Collected Works*, p. 41-42).

19. Cf. Perry : « The king's panegyrists produced accounts of Elizabethan glory emphasizing the continuity between the queen and her successor, thereby using the appeal of the queen's memory to ratify James's policies » (p. 90).

Queen. Vpon my bond.  
 Hob. No, no my Soueraigne,  
 Ile take thine owne word without skrip or scrowle.  
 Queen. Thankes honest Hobson, as I am true mayde,  
 Ile see my selfe the money backe repayd :  
 Thou without grudging lendest, thy Purse is free,  
 Honest as plaine. (xiii, 2090-96)

Hobson se contente de la parole royale comme garantie pour son prêt et la reine, fort familièrement, lui assure qu'elle s'occupera en personne de son remboursement.

L'autre exemple de cette parfaite entente entre souverain et marchands est donné à l'occasion de la construction de la Bourse de Londres, voulue et financée par Thomas Gresham et inaugurée, le 23 janvier 1570, par la reine en personne qui admire fort l'édifice, qu'elle nomme « Royall Exchange » (xiii, 2105). Comme Perry l'explique, la considération accordée par la reine à Londres et à ses marchands procédait d'un intérêt réciproque bien compris : en échange de tel ou tel monopole accordé aux marchands — comme en 1594, celui des draps blancs (Perry, p. 96) — Élisabeth obtenait sans problème des prêts d'argent importants pour financer telle ou telle opération militaire, par exemple, ou simplement pour la bonne marche du royaume. Cette relation de confiance réciproque s'accompagne, dans la pièce d'Heywood, d'une peinture idyllique du caractère familial et aisément accessible de la souveraine envers son peuple, aussi humble fût-il. En témoigne par exemple la réponse qu'elle fait à Hobson, citée plus haut. Il est donc naturel que sa popularité soit à la mesure de cette simplicité revendiquée. Durant les épreuves de sa jeunesse, Heywood montre une princesse soutenue par ses gens et par le peuple anglais, comme en attestent plusieurs scènes. Les trois soldats qui doivent la mener à la Tour chantent ses louanges, à mots couverts : « Masse I say this : That the Lady *Elizabeth* is both a lady,/And *Elizabeth*, and if I should say she were a vertuous Princesse,/Were there any harme in that ? » (vi, 478-80). De même, Gage lui est fidèle tout au long de ses épreuves, envers et contre tous, comme son cuisinier, qui s'oppose au lieutenant de la Tour (scène ix). Heywood utilise également un enfant, qui vient porter un bouquet à Élisabeth pour montrer combien elle était populaire (scène x) et à la scène suivante, le peuple accourt pour la voir sortir de prison et sonne les cloches en son honneur, au grand dam du lieutenant de la Tour. S'il est vrai que cette image contrastait avec la distance que Jacques I<sup>er</sup> mettait entre lui et ses sujets, comme Perry le suggère (« a sharp

distinction can be drawn between the accessible plain style of Elizabeth [...] and the more authoritative plain style of James » [p. 99]), on sait par ailleurs que le dramaturge ne manquait pas de faire l'éloge du Stuart dans ses écrits, comme par exemple *Troia Britannica : or, Great Britaines Troy* (1609). Cela fait dire à Perry : « The apparently naive association of nostalgic Elizabethan patriotism and Jacobean panegyric in Heywood's chronicle suggests that for Londoners during the first decade of James's reign, it was at least possible to support the crown while cherishing a memory of Elizabeth replete with oppositional potential » (p. 107).

Précisément, tous les traits constitutifs du portrait littéraire d'Élisabeth chez Heywood, pour inoffensifs qu'ils étaient en 1605-6, n'en acquièrent pas moins objectivement un potentiel subversif au fil des sept rééditions de *If You Know Not Me*, première partie, entre 1605 et 1639<sup>20</sup>, et des trois rééditions de la seconde partie, entre 1606 et 1634<sup>21</sup>. On notera que la première partie fut reprise en 1667. Malgré la qualité littéraire discutable de la pièce<sup>22</sup>, ces nombreuses publications témoignent d'un solide succès. Or, avec le temps, l'éloge sans partage de la reine Tudor pouvait être interprété comme l'image en négatif du souverain Stuart régnant. Trois aspects sont à envisager ici : le militantisme anglican de la reine, tel qu'on l'a vu plus haut, les relations économiques avec les riches Londoniens, et enfin l'impérialisme anglais, tel qu'il apparaît dans la mise en scène de la victoire anglaise sur l'Armada espagnol dans 2 *If You Know Not Me* (scènes xvii-xviii). Le premier et le troisième sont liés à l'attitude de Jacques vis-à-vis de l'Espagne, avec laquelle il signe un traité de paix dès son arrivée au pouvoir, renversant radicalement la politique étrangère de l'Angleterre envers cette nation catholique. L'insistance sur la défense par Élisabeth de la foi anglicane peut également être envisagée comme un commentaire négatif de cette même attitude, surtout au moment où le prince

20. En 1606, 1608, 1610, 1613, 1623, 1632 et en 1639. Voir Doran, éd., p. v-vii.

21. En 1609, 1623 et en 1633. Voir Doran, éd., p. v-vi.

22. À lire la plupart des critiques d'Heywood, *If You Know Not Me* est une œuvre de piètre qualité, à peine digne d'être mentionnée, encore moins d'être étudiée. Cela n'est pas nouveau puisque Samuel Pepys, après avoir vu une reprise de la pièce d'Heywood en 1667, la qualifie ainsi dans son journal : « the most ridiculous that sure ever came upon stage [...] merely a puppet-play acted by living puppets [and] neither the design nor language better » (entrée du 17 août 1667, cité par Wentworth, p. xii). Grivelet s'exprime ainsi au sujet de la pièce : « sa pièce, loin d'être un sommet pour l'art, compte parmi ce qu'il nous a laissé de plus mauvais » (p. 133). Irving Ribner déclare, de son côté : « the two parts of *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody* [...] are careless productions of little artistic merit, although the corrupt texts in which they have come down to us may cause us to underestimate the merits of the original productions » (p. 215-16).

Henry se révèle être un héritier du trône des plus intransigeants sur ce point. Son protestantisme radical, comme l'a montré Strong (*Henry, Prince of Wales*), s'opposait violemment à l'indulgence de son père envers les catholiques. Cela n'a pu que s'aggraver avec le projet de mariage espagnol de Charles. Enfin, l'harmonie entre marchands et souverain perdura pendant les premières années du règne de Jacques, jusqu'en 1610, date à laquelle la Couronne se trouve en peine d'honorer ses dettes et perd de son crédit auprès des prêteurs d'argent londoniens<sup>23</sup>. Aussi, et de manière rétrospective, la peinture d'une reine qui honore scrupuleusement ses engagements financiers ne pouvait que faire du tort au nouveau roi<sup>24</sup>.

Chez Chapman, la doctrine Tudor n'est pas absente non plus, en témoignent les vers adressés par la reine à un Byron trop ambitieux. En cela, elle est fidèle au portrait fait par le roi français :

But for a subject to affect a kingdom  
Is like the camel that of Jove begged horns,  
And such mad-hungry men as well may eat  
Hot coals of fire to feed their natural heat;  
For to aspire to competence with your king,  
What subject is so gross and giantly ? (*The Conspiracy*, IV, 1, 138-43)

Entrer en compétition (« competence » [142]) avec son roi est hors de portée et contre nature (d'où l'exemple du chameau qui veut des cornes [139]) pour un sujet et ne peut convenir qu'à un surhomme (« giantly » [143]).

À part cela, Élisabeth fonctionne clairement comme une figure de médiation offensive contre Jacques I<sup>er</sup>. Ce qui me permet de l'affirmer sont les critiques à peine voilées que le dramaturge lance contre le nouveau souverain dans différentes pièces. Dès 1605, date de première partie de *If You Know Not Me*, il s'attaque dans *Eastward Ho!* aux chevaliers écossais promus par Jacques, dans des termes très sarcastiques qui lui valurent, à lui et à ses collègues Jonson et Marston, un petit séjour en prison. Cette attaque est renouvelée dans *Bussy*, quand un des personnages déclare, pour se moquer du héros tout frais arrivé à la Cour : « Sfoote tis

23. La dette léguée à Jacques par Élisabeth se montait à £ 420 000, dont £ 300 000 couverts par le Parlement, via une aide accordée en 1601. À la fin du règne cette dette se montait à plus d'un million de livres. Voir Houston, chap. 2, « Finance: the Canker of Want », p. 13-25.

24. Cf. Perry : « James's failure to live up to the standards of royal behavior popularized in these earlier texts may have contributed to the erosion of his credit, in the broadest sense of that word. [...] In time [...] Jacobean praise for Elizabethan glory became more programmatically oppositional » (p. 109).

D'Ambois ; The Duke mistakes him (on my life) for some Knight of the new edition » (I, 2, 109-10)<sup>25</sup>. Ces éléments permettent d'envisager la figure d'Élisabeth d'une manière différente de chez Heywood. Outre que le compliment se fait plus politique chez Chapman, la position particulière de la reine anglaise, en particulier dans *Byron*, lui donne un sens autre. Dans les tragédies françaises, Élisabeth n'est jamais un personnage à part entière, en ce sens elle est hors scène, cachée aux yeux des spectateurs. Mais c'est justement cette absence physique qui lui donne une telle importance symbolique et la réintroduit de manière si flagrante au centre même d'une pièce comme *Byron*, et en particulier de *The Conspiracy*. En outre, l'éloge qui en est fait procède toujours du roi français (Henri III dans *Bussy*, Henri IV dans *Byron*). Dans *The Conspiracy* justement, Henri IV est dépeint lui aussi comme un monarque exemplaire, clément, juste et magnanime, qui considère Élisabeth comme une référence, comme un véritable phare, déplaçant ainsi le centre de gravité symbolique de la pièce de la France catholique vers l'Angleterre protestante :

And therefore doth my royal sovereign wish  
Your years may prove as vital as your virtues,  
That, standing on his turrets this way turned,  
Ordering and fixing his affairs by yours,  
He may at last, on firm grounds, pass your seas  
And see that maiden-sea of majesty,  
In whose chaste arms so many kingdoms lie. (*Conspiracy*, IV, 1, 115-21)

La coïncidence des deux monarques — Henri IV était encore vivant quand est paru *Byron* — représente un indice assez sérieux quant à la cible potentielle visée par le dramaturge, je veux parler de Jacques I<sup>er</sup>, qui, on le sait bien, détestait cordialement Henri IV, qui le lui rendait bien d'ailleurs (il suffit de lire la correspondance de ces deux rois). De plus, s'il est vrai que la tragédie est dédiée à Sir Thomas Walsingham, le prologue suggère quand même qu'elle est conçue comme un miroir, dont avec Jean Jacquot et John Margeson, je crois qu'il était destiné au jeune prince Henry, rival de son père (« And see in his revolt honour's flood/Ebbs into air when men are great, not good » [23-24]<sup>26</sup>).

25. Ce thème de la vente des titres de noblesse met en lumière le problème le plus épineux du règne de Jacques, celui des finances. Lawrence Stone, cité par Houston (p. 21), estime qu'entre 1603 et 1629 la vente des titres aurait rapporté £ 620 000.

26. « Though *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Byron* cannot be linked in any direct way with Prince Henry [...] nevertheless, the tone of the Prologue with its emphasis upon Byron's greatness as saviour of France

On voit donc comment au fil du temps la figure d'Élisabeth, idéalisée par le souvenir nostalgique, et apparemment inoffensive, acquiert une charge polémique de plus en plus perceptible, devenant par là une figure centrale de médiation politique, tandis que Jacques I<sup>er</sup> devient la victime potentielle d'une rhétorique qui le met hors jeu.

Il est intéressant de constater qu'à des moments très proches, Heywood et Chapman ont fait le choix de deux modes de représentation différents : l'un optant pour une esthétique résolument tournée vers le passé, qui rappelle les saints-plays du x<sup>v</sup><sup>e</sup> siècle ; l'autre, bien que tout aussi nostalgique que le premier, opte pour une esthétique baroque qui convient si bien à son approche ambivalente des choses, jouant sur les associations significatives des personnages entre eux et des rapports entre les personnages et les personnes, ce qui est rendu possible par l'association de l'Angleterre et de la France, alors qu'Heywood ne s'occupe vraiment que de l'Angleterre.

Ce qui ressort également de cette comparaison, semble être l'impossibilité de faire d'Élisabeth un personnage proprement dit, affranchi du modèle historique. Heywood, qui s'y est risqué, a échoué d'un point de vue littéraire ; et Chapman en a été empêché pour des raisons apparemment techniques, à cause de la censure dont sa pièce a été victime. Sur le long terme, Élisabeth ne semble véritablement fonctionner que comme une figure de médiation, le réceptacle prestigieux des attentes frustrées, des contestations plus ou moins sourdes, des oppositions plus ou moins feutrées à Jacques I<sup>er</sup>.

and his subsequent revolt from honour suggests that in this play too he is writing a mirror for princes » (Margeson, éd., p. 2). Jean Jacquot ne dit rien d'autre d'ailleurs : « Le prince Henri, avec lequel il était en correspondance avait pour lui la plus vive admiration. Il est probable que les deux parties de *Biron* ont été écrites avec l'intention d'instruire le prince et de lui plaire » (p. 48).

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