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Suspense is Believing: The Reality of Ben Jonson's The Alchemist

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> "Seeing is believing, but feeling's the naked truth".
> (John Ray, in *The Home Book of Quotation*)

Jonson's *The Alchemist* is a very particular kind of play when it comes to suspense. The notion itself is commonplace, that plots set up representations of incomplete actions moving toward some form of completion, and that in the process they evoke a quality of emotional excitement in the reader concerning that relation of events, one that, if it is well managed, excludes all other interests by concentrating the entirety of our conscious attention upon the Gestalt of the play-world in the making. But that is a rather large definition of the term, for suspense has traditionally been reserved for feelings about characters and their destinies, and typically for liked characters who find themselves not only in danger, but in circumstances with diminishing prospects which alone can incite within readers or spectators a quality of empathetic alarm both for the characters and for themselves. There are reasons to debate whether suspense can be accounted for experientially in any other terms. That is what makes Jonson's play special, for while few would contest that the play is suspenseful in its overall effect, it is less obvious why it is so in the absence of any characters upon whom we might be inclined to expend our sincerest well-wishing.

To be sure, from the very outset of the play there is alarm, a brilliant Homeric opening in the form of an argument in progress, as at the beginning of the *Iliad*. One of two men holds a flask of some biting liquid as protection from a beating. The other then threatens public exposure of the charlatan but is dissuaded from such a course by his own lack of public credit. Something important is at stake, as a third party, a woman, does her best to referee, placate, and threaten. The exchange calls for all of our orientational acumen, for only by the clues supplied *in medias res* are we equipped to infer who these people are and the terms of their differences. By the end of the scene, we are able to determine that one man is a professional con man adept at imposing his jargon on the unwary, but otherwise without a place of permanent residence, the other is a household servant who sells his master's goods on the side for extra cash, cheats at card games, and now serves as the front man in the cheating game, while the woman is a common prostitute whom these two share between them at night by the drawing of straws. Together they are involved in an elaborate scheme to dupe as many conies as they can by offering the illusory powers and riches promised by the alchemical arts, while within the hierarchy of their micro-society the two men vie for the position of alpha male. The power struggle that risks destroying their fraternity remains unresolved, simmering in the background as they turn their animosity temporarily into a contest to outperform each other in fleecing their victims. That quality of social action and concern persists throughout the play. We watch with fascination as scene follows scene in an incremental representation of the aberrations of human greed and ambition, and as a trio of tricksters seeks to control the centrifugal energies of the expanding group of dupes and sceptics. Something about this opening transaction has made us care, and care emotionally, if suspenseful attention is part of the response. Arguably, we do not adopt any of these characters as a moral centre with claims upon our empathy, but we do speculate intensely upon the probabilities of their respective situations and their prospects for success or failure in purely computational terms both formal and social.

The nature of suspense in relation to such an action would seem self-evident, but in fact raises many difficult questions. Suspense is emotion-like because it constitutes the limbic component of attention invested in narratives. Thus it has its origins in the so-called paleomammalian or middle brain. This matters, because while it is accessed and triggered by—and provides excitatory support to—the cognitive events of consciousness, it does not belong, as a response system, to the cerebral cortex. Yet it is a feature of the phylogenetic, species-wide brain that constantly invigilates and interprets the environment established by story-telling in parallel to the emotional support aroused by the narratives of perceptual consciousness in the form of attention and absorption. But there are mysteries pertaining to the phenomenon, namely what suspense is as an emotional state, in what mode it reads external stimuli, and precisely what conditions are responsible for its arousal.

In relation to the topic of this collection, Colin McGinn, in his cogent and persuasive book, *Mindsight: Image, Dream, Meaning* explains in cognitive-philosophical terms why human consciousness is constituted of two inassimilable modes of thought: percept and image. The former is driven by stimuli from the world we call real, namely that which enters by our senses, and which pertains propositionally to things epistemologically demonstrable, while the latter is volitionally driven in the form of imaginative reconstructions, projections, and fantasies, or involuntarily driven by dreams. His point is simple yet heavily laden with repercussions. Our species has profited immeasurably from capacities both to perceive and to imagine, but only if they are modally sealed off from each other. We always know the origins of our thoughts, whether they derive from percepts or from images. Confusion between them would diminish our fitness to nil; taking image for percept is tantamount to hallucination. For that reason, we are never deceived by the fictionality of fiction. A mind driven by images may see inwardly but never believes. But aestheticians face a difficult question in describing how much that fact colours the evaluation of fictional worlds as social representations, for much criticism depends upon the constancy of that meta-awareness, namely that the imaginative is always mere artifice. Inversely, however, the attention fastened to these as images in the form of suspense gains this limbic support from mental faculties unable to distinguish between percepts and images. That which is imaginative in origin is as apt to arouse the emotions as that which is perceptual.

As Aristotle pointed out, the cathartic component of story-telling achieves its ends not only by accessing the limbic system, but by shaping those emotions in its own image as a representation of social circumstances. The emotions, in a sense, have no power to resist, despite the fact that no real persons are in peril. But the mind has not been tricked. Vital to the success of provisional scenario spinning is that those imaginary drafts of future courses of action enjoy the "gut-feeling" evaluations provided by the emotional responses they arouse. Emotions cannot be imaginary; we cannot even imagine what such emotions would be like, and there is no adaptive reason why they ever would have evolved.[1] Thus, if suspense is the emotional component of concerned attention, then its mode of reading the environment is always real. By extension, if the object of suspense is constructed in social terms within the narrative, then, to the limbic system, the social representations of narratives are real, and the emotional brain believes in them entirely.

At this juncture we could chop logic over what it is to believe, and whether something as propositional as belief pertains to the emotions. But as a system of response to the environment, the limbic brain reads percept and image in identically serious ways—a legacy of the genetically confirmed fitness of our Pleistocene ancestors. What is more, through the phenomenon of suspense, the emotionality of fiction, according to Victor Nell (p. 50), is the source of our principal pleasure in reading. We enjoy literature because our emotions believe, and because they sustain our interest in things they deem vital to our well-being. Seeing through the emotions is always believing, and the principal stumbling block to the absolute fictionalizing of imaginative experiences.

Jonson's play opens with the fictive simulation of an argument, offering data of a computational kind. We seek to calibrate social relationships, motivations, hidden interests, indeed all that we can discover about who these people are. We are curious animals, easily drawn into the social imbroglios of other members of our species, even in imagined forms. These are sufficient to arouse fixed attention and suspense. Because there can be no emotionality without commensurate objects of excitement, that suspense emotionalizes the reading experience. Concomitantly, we must acquiesce to the reality imposed by our emotional brains and their independent readings of the environment.

Obstacles to this argument lie with the nature of the emotions themselves. Suspense is adaptive. It keeps the mind focused on the things that matter in cause-and-effect sequences. Evolutionary "just-so" stories are easy to invent, such as the adaptive benefits of remembering the presence of dangerous animals in the environment, even when they are out of sight. The invisible lion may become a mere image, but the heart is justifiably still pounding. This is a reminder that the classic theory of emotions pertains to the immediate preparation for resistance to or escape from instinctually perceived sources of danger. Suspense as an emotion must therefore pertain only to the tooth-and-claw phases of experience, and can be adapted to fiction only when those same fears are alerted, as in films with stalkers or man-eating sharks. But through such studies as Paul E. Griffiths' *What Emotions Really Are: The Problem of Psychological Categories*, we can now leave behind the half-dozen fixed, universal mind-numbing emotions to concentrate on the excitable dispositions aroused by all manner of circumstances from meeting an old friend to discovering a strange insect in the backyard. His argument holds that there is a vast array of "higher cognitive emotions"—those which are triggered by the processes of thought, and particularly those arising from our interest in the intentions and moods of others. Such compulsions lead to spying, gossiping, and elaborate speculations upon character in order to complete the *Gestalt* of personhood. Those experiences are equally emotionally saturated. We are also ludic in our interests, and as intently willing to be entertained by the cavortings of others as to be edified, not to forget the lessons by analogy that may prove beneficial to our personal prospects. Distinctions are difficult to draw. But such an approach to the emotional components of the conscious life among percepts and images permits an altogether different approach to the problem of suspense.

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[1] Walton, pp. 100ff., proposed such a theory, namely that the emotions aroused by fiction are themselves part of the fiction, but the design of the human brain does not allow for the existence of such a capacity.

What remains is a sorting-out of the categories of stimuli provided by narrative that are apt to arouse this response. We can temporarily overlook the eternal paradox that the emotions pay attention because they believe and thereby taint their objects with the significance of belief. We can also leave behind the adrenalin-powered responses aroused by fear and empathy. We can also, for the nonce, put aside the proposition that fictive representations are of interest to us only to the extent that they function analogously to reality in some vital sense. But if these matters no longer pertain to the suspense elements elicited by *The Alchemist*, does Jonson's play direct us exclusively to the higher cognitive emotions and their readings both aesthetic and social? In a primary sense, the narrative arts are suspenseful by dint of their temporal fragmentation and cumulative completion. Jonson was a master of the compound plot, the parts sustained in their incomplete states in anticipation of a magical synchronized denouement. A great deal of theorizing could be expended upon the epistemic calibrations in relation to comfort levels of knowledge and waning interest pertaining to aesthetic forms. In an equally primary sense, suspense is aroused by nearly any representation of the social, concerning which the first level of emotional investment is in the forward-moving search for information about that society's conditions and actors. This principal is at the very centre of Wolfgang Iser's *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, in which he outlines how readers participate actively in the actualization of imaginary worlds because of what writers do not say about circumstances and outcomes (p. 168). It is precisely these epistemic shortfalls that provide the incentive to move forward in pursuit of explanation, knowledge, and final things. Roman Ingarden studies similar matters under the aegis of the "indeterminacies" in the text. Suspense, within these analyses, becomes part of the aesthetic response in the form of an "unsatisfied hunger which appears when and only when we have already been excited by a quality but have not yet succeeded in beholding it in direct intuition so that we can be intoxicated with it" (p. 191). Such indeterminacies come down to those which impel all acts of communication. Even the micro-exchanges between characters arouse in us strong feelings, as they endeavour to gather information from each other while concealing their intentions to control and manipulate their interlocutors. These are the speech acts of characters struggling to maintain their edge in competitive social environments—the new playing fields of survival for modern humankind. In short, suspense is the attention sustained by the social emotions associated with the compulsive epistemic drives through which we read the social environment.

Nevertheless, the naming of those emotions will be challenging simply because they orient themselves within moving social concerns. Moreover, the hermeneutic interference from the logic of the emotions at their speciated base always threatens to return. What is there about the threats to the well-being of the society constructed within the play that alert our survival-oriented feelings, unless the future of that society is somehow made to matter to us as though it were our own? The alternative is always to cling to the epistemic interests generated by cognitive disorientation in the creation of social simulacra and the reader's quest for orientation and resolution, but this somehow falls short of why our primal emotions scan the horizons of our worlds, both perceptual and fictive. This brings us back to the vexing question of why we should have limbic concern for character or society in Jonson's play, and whether we read with urgency to the enhancement of our own social advantages.

Space allows for only two suggestions among many possible: the psychology of trickery and the social economy of cheating. They are, of course, interrelated. The argument so far has called for the emotionality of suspense no longer as a modified form of fight or flight emergency, but as the excitement arising from the epistemic shortfalls created by incomplete data concerning intentional states and the definition of communities. These emotional colourations are attached to operations that are both propositional and computational. The mind that, for its own orientational well-being, struggles to reduce to cognitive order the data received from a complex and mystifying environment is sustained by limbic support. Yet there remains the paradox of suspense as systemic excitement over incomplete forms and as a social interpreter. Narratives including *The Alchemist* are not only potential forms seeking actualization but social representations seeking evaluation. Suspense pertains to both. This ambiguity is clearly seen in the plans of the confidence schemers. Subtle and Face have mastered both the vulnerabilities and susceptibilities of their victims and the means to dupe them by playing to their deepest desires, whether modest, epicurean, or hypocritical. Their arts consist of creating wish-fulfilling futures for their clients, from whom they would receive present profits before their victims discover their losses. Better yet, they would blame those losses, as often as they might, upon the victims themselves, or fate, or accidents ostensibly beyond their control. Thus, each emboxed episode consists of an intended scenario, fully preconceived and in keeping with the characters of the victims, whereby they collaborate in their own demises. The trick thus represents an idea, a micro-plot, a self-actualizing scenario, a social transaction, an act of treachery, a witty creation, an exercise in contingency management, and a vehicle of comic and social justice. It engages our interest along this complex continuum as a simple form seeking completion and as a social contest of wits and survival strategies. The suspense aroused pertains variously to forms, indeterminacies, the detection of intentional states, epistemic jags, social contest and knavery, and, in a sense, failed strategies for survival. We take an excitable interest in these things presumably on the basis of their alignment with reality as social possibilities. Yet if priorities were to be assigned, we might find difficulties in explaining the emotional content of the trick without expressing some theory of what it would be like to be the plot's knave or the plot's fool. Arguably, however, we side with neither, and thus find ourselves once again in the camp of aesthetic suspense attached to the completion of literary forms. But there are other perspectives.

Altruism would appear to be remote to the interests of this play, and yet it was the advantages of human social reciprocity partially built into the genome, of which altruism is the highest expression, that sent Robert Trivers in search of the basic ethics of community—namely the self-interestedness of calculated co-operation among our ancestors. The argument follows that much of our cerebral advancement as a species may be the result of a kind of cognitive race to keep track of all the social permutations of human co-operation, half co-operation, cheating, and the attendant emotions serving as guarantors of honest dealing through which we buy membership. The plasticity of mind was further developed by sham emotions, which in turn necessitated refined emotion detectors, and more subtle forms of cheating, and ever more subtle forms of information sharing to contain the cheaters.[2] Such a history has left us equipped with psyches having not only a flair for spotting slackers but a gift for dissimulation that works to our own advantage, coupled with a conscience that urges limits in light of the cost of lost reputation. We scan the social world through this value system, both perceptually and provisionally through the imagination.

Reading *The Alchemist* entails a complete exercise in the scoring of cheaters and the repercussions of their deeds on their society. Arguably, suspense is aroused in these precise terms. We approach defined communities, no matter how amoral, with a residual sense of the reciprocity upon which relations of trust are built, including all of the tolerable slippages that may breed suspicion but not exclusion. Much space might be devoted to an elaboration of this innate sense of advantage and disadvantage through group dynamics that orients much of our invigilation of the social world. In short, we are inveterate score-keepers of bluffers and rogues, as well as co-operators and sharers. The activity is compulsive, primal, itself social, as information is spread among the trusted concerning perceived cheaters. Above all, we take pride in our abilities to interpret the intentional states of others and to master the finest nuances of social credits and debts. This quality of attention is clearly supported by limbic colouring and takes on overtones of fitness-strategizing and survival. In this regard, no projected society could be better conceived to test and train our acumen than that of *The Alchemist*. The opening of Act Three is a subtle case in point, for Tribulation and Ananias are not cheaters and owe nothing to the society of the play, but come to it with expectations that Subtle will keep his word in projecting to the benefit of the brethren and their cause. At the same time, they are antisocially absorbed in their cult and for that reason suffer in near-silence the barbs of Subtle's derision. Yet curiously, their purpose is to gain legitimacy and credit in the society at large, which they plan to purchase with their new-found wealth, thereby suggesting the corruptibility of all those in power beyond the confines of the play-world. The economy of cheating extends itself in many directions at once and the score-keeping grows exponentially. In short, the world of the play is a micro-community characterized by misplaced trust, expectation, and asymmetrical relations for which we must do the bookkeeping. Moreover, as Pinker notes, "since hypocrisy is easiest to expose when people compare notes, the search for trustworthiness makes us avid consumers of gossip" (p. 405). That was the "subversive" voice to this upside-down society seeking to be heard. Surly was to have been the inaugurator of the movement and the potential maker of moral reversals, but was himself given to vanities and bamboozled into silence. Only at the play's end is the gossip cycle completed, although ineffectually, as the dupes return in chorus to hammer at the door. Analytical investigations of the design and execution of the trick and the scorekeeping that pertains to reciprocal social relations are two of the cognitive activities potentially set in motion by the play that might command limbic investment because both, as provisional drafts of possible conduct, pertain to epistemic drives and to survival strategies.

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[2] For a more complete account of this psycho-evolutionary "arms race", see Pinker's discussion of Robert Trivers, along with the work of Leda Cosmides and John Tooby (Pinker, pp. 401-7). See also Cosmides and Tooby.

The paradox of the reading brain is that, while it always recognizes the fictionality of its imaginative stories, it processes them with the same emotional systems that survey and respond to the real world. And because the limbic response system is always a believer, treating all stimuli as percepts, fictional creations are constantly coloured by the concerns and urgencies of real environments. The paradox of Jonson's play is that its artifice is omnipresent to the computational mind, but that, in eliciting the attentional features of limbic involvement, even this imaginative draft of a putative community in contemporary London achieves at least the emotional support of absorption. Insofar as emotions are a way of reading the world largely independent of our cognitive faculties, even this play involves the reader in the belief states furnished by limbic surveillance, giving the play whatever urgency the emotions deem to be present. That input seems considerable to the extent suspense applies to the play—that felt investment in knowing how things finish according to the logic of the emotions themselves. And if belief alone is all that matters to the emotions, we may well ask what the emotions deem of such great urgency in this play as to make their investment.

The working premise is that our emotional brain is not interested in things below its arousal thresholds. Yet this mental "point of view" interprets widely by treating images as real. Thus, to the emotional brain, even the replication of an argument—that most classic form of speech act—is worth the arousal. From word to intentional states of characters to tricks to interwoven stories to final resolution, the limbic system is a willing believer, and in believing gives these simulations the colour of felt reality. All along we may read *The Alchemist* from the top down as one of the finest worms of Jonson's superlative brain, but our own generic brains continue to read from the bottom up, scanning the Jonsonian world for what is important to its instinctual concerns. To a large extent, the computational mind can borrow upon that system to sustain its concentration upon problems, puzzles, and other incomplete or kinetic forms where satisfaction follows effort plotted over time. But Jonson's play is also a social representation. Thus, while we are presumably not emotionally concerned with the rising and falling fortunes of the protagonists *per se*, except as representative players within an economy of cooperation and cheating, we are vitally concerned with the mechanics and evaluations of that computational economy, perhaps because what we learn about those exchanges through provisional practice may be essential to our future well-being. Therein may lay the link between the higher cognitive emotions and the survivalist orientation of the basic emotions culturally fortified through the narrative arts.

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Belief and Spectacle at Early Performances of Doctor Faustus

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The story of Faustus has inspired many authors, artists and even scientists since Christopher Marlowe's *Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*:[1] indeed, the German scholar's insatiable desire for infinite knowledge finds a modern expression in insatiable scientific inquiry, while his attempt to free himself from the shackles of our human condition is of perennial interest. If I have chosen to focus on what was probably Marlowe's last play, it is, however, because this first dramatization of the German prose narrative entitled in its English translation, *The historie of the damnable life, and deserued death of Doctor Iohn Faustus*,[2] is undoubtedly about seeing and believing, and Faustus himself a seer. My approach is stage - and audience-oriented, and limited to aspects of the play which, apart from David Zucker's *Stage and Image in the Plays Of Christopher Marlowe*, William Tydeman's *Doctor Faustus: Text and Performance* and Michael Hattaway's *Elizabethan Popular Theatre*,[3] few studies have taken into full consideration, namely the visual elements. My own speculative venture concentrates, not only on the plausible response of spectators to these visual elements in *Doctor Faustus*, during the early performances of Marlowe's drama in London playhouses and on other stages in the provinces, but also on the interaction of stage audiences and general audiences, an aspect which has been neglected so far.

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[1] Such is the full title of the 1616 London edition of the play printed by John Wright, who attributes it to "Ch. Mar".

[2] The original was published in Frankfurt in 1587, its English translation by one "P. F." in 1592—hence, the tendency to regard *Doctor Faustus* as Marlowe's last play, written just before he was stabbed to death in 1593.

[3] Zucker's main interest is the recognition of well-known emblems in stage productions. Tydeman's more general approach addresses students of the play and describes the main features of some modern performances. Hattaway's chapter, "Doctor Faustus: Ritual Shows" (pp. 160-85), mainly

Given the facts that naturalistic staging was not attempted on Elizabethan stages and that all play-goers have always remained aware of being confronted with a mere representation of reality during a performance, I use "belief" in the restricted sense of "a willing suspension of disbelief". I do not minimise the effect of "hearing" the words of a play, especially a Marlovian play, but I feel sure that, as is the case today, what was visible on the stage influenced the spectators' susceptibility to illusion one way or another, even if their viewing range was limited.

To answer the question, "How much was seeing believing?" in *Doctor Faustus*, a manifold and multilayered play which purported to dramatise the true story of a real man, I find it more useful to deal with instances of similar material than to follow scenic divisions. I distinguish four levels of showing and believing in what was seen. I shall start with the simplest and most conventional visual "gags", involving hardly any suspension of disbelief, which are found mostly in subplots. My second layer consists of Faustus' display of his magic powers for the benefit of both intra-dramatic and extra-dramatic audiences, among whom there must have been disbelievers as well as believers. At the third level, I analyse the inset shows engineered by the forces of Good or Evil to persuade Faustus, and the relationship between his response and those of spectators. My fourth layer is composed of the elements of the main plot, which I presume to have caused the highest degree of willing belief among the latter.

For each level or layer, I intend to begin with known stage practices in Medieval and Renaissance drama,[4] and with what I presume to be constant in audience response. Then, helped by others' intuitions, I shall make my own conjectures about the inevitably unstable balance between what spectators, both intradiegetic and extradiegetic, would have seen and what they are likely to have momentarily believed. In so doing, I shall take into account the old and the new

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focuses on the nature of the play and on how it "revealed the creative powers of ritual through all the spectacular devices the playhouses had to offer" (p. 160). I am indebted to all three authors for information and suggestions, although my concern in the present article is restricted by comparison.

[4] See notably Chambers, Wickham, Axton, Bethell, Bevington,, Campbell, Dessen, Gurr, and Greg, ed., *Dramatic Documents*.

forms Marlowe was using while meeting and sometimes moving beyond his audience's expectations; and I shall describe some of the ways in which the scenes I consider may have been performed on Tudor stages. My necessarily tentative investigation cannot completely leave out the words that must have challenged the hearers' senses, as well as their intellect and imagination. I hope to reach a conclusion about the effects of the blending of various forms of seeing and believing in what was from the start a very popular spectacle.

Doctor Faustus was written at a time when astronomical and other scientific inquiry was challenging old beliefs; a time when England, developing as a nation, took part in and benefited from the discovery of the New World, while new ways to wealth and honour were opening for the middle classes; a time when permanent playhouses built in London were catalysts in the spectacular success of drama, which was becoming the ultimate public entertainment. It was also written at a time when religious convictions were constantly under the pressure of political choices, and free will was a widely debated question; a time when most people believed in the power of the devil and all the forces of darkness, as is proved by the often-quoted account of an Exeter performance of the play, during which the actors, hence the spectators, were panic-stricken because "they were all persuaded, there was one devil too many amongst them";[5] a time when alchemy and black magic were said to contaminate the most learned circles (John Dee and Kelly in the eighties, Raleigh and the School of Night in the nineties). *Doctor Faustus* was performed shortly after the violent death of Marlowe, seen by some as a just punishment for his blasphemous life, works and sayings.

In order to concentrate on the theatrical effects in question, I have chosen to adopt as a working edition Roma Gill's text of the play, in the 1971 Oxford edition[6] and to refer to Marlowe as its author, whether or not the "adicyons in doctor fostes" paid for by Henslowe in 1602 were extensive.[7] Many critics think that they concerned the comic scenes in Acts Three and Four, for which there seems to have been a strong demand. If I start with them, however, thus destructuring a well-known play, it is in order to focus on seeing and believing both in the onstage audience(s) and in the general audience, at four levels, as I have said, of sight and belief ranging, in my opinion, from minimal to maximal adherence to what was seen on stage.

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[5] Certain players at Exeter acting upon the stage the tragical story of Dr. Faustus the conjurer; as a certain number of Devils kept everyone his circle there, and as Faustus was busy in his magical invocations, on a sudden they all dashed, everyone harkening other in the ear, for they were all persuaded, there was one devil too many amongst them; and so after a little pause desired the people to pardon them, they could go no further with this matter; the people also understanding the thing as it was, every man hastened to be out of doors. The players (as I heard it) contrary to their custom spending the night in reading and in prayer got them out of the town the next morning. For this undated account by "J. G. R." and other telling anecdotes about *Doctor Faustus*, see Hattaway, pp. 166-67.

[6] See the parallel texts edited by Greg, *Doctor Faustus*, p. vii. Of the two texts we have, Greg thinks that Quarto A, first printed in 1604, 1,517 lines in length, "shows signs of having been reconstructed from memory by an actor", while Quarto B, appearing in 1616, 2,121 lines in length, contains extensions and stage directions which point to a basis in a theatrical promptbook. Gill bases her edition on

I. Seeing was disbelieving—or was it?

My exploration of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* will first focus on those scenes which were obviously designed to meet the spectator's expectation of a substantial adjunction of mirth to edification or pathos. From what we know,[8] I assume that, in performance, the comic parts of Marlowe's dramatic scripts were, like those of his rivals, open to additions, elisions, permutations and manipulations, according to the nature of the audience, but also to the more or less popular comic actors the company could hire for the occasion, and to the range of their talents: juggling, fencing, singing, dancing.

The clowning scenes in *Doctor Faustus* are first and foremost I.iv, II.iii, III.iii and IV.iv. Although they more or less follow the German narrative which was Marlowe's source,[9] they have received little critical attention and are often dismissed as not being by Marlowe himself. In these scenes, Faustus is out of our sight, though he remains at the centre of all conversations and is imitated by various protagonists. Whatever their names on the page nowadays,[10] these protagonists are stereotypically characterised as clowns.

There are two lines of action in these scenes which often combine and—this is at least my contention—reflect the main plot of *Doctor Faustus*. The minor one we may describe as social comedy or farce. It has a comic ancestry and relates to both popular and more sophisticated dramatic traditions: spring rituals, Mysteries, Morality Plays, Mummers' plays, Tudor Interludes, Latin Comedy and Italian *commedia dell'arte*. Its main theme is temptation. A human desire to feed one's body's appetite for food, drink and sex vies with and soon supersedes

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the B text, but adopts readings from the A text whenever she considers them justified.

[7] See Henslowe, p. 206.

[8] See Wiles.

[9] See Thomas and Tydeman, eds., pp. 171-248.

[10] In the A text and some editions, Robin's partner is called Rafe instead of Dick.

a Christian desire to secure one's soul's salvation. As in many cases, temptation in *Doctor Faustus* is associated with social climbing and being revenged for humiliations, not necessarily on those who have inflicted them. Wagner, Faustus' half-servant, half-disciple, lords it over Robin and addresses him as "sirrah boy" (I.iv.1), using the same demeaning terms he had resented coming from Faustus' scholars. Pointing at Robin's "air-conditioned" clothes, he says, "Alas, poor slave, see how poverty jests in his nakedness" (6), expecting and already bragging of his instant submission. Getting some recognition at both intra-dramatic and extra-dramatic levels is part of the game for both victimiser and victim. Being a clown, Robin exhibits his (probably fake) "pick adevant" beard and his empty pockets to the audience (3-5). He resists temptation, however, with irreverence, jesting logic and a wink at the same audience (6ff.), until he is frightened into Wagner's service by what he *sees* (35). Two acts later, following Wagner's practice, Robin, in his turn, tempts Dick, a poorer slave than he, into free wine drinking and juggling a silver goblet out of the sight of its owner, a vintner, but in full sight of the audience, of course (III.iii.1-20). Robin and Dick are sure to win the connivance of this audience and their admiration for their inebriated dexterity, but not a belief that they are genuine drunken robbers. The visible gap between actor and character is bound to deflate the illusion of reality.

Indeed, the actors impersonating Wagner, Robin and Dick do not so much play "in character" as "in role". Clowning is their main function, as is indicated by their coarse language and probably rustic pronunciation, even if Wagner is better educated than the others. Their difference is visible as well as audible. Ludicrous appearance and demeanour, louse-shaking (I.iv.21) and belly-filling alacrity ("I'll give thee wine … and whipping crust, Hold, belly, hold" [II.iii.26-27]), convulsive quaking and splitting laughter ("the clown runs up and down crying" [I.iv.31 SD], as Wagner laughs uproariously), funny acrobatics and slapstick advertise their buffoonery. Like many clowns, they do not only exaggerate all affects and effects but generally work in duos. Traditional clowning routines, such as the dominant character's threatening to belabour the posterior of his victim, the brisk, vigorous evasions of the latter, his falling heavily on his buttocks and his pretending to be brave while behaving like a coward (I.iv.29ff.), are bound to induce hearty laughter from the audience, the more so as they suspect that padding reduces the pain inflicted. Yet, in *Doctor Faustus*, the expectations concerning comic scenes are both met and somewhat defeated. Generally, clowns fail at everything they endeavour. Here, they succeed in their main ambition, conjuring devils. Most of the time, they resent their final defeat. Here, Dick and Robin willingly submit to their punishment, transforming their exit as an ape riding a dog into a mock triumph, while Mephostophilis, the angry author of their metamorphosis, fronting, as seems probable, the audience in the pit, expostulates against the "princely legions of infernal rule" before being literally uplifted (III.iii.26-45). The spectators must have been amused, but also surprised and led to expect more surprises.

The main line of action in these clowning scenes consists in using magic, thanks to Faustus' borrowed or stolen books, in order to force the socially inferior creature into one's service. This is what Wagner does in I.iv, what his victim, Robin, does in II.iii, and what Robin and Dick do in III.iii. The sequence in itself is good spectacle. The audience watch the devolution and degeneration of Faustus' magic practices. My guess is that the magic circle drawn by the would-be conjurer—Wagner, in I.iv, his new apprentice, Robin, in II.iii, Dick in III.iii.22—gets less and less round, and less sacred as it is stepped into: "Keep out of the circle, I say" (II.iii.11). The conjurer's gestures are less assured and his costume less flamboyant than his model's. At first, he elicits impertinent incredulity in his victim (I.iv.29; II.iii.29-30) and probably part of the general audience, before the curious magic works and devils actually appear on stage (I.iv.31; III.iii.24). Seeing them would have caused not only the victim's fright, but that of the uncontrolling conjurer onstage—"Will it please you to … go back again? … we called you but in jest" (III.iii.30-33)—and of the most gullible spectators in the theatre.

One may safely conjecture from contemporary reports that the appearance of the devils was grotesquely horrifying and the body-shaking panic they inspired, with their traditional horns, tails, fangs and fire-works (Dessen, p. 169) both eye-catching and theatrically effective. Yet, coming after Faustus' prior successful conjuring, they were bound to deflate, not only his achievement, but its effects of surprise and terror, while the undignified names of Belcher and Banio, and the unprecedented loss of composure of Mephostophilis, would have generated some disbelief in the reality of these spirits. When the latter's discontent at being "swiftly brought from Constantinople by these villains' charms" (III.iii.4) climaxed in his vengeful transformation of Dick and Robin before he "wing[ed] himself with the flames of eternal fire" (44-45), the power of words must have been directly challenged by what was seen on stage and recognised by many as skill on the part of the actors putting on large animal heads, or vociferating to cover the noise of the hoisting pulleys. Pure delight in the visual and great awareness of the play as performance must have been very strong for spectators at this first level, that of clowning and farce. Disbelief, however, and desire to be distracted from worrisome thoughts were probably tinged with anxiety concerning evil powers at work in the world at large, and in Marlowe's personal associations.[11]

II. Faustus' magic feats: belief and disbelief

The second level I shall consider for many critics still involves low comedy only loosely linked with the main action of the play. How do these scenes, found mostly in the second part of the play, set at the Emperor's court (IV.i, IV.ii, IV.iv, IV.v, IV.vi. and V.iv), or at the Vatican (III.i, III.ii), differ from the clowning scenes? First, it is now Faustus himself who uses his expertise as conjurer, either to take revenge on offenders and disbelievers in his magic or to impress his aristocratic audience. Secondly, these scenes generally involve more than two characters, sometimes in "split scenes", and these characters have a higher social position, as would have been made clear to an Elizabethan audience, alert to visual codes, by costumes, gait, weapons and emblems of power. Thirdly, in spite of some overlapping, they constitute independent episodes and are more complex, as far as plot, use of space and time-scheme are concerned, than clowning scenes, hence in their protagonists' relationships with onstage and general audiences. The question of belief becomes more complex too.

Although Mephostophilis is present, he does not intervene in the horse-courser sequence (IV.iv.1-36, IV.v, IV.vi), which opposes Faustus and a horse-trader and provides a variation on the theme of "the engineer hoist with his own petard". The would-be cheater is cheated of the little money he has offered for the Doctor's horse when this horse becomes a bundle of hay in water, which, as is well known, breaks the spell. Most of the spectacular action in this subplot is not seen but narrated, and so left to the imagination of the audience. However, there are some striking reality effects. In IV.iv.21-33, when the horse-trader returns furious, soaking wet (23 SD) and covered with hay ("I had nothing under me but a little straw … your horse is turned to a bottle of hay" [26-29]), and tugs at one of Faustus' legs to wake him up, the leg comes off (31), and he flees holding it tight, while Faustus yells, "The villain hath murdered me" (32). The next scene, in which narration predominates over action, brings back Robin and Dick, this time as stage audience, while they wait for a tavern hostess to serve drinks and are entertained by two tales concerning Faustus. After a carter has complained that an entire load of his hay has been swallowed by Faustus, who had paid him only the low price he had asked for, failing to believe the doctor could eat a great deal of hay (IV.v.20-26), the horse-courser brags of his pulling the cozening doctor's "leg quite off" (43). Belief and disbelief must have alternated on the faces of the hearers onstage, but the general audience knew better. They had seen Faustus laugh heartily and stand on two legs the minute the panicked horse dealer had left with his fake leg (IV.iv.33-34). Moreover, many would have been accustomed to the dismemberment routine in Mummers' plays. If some had been tricked into believing in the reality of the dismembering, the others might well have wondered at their credulity.

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[11] Cf. Baines's and Kyd's accusations, quoted in Gill, ed., pp. viii-ix.

Things may well have been different when a worthy Emperor's seeing was shown to be believing. In the central episodes of the play, which take place at Charles V's court, the dumb-show with which Faustus impresses his host is so believable that the Emperor, at the sight of Alexander, his ancestor, and the latter's paramour, forgets himself and "leaving his state, offers to embrace them" (IV.1.97 SD). He has to be stopped by Faustus and reminded that "these are but shadows, not substantial" (98-99). He begs, however, to be allowed to see the "little wart or mole" on the neck of the "fair lady" in order to "prove that saying to be true" (107-9), then profusely thanks the magician:

> Faustus, I see it plain,
> And in this sight thou better pleasest me
> Than if I gained a monarchy. (110-12)

For the Elizabethan audience, this scene and the following ones are bound to have been a feast of theatricality and reality effects. They successively watched two magnificent pageants introduced by trumpeters: the entrance of the German Emperor, Bruno, the duke of Saxony, Faustus, Mephostophilis and numerous courtiers and attendants in various splendid, bejewelled costumes, then that of spirits in the shape of Alexander the Great at one door and Darius at the other, "both in armour" (IV.i 97 SD). The show went on to present their fight and the killing of Darius by his rival, who set his crown upon the head of his newly arrived and embraced paramour. Both saluted the Emperor. During the dumb-show, the spectators' proximity to the dramatic action, and more particularly to the fighting, would have enhanced their sense of reality, especially since many actors were excellent fencers. Conversely, if there was a slow motion or choreographic effect, the illusionary status of the inset show would have been highlighted, and would have tended to lend more authenticity to the extra-dramatic spectacle, Faustus' display of his magic. So would the courtly costumes the actors wore. So would the lavish Elizabethan pageants to which they were accustomed.

Onstage spectatorship is made even more complex by the fact that, while Faustus and Mephostophilis, acting as Masters of Revels, in academic gowns, with "smooth faces and small ruffs" (IV.i.156-57), watch the Emperor and his court watching the dumb-show, they also watch other watchers, Martino and Frederick. Earlier, these two knights at the Emperor's court, entering "at several doors" (IV.i.1 SD), had paved the way for "His majesty's coming to the hall" (4) with "The Wonder of the world for magic art" (11), Faustus, and had roused from his drunken sleep a third knight, Benvolio, who finally appears "above at a window in his nightcap, buttoning" (23 SD), content to thrust his head out:

> See, see, his window's ope ...
> Come, leave thy chamber first, and thou shalt see
> This conjurer perform such rare exploits ...
> As never yet was seen in Germany.
> ....
> Wilt thou come and see this sport?
> ....
> Wilt thou stand in thy window and see it? (IV.i.22, 30-33, 38, 40)

Repeatedly invited, like the general audience, to see and believe, Benvolio provides a comic counterpoint to all believers. He greets Faustus' emphatic promise

> To cast his magic charms that shall pierce through
> The Ebon gates of ever burning hell
> And hale the stubborn furies from their caves (67-69)

with a less than reticent scepticism: "Blood, he speaks terribly! But for all that, I do not greatly believe him; he looks as like a conjurer as the Pope to a costermonger" (IV.i.71-72). The split scene thus contrasts two extreme positions regarding our theme: excess of belief, exemplified by the Emperor's response, and stubborn disbelief. Even if they were aware that seeing is an illusion both in the fiction and in the theatre—for the Emperor sees but shadows, his ancestor's fair lady is but a disguised male actor, and the early dawn and city house suggested by Benvolio's sleepy, unbuttoned appearance "above" are but theatrical make-believe—the spectators may well, at the sight of an enthusiastic imperial acceptance of illusion as reality, have suspended their disbelief for more than a split second.

Marlowe complicates things by allowing Faustus to bring together the two onstage audiences. The magician calls the Emperor's attention to his punishment of Benvolio for disbelieving his art:

> See, see, my gracious lord, what strange beast is yon,
> That thrusts his head out at window?
> O, wondrous sight! See, Duke of Saxony,
> Two spreading horns most strangely fastened
> Upon the head of young Benvolio! (IV.i.114-18)

Laughter is raised onstage and in the playhouse. The episode escalates, and retaliation follows retaliation. Readers may be bored, but spectators were, and are, given much to see and to hear, especially when Benvolio and his attendants, having ambushed and savagely beheaded Faustus, brandish and mock his severed head, as is indicated by the gestic terms they use:

> Was this that stern aspect ... ?
> Was this that damned head ... ?
> Ay, that's the head, and here the body lies ...
> (IV.ii.45, 49, 51)

Then the knights' plan to sell Faustus' beard to a chimney-sweeper (59-60), and to put out his eyes to "serve for buttons to his lips" (54), is defeated by Faustus' very spectacularly standing up with a new head and commanding his attendant fiend, among other things, to "break the villain's bones / As he intended to dismember" him (90-91). At this stage, the eyes of some of the spectators, both intradramatic, ("Give him his head, for God's sake!" [68]) and extradramatic, might be popping out. It seems that Marlowe is himself constantly playing with the power of illusion, and strives to inflate and deflate belief at will. At the end of the episode, horns appear on the heads of the three knights, but I doubt that many in the general audience believed they were irremovable, as threatened by Faustus. Like the detachable leg and head, they must have been identified as magically contrived fakes in the fiction which the dramatist presents, and artfully contrived fakes in the playhouse.[12] The same would apply to the "trees removed" at Faustus' command (101) in the same scene, and later to the ripe grapes fetched from the other side of the world to satisfy the pregnant Duchess of Vanholt's craving in the middle of winter (IV.vi.1-28), if the performance took place in winter.

The Benvolio episode ends with several very spectacular moves, the formidable entrance of "Asteroth, Belimoth, Mephostophilis" and other devils, at their master's call (78), their forceful exit "with the Knights" (94 SD), immediately followed by the probably disorderly entrance of "the ambushed Soldiers" making ready to "dispatch and kill" the magician (98). These helpers of the knights are soon set upon and driven out by the awesome army Faustus instantly conjures up: "Faustus strikes the door, and enter a Devil playing on a drum; after him another bearing an ensign; and divers with weapons; Mephostophilis with fireworks" (105 SD). The directions tell us nothing about the nature of the weapons used by the combatants once the stage-trees establishing the place of the fight have been removed to "stand as bulwarks" to shield Faustus from his enemies (102-3). Yet Faustus' words of intimidation, "base peasants" whose "weak attempt" is to be countered by his "army", suggest that they might have been odd sorts, forks, cudgels, on the one side, swords on the other. The symbolic impact of the forces of hell brandishing weapons traditionally allotted to angels, as well as the resemblance of their march to victory to that of Elizabeth's armies, would have enriched spectacle with thought.

At the beginning of Act Four, the spectators are given a vivid description of "all that is fair to the eye" (III.i.10), what Faustus, "sitting in a chariot burning bright" (5), sees from the sky. When he reaches "the goodly palace of the Pope … for to delight his eyes" (26, 32), Henslowe's "sittie of Rome" property (p. 319) and the frequent use of "see", "view", "behold", "eyes", "sight", and of the present tense, may contribute to making the audience *see* what is described with their minds' eye. Soon, however, like Faustus, they view the highly ritualised "triumphs" of Cardinals and Bishops entering and probably crossing over the stage, some bearing crosiers, some the pillars, followed by Monks and Friars singing in their procession. Then the Pope and Raymond King of Hungary enter, with Bruno (the would-be pope) led in chains and made to serve as a stool for the Pope to ascend "Saint Peter's chair and state pontifical" (III.i.92 and preceding SD). Even if metonymy, in this case two or three actors standing for several people, is the rule, this ceremonial procession, the excommunication ritual and the banquet which is solemnly "brought in" (III.ii.SD) give ample opportunity for colourful, spectacular visual effects and would feed the Elizabethan distaste for "the Antichrist", whose arrogance, extravagant pomp and humiliating proceedings had long been stigmatised by the reformers. The relatively recent excommunication of their own queen must have engaged the audience's attention, and increased their readiness to watch and believe:

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[12] Cf. the property heads and limbs in Henslowe's inventory (p. 319).

> Behold this silver belt, whereto is fix'd
> Seven golden keys fast seal'd with seven seals,
> In token of our seven-fold power from heaven,
> To bind or loose, lock fast, condemn or judge,
> Resign or seal, or whatso pleaseth us. (III.i.153-57)

Faustus' response is to deflate this popish self-importance by disrupting the feast and the ceremony with beatings, fireworks and other diversions. Such old stage devices as going invisible, which allows Faustus to snatch away the best dishes or wine, and to hit the Pope "a box of the ear" (III.ii.5) without being seen, causing the Pope to cross himself and to set into motion dirge, "bell, book and candle" in order to exorcise the "troublesome ghost" (84)—or such as using disguises, those of cardinals, to rescue Bruno while the true cardinals are dozing under a spell—may well have "released the emotions of forbidden joys in kicking the until so recently supreme Man, the head of the Catholic Church", as Nicholas Brooke suggests (p. 126). Belief, however, is another matter, whether a magic girdle ("wear this girdle, then appear / Invisible to all are here" [III.ii.17-18]) or a cloak to make himself invisible supplements the apparent blindness of all but Mephostophilis to Faustus' presence onstage. Once more, Marlowe strains the audience's credulity after having fostered it. He even makes Mephostophilis an opponent of Roman Catholicism. Yet many among the spectators were probably willing to follow Shakespeare's advice and "Sit and see; / Minding true things by what their mockeries be" (*Henry V,* IV.Cho.52-53).

The two levels of suspension of disbelief I have considered up to now consist mainly of shows within the show engineered by Faustus' imitators or by himself. My last example in this section will serve as a transition to the next one. At the end of his life, Faustus, to please some friendly scholars he has just treated with an exceptionally plentiful banquet offstage, agrees to make them behold Helen of Troy,

> that peerless dame of Greece,
> No otherways for pomp and majesty,
> Than when Paris crossed the seas with her. (V.i.21-23)

The young male actor impersonating the shadow of beauty in person crosses the stage in complete silence. All eyes are riveted on his majestic, sensuous figure adorned with appropriate headgear and attire. As the three scholars express their delight at the sight of this "paragon of excellence", "whose heavenly beauty passeth all compare", and bless Faustus for "this glorious deed" (V.i.32, 30), the attention of the audience is divided between them, Helen of course, Mephostophilis and, judging from what follows, the ravished conjurer he observes. The fulgurance of the apparition was probably enhanced by Faustus' momentary silence, the accompanying music and some light near the actor. If the actor was expert, all would have been likely to suspend their disbelief and admire this second Venus. Beauty, in this case, as in the case of Juliet and Cleopatra, is not merely in the eye of the beholder, but in that of the beholder's beholder. Conversely, if the actor's face-painting and his female gait were overdone, there must have been a wide gap between the onstage audience's admiration and the general audience's perception of corrupt harlotry and of Faustus' delusion.

Inset spectacles are often claimed to further the belief in the reality of the main action. My opinion is that they also shift the spectators' attention to other levels of reality, and of performance, including the craft of the actors and that of the playwright, who distances, enlarges, refocuses, and diversifies their vision, inviting them to distance themselves at times from his story and its protagonists, to be as flexible as his own art and participate in its achievement.

III. "Mark the show"

The third level I shall consider is that of the shows directed towards Faustus himself, by either the agents of Good or those of Evil, to make him change or not change his mind. Those engineered by Mephostophilis, Lucifer and Belzebub, separately or not, are among the most memorable in the play. But the visible machinery of psychomachia, in a play structured like a morality play and integrating various homiletic elements drawn from its source, also includes an old man, a good angel, a celestial throne and some other heavenly appeals.

The Old Man, coming just before the denouement, although human, appears to be the last of God's envoys because he is unconnected to any other protagonist and speaks godly words. His intervention is short but very striking. Described by Faustus as "base and crooked", he must vividly contrast with the young scholars and glorious Helen of Troy, who have just left the stage. His low condition and his old age probably show through his clothes, his bent back and tremulous gait. This Senex is above all, however, an emblem of humility, staunch faith and disinterested humanity. A gentle, compassionate individual, he tries to save Faustus from damnation, which, for him as for Mephostophilis, much earlier, means being "banish'd from the sight of heaven" (V.i.44). He moves the magician deeply; yet despair, not repentance, follows. Offered a dagger by Mephostophilis, Faustus is on the verge of committing suicide, but the old man stays his "desperate steps" (58) and exclaims,

> I see an angel hovers o'er thy head,
> And with a vial full of precious grace,
> Offers to pour the same into thy soul. (59-61)

Emotion and suspense would probably have been very high in the audience. Some probably looked up to verify the truth of this vision. Or they may even have been tempted, identifying with the truly Christian man, to add their own exhortations to his. But all hope of a denouement conforming to the triumphing *deus ex machina* of traditional Morality plays is soon dashed. Not only does Faustus immediately give in to Mephostophilis' threat of torture, but he asks the devil to torment the Old Man he has sent away "With greatest torments that our hell affords" (V.i.84). When the Old Man returns, Faustus' second wish is being granted. Helen is back, "Whose sweet embracings may extinguish clear / Those thoughts that do dissuade me from my vow" (92-93).

While the amorous couple exit, several devils take charge of the torture of the Old Man, whose staunch faith triumphs over them, at least morally:

> Ambitious fiends, see how the heavens smiles
> At your repulse, and laughs your state to scorn.
> Hence, hell, for hence I fly unto my God. (123-25)

The flames of a furnace may be produced. It does not seem, however, that real flying is part of the show at this point. Spirituality has taken over. This short episode is full of dramatic tension. The cruelty of Faustus may have distanced the audience from him and prepared them for his deserved doom. It may have led them to accept the unusual tragic end of the hero. Yet their curiosity about and fascination for the couple could have tempted them to suspend their Christian belief in favour of the more pleasant aesthetic "willing suspension of disbelief" to which all spectators agree for the time of the performance.

A Good and Bad Angel appear together once in the first scene of Act One, three times in the first two scenes of Act Two, which take place in Faustus' study. Since their entrance follows dialogic speeches by Faustus voicing his divided aspirations, they are visual emblems of his moral dilemma, although special distance and appearance designate them as emissaries of transcendent powers from outside himself. No stage directions are given, but, judging from medieval practices in liturgical drama, I can imagine that, whether or not they are fitted with a pair of angel wings "with iren in the ends", as in York's "Last Judgement",[13] one is probably almost motionless, white and hieratic, the other black or colourful, pungent and lively. Their voices too could differ—solemn and awe-inspiring, brisk and enticing, respectively.[14] In the first three cases, the Good Angel speaks first, the Bad Angel last, confirming Faustus' adherence to wealth and power through black magic. In the final instance, it is the Bad Angel who speaks first, and the Good Angel succeeds in persuading Faustus to repent. The first entrance of the Angels follows Faustus' decision to turn to necromancy. Probably gesturing to "that damned book" he is holding, they either prescribe it or warn him against it, directing his gaze towards the other book, the scriptures (I.i.68, 71). As David H. Zucker writes, "the complex psychological process of Faustus' opening soliloquy is thus made visually simple and schematic" (p. 152). Marlowe masterfully orchestrates the outer tensions which reflect the inner ones. Incensed by Faustus' asking Christ for help, in the third instance (II.ii.83-84), Lucifer, Beelzebub and Mephostophilis, the Infernal Trinity, appear together for the first time and terrify him into immediate submission. To reward him, and keep his mind from Paradise, they make a very spectacular demonstration of their illusionistic powers, and of those of the actors of the play.

Even today, the stage climax reached in the allegorical parade of the Seven Deadly Sins remains very impressive. Once more, the spectators are offered an intra-dramatic show and two stage audiences: Faustus himself and the infernal devisers of the show, who watch those who enact it and, above all, its addressee, Faustus, who is given no choice:

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[13] Walker, ed., quotes the Mercers' Indenture (1433) for *The Last Judgement* in the York pageants (p. 159, l. 20).

[14] See Axton, pp. 95 and 115-16, for the contrast of voices and colours.

> *Belzebub.* … Sit down and thou shalt behold the Seven Deadly Sins appear to thee in their own proper shapes and likeness …
> *Lucifer.* Talk not of Paradise or Creation, but mark the show.
> (II.ii.103-4, 107)

The oxymoronic quality of the invitation ("likeness" contradicts "their own proper") underlines the ambiguity of stage apparitions. The spectators would probably have been surprised and even frightened by the explosions of gunpowder accompanying the devils' entrance, and by their appearances. I suppose that those of the Infernal Trinity would have been more terrifying with their "fiery ornaments", whether or not they "roared", had "squibs in their mouths", tails, horny, monstrous shapes, or whether their cloaks were ragged, their hair shaggy, their nails and fangs very long and their eyes unnaturally prominent and bright or red.[15] The smoke issuing from torches and explosions, its smell, colour and blinding effects would have made the conditions of hell vividly perceptible. The risks incurred in the wooden Theatre may have added to the thrill of spectators. During the procession of the Seven Deadly Sins, their various reactions would probably have included a nostalgic recognition of old plays and reminiscences of other forms of representation, written, painted, engraved or sculpted. One thinks of Bosch, Brueghel,[16] and more particularly of Rabelais' description in the *Quart livre*, chapter 13, of the devils' accoutrement in a "diablerie" supposedly presented by François Villon, which underlines its bestiality, as well as the fire, smoke and terrific noise entailed:

> Ses diables estoient tout capparassonnez de peaulx de loups, de veaulx, et de beliers, passementées de testes de mouton, de cornes de boeufz, et de grands havetz de cuisine: ceinctz de grosses courraies es quelles pendoient grosses cymbales de vaches, et sonnettes de muletz à bruyt horrificque. Tenoient en main aulcuns bastons noirs pleins de fuzées, aultres portoient longs tizons allumez, sus les quelz à chascun carrefou jectoient plenes poingnées de parasine en pouldre, dont sortoit feu et fumée terrible. (Rabelais, p. 569)

Gruesome dances to the tune of the piper ("On piper" [II.ii.15]), distorted faces and bodies, and expressionistic moves must have been part of the show. Earlier parodies of the Seven Deadly Sins, and Faustus' delight at this spectacle, make me think that while the unholy Trinity aimed at maximum terror, the minor devils, disguised as Sins, played for laughter, establishing direct contact with Faustus and with the general audience. We know how heterogeneous stage-costumes were. In this ambiguous parade, we can imagine that they could at the same time have verged on the grotesque and satirised extravagant contemporary fashions. They may also have expanded the characteristics of each sin as suggested by its own words and emblematic traditions. Peacock strut in costly plumed costume, with a serpent as necklace and painted fingers blocking the stench of the precincts from a haughty nose, is my suggestion for Pride ("like a necklace … like a fan of feathers … fie, what a smell … " [II.ii.113-15]). Black leanness and quarrelsome attitude seem to suit Envy, who is "begotten of a chimney-sweeper … lean", and tries to dislodge those who sit in both intra-dramatic and extra-dramatic audiences: "must thou sit and I stand? Come down, with a vengeance!" (124-26). A lion's mane, ireful brows, conspicuous scars, a chest sticking out and a heavy step obstructed by his several "cases of rapiers" would have been appropriate for Wrath, who vengefully threatens any mocker ("I leapt out of a lion's mouth … I was born in hell … wounding myself … look to it [128-31]) and so on. Many in the audience, while associating some of these sins with people they knew, may have had a sense of superior awareness, as they perceived Faustus' blindness to his own pride, gluttony or lechery and resented both the lameness of his questions and the easy victory of playhouse shadows over fears founded on reality. Later, reactivations in the drama of the seven deadly sins, Pride in the Pope's actions, Wrath in Benvolio's vengefulness, Lechery in Helen, Gluttony in the Duchess, Sloth in the cardinals would, as Ernst Honigmann suggests, have made "theatrical sense if the Deadly Sins reappear[ed] as recognisable devils" (pp. 182-83). In this case, intellectual, moral and aesthetic distance would have prevailed over any emotional and sensual involvement experienced earlier.

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[15] See Gurr, pp. 168-69, quoting two contemporary descriptions "strongly coloured by memories of the play in performance".

[16] Cf. Bosch's Hell in his *Garden of Delights,* Brueghel's *Seven Deadly Sins*.

The Good and Bad Angels reappear "at several doors" at the end of the play, just before the denouement (V.ii.91 SD). This time the Bad Angel speaks last and is given five lines more than the Good Angel. Music sounds, presumably divinely melodious, while a "throne descends" (98 SD) on stage in "resplendent glory" (104). Then, after the Good Angel has evoked "the celestial happiness" Faustus has lost (99), "the throne ascends",[17] and "Hell is discovered" (108 SD) for Faustus to let his eyes "with horror stare / Into that vast perpetual torture house" (109-10) whose contents are described with venomous spite by the Bad Angel (111-20). Throughout this scene, an onstage audience sit "above" (V.ii.1 SD). gloating in anticipation over Faustus' "wretched" (8) agony, as his "heart-blood dries with grief" (12) and his damnation is at hand. The magician, who has entered later with Wagner, seems unaware of this presence of the Infernal Trinity. Preceded once more by thunder, Lucifer, Belzebub and Mephostophilis now occupy a stage position which is usually reserved for God in Christian iconography and medieval plays. This apparent blasphemy may have shocked those in the audience who did not interpret it as the reflection of Faustus' misplaced new worship. Here again, the spectators were invited to adapt their vision and belief(s) and reconcile them with their superior awareness. Yet the widely shared belief in the reality of Heaven and Hell, supported by many sermons, would have made their representation in the play entirely convincing.

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[17] Unless the same throne is used for both Heaven and Hell, but Gill accepts Alexander Dyce's editorial addition. Henslowe's throne was stored in the heavens (Gurr, pp. 176-77).

IV. A spectacle of damnation

This last part of my discussion will focus on those scenes, my fourth layer, which remain in every reader's mind and make the most lasting impression on the spectators of *Doctor Faustus.* The play begins and ends with Faustus alone on the stage, a striking visual image of solitude. So much has been written about the opening scene that I shall only pinpoint the obvious visual elements and the degree of belief they are likely to have generated. The scholarly, self-absorbed and impatient nature of the proud consumer of all knowledge is immediately apparent in the celestial globe, and the books he picks up and immediately rejects as no longer worthy his study.

The passions of Faustus, as we all know, were first acted out on the stage by a formidable actor, Edward Alleyn,[18] who had already created Tamburlaine and the Jew of Malta for the Admiral's Men at Henslowe's Rose Theatre. Each time, if we may judge from contemporary reports, he did not *play* the part, he *was* the part.[19] His tall stature, his "well-tuned audible voice",[20] and his forceful impersonations commanded the attention and emotion of all audiences, and secured their willing suspension of disbelief. Like all exceptional actors, he enhanced the impact, both intellectual and emotional, of all speeches, and of Marlowe's powerful images and rhetoric. Faustus' dialogic soliloquy, when brought to life by the actor's moves, gestures, and facial expressions, reaches a climax in the opposition between two highly symbolic and easily recognisable books—the Bible and a book of necromancy, each looked at in turn and manipulated with painful qualms in one case, exultation in the other. The enthusiasm conveyed by Alleyn when Faustus decides to turn to "the metaphysics of magicians" (I.i.47) in order to find "a world of profit and delight, / Of power, of honour, of omnipotence" (51-52) and become "a demi-god" (60), is bound to have stayed in the audience's minds and been contrasted with his later disillusions.

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[18] See Wraight.

[19] See Nashe's *Pierce Penniless* (1592): "Not Roscius nor Aesope, those admyred tragedians that have lived ever since before Christ was borne, could ever performe more in action than famous Ned Allen" (quoted in Halliday, p. 27). Thomas Fuller (*The Worthies of England*, 1661) remembered Alleyn as "the Roscius of our age, so acting to the life, that he made any part … to become him" (quoted by Gurr, p. 88).

[20] Armstrong, quoted by Hattaway, p. 91.

In Faustus' ritual conjuring scene (I.iii), supervised from the gallery by Lucifer and four devils, whose first thundering entrance must have caused a frisson in the audience, Alleyn wears either the "cassock with the fur trimmed down of a doctor of divinity over it"[21] evidenced in the 1616 woodcut and on the cover of most modern editions or, as the result of his own fright, the surplice with a large cross upon his breast described by contemporaries.[22] Although I have found no supporting evidence, my conjecture is that, while he exhorts himself with sonorous words to proceed with his incantations, and describes the magic circle (I.iii.1-15), using charcoal, perhaps at the end of a magic wand, he underlines, and makes visible to the double audience, the "lines, circles, signs, letters and characters" (I.i.49) already drawn on the floor of the stage. This staging is easily feasible. It would take some time but enhance the spectacular dimension of the scene and the suspense. When his impressive Latin black-mass ritual is completed by his sprinkling of holy water and making the sign of the cross ("Signumque crucis quod nunc facio" [I.iii.20-22]), a dragon (19 SD)—probably "shooting fire", as did Henslowe's "dragon in fostes" in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (III.ii)—appears on the stage.[23] It would be bound to cause more than a stir in the audience, as it does in Faustus, who immediately commands it to return in the shape of a Franciscan friar. This is probably the shape under which Mephostophilis appears throughout the play, except when he, like Faustus, disguises himself as a Cardinal at Rome or when he resumes a monstrous shape as part of the Infernal Trinity and at the end of the play. The element of antipapist satire would have been likely to release the tension in the theatre, especially during the parody of the catechism that follows Mephostophilis' disillusioning of Faustus about his real power; the devil disguised as friar answers the pupil's questions:

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[21] Hattaway, p. 169.

[22] See Thomas and Tydeman, eds., p. 177.

[23] See Campbell, chap. 4 (pp. 59-65), for the Greek, Latin and Italian heritage, as far as stage machines are concerned.

> Tell me what is that Lucifer, thy Lord?
> ....
> And what art thou that live with Lucifer? (I.iii.62-74)

Yet surprise and a new element of dramatic tension immediately check this release when Mephostophilis steps out of his role as a tempter sent by Lucifer and passionately evokes his being "tormented with ten thousand hells / In being depriv'd of everlasting bliss", as well as struck with terror by Faustus' "frivolous demands" (I.iii.79-83).

The signing of the bond with the devil, which follows the first intervention of the Angel, is another highly ritualised and dramatic scene. Faustus has no sooner stabbed his own arm than he asks that this sacrifice be witnessed by Mephostophilis and the audience: "View here this blood that trickles from mine arm"(II.i.57); then the blood stops trickling when he is about to write his deed of gift: "My blood congeals and I can write no more"(62). Many among the spectators would have provided the obvious answer to Faustus' question: "What might the staying of my blood portend?" (64). Time for heavy suspense is provided by Mephostophilis' going to fetch "a chafer of fire" (69) to dissolve the congealed and unwilling blood. Faustus' hesitations are vanquished; his blood starts running again, and the diabolic pact binding his soul for ever is signed, in spite of the alarming "*Homo Fuge"* he sees on his arm and reads aloud (II.i.77). We know that bladders of blood were used on stage. Together with Alleyn's art and the legalistic apparatus used—scroll, deed of gift, covenants and articles (88-112)—such theatrical realism may have prompted the least sophisticated among the spectators to adhere to the "reality" of the representation. Most of them must have been aware of Faustus' failure, through lack of judgement and faith, to interpret these sights as God-sent warnings, or as hallucinations caused by his own sense of guilt.

The diversion Mephostophilis arranges to prevent Faustus' flight (81-82) arouses his curiosity: "What means this show?" (83). What delights his mind (82, 84) would presumably have delighted the spectators' eyes, while dramatically enacting both the triumph of the devils and "the widespread belief that witches gave garments to the devil who enchanted them and returned them to cement the bond more fully".[24] After having served tragic realism, artifice provides entertainment, but an entertainment fraught with dramatic irony:

> *Mephostopholis*. I'll fetch him somewhat to delight his mind. *Exit. Enter Devils, giving crowns and rich apparel to Faustus; they dance and then depart.* (II.i.82)

Mirroring this sequence of serious matter and antic movements, the solemn, legalistic reading of all covenants and articles of the deed of gift by Mephostophilis is followed by his fetching Faustus the wife he has asked for (88-110). Laughter and growing disbelief in the magician's dearly bought power must have met Mephostophilis' entrance "*with a Devil dressed like a woman, with fireworks*", the latter probably hung about her hips, as suggested by Hattaway (p. 175). Disillusioned at the sight of this "hot whore" (II.i.146), Faustus is deterred from marriage, but he does not seem to question the devil's practical joke.

The growing awareness of spectators makes them realise that the magician does not achieve much of what he desires, contrary to his disciples, Wagner, Robin and Dick, whose aspirations are much lower. While reflecting on Faustus' failures and foreshadowing his end, the long comic scenes in the middle of the play may, *a posteriori*, if we judge from our modern reactions, have given them the sense that their own expecting something important to happen and being given instead artificial shows to delight their eyes was an analogue of what happens to Faustus in the fiction. This would have created a delicate, but not necessarily unpleasant, balance between identifying with him and perceiving the overall meaning of the play.

The rhythm accelerates at the end of the play. Faustus, as we have seen, approaches death with revelling. The stage climax of his sensual indulgence is, of course, the kiss of Helen. On her second entrance, the two Cupids who accompany her establish her as a goddess of Love. The audience is invited to see the devastatingly pleasurable effect of her soul-sucking kiss:

> Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss:
> Her lips suck forth my soul, see where it flies.
> Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
> Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips. (V.i.99-102)

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[24] Hattaway, p. 174

The suggestion of sexual intercourse with a succuba is followed by a terrifying sight, that of devouring hell. From the bad Angel's description (V.ii) and *The second Report of Doctor John Faustus*, quoted at length by Hattaway (pp. 162-64),[25] we can conjecture a Hellmouth "made like the broad mouth of a huge dragon, which with continual armies of smoke and flame breathed forth his angry stomach's rage; round about the eyes grew hairs, not so horrible as men call bristles, but more horrible, as long as stiff spears" (p. 162). Out of it could issue serpents, "huge burning forks" (V.ii.112) to toss damned souls (111), the flaming top of "an ever burning chair" (114), hissing and bubbling sounds to suggest the boiling lead in which bodies are plunged (112), and, of course, tortured yells and screeches. Supported by countless similar representations of hell[26] and Faustus' desperate "O, I have seen enough to torture me" (121), this sight must have enhanced the spectator's belief in the potential reality of this representation, while acknowledging its theatricality. The dichotomy of "false" and "true" would have yielded to an oxymoronic conjunction of opposites. Here again, however, there was a possibility of grotesque exaggeration, destroying all verisimilitude.

The dramatic and tragic impact of Faustus' last-hour speech has been experienced by all those who have read the play. How much would its early performances have enhanced this impact? Under the eyes of the Infernal Trinity, Faustus exerts his last forces against eternal damnation, but fails to make the act of will that would lead to true repentance and salvation. Though engrossed in his personal drama, the spectators would probably have been somewhat distracted from it by the devils' gloating expectation when depths of despair are reached. Suspense is at its highest, for until the last minute, according to the pattern of Morality Plays, the soul of the sinner can be saved. This suspense would have been increased if Faustus turned his back on a devouring hell that the audience could still see. They would have registered the magician's starts at every chime of the playhouse bell. The acceleration of time contrived by Marlowe must have intensified the nerve-racking sense of "now or never". The body of the actor torn between two contradictory desires, to reach up to God and to disappear under the earth, and finally convulsed with terror, would have made the inward torment of the magician visible and almost tangible. At this point, however, it is impossible to dissociate the verbal imagery, so powerfully orchestrated by the dramatist, from the reality effect and the emotional involvement achieved. The mind of the spectator at the first performance of this scene must have harboured such a rich interplay of intellect and emotion, of metaphysical query and sensuous response, that his imaginative participation would have left little room for distance and disbelief.

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[25] Hattaway, following his source, E. K. Chambers, thinks that the description given in the anonymous 1592 work, *The second Report of Doctor John Faustus, containing his Appearance, and the Deeds of Wagner* of 1594, is at least partially based on performances of the play in a London playhouse or at the Court. Dessen, pp. 59-60, proposes that hell could be represented by a tapestry or just a trap door in Tudor plays.

[26] See Shewring, p. 223, fig. 2, for the scene of Judgement in the Valenciennes *Mystere de la Passion* (1547) depicted in a miniature by Hubert Cailleau and Jacques de Moëlles.

> O I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?
> See, see where Christ' blood streams in the firmament! (V.ii.138-39)
>
> O spare me, Lucifer!
> Where is it now? 'Tis gone:
> And see where God stretcheth out his arm,
> And bends his ireful brows. (142-45)

Convinced by the physical reality of the leading actor and swept away by his richly evocative language, Elizabethan spectators may have seen Christ's blood and God's stretched arm with their mind's eye. They may even have adhered to Faustus' final wishful thinking in spite of all contrary indications, and been shocked when the devils swarmed on stage to drag him away. Paradoxically, the greatest demands for empathetic identification are made when spectators cannot really see what the protagonist believes he sees. Earlier, he has complained to the three scholars: "I would lift up my hands, but see, they hold them" (V.iii.53-54). While their sympathy is wholly engaged, however, spectators are also made to perceive how much more dangerous than inflicted deception is Faustus' self-deceit. They are also offered dramatic irony "translated into visual and gestural terms. For, as he attempts to reach up to heaven in supplication, he also reaches out to the infernal trinity observing him from above" (Zucker, p. 172). Likewise, when he follows Helen to the "heaven" he finds in her lips, the actor who embodies her probably leads him in the direction of the hellmouth.

Conclusion

At none of the four levels that I have considered in *Doctor Faustus* is spectatorial disbelief or belief in the reality of what was presented on stage likely to have been unmitigated at early performances of the play. Even in comic episodes, disquieting elements linked to the devilish powers at work must have modulated laughter. Shows within the show must have drawn a variety of responses both onstage and in the general audience. The dramatisation of the supposedly true story of a man who had sold his soul for twenty-four years of unlimited power was probably what would have drawn the greatest empathy from all seers and hearers. Yet audience response had become a far more complex and ambiguous dramatic process than in Morality plays. Marlowe had, indeed, increased his blending of diverse sorts of seeing and believing—sights, visions, hallucinations, Christian beliefs and belief in the reality of what was shown—subtly altering the balance between them, and making ontological and metaphysical doubts part of the spectators' experience. This was the magic that he aimed at and achieved.

Doctor Faustus is undoubtedly a play to be seen as well as heard. In this phantasmagoria, Marlowe uses old forms but moves beyond his spectators' expectations with a fuller use of the potentialities of his medium. He contrives many inset spectacles, confronting various points of view and generating ironic discrepancies. He manages to distract the spectators, not only in the sense of amusing them or diverting them from what is important, but in the sense of surprising, unsettling and bewildering them. His play gives much to see and to disbelieve or believe, consecutively or simultaneously. Its brilliant theatricality complicates and sometimes compromises the plain didactic message of the choruses, which inscribes it in the Morality play tradition: if he dares "to practice more than heavenly power permits" (Epi.8), man is doomed to suffer a "hellish fall" (4). Marlowe's opening Chorus appeals to "patient judgements" (Pro.9). The phrase appears conventional, but the use of the plural implies personal, evolutionary responses, rather than clear-cut collective moral judgements, while the patience required is far from being passive. In the play, magic and artifice are both deflated and glorified. Adhesion to fictional reality is both invited and questioned. *Faustus* is not only a dramatisation of the conflicting aspirations of Renaissance Man; it is also a school of spectatorship. The enrichment of his perceptive possibilities makes the spectator an active partaker in the more and more ambiguous dramatic feast. He may be tempted to echo Faustus' words: "My senses are deceived … / O, yes, I see it plain" (II.i.79-80), and to add: "I shall never abjure the magic of the theatre."

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Seeing-is-believing Vision and the Power of Verbal Framing in the Tudor Theatre

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In the process of seeing, an object reflects a pattern of light onto the eye; the light enters the eye through the pupil, is gathered by the lens, and thrown onto the screen at the back of the eye, the retina. On the retina is a network of nerve fibres which pass the light through a system of cells to several millions of receptors, called cones. The cones are sensitive to light and colour and they respond by carrying information about light and colour to the brain. At this point, the human equipment for visual perception ceases to be the same for each person. The brain must interpret the raw data it receives and give the complex ocular data both structure and meaning. This is done with innate skills, on the one hand, and also with skills developed out of experience. Since each person has had different experiences, and possesses different knowledge and faculties of interpretation, each person processes the data received by the eye with different equipment. Much of this equipment is culturally relative, in the sense that it is determined by the society which has influenced a person's experience. It is composed of a number of variables which include the categories with which the visual stimuli will be classified; the knowledge that will be used to supplement what immediate vision gives a person; and the attitude that will be adopted to what is seen. These variables contribute to making what I shall call the "given-to-be-seen", to be understood as the product of a verbal framing process which gives shape and form to what is apprehended visually.

It is the human mind that gives sense to what is seen, and no transcendental deity or scientific processing of any kind. However, there are accepted ways of seeing, pre-invented worlds into which we are born and which are either absorbed fully, or uncomfortably. In the latter case, the coercive side of these worlds will be become apparent and questioned, even dislocated or rejected. The experience and perceptive "equipment" that the Tudor playgoer took to the theatre drew upon a variety of cultural, topical and popular references, but also upon diverse texts and performances, all of which enabled him/her to believe or disbelieve, to engage his/her imagination or not in the possible worlds represented by the playwright on the stage. Ostension—the most primitive form of signification which distinguishes "show" from "narrative," wherein description is used—is of utmost importance in the drama, but in the main it is accompanied by verbal framing of some sort, either intended to persuade the audience to accept the author's vision of things or designed to open up the way to new visions of truth.

In this paper I wish to discuss a number of ways in which verbal framing operates in a selection of Tudor plays, beginning with the manner in which playwrights relied on stage conventions to orient the spectator and enlist his/her imagination in order to give credence to the make-believe world of the theatre.

I would first like to point out the recurrence of the verbs "to show" and "to see" in the early Tudor theatre. Showing and seeing, actions which are related to direct optical contact and visual experience, are key words and concepts in the new condition of post-resurrection faith that was engendered in the hearts of Christ's disciples. Seeing was particularly necessary to the doubting Thomas, who would believe in the risen Christ only once he had been invited to put his fingers into the imprints left by the nails and spear in Christ's hands and side, and once he had actually seen these. Seeing was at first necessary to prove the veracity of His resurrection, and was a way of passing from the state of unbelieving to believing. The real was considered accessible only through the bodily senses, that is to say, through eye-witnessing. Seeing, then, was instrumental in leading to the faith that the crucified and buried Lord had indeed risen.

With the passing of time, eye-witness accounts—written reports—sufficed to engender faith, and we find John (20:29) reporting Jesus as having said:

“Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* believed”. Those who believed without seeing were subsequently given a higher status amongst the faithful than those who clamoured for visual proof. These preliminary remarks show how powerful the authoritative texts became, relating eye-witness accounts and foisting upon Christ’s followers ready-made ways of seeing which, as time distanced the event, could not be verified through ocular means, only believed. A similar act of faith, when direct optical contact is not possible, is required of the spectator by the poet-maker, who, in Philip Sidney’s words, is endowed with “the force of a divine breath” (p. 25) in his capacity as creator.

When Sidney first discusses the theatre in *A Defence of Poetry*, he asks rhetorically, “What child is there that coming to a play and seeing Thebes written in great letters upon an old door, doth believe that it is Thebes?” (p. 53). He is alluding here to the power of words to evoke an appearance in the spectator’s mind’s eye, but warning that the make-believe of the theatre is not to be taken as the literal truth. After underlining the fictionality of the stage, Sidney then advocates adhering to the classical unities in order to make the imagined play world more plausible. The popular theatre of the day, he complains, “where you shall have Asia of the one side and Afric of the other”, has to rely on actors coming on stage to explain everything: “the player when he cometh in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived” (p. 65). Here Sidney underlines two seemingly contradictory conventions of the stage: one that demands the audience to believe in the reality of that which is represented and another, simultaneous convention, that stresses the importance of remembering that what is happening is indeed a performance.

Theatrical creation relies on the shuttling from the one convention to the other, and often the seeing audience is addressed directly by an onstage character who, like the Prologue in Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, begs the spectators to participate in imagining the scenery and presence of absent characters, dictating to the audience, in fact, how to interpret the material reality of the stage props, and so on:

> Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts:
> Into a thousand parts divide one man,
> And make imaginary puissance.
> Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them,
> Printing their proud hoofs i’th’ receiving earth;
> For ‘tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,

> Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times,
> Turning th'accomplishment of many years
> Into an hourglass. (*Henry V*, Pro.23-31)

Verbal framing is instrumental here in giving meaning to what is intended to be made visible on the stage. The audience is required to believe in the power of synecdoche. Out of words, images can be created and what is visualised in the mental image is to be taken as a real presence. In the prologue to *Henry V*, Shakespeare outlines the dialectic between fantasy and materiality which is the prerequisite for the theatrical creation. He also shows how dramatic meaning is created through the dynamic interplay between stage and audience. At the same time he illustrates how, in the receptive mental work of "seeing-is-believing-vision", there is a continual interplay of two great symbolic systems, one expressed as imagery and the other as language, how images can be generated by verbal systems, and verbal systems by images. Paradoxically the audience is asked to believe something that is not free from deceit, something that depends entirely upon feigning, upon immaterial fantasy, and not upon trustworthy fact. This is all part of the playwright-audience contract, of course, an instance of words producing images in the mind's eye, revealing how, ultimately, a world may be reinvented and changed by the resulting fully dimensioned images that are created.

In Shakespeare's comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we have an illustration of how a playwright can constantly play off opposing theatrical conventions against each other. This is to be found especially in the Pyramus and Thisbe inset play, which tries to destroy the theatrical illusion completely and make it plain that the audience must believe exactly what it sees, that is to say, a man playing a wall, a man pretending to roar like a lion, and so on. In this case, the hempen homespun crew make it clear that the verbal framing is not to influence the spectator, nor to frighten away the ladies in the audience. Much has been written about this play-within-a-play. My concern at present is more with the onstage spectator, Theseus, and the extent to which he may or may not be considered to stand as the spokesman of the ideas endorsed by the play.

When Theseus chooses the local am-dram group's play for his wedding-night entertainment, from what he says at first, when he justifies his choice, he momentarily stands out as the ideal spectator:

> I will hear that play;
> For never anything can be amiss
> When simpleness and duty tender it. (V.i.82-84)

What he tells Hippolyta, when she expresses doubts about the quality of the entertainment, seems to confirm this impression: “Our sport shall be to take what they mistake” (V.i.90). He sounds like the competent spectator capable of “Piec[ing] out our imperfections with [his] thoughts” that the Chorus in *Henry V* calls for. However, his judgement of the things of the imagination is far from perfect, and we only have to look at the speech in which he expresses his famous world-view to realise that he is the sort of man for whom dreams and fairytales, and what may appear on a stage, are little more than empty shadows, incapable of harbouring truths of any kind. Theseus is the type of spectator who has accepted a pre-invented world, one defined by the patriarchal views of Athens. He speaks as a rational, no-nonsense pragmatist, as is conveyed by his linking lovers and madmen to poets. Hippolyta is seemingly of a different mettle. As Queen of the Amazons, her unconventional upbringing has taught her more incongruous ways of being and seeing that admit the presence of difference and the possibility of change from the oppressive patriarchal culture that sets itself up as the superior, normative one in Athens. In Theseus’s cramped world there is room only for the truth of everyday, common-sense experience: all that lies outside this category is “antique fables” or “fairy toys” (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, V.i.3), and that which is “strange” is almost certainly not “true” (2).

As pointed out previously, whatever sense we make out of the world, it is the human mind that is at work—there is no transcendental power or deity that makes sense for us. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Shakespeare shows how the mind of a patriarchal law-giver works when confronted with the desires of the younger generation for liberation, with their rejection of the ready-made conventional images of a normal humanity that is shot through with contradictions between its ideals and its reality. Significantly, the youngsters’ dream experience takes place in the wild wood, the wood that lies outside Theseus’s rational world, the place where states of madness are traditionally engendered, states which may boast of having the powers of healing chaos. The wood in which the midsummer night’s dream is enacted is the very antithesis of Theseus’s oppressive court: it is the domain of the subconscious, as opposed to the conscious, rational, repressive world of the Athenian court.

The title of the play, of course, signals the importance of dream and its associated modes of knowing: fantasy, imagination, magic. For an Elizabethan audience—and this applies to a twenty-first century one even more—dreams were held to represent kinds of truth. A modern audience will bring to a play the huge body of Freudian and post-Freudian thought which stresses the importance of dreams in the makeup of the human psyche and their ability to reveal knowledge about the subconscious. The significance and importance of the language of dreams is well-established in both classical Greek and Roman, and Judaeo-Christian hermeneutic traditions which Tudor culture inherited. We find obvious examples in Genesis, where, for instance, the imprisoned Joseph interprets the dream of the baker and butler, then that of Pharaoh. In early English texts, such as *Piers Plowman*, there's a clear awareness of the ways in which dream-meanings are encoded in symbols, condensed narratives and displaced images. Dreams are reckoned to tell a truth about what is going on around the dreamer and often within the dreamer. Throughout *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the truth-value of dreams is stressed: upon waking from their dreams, the lovers in the wood find that the therapeutic process of dreaming enables their desires to be accommodated to social reality. The world of dreams and the world of theatrical representation are shown to be analogous to each other throughout the play. The two famous Renaissance conceits—all the world is a stage and life is a dream—feed off one another. The audience is invited to participate in a fiction which is itself dream-like, and to consider the similarities between theatrical illusion and the experience of dreaming. The play argues for the truth of dreams and for the truth of the stage, even though Puck's epilogue ironically dismisses both as "weak and idle", suggesting a Socratic vision that is "No more yielding but a dream" (Epi.6). In Theseus, Shakespeare embodies the attitude of the spectator who is unable to free himself from the "given-to-be-seen" of his upbringing, an attitude contrasted sharply to that of the Amazon Queen, whose unconventional origins prepare her for seeing differently and believing in another world, like the one suggested by the dream experience in the wood.

My next illustration is to be found in *The Comedy of Errors*, where Shakespeare seriously questions the power of the verbal frame to confer identity. Here we find a demonstration of how Renaissance culture erroneously conceived of the materiality of identity. He focuses on the discontinuities that exist between identities and on the external marks that display, support and confirm them. Shakespeare issues a caution about quick judgements based upon appearance alone. As the Abbess states in the final scene of the play, all the characters in the play make the same "sympathizèd one day's error" (V.i.399), and this suggests that if any had made the effort to find out the reality underneath the external appearance, instead of assuming that distinct identities are manifest in distinguishing visible marks, the confusion and near-chaos of the play-world would have been prevented.

By introducing two sets of twins bearing the same name into his adaptation of Plautus's *Menaechmi*, Shakespeare raises important questions about the location of identity. No logical explanation is given for the siblings having the same names, a deliberate choice on Shakespeare's part, of course. The characters assume, not unnaturally, that name confers identity. When Adriana, the wife of Antipholus of Ephesus, believes she is speaking to her husband and servant, she identifies them by their names. The surprised Syracusans take this as proof that she does indeed know them. As confusions escalate, Dromio of Syracuse begins to have doubts about name and identity being one and the same. After Nell, the kitchen maid, reveals knowledge of the marks he bore on some intimate parts of his body, he begins to wonder whether he is not "besides" himself (III.ii.78). "Do you know me, sir? Am I Dromio? Am I your man? Am I myself?" (73-74), he asks his master. Names become unfounded, as do distinguishing marks on the body: "That you beat me at the mart I have your hand to show" (III.i.12), Dromio of Ephesus answers to the wrong Antipholus as proof that they had met recently. These bodily marks are revealed to be the exclusive property of neither of the twin siblings, and again serious doubt is cast on the fixity of identity, and even on the stability of reality. Dromio's description of his encounter with his "wondrous fat" (III.ii.92) would-be wife inspires genuine anxiety in Antipholus of Syracuse: "If everyone knows us, and we know none, / 'Tis time, I think, to trudge, pack, and be gone" (150).

Shakespeare's *Errors* demonstrates how essential selves cannot be determined from outward marks, how it is wrong for the onstage Ephesian characters, especially, to adhere to the verbal framing that constituted the Tudor conduct manuals and sumptuary legislation which classified status-coded behaviour and determined identities through outward show. The aim of the sumptuary laws was to try and guarantee that who you saw was who you got. Shakespeare seriously questions this assumption in creating escalating confusion that very nearly transforms the comedy into a tragedy.

In an article entitled "'Stigmatical in Making': The Material Character of *The Comedy of Errors*", Douglas Lanier suggests that a considerable amount of strain must have been put on an Elizabethan audience in requiring them to make a supplementary effort to disregard what they may have seen on the stage in the stead of perfect twins. As he says, Shakespeare no doubt had difficulty in finding two sets of identical twins (p. 318) and the difference would have been played for laughs. Here again, we find an example of a Tudor playwright requiring his audience to rely on verbal framing to guide it in its perception of what was displayed on the stage—imperfect twin siblings, implausible mistaken identities triggering off farcical situations which, if they misfired, would have made the play into a total disaster. Identical costumes may have been the answer, but on the other hand, the biblical knowledge that the audience brought with it to the theatre could possibly have helped engage audience consent to the plausibility of the situations. In the Scriptures, Ephesus had a reputation for sorcery. References to this abound in the play, and are even evoked as being possible causes for the misrecognitions and suppositions that run through it. In this comedy we realise how crucial the role of the viewer can be: "seeing-is-believing vision", consisting as it often does in pre-determined ways of seeing and classifying individual selves, is seriously undermined throughout.

What emerges from all the confusions in *The Comedy of Errors*? The suggestion, perhaps, that appearances need to be probed with the mind. The spectator must learn to become a *voyant* and not content her/himself with the role of the *voyeur* on the margins. (S)he must pass from spying at the edges to seeing at the core if (s)he is to uncover the truth. As we watch versions of the truth that pass publicly without, we need to learn to recognise the private personal truth within.

If we take the word "believe" to mean "to hold as true, free from deceit, unfeigned, agreeing with reality"(*OED*), my next example will tentatively reveal how a process of indoctrination may be operating in certain conditions in which the given-to-be-seen is dictated, as it were, in advance. This could well be the process at work in the play entitled *Misogonus* (1571?), attributed to Anthony Rudd, in which the Vice-character Cacurgus is bent on disproving the veracity of the proverb, "Children and fools, they say, can tell no lies". Proverbs, invested as they are with great authority and experience that has been tested out, are favourite targets of the Tudor interludes and moral drama, wherein they are turned inside-out. In *Misogonus*, Philogonus, the father of the eponymous prodigal son, is totally blinded by the power of the proverbial saying, which influences his judgement of his servant Cacurgus, who plays the counterfeit fool and simulates the language and behaviour of the natural, rustic fool. Two kinds of fool are combined in this

Vice-character, as Cacurgus can be seen to play the crafty, malicious trickster and the simpleton who traditionally tells all he has on his mind without lying. The son is not fooled by his games, and, when seeing Cacurgus with the long ears of the traditional fool's costume and learning that his father considered Cacurgus to be his "natural" (I.i.316), reacts with surprise at his father's gullibility:

> Fie of all folly! How blearest thou his eyne?
> Is my father to fools become so liberal?
> But did he think thou wert a fool indeed?
> He were never so foolish to think so of thee! (I.i.317–20)

When the Vice's game is up, and the demonstration of Philogonus's misplaced trust in the proverb is over, Cacurgus nonetheless tries to sell his services to a new master by advertising his skills in the market-place, filling the audience's ears with his smooth talk, as if trying to erase the image he had given of himself previously in the play, and as if trying to make the age-old magic of the proverb start working again on some other gullible master:

> O, o, o, oyez!
> If there be any gentleman
> Or any gentlewoman
> O'th'town or o'th' country
> That will, for Saint Charity,
> Receive a stray fool,
> One is here on this stool
> That can roll out dough
> And that can peel a potato;
> That can chare flies
> And that can peck pies;
> That can rock the cradle
> And that can bare a bable;
> That can gather sticks
> And that can chop leeks. (IV.ii.21–35)

The author of *Misogonus* gives a full demonstration of the pitfalls involved in accepting ready-made ways of seeing and believing.

My next illustration will focus on the stage incarnation of the Wild Man myth and the manner in which travel literature greatly affected ways of seeing the foreign other. In the anonymous *Mucedorus* (1598), the wild man character called Bremo shows how the author of this play conceived of the concept of wildness, savagery, and barbarism as being embodied in the universal myth of the animal-like wild man. From biblical times, the Wild Man was associated with the idea of the wilderness—the desert, forest, jungle, and mountains—those parts of the physical world that had not yet been domesticated in any significant way. At the time that *Mucedorus* was written, the conception of the wild man was undergoing change due to travellers' tales about antipodean monstrous peoples. Sixteenth-century English playwrights were brought up in a Calvinistically tinged version of the Christian faith, which refocused and renewed the traditional polarity between salvation and damnation, as well as the mediating role of divine grace. The world remained fundamentally "theonomic", in the expression of Hayden White, who attributes to this fact the tendency to categorise humanity according to appearance:

> … in a universe that was thought to be ordered in its essential relations by moral norms rather than by immanent physical causal forces, how could radical differences between men be accounted for, save by the assumption that the different was in some sense inferior to what passed for the normal, that is to say, the characteristics of the group from which the perception of differentness was made? (White, p. 9)

White places the figure of the Wild Man in this context. On the model of the Old Testament "rebels against the Lord" and their depraved descendants (p. 14), the Wild Man stands as a visible sign of the withdrawal of God's blessing, marking "a fall into a state of degeneracy below that of 'nature' itself, a peculiarly horrible state in which the possibility of redemption is all but completely precluded" (p. 13). It is not surprising, then, that when travellers brought back captives to England from the New World, the people who paid to see them thought they were encountering subhuman wild men, naturally vicious, damned peoples from the cursed antipodes.

In *Mucedorus*, a box-office success in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is the wild man of the European tradition that sent a chill down the spine of the theatre-goers, who must have gone home believing that there was such a bogeyman as Bremo lurking in the wild forest the other side of the walls of civilised London town. Bremo presents all the characteristics that the tradition had endowed the wild man with: he is hideous, a cannibal who "glut[s]" his "greedy guts with lukewarm blood" (xi.18). He eats wild fare; his world is the forest and abundant nature. He also shows signs that he could be tamed by love for a sweet lady, Amandine, who arouses his sexual appetite, but then his destructive violence when she tries to escape his clutches. Bremo is the only wild man in the extant plays of the period to be portrayed with all the conventional wild man characteristics. In other plays of the period, he is transformed. We find no simple variants but wildness increasingly becomes associated with foreign otherness, as my ensuing discussion of *The Tempest* will show.

When Shakespeare created Caliban, he probably had in mind, not only the wild man of European myth, but also descriptions of the different kinds of monstrous races reported by ancient and contemporary travellers alike—races of men with one eye in the middle of their heads, feet turned backward, a double sex, men without mouths, pygmies, headless men with eyes in their shoulders, and dog-like men who bark rather than speak—all of which appear in medieval iconography as representations of wild men. Such given-to-be-seen images of pre-invented worlds abound in the lies of the travel literature, which easily became impressed on credulous minds. In Trinculo's and Stephano's attitudes towards the misshapen islander, Caliban, there are traces of what Renaissance romances and travel tales had led them to expect in terms of encounters of the monstrous type. In this case, the way the characters see and believe what they perceive is affected by what they think they have learnt from maps and reports. Seeing and believing in this instance is pre-scribed, and the world is apprehended under conditions dictated in advance by what has been previously given to be seen.

Shakespeare's Italian castaways were brought up with such ready-made ways of seeing differentness, as their various encounters with Caliban reveal. Trinculo's reaction when he comes across the grotesque creature is one example. His imagination quickly conjures up the possibility that the "strange fish" (II.ii.26) he lights upon is potentially a profit-making commodity, the equivalent of "a dead Indian" (31) that could rake in money from crowds visiting the exhibitions of American Indians in London. A similar example is provided by Stephano, who plans to take the "monster of the isle" (62)—presumed to be of a savage nature—back to Italy to sell him "if [he] can recover him and keep him tame" (65). In another scene, when Ariel's spirits "of monstrous shape" (III.iii.31) make the Italian courtiers start believing in unicorns and headless men, from that moment on they are ready to confirm the veracity of all the travellers' tales they had ever heard, however tall.

In these scenes, Shakespeare provides an explicit demonstration of the power of verbal framing. With their heads full of travellers' lies, they not only see what they expect to see, but believe that they actually see what they had previously been given to see in tales and illustrations on maps. Characterisations such as these show how old beliefs die hard and especially how, dating from the Middle Ages, there was a tendency to describe anything new in terms of the familiar. An enlightening parallel may be drawn with the way Christopher Columbus recorded his observations.

Stephen Greenblatt points out, in *Marvelous Possessions*, that Columbus's "act of writing" what he saw "depends upon a structure of expectation and perception in which the word is at least as fully implicated as the eye", and that if his observations do not conform to his preconceptions, "they will be demoted from the status of signs and not noticed any longer" (p. 88). Those preconceptions, in turn, were nurtured and shaped by cultural constraints. Columbus no doubt had his vision impeded by, amongst others, the Church fathers who had rejected the idea of the possibility of other human peoples on the other side of the earth. That would imply nations not descended from Adam. It was safer for the orthodoxy and credibility of travellers to tell, like Othello, of "Anthropophagi, and men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders" (*Othello*, I.iii.143-44) than to hint of an unknown race of ordinary men and women. While reporting that he himself encountered no monsters but quite well-built, beautiful wild people, Columbus elicited confirmation from his native interlocutors that the *Othello*-like monstrous truly existed elsewhere—further on, over the horizon (Greenblatt, p. 75).

Seeing-is-believing vision in the theatre, and on the larger stage of the world, I shall conclude, is often in conflict with the human processors that interpret the data received by the eye in the process of visualisation. Verbal framing can seriously undermine the plastic representation of reality, since it imposes a conceptual image which can involve the eye's transformation of what is perceived and what it believes it sees. What is more, if the verbal framing happens to flirt with what the early modern period judged to be heretical thinking, then what is visibly truthful is not to be believed at all.

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Four Poets as Presenters and Interpreters in Late Tudor Drama

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The theatre, which is a visual art relying on spectacle, consists in the creation and perception of images; but is this a reason to consider that the same creations are *ipso facto* "true", that, so far as the stage is concerned, "seeing is believing", in a domain which is also the field *par excellence* of deceit, jugglery and illusion and not of "belief" in the most exalted sense of the word? It is not unusual to see on stage things and people that are not supposed to be "there" in the physical sense of the word—for instance, the ghost in *Hamlet*, the witches, Banquo and the four apparitions in *Macbeth* (IV.i). What is difficult is to know when we are supposed to believe in what we see and when we are not. This difficulty can, of course, be ascribed to the absence in a dramatic text of a narrator (as understood in a narratological approach) who would be answerable for the truthfulness of what is being said or shown. Is Banquo truly "there" after his murder? Macbeth says he is there, but he is not visible to the other guests. Which are we to trust?[1]

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[1] Another classical difficulty lies in the definition of the terms used in this proposition, "see" and "believe". The theatre being the realm of illusion (material as well as interpretative), it seems advisable to stick to the traditional, and probably unsatisfactory, definition: what we "see" is what we "think" we see, and theatrical belief is not of the nature of religious belief; it refers only to the temporary explanation we can give of our visual impressions.

When trying to sort out what is "true" from what is deception, it would be a mistake to transfer modern categories and concepts to Tudor drama. Fortunately in this case, Tudor plays are more varied than modern ones, and use a vast range of theatrical techniques, implying a multifaceted relationship with the audience. Of particular interest seem to be the inductions, prologues, epilogues, dumb shows and stage directions present in most plays of the period. They all have in common the effect of introducing, closing or bringing to a temporary halt the usual dramatic intercourse. These passages, often considered as marginal, belong to the performance text (as opposed to the dramatic text) in their own right, and constitute a threshold between the non-dramatic environment and the dramatic creation. When you listen to a prologue, you suspect that something is brewing, that there will be a sequel to it, even if you do not know exactly what. A prologue does not exist in isolation. Take, for instance, the exchange between A and B at the beginning of Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucres*: one might think that they are just two poor unemployed blokes, who strongly deny that they could be actors—until one of the two admits that he has some knowledge of the plot of the play that is coming, and then immediately engages in the delivery of a regular, and particularly emphatic, prologue, in the form of a detailed summary of the plot.

There are numerous types of prologue: some are no more than a few words of welcome for the spectators, a call for attention and silence, or a stimulation of the audience's imagination (*Henry V*). Some take the form of a discussion about the different dramatic genres, tragedy, comedy, and so forth (*Warning for Fair Women* [1599]), or a presentation of the play by some allegorical character (Fame in *The Three Ladies of London* [1581]), or a heavenly court (*The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* [1582]). Those, I will call formal prologues. Of greater interest for our purposes are the muses that introduce *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1587) or the Ceres and Mercury prologue of *The Cobbler's Prophecy* (1589), as well as the symbolic scenes with allegorical characters or plots (*The Spanish Tragedy* [1590] or *The True Tragedy of Richard III* [1594]), or scenes staging historical or legendary characters (e.g., Sesostos in *Jocasta* [1566]). The dramatist himself may play the part of Prolocutor (Bale's *Three Laws*, *St. John*, *Temptation of Our Lord*). In all these cases, the credibility of the action and characters of the prologue rests on their belonging, one way or the other, to extra-dramatic history, society or culture, so to a reality whose existence does not depend on the following dramatic action.[2]

In this paper, I wish to draw attention to the particular situation created when a poet is part of the prologue as a character, or simply quoted. The presence of a poet may be interesting for a double reason: he is, first, a historical figure and, secondly, the creator of a fiction similar to the play he introduces. In what has been described as Skelton's "*Apologia pro vita sua*", that is, in his *Garland of Laurel*, we read that, entering the Palace of Fame, he meets with three poets, Gower, Chaucer and Lydgate, who welcome him to that seat of eternal glory.[3] Although the idea is jocularly presented in the form of a dream, Skelton certainly wishes to imply that he also belongs to the magic circle of the elect. Thus is constituted the quartet of "old" English poets that were revered throughout the sixteenth century. By a curious coincidence they are all four included (each appearing only once) in the prologues of four plays written at the turn of the century: Chaucer, in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613); Lydgate, in Tarlton's *The Plot of the Seven Deadly Sins* (1588); Gower in *Pericles* (1607); and Skelton in the two parts of Munday's Robert, Earl of Huntington plays, *Downfall* and *Death* (1597).

Pericles

Shakespeare manifests no ambitions of originality when he opens the play *Pericles* under the aegis of "Ancient Gower": "To sing a song that old was sung, / From ashes ancient Gower is come" (I.Cho.1-2). The terms "old", "ancient" and "ashes" give to the first two lines of *Pericles* a melancholy and conservative ring. Indeed, Shakespeare was being conservative in both subject matter and form. He admits he found his plot in a well-known story from Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, in the same way as Barnabe Barnes had used Guicciardini's *History of Italy* in his *Devil's Charter.* In both cases the borrowing is explicit and advertised: Guicciardini appears as prologue to Barnes' play; so does Gower, who alludes to his own book when he declares that "lords and ladies … / Have *read* it" (I.Cho.7-8, italics mine). While Barnes' Guicciardini only gives a short commentary of a dumb show in the opening words of his play—"Thus, first with golden bribes he did corrupt / The purple conclave" (ll. 60-61)—Gower is more prolix, as there is at the opening of *Pericles* no visual spectacle, no dumb show on which he could rely to impart to the spectators the main lines of the plot. As a quasi-contemporary of Chaucer he unnecessarily insists on his own antiquity, and in the eyes of the spectators of 1607, addressed as "you born in these latter times" (11), he easily appears as a representative of a long-gone Ricardian past. But, beside the written word, Gower insists on another sort of tradition, that of popular festivals—"ember-eves" (referring to the liturgical *quatuor tempora*) and "holy-ales" (6),[4] during which legends and tales were not only told but sung ("To sing a song that old was sung")—and he then asks the spectators "to accept his rimes" (12) (which can refer either to singing or to reciting), and "to hear an old man sing" (13), which can evoke a minstrel's performance. These allusions to folk traditions are deliberately used to produce a romantic atmosphere.

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[2] The relationship between extra-dramatic reality and the fictional creation of the play is particularly well illustrated by the dialogue between Truth and Poetry, used as a Prologue to *The True Tragedy of Richard III.* This play, a history play, is presented as being "Truth's pageant" (l. 67).

[3] See Skelton, ed. Henderson, p. xix. For Skelton's welcome in the Palace of Fame, see *Garland*, ll. 1135-39 and 1156-62. See also Walker, p. 57.

There are also textual proofs of the existence and influence of the play's sources, not only Gower's *Confessio Amantis,* but also Lawrence Twine's *The Patterne of Painefull Adventures*, of which we find, if not exact quotations, at least paraphrases in the text of *Pericles*.[5] Gower, in fact, returns at the beginning of each act, mostly as commentator on a dumb show or a tableau adumbrating the following action. This recurring presence helps the spectator structure the play by giving him information about the complexities of the plot, while allowing him to concentrate on particularly striking events (e.g., Pericles shipwrecked on the sea-side near Pentapolis at the beginning of Act Two, or his speech from the ship's deck at the beginning of Act Three). So the invitation addressed to the spectators to use their imagination (IV.Cho.1) is anything but an invitation to dream freely or extemporize, and the spirit of Gower reminds his human counterpart, "old Gower", of the importance of the accuracy of the play: "this 'longs the text" (II Cho.40).

Like *The Travels of Three English Brothers*,[6] by John Day, William Rowley, and George Wilkins, *Pericles* is built on a succession of passages seen, that is, explicit, in which the characters play their parts, as it were, "realistically", and, on the other hand, tableaux (the dumb shows), which, although perceived by the eye, are not really "seen" because they can be understood or deciphered only with the help of commentaries (the choruses). This is, then, a kind of indirect perception, or perception at a remove, which demands an effort on the part of the spectator, creating distance, or rather juxtaposing two stages, in the perception of the spectacle: the dumb show and/or the poet's speech conjuring up the image of the poetic source, the romantic, medieval or traditional past; and, on another level, the "acting", which is a sort of bridge between a real or re-created collective memory and the actual re-enactment of the same events in a game which is never presented as anything but a game, an illusory poetic creation[7] in which actors of flesh and blood act and speak in place of, and in imitation of, the "historical" characters. This denudation of the creative process is certainly suitable for securing maximum audience participation.

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[4] In the prologue to *A Tale of a Tub*, Jonson refers to "Wakes and Ales", and considers the stories told on such occasions (old wives' tales) as "authorities" or "country precedents".

[5] For references of passages influenced by Gower or Twine see Hoeniger, ed., Introd., pp. xiv-xvii. The play contains a prologue, four choruses and an epilogue.

[6] Notice, in the third Chorus of *Travels*, three occurrences of "suppose" (799-820) and the synonymous "intreate your thoughts" (800). In the second chorus, "Our storie then so large we cannot give / All things in acts" (663-64) underlines the alternation between "acts", i.e., staged actions based upon

The Two Noble Kinsmen

The Two Noble Kinsmen, by Shakespeare and Fletcher, has a less strictly structured composition. No regular return of the chorus indicates the change from one act to the next. Only at the end of the play does the Epilogue re-establish direct contact with the audience. By again using the word "tale" (Epi.12), the Epilogue takes up the concept found in the Prologue of *Pericles*, which is there expressed by "song". A special emphasis is laid on the notion by the phrase, "For 'tis no other" (13), in the next line. Thus the cultural nature of the story which constitutes the basis of the theatrical action is made clear. During the play we watch the actors that embody the characters of the tale; we listen to their words, but the question arises: should we have faith in a tale?

The Prologue tells us that this is not just any tale: "it has a noble breeder and a pure" (Pro.10). Indeed, the reference text, Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, ranks among the most famous. It was certainly known by a majority of educated spectators; the author was a real national hero, probably the most representative English poet for an early seventeenth-century spectator, a figure just as impressive as Shakespeare would be for later generations. The image associated with

dialogue, and link passages that sum up journeys or the most intricate parts of the plot, or provide moral or psychological appreciation ("trayterously" [668], "base" [669] and "credulous" [670]).

[7] See n. 2 above on Truth and Poetry in *The True Tragedy of Richard III.*

Chaucer is that of poetic perfection, and the task of the dramatists who take up the same plot is to imitate that model without ever hoping to reach the same standard. The imitation of Chaucer was the duty of the poets after him, Lydgate and Skelton included. The source of the play, Chaucer's tale, appears, then, not as a piece of fiction, but as a historical fact, just like Chaucer's fame, which has no equal "'twixt Po and Silver Trent" (Pro.12). The story of Palamon and Arcite had not been told by Chaucer alone; it was one of the most popular legends at the end of the Middle Ages, traditional lore which could be considered by any citizen as a personal treasure. We can also imagine that the great success of Richard Edwards' lost *Palamon and Arcite*, performed before the Queen at Cambridge in 1566, was in all minds, and constituted an event which confirmed the reliability of the story.[8]

So, what Shakespeare's contemporaries considered as being "the truth" in a literary work did not exactly coincide with today's demands in the scientific field, but was rather grounded on information and events established by human evidence and experience, or social consent; and a good approach to the relationship between the reliability of the sources and the esthetic experience of the theatre-goer can be found in these lines from the Prologue to *Damon and Pithias* (1571):

> [the matter] which here we shall present is this, *Damon and Pithias,*
> A rare example of friendship true. It is no legend-lie,
> But a thing once done, indeed, as histories descry,
> Which, done of yore in long time past, yet present shall be here
> Even as it were in doing now, so lively it shall appear. (Edwards, ll. 30-34)

The Downfall and Death of Robert Earl of Huntington

Let us now turn to Munday's *The Downfall of Robert Earl of Huntington* and its sequel, *The Death* (both 1597). Both plays use as prologue another famous English poet, John Skelton. Skelton (1460-1529) was the most recent of the four English poets used as presenters in late Tudor and early Stuart plays, and could still be considered in 1597 as part of contemporary history, as he had lived the whole of his active life under Tudor rule. But at the same time, the play takes us back to legendary times, as it belongs to the abundant production of Robin Hood literature of the turn of the century.[9]

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[8] "[B]ecause of the Queen's presence, several eye-witnesses left detailed accounts" (Potter, ed., p. 46), which in their turn could be held as proof of the historicity of the story. Furthermore, a song from that play can be found in a seventeenth-century MS, and so could have been known in 1613 (Potter, ed., p. 46).

The part played by Skelton in this play is more active than, and different from, those of the poets used in *Pericles* or *The Two Noble Kinsmen.* Skelton appears as a poet and under his own name only twice in Part I (*Downfall*) and once in Part II (*Death*). Part I begins as a realistic play with a conversation between Skelton and Sir John Eltham. We gradually understand that Skelton and his interlocutor have prepared, at the request of King Richard, an interlude, which soon turns out to be a Robin Hood play. Furthermore, this play, as we learn, was written by Skelton himself, for he declares, paraphrasing the well-known saying, "Many talk of Robin Hood, that never shot in his bow, / But Skelton writes of Robin Hood what he doth truly know" (ll. 79-80), and he quite naturally suggests that he, the author, will stand prologue to the play, in order to explain the opening dumb show.

But there is more to it than that: we soon learn that Skelton takes the part of Friar Tuck and Sir John Eltham will play Little John (ll. 20-21), while other members of the Court take secondary roles (l. 76). According to a well-known trick, this sort of impromptu rehearsal becomes the play of the *Downfall,* supposedly performed in the presence of King Richard. So Skelton enjoys a double status in the play: his fame as a poet would have been warrant enough to justify the audience's belief in the events reported under his authority (so much the better in this case, as he was also a dramatist and not only a poet), but Skelton is also present throughout the play under the disguise of a character. Taking the part of Friar Tuck was not a random choice: Skelton's Friar Tuck is a notable manager and manipulator, in a role somewhat akin to the Vice of the almost contemporary interludes.

The spectators watching the play in 1597 supposedly see the same spectacle as that given for Richard, but from a different perspective in time. The first performance and the events it contains constitute in a sense the referential "truth" of the later occasion. In order to reinforce the "long ago and far away" atmosphere of the play, medieval allusions are dropped here and there, such as the presence of allegorical characters, including Ambition and Insurrection in the dumb shows (*Death*, l. 252), ballads (*Downfall,* ll. 773-817, *Death,* ll. 815-26) and, significantly, occasional "ribble rabble rhymes skeltonical" (*Downfall*, l. 2141).[10]

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[9] The Robin Hood stories were criticized by Langland as early as 1377; a similar attitude is to be found in the author of *Dives and Pauper*, *c.* 1426-27. There was a performance of a Robin Hood play at Exeter, and many more after 1475. See Pollard, pp. 9-14. Among the abundant literature on the Robin Hood theme, we refer the reader to the thirty-two tales edited by Child, vol. 3.

The Plot of The Seven Deadly Sins

Like Skelton (and even more so!), Tarlton belonged to the Tudor show-biz world. No dramatic text remains of his production, but it seems probable that he wrote tragic as well as comic pieces.[11] The only extant document is the plot of the second part of *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1590). The poet that serves his turn in this play is Lydgate, "flowre and tresure of poise",[12] who, although a monk, was also in his way a show-biz man. In the sixteenth century, Lydgate was probably held to be the first English playwright. Indeed, among his poems some, traditionally known as "mummings", seem particularly adapted to solemn occasions at the Court. What must be noted about these mummings is that they differ in an important way from most modern drama: they are not simply devised for entertainment. They represent the spoken part of, if not a religious, at least a formal and traditional, ceremony of homage to the sovereign (or other important personages or institutions). So, the mumming (also called "disguising") bore the image of a "ceremony with a purpose"—social, political, etc.

No text of Tarlton's play remains—only a plot—and so a lot of guesswork is necessary to make it speak. Yet a comparison with contemporary plays allows us to supply the missing text with reasonable chances of guessing right. It seems that, instead of being a play with a central plot, possibly illustrated by dumb shows, *The Seven Deadly Sins* was made up of scenes, mostly dumb but possibly partly speaking. The second part contains three such tableaux, illustrating three sins. The story of Gorboduc illustrates the sin of Envy, Sardanapalus the sin of Sloth, and Tereus and Philomela the sin of Lechery. The other four sins were probably the subject matter of the first part (which is lost). Eight times in the course of the document is to be found the tantalizing and exasperating stage direction, "Lidgate speaks", but his words are not reproduced. No doubt, in such monologues, he explained the meaning of the dumb shows which are vaguely hinted at in the plot. A stage direction at the beginning of the plot, "A tent being plast on the stage for Henry the sixt—he in it—A sleepe", and another one a few lines further down, "Henry awakening", clearly show that the dumb scenes are "visions"[13] which appeared to Henry during his sleep, and by the same occasion are shown to the audience. At another point, Henry is mentioned as speaking to Lydgate. These two characters clearly constitute a link between the tableaux: the presence of these two historical characters, a king and a poet—the latter responsible for an enormous literary production that was still popular in the sixteenth century—gives credit to the visions which constitute the body of the play. As in Munday's play, allegorical characters (Sloth, Envy and Lechery), who walk across the stage introducing each tableau, give the play a medieval flavour, and may remind the spectator that Lydgate himself played the role of presenter and interpreter in some of his own mummings.

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[10] Skeltonics occur at *Downfall*, ll. 80-104, 1479-1525, 2040-58, 2148-63 and 2395-2401, and at *Death*, ll. 1-16 and 34-41. On one occasion (*Downfall,* ll. 818-19), the characters call each other by their "true" names and not by those of the characters they impersonate.

[11] His only extant works are his *Jests* and *News from Purgatory*. Notice that the title "Seven Deadly Sins" would also fit Gower's *Confessio Amantis.*

[12] Quoted from a letter from Benedict Burgh to Lydgate dating from the early 1440s, printed by Hammond, ed., pp. 189-90.

Conclusion

> Why, how now, humorous George? What, as melancholy as a mantle-tree? Will you see any tricks of legerdemain, sleight of hand, cleanly conveyance, or *deceptio visus*? What will you see, gentlemen, to drive you out of these dumps?

These lines come from *Wily Beguiled*, a comedy in which, as is clear from its title, all is guile and deceit.[14] The leader of the game is a knavish character, very similar to the Vice of the contemporary interludes, whose tutelary spirit is the facetious and mischievous Robin Good Fellow, and who, at some point in the story, dresses like a devil to frighten the scholar, Sophos. But the truth will out, and the play ends in bliss and marriages.

The contrast between the plays staging truths and a spectacle of pure illusion can be illustrated by a comparison of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* with *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, or of *Nice Wanton* with *The London Prodigal*. At the end of Marlowe's play, Faustus is damned, whereas the "merry devil", Fabell, goes to meet his friends and unites the lovers; the wicked children of *Nice Wanton* go to hell, while the London prodigal is pardoned and gets married. The same contrast may be observed in popular stories. Legend has it that during a performance of *Doctor*

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[13] The dumb shows are called "strange visions" in Munday, *Death*, l. 886.

[14] The title of this play, possibly written as early as 1566-67, evokes the "*moccum moccabitur*" theme in Heywood's *Play of Love*.

Faustus, "as Faustus was busy in his magical invocations, on a sudden they (the devils who helped Faustus in his conjuring) were all dashed … for they were all persuaded there was one devil too many amongst them". They interrupted the play and "the people understanding the thing as it was, everyman hastened to be first out of doors" (cited by Chambers, 3: 424). The other story is that of "A man who acted in a play as a devil".[15] Having no change of dress, the actor was returning home in his devil's costume, when, walking through a warren belonging to a neighbour in the village, he espied a priest and some other men hunting rabbits. Thinking he was a true devil, the poachers scampered away in fright. Our actor took the priest's horse loaded with the dead rabbits back to the warren's owner, where several servants successively closed the door upon him—until he managed to make himself known, and they all had a good laugh together. The play devils of the Mysteries could be a real threat, and provoked conversions. (Stories are numberless.) This could also be the effect of domestic plays. Hamlet voices this point of view:

> I have heard
> That guilty creatures sitting at a play
> Have, by the very cunning of the scene,
> Been struck so to the soul that presently
> They have proclaim'd their malefactions. (Shakespeare, *Ham.*, II.ii.584-88)

This moral fits in well with the tone of the play, since, like revenge plays in general, *Hamlet* is a serious play. In comedy, on the other hand, all is illusion. And the juggler's part, such as the one in the prologue of *Wily Beguiled*, can be taken as the symbol of such plays.

The four plays we have been dealing with in this essay are all serious plays. Their seriousness does not manifest itself in the religious, moral or historical fields, but in the romantic. In order to give them a solid basis of credibility, who could be more fitting than a poet?

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[15] From *A Hundred Merry Tales* (1526), in Oesterley, ed.

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Limits of Illusion in the Theatres of John Rastell

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In respect of the idea of illusion in art, Holbein's portrait of the Hanseatic merchant Derich Born, dated 1533, is remarkable. It affords a Latin inscription on the lower half of the painting which states that if the picture were given a voice it would appear to be Derich Born in person. It is questionable, says the inscription, whether the progenitor was his natural father or the painter. The spectator's attention is thus drawn directly to the skilful illusion that poses in a direct way the question of our volume, "Seeing is believing—or is it?" Holbein is noted for such realism in his portraits, and we can be confident that this effect was what the artist sought after. We are on far less certain ground seeking to know whether or to what extent playwrights of the early sixteenth century attempted a similar effect, or indeed whether such an effect could lead spectators to believe what they saw. For, as Thomas More noted in his *History of King Richard III*,

> in a stage play all the people know right well that he that playeth the sultan is perhaps a shoemaker. Yet if one should be so foolish in an inopportune way to show what acquaintance he hath with him and call him by his own name while he standeth in his majesty, one of his tormentors might chance to break his head, and worthily so, for marring of the play. (p. 83)

From this it may be possible to infer that audiences, while perfectly knowing about the nature of theatrical illusion, were nevertheless keen not to transgress the decorum of spectatorship in order that the fiction represented might maintain its integrity. Thus illusion and actuality may be seen to be held in some sort of equilibrium amongst playgoers of the early Tudor period.

In terms of seeing and believing, I have always been hugely entertained by the story of John Adroyns that appears in John Rastell's *C Mery Tales* published in 1526. Adroyns, a Suffolk man, had been appearing in a stage play as a devil and on the day of the performance was walking home at dusk still in his costume. His path took him through the local manorial warren, where he came upon the priest with some companions poaching rabbits. On seeing the devil, as they believed this figure to be, they took flight. The said John Adroyns then took their horse and the poachers' catch of rabbits to the manor house to report the incident. When Adroyns arrived at the manor house gate, further misunderstandings arose regarding his apparently infernal identity. The matter was finally cleared up much to every one's amusement. The story has a moral: "On many occasions men fear more than they need which has caused men to believe that spirits and devils have been seen in various places, when there has been nothing of the kind." Thus we may infer that the priest and his companions are represented as misguided and foolish in believing that they have in truth been visited by the devil.

However, elements of the story are apposite to our theme. The man John Adroyns has been appearing in a play. We can only hope that in performance he achieved a similar level of acceptance in his role as was accorded him in the dusk in the warren. We must assume that if he had been suddenly exposed as himself, it would, in Thomas More's terms, have marred the whole thing. What is significant in the story, however, is that, according to its moral, such feigning will only appear actual either to the ignorantly credulous, or, as in this case, to those with something on their conscience. For the former, the external reality represents the literal nature of things; they cannot see through the acting to the artifice behind it. In terms of play-going, this may be regarded as an error of perception. For the latter, the experience strikes deeper and touches a root belief in such a way as to provoke a direct response to the imagined world of the play. In one sense it becomes actual to them. One could say that they are led to believe that the fiction they witness carries immediate implications for themselves in real time. Some proof of this may be found in the case of John Roo, who suffered a summary jail term in 1526 for playing an interlude critical of government that Cardinal Wolsey felt was too openly directed at himself. Wolsey, of course, as a deviser of pointed entertainments, would more than most people have been singularly aware of this possibility. A corollary of this is Hamlet's comment upon "guilty creatures sitting at a play" (II.ii.585) being obliged involuntarily to proclaim their malefaction. As often recorded in the sixteenth century, such a response serves as a justification for plays as exemplars.

From this we may conclude that belief, *per se*, is a complex and subjective nexus of feeling, imagining, knowing and wishing, in great part culturally determined, that must underlie any act of spectatorship. The pleasure and engagement with the illusions of a fiction call on such perceptions but are also moderated to a greater or lesser extent by awareness of the occasion of performance, an understanding of its conventions and the nature of the illusion with which one is invited to engage. In essence, a spectator will see what he believes rather than believe what he sees.

From this it is clear that the concern of the authors of *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* about the effects of fictionalising the bible stories through performance was misplaced. They asserted and attempted to demonstrate that the whole enterprise of play-making "is agenus oure bileve" (p. 100), because "thise miraclis pleyinge ben onely singnis, love without dedis" (p. 98). The truths ostensibly shown through the performances are sententious, all appearance without substance. As such, their lack of integrity is a deception to be avoided and belies the underlying truths of the Christian faith. The writers go on to assert that they are "the most ginnys of the dyvul to drawen men to the byleve of Anticrist" (p. 98). The writers of the *Tretise* thus show little faith in the spectators' ability to resist the wrong message this, despite the fact that they draw attention to a significant distinction between "gode feith withinneforthe" that would certainly guard against such naiveté and "sight withouteforthe" that indicates the vulnerable suggestibility that alarms them (p. 102). There seems, however, in their terms to be no denial that the plays can stimulate, even sustain, belief, but uniquely in the power of evil.

One is then led to ask what the authors of the *Tretise* would have made of Coleridge's oft-cited aphorism that spectatorship depends upon a "willing suspension of disbelief". Leaving aside the fact of its misappropriation to theatre from Coleridge's comments on his own contribution to the *Lyrical Ballads*, we may turn to his Lectures on Shakespeare for a more developed discussion regarding theatrical illusion. There Coleridge writes at length about dramatic performance, whose very purpose, he suggests, "is to produce [only] as much illusion as its nature permits" (I: 178):

> In an interesting play, read or represented, we are brought up to this point [of acceptance], as far as it is requisite or desirable, gradually, by the art of the poet and the actors; and with the consent and positive aidance of our own will, we choose to be deceived. (I: 116)

As is obvious, an audience certainly gathers willingly to a performance. They are, as it were, accessories after the fact. But, as Coleridge stresses, the spectator's involvement is dependent upon being brought up to a point of "acceptance", "as far as it is requisite", in order that the illusion may work with the imagination. The terms "consent" and "aidance" support the notion that we are willing agents in the process. While a necessary part of the act of going to a play may be "choosing to be deceived", it is here expressed as in the spirit of a process of "co-creation" invoked through the skills of the poet and the actors. This interpretation is given support in the value Coleridge put upon the function of the imagination. For him imagination comes in two kinds: a primary imagination, that is, "the living power and prime agent of all human perception" akin to the power of the Creator himself; and a secondary imagination, which echoes the primary but coexists with the conscious will of man. This secondary imagination is the creative imagination of the poet, the artist, and, in the case of theatre, of the actor, which "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate" (I: 166). He acknowledges "the poetic power of making everything present to the imagination" (I: 193) and suggests that will contributes to this process as part of the human creative impulse in the shaping of art. For Coleridge, the will of the spectator has also to be engaged to participate "as far as it is requisite" in this creative process:

> Stage presentations are to produce a sort of temporary half-faith, which the spectator encourages in himself and supports by a voluntary contribution on his own part, because he knows that it is at all times in his power to see the thing as it really is. (I: 178)

As before, Coleridge's emphasis is on the very process of enactment as the means by which the half-faith is produced. Thus Coleridge may be seen to acknowledge the dualism that stands as a central paradox in the spectator's experience of theatre. He is also part-way to identifying effects sought after by the movement towards Naturalism that characterised drama of the later nineteenth century—that same movement that leads us in the twenty-first century to expect that the whole of theatre is about persuading people to see something that isn't really there.

However, one should never forget the delight in and the influence of the distracting theatrical aspects of a performance. There are those that delight the eye—costumes, scenic devices, skilful dance or physical action—or those that impress the ear—fine speech, singing, musical and sound effects—all of which may contribute significantly to the style and therefore the reception of a play. Nor should one ignore the influence that the presence of an accomplished actor may have, and our apparent capacity to see the actor and the role simultaneously; Olivier's Hamlet, we say, Mckellen's Iago. On the one hand, at their best, the theatrical elements may assist and sustain the growing acceptability of a fiction. Sometimes, of course, on the other hand, our pleasure in these aspects of performance predominates over any experience of "credibility". Furthermore, they are all factors that recent neuro-scientific research has begun to suggest join our being to the world of the actor in an unavoidable physiological and inherently psychological manner. Once we have said yes to spectatorship, thus far certainly an act of the will, potentially we become subject to involuntary mimetic responses to what we see and hear. Rather than "seeing is believing", therefore, the formula might become "seeing is being alive" to a performance in an analogous way.

Finally, to confirm this view that a theatre performance is a powerful "actual", as Richard Schechner defines it (pp. 51ff.), there is a persuasive account of the child actors in Elizabethan theatre given by Bert O. States. He writes specifically of the boy companies whose repertoire was largely comedy and satire where, as he says, "actors spend a good deal of their time flirting with the audience". Since the children will be "conspicuously *not* identical with the adult characters they are portraying," he argues, "the medium becomes the message: the form winks at the content" (p. 32). He further generalises then with regard to the "titillating potential of a medium that by its very nature inoculates the audience *against* belief" (p. 32). He points up this collision between artifice and actuality in a concluding reference to Launce's dog in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The dog is "blissfully above, or beneath, the business of playing, and we find ourselves cheering its performance precisely because it isn't one" (p. 34). Thus the paradoxical nature of theatre may be seen to derive from the fact that any illusion created, often within a transparent conventional frame, operates in the situation of performance as a meeting place where actual life itself is always and ever present. So, to conclude, I would want to agree with States that theatre inoculates the audience against belief and, on the other hand, to say that in practice performance works, in Coleridge's terms, to bring the audience up to a point of acceptance of the integrity of the illusion presented.

Acceptance in this context will mean acceptance of the performance as a whole, fiction and artifice working together to convince sufficiently of the illusion, the virtual reality, established for the occasion. But in the end, as Erasmus says, "the feignyng and counterfaityng is it, that so delighteth the beholders" (p. 38). Thus the elements of knowingness and acceptance remain constantly in contention, though perhaps rarely in balance, and that is as far as belief may really go.

Turning now to the theatrical world of the early sixteenth century, I have chosen to make reference only to those plays associated with John Rastell and printed by him, three of which I have taken the opportunity to direct. (Those are *Gentleness and Nobility*, *Calisto and Melebea* and the first part of *Fulgens and Lucres*.) Fortunately, all of Rastell's texts are full of hints about and guides to the relationship that must have existed between the audience and the performers. Certainly, it becomes plain that the relationship is a very fluid one, often shifting its ground by the moment and often taking delight in the pleasures of performance for their own sake. Nowhere is this more apparent than in *The Nature of the Four Elements*, one of two plays directly attributed to Rastell himself.

Printed some time around 1525, *Four Elements* is, I would hazard, the least familiar of the plays associated with the Rastell's and, because it is incomplete, exists in a kind of theatrical no-man's-land. It is clearly influenced by Henry Medwall's *Nature*, printed somewhat later by John's son William. There are obvious affinities, in that it employs a morality pattern with Humanity as its central concern and the figure of Nature, rather than of God the Father, instigating the action. Humanity is all obedient attention at first to the lessons offered by his mentors. Later he errs in preferring worldly, that is, sinful or non-intellectual, companions such as Sensuality (or Sensual Appetite), who lead him into byways of disorder, mainly in the tavern. Nature insists, however, on recovering Humanity from his error, regardless of how many times he succumbs to temptation. A happy ending is contrived with Humanity back on track to a good life, thankfully able to dismiss and do without his tempters and betrayers. Such a model plot would have been very familiar to contemporary audiences.

In Rastell's play, unfortunately, the final recovery of Humanity remains incomplete, as we have lost the last pages. There is also an important lacuna in the middle, which denies us the knowledge of exactly how Yngnoraunce enters the scene. Thus the model cannot be substantiated in full. There is enough of it, however, to remain confident that the parallel exists. One could argue, indeed, that *Four Elements* in its structure is a quite slavish imitation of its predecessor. It becomes clear even at the outset, however, that whatever debt Rastell owed to the earlier model for the structure of his play, he was employing the model for quite different purposes.

First, there is a Prologue delivered by a Messenger who seems disinclined to claim any responsibility for the succeeding action of the piece, but only for its intellectual and moral content. The premise is to bring knowledge of nature and geography to an audience whose ignorance of such matters is assumed. The presentational aspects of medieval drama, of course, had always served its authors as a means of communicating essential elements of belief, both sustaining and confirming doctrine. In this case, similarly, there is little attempt to produce affective, empathic responses from the audience or to woo them with the promise of a narrative. Rather, Rastell confronts his audience directly with a number of his own preoccupations, which have no dramatic predecessors. If we take, for instance, the analogous introduction of the Messenger at the beginning of *Everyman*, we find a quite different approach. The *Everyman* Messenger is brief, indicating the narrative of the play, even outlining its implications and introducing "our Heven Kynge" directly to get the action underway (ll. 1-21). The Messenger speech serves, in that case, to focus the audience's attention, invoke the themes of the play and introduce the first character in person. The playwright is conscious of the need to bring the audience along, to engage them with the drama that is about to unfold. By contrast, the Messenger of *Four Elements* offers a different experience. He makes a rather inauspicious start by petitioning the audience for charity because the playwright may "be yngnorant and can lytyll skyll" in respect of this "lytyll interlude" (ll. 5-21). He also expresses clear anxiety about the subject matter of "phylosophy naturall" being presented through the medium of English. Such "matter substancyall" is, by implication, a work of "connynge" of a kind that has not previously found expression in the mother-tongue. English, he says, is mainly deployed for "love or other matter not worth a myte" (l. 40). He has observed, however, that in terms of subject matter other writers in English follow their fancy and write what they will. It follows, therefore, that this playwright may choose to do the same. Somewhat typically of Rastell, therefore, the Messenger is used to present the author's current personal concerns, in contrast to familiar or fashionable alternatives. The hook of a coherent situation or story line is left in abeyance. Indeed, the tone of contention persists throughout the Prologue. It is obvious that Rastell perceives a need to re-orientate audience expectations, to announce the difference they may expect from this play and to bring a new kind of attention to the unfamiliar subject matter they will hear and see.

I imagine that an audience of the period would have responded questioningly to both the message and the Messenger, as they undoubtedly would have done to the second great "idea" of the Prologue. The Messenger proceeds to develop a common Rastell theme that riches should not be the measure of wisdom, as "is the oppynyon moste commonly / thorowe out the worlde" (l. 60). Without the poor and, by inference, ignorant labourers there would be no riches in the first place, so it is necessary for rich men to exercise their conscience with regard to the commonwealth as a whole. They should make provision "That bryngyth them to knowledge that yngnorant be" (l. 91)—that is, Rastell offers a novel interpretation of *noblesse* (in this case *richesse*) *oblige*. Finally, the statement that learning should entail knowledge of nature and the elements, as well as knowledge of eternal verities, strikes at a familiar clerical educational discourse. This challenge to what could be regarded as an establishment view is spiced by an arch question:

> How dare men presume to be callyd clerkys,
> Dysputynge of hye creaturis celestyall,
> As thyngys invysyble and Goddys hye warkys,
> And know not these vysyble thyngys inferyall? (ll. 113-16)

So, finally, the Prologue challenges the *status quo* from an anti-clerical perspective. The audience is being asked to view this play from a different basis of understanding, even of belief. They must not expect the play to offer them sad matter of a familiar kind.

Despite his rather intense commitment to these new ideas, however, Rastell manifests a showman's consciousness of audience appeal, albeit in a rather crude fashion. He attempts to sugar the pill:

> Because some folke be lytyll disposyd
> To sadnes, but more to myrth and sport,
> This phylosophycall work is myxyd
> With mery conseytis, to gyve men comfort
> And occasyon to cause them to resort
> To here this matter. … (ll. 134-39)

This last citation is one that half persuades me to speculate that this play, despite internal references to hearth and hall, was fashioned for performance on Rastell's own stage in Finsbury. It suggests that audiences have to be persuaded to resort to the performance. It also anticipates that their span of attention to serious matter will be limited and that the play will need to be balanced in favour of "entertainment". The text's title page gives a further hint that Rastell was conscious of this need. We read that this "interlude, yf the hole matter be playde, wyl conteyne the space of an hour and a halfe; but yf ye lyst ye may leve out muche of the sad mater … and than it wyll not be paste thre quarters of an hour length" (p. 30). So the play-text, while aimed, no doubt, at readers, was also apparently aimed at producers who would have a commercial interest in attracting and holding audiences. A little further on the producers are told, "Also yf ye lyst ye may brynge in a dysgysynge" (p. 30), an element that the text would allow. These hints at how to spice up the performance are interesting indicators that merry conceits and antics were thought of as crowd-pullers. This also suggests that lately developed ideas about the integrity of theatrical illusion were not necessarily at the top of Rastell's list of requirements. Rather, he is promising his audience entertainment if they will first accept the representation of some novel and difficult ideas. I would conclude that the tone of the Messenger speech shows that Rastell must have recognised that he was putting himself out on a limb. He persevered nevertheless.

A performance of *Four Elements* can be built around three diverse principles of action. The Prologue, containing a direct presentation of the author's own preoccupations with matters of social and cultural concern, is a kind of sermon or lecture. It serves more as a justification for the author's fancy than as an introduction to a drama. The envoi, "The pleyers begyn to appere in presence; I see well it is tyme for me to go hens" (l. 144), almost suggests an opportunistic intrusion rather than an introduction. The play proper that follows opens with a formal introduction by Nature. It is remarkably similar in tone to those street-pageant performances prepared to greet eminent visitors. It was a form in which Rastell was himself experienced. Thus, the opening exchanges between Nature, Studious Desire and Humanity are in rime royal, the chosen stanzaic form for the majority of such public addresses. As Nature explains his role and lays down the themes that are to be a central concern of the "sad mater" of the play, his persona is reflected in the rhythms and vocabulary of his speech:

> Wherfore I am the verey naturate nature,
> The inmedyate mynyster for the preservacyon
> Of every thynge in his kynde to endure,
> And cause of generacyon and corrupcyon.
> Of that thynge that is brought to distruccyon
> Another thynge styll I brynge forth agayne.
> Thus wondersly I worke and never in vayne. (ll. 148-54)

The character proceeds to draw attention to the two regions of the great world, the ethereal above and the mundane below, "Conteynynge these four elementis beloo: / The fyre, the ayre, the water, and yerth also" (ll. 167-68). Nature appears dignified, and authoritative, at ease with himself and with his role. He has the authority to command obedience and respect for his utterance and to take an initiative in the instruction of Humanity. Thus far the audience is invited to accept the imagined situation presented with such solemnity.

After two long introductory speeches in this vein, however, Nature departs, consigning Humanity to the care of Studious Desire. At this point the scene is invaded by Sensuality, and two shifts of awareness occur. First, the audience will be struck by the different rhythms of the popular tail rhyme that is substituted for the more formal rime royal of the opening. Furthermore, the familiar "Make room" is used to indicate that the comic characters may enter from amongst the audience. The dialogue lightens up with more shared lines and interjections showing a degree of animation previously absent. The character Sensuality, coming as he does from among the audience, is a living presence that unites him with them in both present and theatrical time. This is a trick that had already been exploited in both of Henry Medwall's plays, but nowhere more blatantly or with such consummate skill as in his *Fulgens and Lucres*. That play is too well known to need detailed analysis, and it is sufficient to point out that the behaviour of A and B at all the major shifts of action in that play serves a similar end. Sensuality, like them, seems to exist in both theatrical spheres simultaneously. He takes on Studious Desire and later Experience in a lively and contentious fashion. He makes frequent appeals to the audience, whose delight in the performance will derive both from the situation represented and from its association with actual misrule. In addition, we are offered a series of set-piece actions with jokes dependent upon innuendo and other word-play. Anti-feminism, scatology and folly of many kinds all feature as part of this. This third mode of performance seems to rely most on the actors and their exploitation of their authority within a theatrical frame. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that at times the merry conceits in which the actors indulge run the risk of overwhelming the circumstances that sustain the serious matter.

This is especially true towards the end of the play. Yngnoraunce specifically targets the pretensions of the studious characters:

> I love not this horeson losophers,
> Nor this great connyng extromers,
> That tell how far it is to the sterres;
> I hate all maner connyng. (ll. 1137-40)

Instead of the foolish "losophy" that "has made you [Humanity] mad", Sensuall Appetyte proposes an entertainment to "fet hyther a company, / That ye shall here them syng as swetly / As they were angellys clere" (ll. 1242-44). He proceeds further to introduce

> Another sort
> Of lusty bluddys to make dysport,
> That shall both daunce and spryng,
> And torne clene above the ground
> Wyth fryscas and wyth ganbawdes round,
> That all the hall shall ryng. (ll. 1245-50)

Yngnoraunce supports Humanity's enthusiasm for this dancing and singing by further suggestion that the audience has had enough of the serious stuff:

> So shalt thou best please
> All this whole company.
> For the folyshe arguynge that thou hast had
> With that knave Experiens, that hath made
> All these folke therof wery. (ll. 1296-1300)

He even suggests that the audience are in fact his devotees, for they

> Love pryncypally
> Disportis, as daunsynge, syngynge,
> Toys, tryfuls, laughynge, gestynge:
> For connynge they set not by. (ll. 1303-6)

Again, here there are clear echoes of A's remarks at the opening of the second half of *Fulgens*, where he speaks of "Dyvers toyes" and "tryfyllis" that are impertinent to the action of the play, but which it is nevertheless expedient to include: "For some there be that lokis and gapys / Only for suche tryfles and japys" (Medwall, pt. 2, ll. 23-31).

But Rastell, through the interjection of Sensuality, also seems genuinely to recognise that his audience might indeed welcome a change of gear. And there is some truth in the suggestion that the speeches of Experiens, in particular, however objectively interesting, have indeed gone on too long, especially with regard to the "figure" brought on at the beginning of the action by Studious Desire. This figure seems to have been either a very large map of the world or possibly a large globe. Though it is acknowledged by Nature when it first arrives on stage, he leaves it to be explained by Experiens. The latter leads the audience in a long lesson of what Rastell would call "natural philosophy". The character points out and lists lands local and familiar, as well as distant, and thereby reveals all the countries of the then-known world, including the Americas. He goes on to describe at further length how sea-goers may determine from observation, as they leave the shore, that the earth is round. Finally, if we haven't quite got the point, he gives a demonstration of the roundness of the sea with the help of a globe, a candle and the model of a ship. That the figure is an object both to arouse and, through the explanation, to appease curiosity is undeniable. It is present throughout the play. The late admission that the explanations might have become tedious to a general audience is perhaps to Rastell's credit. Whatever we may choose to make of the mixed education and entertainment of *Four Elements*, the playwright's handling of them reflects a theatrical intelligence at work. Choices have been made in face of a real expected audience, and the results, though perhaps appearing unsubtle and even clumsy to us, are nevertheless illustrative of the perceived interactive nature of performance reflected in these plays.

This interactive quality becomes differently apparent in the later sequences of *Four Elements*. The wonderfully up-beat song of "Tyme to pas wyth goodly sport" is welcomed by Yngnoraunce but criticised with the strange remark that "it is pyte ye had not a mynstrell / For to augment your solas" (ll. 1326-27). Sensuall Appetyte makes light of this deficiency and promises a dance, also without a minstrel. Humanity then turns abruptly to the audience and says "Now have amonge you, by this lyght!", to which Yngnoraunce adds, "That is well sayd, be God almyght. / Make room, syrs, and gyve them place!" (ll. 1332-34). Doubtless the a-capella singing has produced a charming effect in its own terms, and now the performance space has to be enlarged for the subsequent dance. Thus any suggestion that this play might consistently invite belief in an illusionary action can be put to rest here, as the audience is involved in activity quite outside dramatic time, moving about to accommodate the dancing. The climax of this episode of *Four Elements* is the performance of a ribald nonsense song by Yngnoraunce, which serves to carry the element of entertainment into an area of extreme abandon. That this song is interrupted by the re-entrance of Nature, long forgotten, brings a timely reminder of the first purpose of the play. Nature is forthright in his condemnation of such wildness. He makes it clear that while Sensuall Appetyte is a necessary companion for Humanity, excessive self-indulgence leads to folly. A balance needs to be observed between study and moderate relaxation:

> If thou wylt lerne no sciens,
> Nother by study nor experiens,
> I shall the never avaunce,
> But in the worlde thou shalt dure than,
> Dyspysed of every wyse man,
> Lyke this rude best Yngnoraunce. (ll. 1438-43)

At this point, the text comes, unfortunately, to an abrupt end. On the basis of our understanding of morality structures, however, we can easily accept its tendency to return Humanity to the straight and narrow path. It remains possible to argue that the wild shenanigans of dancing and singing show a necessary extremity of disorder within the fictional frame of the play, that is, they fulfil some expectations of a drama. This episode was no doubt hugely entertaining and would have been a high point in the performance. It may even have worked to make Humanity's return to the fold of good sense acceptable to audiences as a final action. But as I have demonstrated, the manner of its occurrence undermines expectations of the kind of dramatic integrity that invites belief and thus persuades us that the late notions of Coleridge do not quite match the nature of this and other early sixteenth-century theatrical events. The same is true of the somewhat overdone seriousness of the "sad mater" that could, on the author's own admission, be left out to advantage. Regularly throughout the piece, the audience is shifted in and out of attention, and therefore in and out of any "belief" in the illusionary consistency of what they see.

This text, like all of those of Rastell, demonstrates the continuing paradox of the theatrical experience. My argument would be that this was manifest in this early period through experimentation with new subject matter and new forms. The process might be said to have begun with *Fulgens and Lucres*. Dealing as it does with a woman's choice in marriage, and having in my view direct links with court matters of the 1510s, it plays fast and loose with the perceived relationship between performers and audience. We are constantly transported between theatrical and real time. Medwall's play achieves a level of consistency and immediacy in spite of such playfulness, whereas Rastell, aspiring to a similar spirit of playfulness, often lacks the assured and deft touch of his predecessor.

In his *Gentleness and Nobility*, for instance, despite the promise of "divers toys and gestis" on the title page, they are slow to materialise and amount in the end to not very much. The figure of the Ploughman certainly relates to the audience in a comic and confrontational way. His horsewhipping of his opponents might astonish, affront or even win the approval of some of them. The departure and return of the Merchant and the Knight towards the end serve also to disturb the process as the Ploughman, in a brief metatheatrical moment, suggests that "For exortacyons, techyng, and prechying, / Gestyng, and raylyng, they mend no thyng" (Rastell, *Gentleness*, ll. 1002-3). The Philosopher who provides the epilogue is similarly interposed between the audience and the action in a way reminiscent of the Messenger in *Four Elements*. Thus the debate form itself offers something between exposition and theatre, and Rastell's own theatrical sense explores the dramatic possibilities offered by it, while perhaps remaining unconfident about its effect.

Only in *Calisto and Melebea*, a moral tale deriving from a Spanish original and the fourth of Rastell's printed plays to survive, is the audience drawn into the action of the play in a way we might recognise. Melebea opens the action with a solo speech in character. In this case the narrative, borrowing largely from its source text, is indeed developed in a believable way. Only through its comic absurdities, rather than deliberate transgressions of the stage time, are the audience distanced from the fiction—that is, until the final moments, when the character of Melebea's father, Danio, steps out of the frame of the action. Like the Philosopher in *Gentleness*, he delivers what one has come to recognise as one of Rastell's characteristic speeches of exposition. Beyond the action of the narrative Danio, directly addresses the audience on the subject of good and responsible upbringing of the young and the making of laws that would encourage this. In these final moments and outside the frame of the source text, the boundaries of illusion are transgressed with what appears to be a moralising addition.

Rastell's innovative approach to theatre in terms of subject is thus revealed in the range and difference of his chosen plays, all secular and all committed to investigation and debate on issues of humanistic concern. He exhibits a consistent desire to use theatre as a proseletysing medium. He seems everywhere to be searching for appropriate styles to achieve this end. He uses familiar morality structures, story, debate, expository speech and farcical excess. But at no point does he seem to engage with problems of reception in terms of an illusion of reality. In light of this, it may be concluded that theatre as manifest in Rastell and his contemporaries certainly did not embrace what appears to be Holbein's agenda for naturalistic representation. This does not mean, however, that contemporaries were not subject to responses tending to belief of a more fundamental kind, as this last unattributed anecdote from the end of the sixteenth century bears witness:

> Certaine players at Exeter, acting upon the stage the tragicall storie of Dr.Faustus the Conjurer; as a certain number of Devils kept every one his circle there, and as Faustus was busie in his magical invocations, on a sudden they were all dasht, every one harkning other in the eare, for they were all persuaded there was one devell too many amongst them; and so after a little pause desired the people to pardon them, they could go no further with this matter; the people also understanding the thing as it was, every man hastened to be first out of doors. (Cited by Chambers, 3: 424)

This encapsulates almost perfectly the paradox inherent in spectatorship at a play. It identifies precisely the interposition of belief, illusion and actuality to which this paper has been addressed. Perhaps it is unsurprising that the devil appears thus to be the agent of such a paradox of reception, representing as he does those very powers of transformation that are the essential province of the actor in performance.

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Over their Heads: Iago, Vices, and "Denotement"

Michael Hattaway
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I was cued to begin this paper by seeing Wilson Milam's 2007 *Othello* at Shakespeare's Globe in London. This is a production that, for me, generated a few fresh insights into a well-known text, rather more into early modern playing conditions. It is also a production that improved. I saw two performances six weeks apart: the company really needed that time to learn how to make the performance areas, the acoustics, and the audiences of the playhouse work for them. Although certain somewhat lack-lustre central performances did not really encourage me to test out my preferred "literary" readings of the text, my reading of the Globe and the theatrical forms possible in that space for me vindicated the whole Sam Wanamaker project: Shakespeare's Globe is *not* simply a theme park contributing to England's heritage industry. In general, this production displaced the comfortable notion that *Othello* registers a move towards realism and domestic tragedy and made me realise how much self-conscious theatricality there is in the play. These performances also confirmed for me that there are two Shakespeares: what Lukas Erne labels the "literary dramatist" and the professional actor-writer. I will, inevitably, and with some help from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much*

Ado about Nothing, try to bring these two figures into a creative relationship one with another.

The screen actor Eamonn Walker played Othello. He was like a proud stiff bear, mastiffed by a swift-thinking and sharp-biting Iago. It was an old-fashioned interpretation in that, for example, there was little exploration of the nature of the desire between Othello and Desdemona, and the hero displayed little theatricality or self-dramatising of the sort that we learned to look for after reading F. R. Leavis' account of the play, and which we would now be inclined to link to our thoughts about race and gender. (There was a nod towards political correctness in that actors of mixed race played Emilia and Bianca: Emilia disdained her white male husband, who, like Cassio, was attracted to a woman of colour, although he detested his black superior officer.) Overall Walker neither possessed charisma nor could really project, but he made a reasonable job of playing a decent man who was all too easily deceived, who believed what he heard and saw.

Indeed, the plot of *Othello* turns upon persuasion and deception, and it is typical of Shakespeare that this text is in fact metatheatrical: narrative topics of deception impinge on the play's form, and offer suggestive hints about playhouse illusion and the roles and activities of spectators. Shakespeare signals such an intention by the deployment of nonce-words or words invested with unfamiliar meanings, words that are concerned with seeing and believing: "supervisor",[1] "probal", "denotement". The hero demands from Iago "ocular proof" of Desdemona's adultery. What he sees and hears, of course, is a staged event within the staged event of the play as a whole. Othello "supervises" and overhears Bianca accusing Cassio of having had the handkerchief from a supposed mistress—whom Othello assumes to be Desdemona (IV.i.141-61). For this duped man, hearing is believing: "reality", the text therefore suggests, is just as problematic as "representation". Truth lies within us, Shakespeare implies, rather than in the world, and belief is likely to be delusional.

Shakespeare had already written a comedy based on this sort of thing, *Much Ado about Nothing*. That word "noting" (the Elizabethan pronunciation of "nothing") resonates beyond the play's title: it connotes the marking, reading, and, as we would say, decoding of reality. The word artfully sidesteps all problems of "belief". Iago, using an interesting neologism,[2] makes this explicit: he says of Othello, he “hath devoted and given up himself to the contemplation, mark, and *denotement* of her parts and graces” (II.iii.287-89, emphasis added). Yes, lovers are perpetually not just passively admiring, but actively “reading” their partners. “Denotement”, cognate with nothing/noting, might be a good word to describe not just Othello’s attention to Desdemona but also our basic experience as theatre audiences. If, like Othello or the mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, we seek from staged events belief rather than “denotement”, confuse a sign for a reality, at best confusion or at worst chaos comes again. Much virtue in “denotement”.

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[1] *OED* notes that this is the first recorded use of the word in this sense.

[2] See *OED*, "denotement".

Recently Andrew Gurr reminded us that Shakespeare’s contemporaries tended to speak of “hearing” a play. That this does *not* seem to be an implicit claim for the ascendancy of the theatre poet over those responsible for the production is evinced by the exchange between Egeus and Theseus towards the end of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*:

> *Egeus.* Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
> Which never laboured in their minds till now,
> And now have toiled their unbreathed memories
> With this same play against your nuptial.
> *Theseus.* And we will *hear* it.
> *Egeus.* No, my noble lord,
> It is not for you. I have *heard* it over,
> And it is *nothing, nothing in the world*,
> Unless you can find sport in their intents
> Extremely stretched, and conned with cruel pain
> To do you service.
> *Theseus.* I will *hear* that play;
> For never anything can be amiss
> When simpleness and duty tender it. (V.i.72-83, emphasis added)

What this may also suggest is that credibility, the capacity to instil audience “belief” through the illusion of well-wrought visual images, is not a prime criterion of excellence: the mechanicals are mocked because *they* think it is. Without being too ingenious, it may be that those synaesthetic jokes—“I see a voice. . . . / To spy an I can hear my Thisbe’s face” (V.i.187-88)—suggest their complete incapacity for any kind of denotement. They cannot “note in the world” because they cannot apprehend the code, let alone comprehend what is coded.

Moreover, other factors, for example the use of music (another form of "noting"), serves to choke off "belief". Instrumentalists were frequently hired in London playhouses, and although it seems they sometimes occupied a "music-room" above the stage (Hattaway, pp. 29-30; Schütz), there is no evidence that they always remained in such designated sites, and may well have shared playing-space with actors. In our *Othello* this certainly happened: the wind instrument scene (III.i) was retained, with the musicians on the stage. Earlier (II.ii) the musicians, playing Elizabethan instruments, had mocked Othello's authority by sounding mocking flourishes as his herald's proclamation was read. In fact there was a kind of merry war between musicians and players: when, at the beginning, the play's herald was acting as playhouse presenter, they cheekily interrupted his request to kill mobile phones by tootling the Vodafone ring-tone. Towards the end, a truce was called and they came onstage to accompany Desdemona after she had begun her song of willow.

What was most significant was the way the production was book-ended by significant appearances by this playhouse band. First, an induction: for five minutes before the production they warmed the audience up, playing cheery ditties to which the audience was encouraged to clap along—this happened also during the interval. At its end, the production acknowledged the tradition of the terminal jig (Hattaway, pp. 67-69). After the bed, with its tragic loading of the bodies of Desdemona, Emilia, and Othello had been drawn off and the play had ended, the instrumentalists played another joyous number. Players taking smaller roles emerged first, and mooched about the stage to the music, the principals came back for what seemed an orthodox bow, but they too joined the dance—Othello only reluctantly. Iago did not dance at all. Perhaps this jig's sanitised grotesque set off the tragic effect. But I read it as a celebration of collaboration and of the company's skills, a reminder that theatrical pleasure is kindled by *representing* the characters in a text and not by *becoming* them. (As we shall see, this distinction is not as clear-cut as is customarily thought.)

Music can bond performers and hearers. There were further analogies to musical art: occasionally a player's delivery of a long speech (in Elizabethan English, a "passion") drew a round of applause as a well-sung aria does in an opera. Overall the company was pleased to have the pace of its performance cued by the audience—a contrast with a wretched performance of Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* that I saw at the same playhouse in 1997, where the *company*, which obviously had no trust in the play, cued the audience to reductive responses to its content, hissing villainy, booing politically incorrect remarks, and sighing with feigned pleasure at what they took to be sentimental passages. At *Othello* I found myself noting the big laughs of the afternoon: sometimes they surprised me, but I could not say that they came from Hamlet's "incapable groundlings", from a reductive view of the text.

Sound effects were also intermittently metatheatrical. A thunder device sounded under Iago's couplet at the end of Act One: "I ha't. It is engendered. Hell and night / Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light" (I.iii.385-86). In a nice piece of invention, melodrama turned to sound-effect, the rumbling continued under the Gentleman's description of the storm, which opens Act Two. A shot from the playhouse cannon scared the playhouse pigeons, and the tolling of the "dreadful bell" (II.iii.168) was obviously tolled not from a tower in "Cyprus" but from the playhouse tower. Signs are perpetually being translated from one function to another.

Reminders of the playhouse company were as unobtrusive as allusions to the playhouse machinery. The actors playing the Duke and Brabantio doubled as servants in the "Cypriot" part of the play. In my fancy, a disguised Brabantio had made his way to Cyprus to keep an eye on his daughter, the Duke was showing remorse for his jocular delivery of "I think this tale would win my daughter, too" (I.iii.170), which had raised a hearty laugh and demolished the effect of Othello's wondrous tales of "disastrous chances" and "moving accidents". At that moment, were we laughing at romantic extravagance, at Othello, or at Walker's performance?

As for properties, torches were prominent in the opening sequences. In the 1930's Jiri Veltrusky, a member of the Prague Linguistic Circle, famously but tendentiously said that "everything on stage is a sign" (p. 84). The fact that the torches actually blazed in broad daylight created a "reality effect" (Barthes), but the fact that they were unnecessary showed that they were indeed signs of night. When, towards the end of the play, Iago came on with his torch, it served a different purpose, proleptically looking forward to, or indexing, Othello's "put out the light" (V.ii.7).

As days drew in, of course, these torches might have become functional: Meg Twycross gives examples of practical lighting in medieval theatre (p. 53), and there is some evidence from Shakespeare's time that, in order to attract more customers, companies began playing so late that lighting would have been necessary by the end of performances (Hattaway, p. 56). Signs become realities. In our Globe production I saw the play in high summer, which meant that the fight between Roderigo and Cassio was totally stylised—in fact it amusingly quoted from the famous Beijing Opera set-piece, *San Chakou* ("Fighting in the Dark").[3] Such devices and much else served as defamiliarisation devices, mingling delight at a sense of actuality with delight in theatrical art.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare writes tellingly about the use of portable properties to enhance characterisation. Quince pronounces:

> one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern and say he comes to *disfigure*, or to *present*, the person of Moonshine. (III.i.57, emphasis added)

"Disfigure" seems to be more than a malapropism for "figure" ("portray"): perhaps Quince is implying that although iconic properties are needed in this instance to complete the sign, these will in fact defeat his desire for illusion. As for "present", I am not certain that it means, as several modern editors consider, "personate" or "represent".[4] Rather I think it means "introduce", its etymological sense, particularly "to introduce at court or to society, or before a sovereign or other distinguished person" (*OED*). If I am right, this meaning deconstructs the familiar binary of *presentation* (in the sense of exhibiting skills) and the *representation* of a character's feelings. The notion implies a double identity, player and character, reminding us of Bertolt Brecht's informing notion of the actor as demonstrator. Yet again, the engendering of illusion or "belief" does not seem to come into it.

However, there are two well-known testimonies to players creating a sense of lifelikeness in early performances of *Othello*. In 1610 Henry Jackson, a member of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, described the accomplishment of the boy member of the King's Men who played Desdemona in a local performance:

> that famous Desdemona killed before before us by her husband, although she [*sic*] always acted her whole part supremely well, yet when she was killed she was even more moving, for when she fell back upon the bed she implored the pity of the spectators by her very face. (Trans. from the Latin and cited in Salgado, ed., p. 30)

The anonymous author of the funeral elegy for Richard Burbage (1619) celebrated the player's ability to become the part he played:

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[3] Similarities have been noted before: see Fei and Sun.

[4] So glossed in Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Brooks, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Holland; see also *Love's Labour's Lost*, V.i.115ff.

> He's gone, and with him what a world are dead,
> Which he reviv'd, to be revivèd so
> No more: young Hamlet, old Hieronimo,
> Kind Lear, the grievèd Moor, and more beside
> That lived in him, have now forever died. (Cited in Wickham, Berry, and Ingram, eds., p. 182)

All one can say is that these are probably rhetorical compliments rather than considered accounts of the processes of theatre.

As for the acting areas, the Globe stage, as in the case of medieval theatre, could be both localised and unlocalised, using the conventions we associate with both *locus* and *platea* (Weimann; Dillon, pp. 4-5, 88-89). *Loci* might be scaffolds permanently in view, occasionally used. In texts like those of *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Magnificence*, the word *platea* is, in stage directions, translated simply as "the place", in the latter case the centre of a hall. In such fields of play actors took part in the games of love or intrigue, of war or flyting. Like members of opposing sports teams they were sometimes badged—wearing costumes or properties that owed more to theatrical convention than to reality. The evil Lorenzo seems to wear a black mask in *The Spanish Tragedy* title-page engraving (Foakes, pp. 104-6). Could Iago have worn a mask like that of Lorenzo?

Most of my thoughts about the Globe *Othello* were generated by two of its aspects: both derived from these complementary uses of theatre space. First, the degree to which Iago acknowledged—and spoke directly to—the audience. The player "presented" Iago. (Of this direct address, more later.) Second, I was struck by the way that the director and designer used the elevation of the Globe stage in an intriguing manner. (The front of the Globe stage is just below head height.[5]) Indeed, a feature of productions at the Globe in the 2007 season was that extensions were built out from the stage into the yard, as if to experiment with and exploit the possibilities of this particular theatrical perspective. For *Othello*, substantial stairs were built into the yard from the middle of the front of the stage and at its two corners. This drew attention to the way the Globe could function in the manner of a medieval place-and-scaffold playhouse (Twycross, pp. 56-65). In the opening sequence Iago stood at the top of the central staircase, over Roderigo, who was half-way down. The foot of each stair was manned by one of the playhouse stewards, but, at least when I was there, they were not called upon to "stitle", marshal the audience, as, it seems, happened in *The Castle of Perseverance*. In *The Merchant of Venice* a canal bridge reached out from the stage, and for *Love's Labour's Lost* two zig-zag walkways, reaching out from the stage almost to the entrances to the yard, made these both entrances into the playhouse and on to the stage.

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[5] Twycross, p. 47, places the height of pageant wagons at from four to five feet.

My reading of their effect, in *Othello* at least, was counter-intuitive: it seemed that these structures were not used to overcome theatrical distance, to bridge an ontological gap between players and audience, but rather, by elevating the players over the heads of the audience, to them make more distinctive. In medieval theatre, of course, it was authority figures, God, Mercy, etc., that had been placed aloft, often appearing as enthroned kings (Twycross, p. 60). This sort of reverence had disappeared by the age of Shakespeare. Moreover, there can be no doubt that modern re-productions of mystery (cycle), miracle (saints' lives), or morality plays cannot build upon an element of fervency among spectators which, we assume, obtained at the time of their first performances. Medieval audiences would have been expecting some sort of theodicy or epiphany. The plays were formulaic: good or holiness always triumphs.

That obviously does not happen in *Othello*: in this Renaissance tragedy there is no antidote to Iago's poison; agency has been wrested from God to man. In the secularised world of *Othello*—there is practically nothing of the supernatural in the play—divine powers have been displaced by men, busy making their own history. Othello is not granted recognition into the order of things, Aristotelian *anagnorisis*, but, as T. S. Eliot pointed out, he simply cheers himself up. This staging made Iago ever more powerful, as he exploited the unstable equilibriums of Venetian society.

Shakespeare insists that even Othello recognises that Iago comes from an emergent secularism: "I look down towards his feet, but that's a fable. / If that thou be'st a devil I cannot kill thee. [*He wounds Iago*]" (V.ii.283-84). Yet there are obviously residues from religious drama, from Vice figures in medieval mysteries and moralities. My first observation is that these must have been read differently according to whether or not they operated on the same level as the audience—either within the "place", in a place-and-scaffold performance like that called for by *The Castle of Perseverance,* or on a low dias in a great hall—or were stationed "aloft" on pageant wagons or booth stages. When Vices entered there are sometimes indications that they pushed their way through audience members. In *Mankind*, which I take to be typical, the entrance of Mischief is essentially an *interruption* of the "talkyng delectable" (l. 65) offered by Mercy. Mischief serves to modulate the *tone* of the play. (Unfortunately, the manuscript page with the entrances of Newguise, Now-a-days, and Nought is missing.) However, Mischief may very well have, like the Wife in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, "come up". In *Hick Scorner*, written for performance in a great hall (Twycross, p. 66), Freewill bursts into an unlocalised playing space, which one assumes was at roughly the same level as that occupied by the spectators.

Entrances would also have a different effect if they were made through the hangings in front of a tiring-house or an outdoor booth-theatre—obviously part of the theatrical machinery, particularly if these were painted cloths—rather than, say, the entrance to a neighbour room in a hall or inn. They could also have been "discovered" by the drawing of these hangings. Meaning and effect would have been further modulated along the spectrum that runs from naturalism to allegory, according to whether or not the play was being performed outdoors or indoors, and whether players wore workaday attire or what Henslowe later designated as "antics' coats" (cited in Rutter, ed., p. 135).

At the Globe, the many entrances through the crowd of groundlings served as short inductions to each of the performances. These did not always simply create "reality effects", encourage the spectators to become more involved with the story or the characters, although some certainly did. Brabantio pushed through the crush in the yard for his audience with the Doge. The stage thus then became temporally a *locus.* He then turned to address the spectators directly, generating an uncomfortable sense that we, together in one place, were being asked to collude in racism.[6] The opening entrance by Iago and Roderigo had been different: they burst through the groundlings in order to occupy the stage, at that moment unlocalised, a *platea*. Roderigo's opening "Tush" seemed a bit like a Vice's preliminary injection "Peace" (Twycross, p. 55), a rhetorical marker addressed to both Iago and the playhouse auditors.

More significantly, however, these scaffolds in the yard of the Globe demonstrated that the audience was an essential part of the process of theatre. One might see this from two perspectives: as metatheatrical moments, reminders to the audience that they too inhabited a stage-play world, or as sign that they were sharing space with the players going to their place of work. As Bernard Beckerman wrote, "The actors did not regard the stage as a place but as a platform from which to project a story" (p. 164). This indeed called for perseverance, as the audience at the Globe can offer rival attractions: someone fainted in the yard at one of the performances I saw and had to be carted out. Meanwhile a Rubensesque young mother stood squarely in front of the middle stair flamboyantly breast-feeding her baby throughout the play. One thought of the poems by W. H. Auden ("Musée des Beaux Arts") and William Carlos Williams ("Landscape with the Fall of Icarus") that celebrate the way in which, in Breughel's famous Icarus painting, a ploughman who occupies the foreground of the picture is quite unfazed by the tragedy of Icarus happening over his shoulder.

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[6] On this see Walker's blog.

The extra scaffolds also, presumably unintentionally, reminded us that, unlike those in modern theatres, not all seats or standing places in the Globe have an unrestricted view or one that provides a frontal perspective on the action—necessary for any illusion or a sense of realism.[7] That Venetian bridge in *The Merchant of Venice*, despite its semiotic intention (memories of the Rialto), created a kind of contradiction, serving to emphasize how much of the playing area served as *platea* rather than *locus*. (It did, however, enable me to see the players—from my box at the side, all too much on the stage itself was obscured by the enormous stage pillar—and the structure was used to excellent effect for "If you prick us, do we not bleed" (III.i.50-51). This bridge was the equivalent of those shots of gondolas that appear in every film of *Othello*: they are there to *authenticate* the film. For me that demonstrates that their directors do not have trust in their own endeavour, and also that they condescend to the audience. Such devices and their equivalents are inappropriate in theatres.

Now Ben Jonson loved to point out that from the yard the spectators were "understanders" in that the players were "over their heads".[8] Jonson did not seek identification between audience and actors but craved a full comprehension, "understanding" of the moral implications of his dramatic action. This is one aspect of dramatic irony. In this production, it seemed to me, a lot of energy came from players trying to make the processes of deception as plain as possible to the audience, while at the same time deferring any full awareness of the consequence of these deceptions. They were exploiting the hope that at the end, as in a morality play, there might be some restitution. In some ways this inverts the usual pattern of dramatic irony. This was particularly striking in the performance of Tim McInnerny, who played Iago, and who is himself a tall man. This Iago, with s or auditors are on the same level.

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[7] Cf. Orgel.

[8] See Jonson, ed. Hattaway, p. 49n.

We might illustrate this distinction by comparing the entrance of Free Will in *Hick Scorner,* written about a century before *Othello*. He surges in, interrupting the Virtues:

> Aware, fellows, and stand a-room!
> How say you, am not I a goodly person?
> I trow you know not such a guest!
> What, sirs! I tell you my name is Free Will;
> I may choose whether I do good or ill,
> But for all that I will do as me list.
> My conditions ye know not, perdie;
> I can fight, chide and be merry.
> Full soon of my company ye would be weary
> And you knew all.
> What, fill the cup and make good cheer! (*Hick Scorner*, ll. 156-66)

Conceivably a drinking song was sung here—compare Iago's "And let me the cannikin clink" (II.iii.59-63)

Free Will and his fellows Imagination and Hick Scorner are incarnations of worldliness and licentiousness, cheerfully going to the Devil. After a wigging from Contemplation and Perseverance, Free Will recognises Pity and suddenly repents and asks for mercy, abandoning Imagination and Hick Scorner. *Hick Scorner* is, of course, a reworking of another morality, *Youth*, written a few months before. There conversion depends upon "grace", a notion not so prominent in the later play. Perhaps we see can see in this the beginnings of a reaction against Augustinian theology, in which grace played such an important role.

Elements of Shakespeare's dramaturgy may be medieval, but the ideology is modern:

> *Roderigo*. What should I do? I confess it is my shame to be so fond, but it is not in my virtue
> to amend it.
> *Iago*. Virtue? A fig! 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens,
> to the which our wills are gardeners, So that if we will plant nettles or sow
> lettuce … the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. (I.iii.311-19)

This is not just a manifesto for festive licentiousness but also a programme for agency, for making things come to pass within the complex webs of a social situation. Iago's agency is proclaimed by his command over both Roderigo and the yard.

Like a Vice, Iago also plays the clown. In *Mankind,* Nought leads New Guise and Nowadays in the fescennine song:

> Yt ys wretyn wyth a colle, yt ys wretyn wyth a colle, …
> He þat schytyth wyth hys hoyll, he þat schytyth wyth hys hoyll, …
> But he wyppe hys ars clen, but he wyppe hys ars clen, …
> On hys breche yt xall be sen, on hys breche yt xall be sen. (ll.335-41)

Some scholar might deem this to be about confession and repentance: the fact that the lines are repeated suggests that the audience, directed from the stage, sang the repetitions in chorus. (I know that the words go nicely to "La danse des canards".[9])

Iago likewise led an onstage chorus in his snatch of song in Act Two, Scene Three: "King Stephen was and but a worthy peer" (II.iii.76-83). (Might Renaissance audiences have joined in?) This is the seventh stanza of a Scottish flyting ballad called "Bell, my wife" or "Tak your auld cloak about thee" (Percy, ed., 1: 191-92). It's about lack of distinction in dress and social equality, and with it Iago conjures anti-establishment sentiments. This also can explain the laugh Tim McInnerny conjured from "it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets / He has done my office" (I.iii.369-70). Here he seemed to be conjuring racist sentiment: the audience was gulled into colluding with the thought that the idea of Emilia, a white woman, being attracted by a black man was absurd.

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[9] Geoff Lester pointed this out to me.

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Mentions légales

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Deceptions: "The Vice" of the Interludes and Iago

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In my paper I would like to interpret the theme of this collection of essays in two ways. In the first place it is possible to address the process of watching a play, which might well be regarded as participating in it, so as to reveal a difference between what is performed and what is perceived. Secondly, by taking a closer look at the Vice in sixteenth-century interludes it is possible to perceive a process and convention of deception which become the main action of many such plays. I hope that by the end of what I have to say these two approaches can be brought together to bear upon one another and so to illuminate in some ways some conditions of stage illusion and experience.

I begin with a few simple principles. There is some ambiguity between what is shown from the dramatist's, actors' and director's point of view, something which in itself is not one entity, and what the audience derive from it. What is derived is also partly, largely perhaps, dependent upon what the audience bring to the performance. This baggage might be seen as personal, and it might be thought cultural. The latter will be a concern in this paper, including, as it does, matters of ethics as well as of belief. It is also apparent that the political contexts play their part in determining how an audience experiences what they see. Nevertheless, there is also a kind of link between intention and derivation, because the makers of plays have to determine what can be taken for granted and what they might be able to get away with, and perhaps also what they want to challenge in the perceived expectations of the audience.

I

I find it desirable to begin with an historical and chronological look at the Vice, outlining through such a narrative the structure upon which I can hang a number of observations relating to how the audience might be able to perceive him and to respond to his theatrical presence.[1]

The name of the Vice emerges in the 1530s in the printed plays of John Heywood and John Bale. If the convention it adumbrates existed before this time we have lost any direct or positive examples of it. It is apparent there were many evil characters in earlier plays, especially the moralities, like Mischief in *Mankind* in the fifteenth century (*c.* 1461) and Fansy and Foly in Skelton's *Magnyfycence* (written *c.* 1518), but I don't think that they exhibit the configuration of characteristics of the Vice sufficiently to suggest that they are palpable examples of it, even though the Vice convention did draw upon some earlier forms of evil behaviour, identification and performance.

In their differing dramatic contexts, Heywood in *A Play of Love* and Bale in *Three Laws* invented or found a word that could be used for one sole character who was active at the centre of their plays. The differences between the two dramatic modes of their plays are, however, distinctive and remarkable. Heywood was writing for the court, or perhaps very near it, using court idioms and resources for performances, and then publishing his plays as part of a process of sustaining his conservative Catholic belief in order to slow up or change Henry VIII's approach to Protestantism. He was probably influenced by Skelton, whose surviving play was printed around 1530 for his father-in-law, John Rastell, but he chose not to write moral allegories, and his dramatic intentions are closer to farce or witty comedy. This mode had near analogues in French farces and sotties, with which he was certainly familiar. Almost certainly Heywood used boy actors for his productions. Bale, a recent convert, was linked with Thomas Cromwell and working in favour of a Protestant ideology, and he performed his plays in the form of touring entertainment, which we happen to know included the house of Archbishop

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[1] The principal studies of the Vice are by Cushman (1900), Withington (1937), Mares (1958) and Spivack (1958).

Cranmer in Canterbury. Conspicuously, they involved doubling, as the printed edition of *Three Laws makes* clear: a process which was primarily aimed at making the actors work as hard and as economically as possible, and one which became standard for most subsequent interludes. The Vice was useful in this particular theatrical configuration as a linchpin of the action and was usually played by the chief actor in the company. This was even possibly the case for Bale himself in *Three Laws*, as the part of Infidelity, the Vice, is doubled with Baleus Prolocutor.

After the 1530s Bale and Heywood were still interested in drama. For example, Bale revised *King Johan,* originally written in about 1536, after 1558 in the early years of Elizabeth's reign, and in doing so he enlarged the part of Sedition, the Vice, preserving also the doubling scheme within the considerable expansions he inserted (Happé, "Sedition"). But others also used the Vice. Among these was the author of *Respublica*, thought to be Nicholas Udall. The play certainly seems to match a school or boys' environment, and the manuscript does use the phrase for Avarice: "the Vice of the plaie". The implication is that the word has a special meaning, and sure enough Avarice exhibits a large number of Vice characteristics and plays a leading role in attempting to defraud the heroine Respublica. This is not exactly an ethical procedure, even if Avarice is by name one of the Seven Deadly Sins: the emphasis, as has been shown, is more upon a political statement against financial corruption (Walker, pp. 163-95).

There are really two significant strands to the development of the interludes from this point. One is the boys/schools context, and the other is drama performed by adult companies. The latter, under patronage, is concerned with earning a living, and it is in these plays that doubling remains a key feature. But that is not to say that boys' plays did not have such schemes, perhaps with the possibility that other companies might undertake production. This commercial aspect is further emphasised by printing the doubling schemes on title pages to make clear that only a small number of actors could conveniently perform the play—even if, in some cases, this is not in effect a workable proposition. Thus the development of the Vice is part of the economics of the acting trade, even if his allegorical names, used more and more frequently between 1550 and 1590, may look like ethical entities. Moreover, writers might well have found such a convention a great help in assembling their plays—for entertainment and for polemical purposes. We should also notice that there are a number plays surviving from these years where the name "the Vice" is not actually used but the performance is clearly in line with the convention and dependent upon its central mechanism.

I have found twenty plays where he is named and a further twenty-three which ought to be included on the grounds of similarity, even though he is not named explicitly: a total of forty-three examples (Happé, "The Vice").

The subject matter of plays using the Vice became very varied, and it is impressive that the Vice was found indispensable in so many varieties. Some examples may illustrate the range. He was used in the tragic interludes, which derived ultimately from classical sources, *Cambises* (Ambidexter), *Horestes* (Revenge) and *Apius and Virginia* (Haphazard); in Ulpian Fulwell's *Like Will to Like*, the subject is a variety of immoral activities surrounding tavern life and fashion in which the Vice is called Newfangle; he is part of the tormenting of the heroines as Ill Report in *Virtuous and Godly Susanna*, and Politic Persuasion in *Patient and Meek Grissell,* two plays about the suffering and ultimate vindication of innocent women; and, finally, in the second revision of John Redford's school comedy, complete with a giant monster, a duel and a beheading, a Vice is inserted by Francis Merbury in his *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom* in the form of Idleness. In many of these plays the Vice is less a tempter than a manifestation of an evil tendency which in the course of the action he encourages to emerge and whose consequences he relishes. But his moral role is often ambiguous, and this is one of the places where he gives us some evidence for the differences between seeing and believing, as in Ambidexter or Courage.

At this point might be useful to recall some of the characteristics of the Vice. A detailed list is too long for full discussion here, but I can offer some broad headings together with a few illustrative details. Among his homiletic features we find alliance with the hero, using persuasive powers, sometimes involving temptation. There follows desertion and mockery of the victim. His significance is often laid out in a soliloquy, and his allegorical import is further communicated by his taking on a physical disguise and by using an alias for himself and his allies. There may be reluctance about giving his name and also a game about forgetting the alias, the effect being to focus more sharply upon it. He may disguise himself, discuss his plans with the audience, commenting upon the progress of his schemes. Sometimes he appears as a comic doctor, a personification which may suggest an association with the folk plays. In pursuit of a moral structure he may be punished at the end, but often punishment runs off him, leaving him ready for more evil deeds. His moral corruption is expressed by boasting, cowardice, money-making, association with drunkards, thieves and pickpockets and often a group of licentious evil abstract characterisations, and also by salacious wooing.

As we shift along a spectrum from his moral significance to his theatrical and entertaining characteristics, we find that the Vice shows a satirical turn of mind attacking the Church, particularly on a sectarian basis. As it happens, because Tudor government was Protestant rather than Catholic, most of his extant satire is anti-Catholic. He also ridicules love, virtue and particularly women. He acts as a general factotum, messenger, executioner, herald and prophet. As an entertainer in words, he is noticeable for his proverbs, his account of a remarkable but incredible journey, nonsense, bits of Latin, songs, logic chopping, oaths and obscenities, slips of the tongue and a general virtuosity and flexibility of language which allows him to be all things to all men. He has some favourite phrases which occur at intervals, including the specific words and phrases *geare*, *policy* and *cock lorell's boat*. These verbal devices are matched by plenty of physical tricks, like jumping about, dancing, quarrelling, sometimes using a wooden sword or dagger, weeping and laughing, often in quick succession. Sometimes he comes on in peculiar costume, which adds much to the stir characteristic of his arrival; and in some plays he famously rode off to hell on the devil's back.

No single Vice could have shown all these characteristics, but I think there is little doubt that his verbal and physical tricks could be readily and conveniently employed by dramatists and perhaps by performers to make greater impact and to offer a means of recognition to the audience. All this leaves out inevitably the possibility of improvisation, which is not easily discernible from this distance in time except for a few interesting hints. At one point Courage, the Vice in George Wapull's *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* is given the following instruction: "And fighteth to prolong the time while Wantonnese maketh her ready" (E3^r). It is a burden and a responsibility at the same time, and it is also an opportunity. In another example, the intention of setting free improvisation seems to be to increase the entertainment to be got out of a comic fight involving a female character: "Here let her (Marian) swinge him (Ambidexter, the Vice) in her broom: she gets him down, and he her down, thus one on top of another make pastime" (*Cambises,* l. 833).

But what actually would the audiences have recognised? A few of these tricks in the circumstances of performance would have put the spectators into what we might call "Vice-mode". But what the Vice offered was entertainment and familiarity in a process not unlike the use of stock characters like Widow Twanky, Humpty Dumpty or Boots in a pantomime. Once they appear, one knows how these characters are going to behave. The very familiarity might take some of the sting out of them, particularly in the light of their pursuit of well-known gags about women, love or priests. Some ingenuity acts as a sauce, and if there is originality in a given performance, it is more likely to be connected with the re-presentation of familiar material, rather than shedding new light in dark corners.

So we might ask how the audience would have approached the Vice, knowing that he was an evil impersonation and yet at the same time appreciating his capacity to entertain them and to contradict his apparent moral significance in all sorts of ways. This would be enhanced by the Vice's ability to belittle himself and make himself ridiculous or his moral teaching quite transparently bogus. We can therefore ask whether the audience believed what they saw in seeing and hearing the Vice. The metatheatrical devices we have noticed, whereby the audience are continually reminded of the theatricality of what they are watching by means of the Vice's self-explanation, are bound to encourage disbelief in his powers. But sometimes his activities are threatening and the outcomes terrible. A case in point is John Pykeryng's *Horestes*, where the very active Vice called Revenge (*alias* Courage) prompts the hero to take revenge for his father's death and his mother's adultery (following the pattern of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*). The dramatist makes the agony of the protagonist serious enough in the arguments before the climax, and there is a violent outcome and one designed to produce a pitiful effect, summed up by the stage direction: "Fling him [Egistus] off the ladder and then let one bring in his mother Clytemnestra, but let her look where Egistus hangs" (l. 804 SD). This dramatic effect, which cannot be other than grim in itself, is, however, framed, circumscribed or even contradicted by the Vice's subsequent behaviour. After the crisis he comes in singing a song about having to find a new master because Horestes has come to regret his actions of revenge. His skittish and inconsequential character is encapsulated in the following stanza, in which we find several of the Vice characteristics noticed above. He starts to talk to Mistress Nan, presumably a member of the audience, or perhaps a planted mute actor, about where he should go:

> To heaven? Or to hell? To pourgatorye? Or Spayne?
> To Venys? To Pourtugaull? Or to the eylles Canarey?
> Nay, stay a whyle! For a myle or twayne
> I wyll go with the I sweare by Saynt Marey.
> Wylt thou have a bote, Nan, over seay the to carey?
> For yf it chaunce for to rayne, as the wethers not harde,
> It may chaunce this trym geare of thine to be marde.
> (ll. 881-87)

I would identify here several Vice traits: nonsense, blasphemy, muddled journey, plain contradiction, male chauvinist mockery of a female member of audience and the use of the keyword "geare". Thus the dramatist hits unmistakably the mode of the Vice's superficial nonsense within a few lines of the terrible scene we have witnessed and one which he obviously meant the audience to take seriously. This juxtaposition is remarkable if the play was indeed performed at court, as has been suggested (Axton, p. 29).

II

But perhaps an even larger aspect of the gap between seeing and believing is the Vice's deception of other characters. Here the maxim works somewhat differently from the method we have been observing, because this time the deception is complete and our study underlines the comprehensive way in which the Vice goes about his business. I should like to discuss this part of the topic by looking more closely at how the Vice influences his victims in two interludes. Both the ones chosen here are specifically called "the Vice": Haphazard in *Apius and Virginia* in the text itself, and Politic Persuasion on the title-page of *Patient and Meek Grissell*.

Haphazard gives a dazzling performance in a play which shows much theatrical ingenuity and a consistent ethical stance. It begins with an extended serious introduction, comprising a learned prologue and an elaborate family scene in which Virginius and his wife and daughter celebrate their mutual love, culminating in a song for the three voices. The Vice's arrival is therefore a theatrical contrast to this happy start, and he comes in with a bravura monologue of some thirty-five lines. He demonstrates that he can appear in many different circumstances, and he does so in a form of speech which has strong rhythmic and auditory effects, chiefly because of alliteration and rhyming tetrameter couplets:

> Yes but what am I; a scholer, or a scholemaster, or els some youth
> A lawyer, a student, or els a countrie cloune,
> A brumman, a baskit maker, or a baker of pies,
> A flesh or a fish monger, or a sower of lies,
> A louse or a louser, a leek or a larke,
> A dreamer, drommell, a fire or a sparke…
> (*Apius and Virginia*, ll. 181-86)

This may seem a bit like the nonsense mentioned above, but it isn't quite so because it implies a truth about his many-sided activities in making people take a chance. The moral basis for this is not in the same order as one of the Deadly Sins, yet it is indeed a risky business, and the play goes on to show how those who follow his persuasion to have a go might or might not prosper: the play, we notice, is designated a "Tragicall Comedie" on the title-page.

The main action, his influence over the lustful judge Apius, is held back while a further preparation takes pace. The Vice now encounters Mansipulus and Mansipula, who are already at variance with one another. Haphazard goads them into fighting with him, and the bout is ended when Mansipula intervenes to save Mansipulus. At this point the Vice sets about persuading the two servants to avoid their responsibility and stay away from their master, to "skive off", in short. He does it by using his own theme: "It is but a hazard and yf you be mist" (l. 171); and so he prevails. Joined by another servant, they all sing a song to celebrate; the Vice is once more left alone to address the audience, and he returns to his chief ethical motif. This time, in taut and lively comic language, he dwells upon an upside-down comedy:

> Haphazard eche state full well that he markes
> If hap the skie fall, we hap may have larkes.
> Well fare ye well now, for better or worse,
> Put hands to your pockets, have minds to your purse.
> (ll. 341-44)

This last line brings in the recurring joke about pickpockets, with whom he has a relationship, working the audience.

After this extended preparation, the dramatist is now ready to proceed to what Ben Jonson would call the *epitasis*, as in *The Magnetic Lady* (I.Cho.7-13), in which Apius enters and reveals his tormented and adulterous desire for Virginia. The mood turns heavily tragic in Senecan fourteeners. Haphazard, ready at hand, offers advice to Apius, who offers reward for access to Virginia. Haphazard wins by telling the judge exactly what to do: the plan is to claim that Virginia is not legitimately Virginius' daughter, and so Apius, distorting justice, would gain possession of her. The Vice's triumph is marked by a dumbshow in which abstract figures called Conscience and Justice "come out of him", from which Apius realizes that he risks the fire eternal (l. 428 SD). Haphazard strikes again, telling Apius that justice is already at fault and that conscience is useless. Apius is overwhelmed, and his words reveal how Haphazard's dominance has control over him: "Hap blunt, hap sharp, hap life, hap death, though Haphazard be of health" (l. 455). It is a line which, fortuitously for my purpose below, anticipates

Iago's "I am your own forever" (III.iii.482). The Vice rejoices again that he has set the world upside down:

> Lerkes shalbe leverets
> And skip to and fro,
> And chourles shalbe codsheads,
> Perhaps and also. (ll. 491–94)

In a further prompt, Haphazard induces Apius to have Claudius arrest Virginius. There follows the climax of the play (the *catastrophe*), in which Apius presents Virginius and Virginia with a tragic dilemma, the outcome of which is her complaisant death at the hands of her father rather than face the dishonour threatened by Apius. The Vice is not present in this long sequence, but he reappears as Apius awaits the outcome of his plot, still unaware of the death of Virginia and still thinking of taking a chance—"Well hap as hap can, or no" (l. 856)—in order to possess her. Haphazard has indeed been on a strange journey, apparently to Caleco (Calcutta?), and in telling the tale he mentions Carnifex, thus injecting a sinister threat to Apius. Virginius reveals his daughter's death, and immediately Justice and Reward come to exact vengeance. As punishment becomes inevitable for Apius, Haphazard now deserts him: "I wyll serve him no longer; the devil him shame" (l. 945). He turns to Reward for some recompense for his success with Apius, commenting that "halfe a loafe is better then nere a whit of bread" (l. 953), but in spite of his optimism he receives a rope and is led off by Virginius to be hanged. His parting shot returns to the pickpocket joke:

> Then come, cosin Cutpurse, come runne haste and follow me;
> Haphazard must hange; come follow the lyverie.
> (ll. 1005–6)

This gallows humour prevents us from taking his death seriously, but he has indeed done much damage by his plot, and Apius was completely taken in by the false hopes Haphazard had offered. Against this, however, we need to recall that Mansipulus and Mansipula got away with it in spite of all risks.

The Vice Politic Persuasion, named on the title-page of John Phillip's *Meek and Patient Grissell*, gives a virtuoso performance for much of the play. The word "politic", in keeping with the related variations on "policy" in other interludes, suggests wicked intentions, and the prevailing feeling about this Vice is his exercise of malice, though he operates in a limited way by intervening only at a few critical points in the narrative. This may be because Phillip has used a good deal of specific narrative detail from his sources in the *Decameron*. He is much less intimately involved with the detail of the play than Haphazard in *Apius and Virginia*, and to that extent the moral allegory underlying the Vice proves to be less productive. Nevertheless this Vice has a number of performing tricks, most of which are verbal rather than physical. He has several soliloquies, in which we see him establishing conventional elements and also informing the audience about his growing sense of achievement. His language includes some of the trademark words, phrases and verbal tricks, like the word "geare" (ll. 896, 956, 1491), "cock lorell's boat" (l. 106), word slips (ll. 209-11, 945), proverbs (ll. 898, 1014, 1166), and oaths (ll. 46, 476, 940, 1590, 1665). He plays with his name, making much of the device of forgetting what it is (ll. 92-100), and he puts on an appropriate face to achieve his ends, in this case "grave, sad and demure" (l. 916). He thrusts in several derogatory comments at times when the main characters are involved in serious emotional experiences, especially in his mockery about women and marriage (ll. 165-69, 209-11, 366-381, 1518). His strange journey is intriguingly muddled up with nonsense. He describes in his opening soliloquy how he has been on a remarkable adventure, riding upon a comic horse from which he had a sudden fall. During this account the classical pantheon, including Venus (milking a cow), Jupiter (eating bread and cheese) and Mars, is mixed up with the Christian heaven, where he has found St Peter's pancakes.

His main object is to test Grissell's patience, but this reading of the *Decameron* story leaves a great deal of initiative with the Marquis Gautier, the protagonist and husband of Grissell. The Vice does prompt him to the main ethical theme, which Politic Persuasion maliciously develops when he decides to upset her happiness: "I will not cease prively her confusion to worke" (l. 897). He does this by setting out to make it difficult for her to remain patient in the face of cruel and arbitrary adversity. But part of the adversity is that Gautier should do much on his own behalf: he carries out the wooing without the Vice, and once he has accepted the Vice's prompt to test his wife he remains in control. The only exception is that it is the Vice who apparently suggests that Gautier should decide to remarry as part of the test, casting Grissell aside, and that he should, outrageously, propose their daughter, whom Grissell believes dead, as the new bride. Politic Persuasion does this by a "secrit geare" (l. 1491), in which he apparently whispers a plan to Gautier, and the audience does not find out the outcome until later. Thus he is at the centre of the manipulation of the plot in accordance with his evil intention, and by a theatrical unheard aside Gautier is seen to follow him. The limitations of the play are further revealed by the absence of supporting detail from any subplot, and his departure well before the final happy resolution of the plot, having, as he boasts, “playd the man” (l. 1666).

These two examples of the Vice may enable us to relate him more closely to he question of how far we engage in belief and how far this engagement is inherent responses to the Vice by the audience. In the first place, we might ask what difference the Vice actually made. Without attempting a history of sixteenth-century drama, one may at least suggest that the phenomena that he was invented, and, once invented, took up such a dominating position in theatrical life, opened up an ambiguity in moral values and facilitated a serious playing with them. This ambiguity promotes the question of whether he was believed or not—by other characters as well as by audiences.

In considering the Vice’s effect, we are faced also with a remarkable performance duality. I have suggested that he is very physical, and indeed he certainly is. But you cannot conceive him without his verbal dexterity and the enormous impact which this enables. Susan Brigden recently remarked of the Protestant revolution: “The reformers sought to replace a religion of seeing as believing by a religion of the Word” (p. 131). In an age of the Word, the Vice is a star player because he played with words. We should make no mistake that some of the issues raised by plays in which the Vice appears were dealing with very serious public matters and were written to bring about political change or remedy. For example, *Respublica*, addressed to Queen Mary, is directed at the legacy of Protestant economic abuse under her late brother and his advisors.

What was achieved, however, was essentially a challenge by theatrical means. The Vice looks, behaves and speaks oddly and is designed to be essentially incredible and yet to command attention. The dramatists propel him to the centre of the stage and the centre of their play worlds. But he is never human, though in saying that I don’t want to dwell upon the much-debated critical question of whether he is a devil. Rather, I suggest that his failure to exact a response as to a human impersonation is a positive effect, since it concentrates attention upon self-conscious performance. He is always implying, “Look at me, at what I am doing and how I am doing and saying it”. Moreover, the plays do not endorse the Vice. They encourage us to separate ourselves from him, but paradoxically they do it partly by engaging us in his activities through skilful theatrical practice. It was a remarkable theatrical achievement, and many dramatists for a generation or more could not deny themselves its advantages; these, as we shall now consider, included Shakespeare.

III

It is apparent that, like Ben Jonson, Shakespeare knew of the Vice convention. Most likely, when Shakespeare arrived in London in the early 1590s, it was still possible to see performances of plays containing the Vice, as in the case of Richard Wilson's *Three Lords*. However, by 1616 in *The Devil is an Ass* Jonson had come to regard him as ridiculously outmoded, something redolent of a now-dead stage practice (I.i.37-38, 40-52, 80-85), whereas Shakespeare seems to have been attracted enough by the convention to make allusion to it and to use it a number of times. The latter is apparently the case with the characterisations of Richard III, as well as of Falstaff. The former identifies himself with the moral Vice Iniquity (*Richard III*, III.i.82), a common name for a Vice, as it is found in *Nice Wanton* (1560) and *King Darius* (1565). Falstaff is described as a "reverend" Vice and a "grey Iniquity" by Prince Hal (*I Henry IV*, II.iv.375-76). Even Hamlet makes a brief reference, calling his uncle a Vice of kings who has stolen the crown (III.iv.88-91), and there is a comic reference in *Twelfth Night* (IV.ii.111-22). But in *Othello* the allusions, which surround the character and actions of Iago, are ostensibly less direct, though there is, as we shall see, one possible reference to the Vice which may hint at significant recognition and exploitation of the role sustained elsewhere by Shakespeare.

Since one of our chief concerns has been to consider performance techniques of the Vice, it is notable that Richard, Falstaff and Iago all have monologues in which they address the audience directly, describing their own characters, and making clear their ethical status, and also giving an indication of what is about to happen as the plot which they are manipulating is unfolded. The effect of these speeches is not always what it seems, in that in spite of some admiration which might be felt for the skill and ingenuity these Vices exhibit, there is also an implied condemnation of what they are doing or planning. This tension between theatrical skill and a moral judgement is entirely characteristic of the Vice convention, and it is my feeling that Shakespeare sought to exploit it—for tragic purposes in *Richard III* and *Othello* but more comically with Falstaff in *Henry IV*.

In the light of what I have said in the earlier part of this essay, I should like now to point out some of the features of Iago's self-presentation, as well as to look at some aspects of his performance as a homiletic showman. A great deal is established in the first scene of *Othello*, in which Iago manipulates Roderigo and in doing so describes himself. It is in this early scene that echoes of the Vice are critical, and give a particular tone to this characterisation and for our purposes. It seems likely that the reverberations of Vice characteristics were in Shakespeare's mind, as he put together the initial impact of this patently evil character. He makes Iago's self-interest quite clear:

> In following him, I follow but myself.
> Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
> But seeming so for my particular end.
> ....
> ......I am not what I am. (I.i.59-61, 66)

Roderigo does not react against this cynical presentation – rather, he goes along with it—but the audience presumably does, no doubt rejecting the sentiment in spite of seeing the skill with which Iago imposes his objectives on Roderigo; and one might also suppose that some anticipation of the behaviour of a Vice would be aroused. Later he says that in spite of his hate for the Moor, "for necessity of present life, / I must show out a flag and sign of love, / Which is indeed but sign" (I.i.154-56). Not only are these signals a means of setting up the character but also they establish some of the ambivalence which is inherent in the Vice. Besides this, in doing so Iago uses Roderigo as a kind of substitute audience: "Now sir, be judge yourself" (I.i.38), inviting complaisance with his objectives.

The self-display is sustained by further direct address to the audience as the situations develop, and this follows a primary Vice characteristic, in that it reinforces his moral significance. It is especially so in the references to his "honesty". Iago uses this word about himself many times, and there is one moment when it is embodied in an aside characteristic of the Vice's linking with the audience and so setting up an ambivalent response:

> [*Aside*] O, you are well tuned now!
> But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,
> As honest as I am. (II.i.191-93)

It is indeed in the use of the motif of "honesty" that Iago comes closest to the allegorical methodology of the Vice. Honesty is naturally a virtue, and we recall that the Vice frequently takes on an alias with a virtuous name, as with Envy as Charity in *Impatient Poverty* and Shift as Knowledge in *Clyomon and Clamides*. There was considerable contemporary stage interest in Honesty as a character and as an oath. "Iago is a knave posing as Honesty, a hunter of knaves", and an oath sworn on the swearer's honesty was a common device for knaves (Jorgensen, pp. 566, 558). True to form, Politic Persuasion, the Vice, swears "by myne honestie" in *Meek and Patient Grissell* (l. 997). But most times when Iago uses the word about himself, or one of the many other characters uses it (Othello, Cassio, Emilia, Desdemona), we come to think of the opposite. Even at the climax of his deception of Othello there is a sort of wordplay:

> *Othello*. Nay stay: thou shouldst be honest.
> *Iago*. I should be wise; for honesty's a fool
> And loses that it works for. (III.iii.382-84)

Iago is, in fact, working for his objectives here, but they are not what Othello thinks they are. There is also a play linking with other abstractions, particularly love: "Pricked to't by foolish honesty and love" (III.iii.413). Picking up on an earlier link—"I protest, in the sincerity of love and honest kindness" (II.iii.297)—he pretends reluctance in telling Othello his suspicions about Cassio: "I humbly do beseech you of your pardon / For too much loving you" (III.iii.214-15). This self-abnegation leads to what is just possibly the clearest indication that Shakespeare is thinking about the dominating moral ambiguity of the old Vice, for Iago says, in this same scene, "O wretched fool, / That lov'st to make thine honesty a Vice!" (III.iii.376-77). If Shakespeare really does mean the Vice here, it is a palpable exploitation of the way in which that conventional character made the most of his own moral status, and here, as in many earlier situations involving the Vice, it is essentially a performative dimension. It is worth noticing that the Folio text, which is thought to derive from a Shakespeare autograph, prints a capital "V" for Vice.

We should be well aware, however, that the suggestion that Shakespeare is using the Vice convention does not mean that this is all he was doing. His objectives in *Othello* were not to produce a didactic moral text aimed at entertaining as a means of teaching the way of salvation characteristic of the Vice interludes. It is rather that Shakespeare uses reverberations from this earlier kind of drama in his own context, which operates rather differently and which is manifestly located in the context of the Renaissance tragic drama created by himself and his contemporaries. The same may be true of performance characteristics. The circumstances for which Shakespeare wrote had changed markedly from those aimed at in the interludes. A case in point, which depends particularly upon the question of motivation, may well be in the soliloquy where Iago refers to the possible reasons for his hatred of Othello. He says:

> I hate the Moor,
> And it is thought abroad, that 'twixt my sheets
> He's done my office. I know not if't be true….
> (I.iii.368-70)

But he avoids saying that he actually believes the story he is adducing here, and we, the audience, do not quite know whether to believe him or not. This feature is perhaps related to whether we react to him as a human being. Near the end, as Roderigo finally receives the blow which is the culmination of Iago's betrayal of him, he calls out, "O damned Iago! O inhuman dog!" (V.i.62). Iago's final silence—not saying anything about why he has acted so wickedly (V.ii.301-2)—again brings into question whether he is human or a devil. (Scragg). If he does have motivation, it remains difficult to fathom, and this may well be a reaction to evil in some human beings. It is clear that most readers and spectators inevitably recognize him as evil, yet the absence of clear motives has left enormous scope for actors and directors who attempt to give him the solidity of human existence (Sanders, pp. 25, 47-49). It is always tempting to see such individuals as not human but participating in some essential evil which is perhaps supernatural, but it is also very close to the allegorical non-human evil of the Vice. In the end the Vice cannot be punished even in those plays where he is executed, as with Ill Report in *Susanna*, who is killed on stage. Distanced from human existence he remains potentially a figure who challenges our search for motives.

The range of performance characteristics embodied in Iago which seem to parallel those of the earlier Vices is considerable. He stage-manages events, as in the eavesdropping scene, though there is some apparent improvisation, and his control of events eventually fails. A feature of this is that the audience are prepared for what is to be shown, and this creates the theatrical situation in which the stage presence of a watcher induces in the audience an awareness of more than one thing at the same time: Iago's clever conversation with Cassio about Bianca is interwoven with Othello's tumultuous apprehension of the supposed infidelity of Desdemona. Similarly, he prophesies the coming disaster: "Hell and night / Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light" (I.iii.385-86).

He also gets involved in singing, a frequent feature of the Vice, in the extended rather bawdy exchange with Desdemona which she characterises as "old fond paradoxes to make fools laugh i'th'alehouse" (II.i.136-37). Both these references have connotations with the tavern, a standard recourse for the Vice and his companions (as with Nichol Newfangle and his associate Tom Tosspot in *Like Will to Like*). Iago's capacity for comic effects is wide-ranging, even if there is a grim undertone. Perhaps the most striking of these is the mockery of Othello as he reduces him to gibberish: "Work on, / My medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught" (IV.i.42-43). He describes offstage circumstances and events which enrich and broaden the audience's perception of what is actually being enacted before them. He makes the audience look, and he also makes them imagine things which don't actually happen but which are part of the trickery he is exhibiting to them.

Nevertheless, by the time we get to Iago the Vice convention had disappeared from the stage and was no longer extensively relied upon. Shakespeare most probably drew upon his earlier experience and also perhaps on the recollections of actors who might have had close encounters with the convention. My suggestion is therefore that he saw something in the inhuman, destructive, clever, immoral figure which could help to pinpoint the enormity of what Iago accomplished and also to locate him as a theatrical figure in the drama of the Moor. Even if the Vice in his heyday embodied in allegory and theatrical performance aspects of the portrayal of evil necessitated by the moral issues in plays before his time—whether moralities or mystery plays—the phenomenal concentration of these features in the Vice convention turned out to be a resource subsequently for a different theatre and culture from that in which he originally flourished.

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Mentions légales

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Speaking of Miracles: Seeing, Believing—and Hearing

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When the rug is pulled out from under by asking, "or is it?", someone of perverse mind might be switched onto a different track and wonder to what extent believing may instead be a matter of hearing. But the question is less frivolous than fraught, extending all the way from the early modern penchant for "hearing" rather than "seeing" a play to Puritan iconoclasm and anti-theatricality, complex questions, however old hat (as in *Hat, The Anti-Christ's Lewd* [Lake and Questier]). They intersect with the broad Reformation principle that, in proportion as God visibly withdraws from the public sector, on stage and off, his Word is privatised. Also lurking is the monstrous question of outward signs in relation to inward essence. When Ben Jonson agreed with the ancient rhetoricians (and a current proverb)—"Language most shows a man: speak, that I may see thee" (Jonson, ed. Donaldson, l. 2049 [p. 574])[1]—he did more than assimilate the visual to the verbal. He also by-passed his own profession, the role-playing and double-talking that he practised on the stage (and no doubt elsewhere[2]), habitually "suit[ing] the action to the word" (Shakespeare, *Ham.*, III.ii.17) precisely so as to conceal or to conjure—or both—"that within which passes show" (I.ii.85). As the case of Hamlet illustrates to perfection (if that is the word), such juggling with essential impressions often plays off, as I have proposed elsewhere (Hillman, esp. pp. 1-34), self-*speaking* means against a self-*effacing* end, the latter lending itself to an eminently optical metaphor: "aphanisis" (fading).

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[1] The famous remark is embedded within a discussion of rhetoric and sandwiched between citations of Quintilian and Cicero; its proverbial character is noted by Donaldson, ed., n. to l. 2049 (p. 752), citing Tilley, S735. See also Herford and Simpson, eds., vol. 11, nn. to ll. 2031-89 (p. 270) and 2031 (p. 271).

[2] See, for instance, the anecdote recorded by Drummond (13.254-58 [p. 601]) regarding Jonson's impersonation of an astrologer; see, for that matter, the *Conversations* with Drummond generally.

Incidentally, it may serve as a cautionary lesson that Jonson, to whom it is fashionable to impute a Catholic-tinged taste for the miraculous, proclaims the contingency of seeing upon hearing. At the same time, one finds the Puritan-leaning George Whetstone, in *A mirour for magestrates of cyties*, invoking at once theatrical and classical authority for what he calls the "sound Reason of Plautus: 'Of more validitie, is the sight of one eye, than the attention of ten eares: for, in that a man seeth, is Assurance, and in that he heareth, may be Error'" (sig. Aiii^r).[3] In fact, Whetstone takes his quotation contrary to context in the finest undergraduate style: Plautus' line is a joke at the speaker's expense involving multiple deceiving appearances, the key one here recalling the lying-in gambit of Mak's wife. No less than Jonson, however, Whetstone had popular wisdom on his side: obviously related to our own keynote proverb is another more fully documented for the period, which actually adapts Plautus in a closer translation: "One eyewitness is better than ten earwitnesses" (Tilley, E274). Taken together, the declarations of Jonson and Whetstone, along with their echoes, both more and less erudite, would seem to diminish the ideological charge.

Thus encouraged, I hope that in such a brief paper I can side-step major spectator sporting events and settle for local glimpses of the games being played here and there. Such glimpses suggest to me that, in broad contrast with the synthesizing impulse of medieval theatre, the Tudor one habitually takes seeing and hearing apart precisely along the axis of believing. Sometimes, too, it puts them together again, and the results can resemble those of someone who tries to fix his own (non-digital) watch, unsure of what all the pieces are for and left with no hope of making the thing tick. (But then the English theatre is notoriously indifferent to the unity of time.)

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[3] The provenance of the citation is *Truculentus* II.vi.8-9: "pluris est oculatus testis unus quam auriti decem; / qui audiunt audita dicunt, qui uident plane sciunt". The speaker is Stratophanes, himself a boastful soldier who is in the process of being tricked by a courtisan into believing that she has had a child by him.

It seems reasonable to presume that miracles, in the drama that serves their cause, should be guaranteed by sight. I take as corroboration the apparent sensitivity on the point shown by the slaying of Abel according to the *Mistère du Viel Testament*. The episode is pertinent because the Bible has Abel's blood crying to the Lord for vengeance, whereupon God addresses himself to Cain. In the English cycles, the crying of the blood seems to attract no special treatment: with the exception of the Wakefield version, to which I will return in a moment, it is simply reported—by God himself in Chester and N. Towne, in York by an interpolated Angel (again, I will come back to this). But the *Mistère* presents a conflicted case. Here the voice is heard, according to a stage direction that actually records the anomaly of having nothing to see: "La Voix du Sang qui crie a Dieu, et ne la voit on point" (Mistère l. 2751SD [vol. 1, pageant 5: "De la mort d'Abel et de la malediction Cayn"]). Immediately, however, sound is processed into sight. The voice appeals to "Justice divine"—"Venez le sang juste venger, / Que voyez ainsi ledanger [*sic*]!" (ll. 2753-54)—and Justice *can* see because she can be seen, since this daughter of God is personified, as throughout the *Mistère* (usually in tandem with Mercy). Justice, in turn, immediately attaches the disembodied voice to a virtual body—"Il est force que je m'encline / A escouter ce messager" (ll. 2756-57). Justice catches God's ear and directs his eye: "Ce sang la n'est point mensonger, / Tu en vois manifeste signe" (ll. 2762-63). Hearing has become seeing in order to warrant believing, all in ten lines or so—lines which also delineate a pivotal role for messengers.

Angels, of course, are messengers by etymological quintessence, and what they say is guaranteed by what they are seen to be. Still, reliability is also broadly built into the theatrical function. Human messengers are no angels, yet their credibility is generally taken for granted from the classical drama on—hence the frequent play between belief and disbelief on the part of those receiving the message. It is standard procedure in neo-Senecan tragedy to have the mere aspect of the messenger communicate his (usually bad) news before he speaks, so that hearing and seeing remain seamlessly joined. In the medieval theatre, angels often, but by no means always, intervene to manifest the divine speech of the Bible: this is the case, for instance, when the command to sacrifice Isaac is passed to Abraham in the *Mistère*, as in the N. Towne, York, and Brome versions, though not in Chester or Towneley.

In any case, taking the divinity at his word is what puts humanity to the test, as spectators were probably reminded, in the absence of an angel, by seeing the speaker on high. The dramatic irony of the medieval drama thus plays out, fittingly, on a cosmic scale, with public and god-head virtually toasting each other ("Here's looking at you . . ."). Such testing is highlighted for Towneley's Abraham when visual confirmation momentarily surfaces as an issue: "Who is that? war! let me se! / I herd oone neven my name" (*Abraham*, ll. 58-59). Yet voice apparently suffices; God need only identify himself and add, "take tent to me" (l. 60), for Abraham to declare obedience, if hardly to banish all human misgivings.

To return to Cain and Abel, normally the voice alone seems to pronounce the concluding curse, although a stage direction in certain Chester manuscripts—"God comminge sayth (minstrelles playe)" (*The Tanners Playe* [play 1], l. 616 SD)—suggests that more objective correlatives were there deployed, and not just for the audience, since Cain seems to recognize God at once. The York cycle is unique in having an angel transmit the curse; indeed, there the interpolation opens a space for comic business (a rarity, since angels are not known for slapstick). As is typical when the English raise Cain, this one exudes the whiff of comic brimstone across a violence at once verbal and physical; here, that violence literally brackets the biblical text—and extends to the angel:

Angelus. God hais sent the his curse downe,
Fro hevyn to hell, *maldictio dei*.
Cayme. Take that thy self, evyn on thy crowne,
Quia non sum custos fratris mei,
To tyne.
Angelus. God hais sent the his malyson,
And inwardly I geve the myne. (*Sacrificium Cayme and Abell* [pageant 7], ll. 86-91)

That last line, I take it, is delivered as an aside, with the angel rubbing a bruised head; the stage-business privileges physicality over theology, seeing over believing, to reinscribe the Cain-Abel-God interaction under the sign of the Three Stooges. At any rate, with the ironic unbelief common in the devil's unwitting henchmen, Cain goes on to bluster back the curse on its unseen originator and to show that what the first murderer believes in is shooting, not only the messenger, but eye-witnesses at large:

The same curse light on thy crowne,
And right so myght it worth and be,
For he that sent that gretyng downe
The devyll myght speyd both hym & the.

Fowll myght thowe fall!
Here is a cankerd company,
Therefore goddes curse light on you all. (ll. 92-98)

Set against such procedures, the Cain of Wakefield emerges as especially interesting. Here alone the character explicitly capitalizes on the absence of seeing to parade, at first, disbelief despite better knowledge; God's first warning falls on ears that are not deaf but defiant:

Whi, who is that hob ouer the wall?
We! who was that that piped so small?
Come go we hens, for parels all;
God is out of hys wit! (*Mactatio Abel*, ll. 297-300)

The subsequent interventions are also by voice alone, to judge from the first exchange:[4]

Deus. Caym, Caym!
Caym. Who is that that callis me?
I am yonder, may thou not se? (ll. 342-43)

The malediction itself, when it comes, provokes the same bluster as in York—"Yei, dele aboute the, for I will none, / Or take it the when I am gone" (*Mactatio Abel*, ll. 356-57)—but there is more room to bluster in, because neither God nor angel appears to Cain. This effect seems linked to his self-projection into despair:

Syn I haue done so mekill syn
That I may not thi mercy wyn,
And thou thus dos me from thi grace,
I shall hyde me fro thi face. (ll. 358-61)

Theologically, Cain's reading appears sound and standard, to judge by other versions—including the absence of Miséricorde to balance Justice in the *Mistère*'s corresponding moment. Yet the impulse to hide from the divine "face" is one thing in the Bible ("a facie tua abscondar" [Gen. 4:14]), another in the theatre, when that face is the more all-seeing because unseen. Insofar as this absent-presence precipitates Cain's present-absence, the staging points to an early effect of aphanisis and the curse becomes that of subjectivity (roughly equivalent anyway in my books).

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[4] So editors agree, to judge from their stage directions.

It is tempting to correlate this negotiation of the self in the unseen face of the Word with the theatrical precocity of the Wakefield Master, who in other respects, too, makes belief a function less of manifestation than of grace-driven hermeneutics: one thinks of the shepherds' discovery, thanks to their charity, of Mak's slice off the old leg of mutton, their spontaneous aspiration to angel-song. The self-condemnation of Cain is no less a conversion—"thou thus dos me from thi grace"—one in which hearing without seeing becomes a positive spur to believing.

It is arguably as much because of as despite the early modern English theatre's reticence about the religious—a reticence eventually enshrined (so to speak) as a legal formality—that the triangular relation among seeing, hearing and believing tends to acquire theatrical self-consciousness. Certainly, in that indispensable point of reference which it is tempting to retitle "A Midsummer's Mise-en-Abyme", we are cued to laugh at Bottom's synesthetic grasping at belief as it fades—"The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen . . ."(Shakespeare, *MND*, V.i.211-12)—a point soon recycled by Pyramus looking in the wall's hole for revelation: "I see a voice! Now will I to the chink, / To spy and I can hear my Thisby's face" (V.i.192-93). But this seeing through a glass not just darkly, but dimly in every *sense*, remains resonantly Pauline, and the joke on Hermia was not so funny when Lysander's voice appeared to light her way in the dark:

> Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
> The ear more quick of apprehension makes;
> Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
> It pays the hearing double recompense. (III.ii.177-80)

The discrepancy between hearing and seeing points her towards disillusion, drawn out when, despite what she sees, she can hardly believe her ears: "You speak not as you think. It cannot be" (191). The cumulative effect of such confusions is to put the joke on us when Puck's invitation precisely not to trust in our sight any more than the lovers could—"Think you have but slumb'red here / While these visions did appear"—is made contingent on his highly suspect word: "Else the Puck a liar call" (V.i.425-26, 434).

If comic containment and meta-theatrical commentary serve as points for taking the pulse of cultural anxiety, there is in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a nearly abstract distillation of this issue, as of others more notoriously fraught (notably patriarchal power). The case provides a window, most immediately, on the inevitability of the question throughout the comic canon. It virtually defines comedy in the period that characters dupe, and are duped by, deceptive appearances, but the attention paid to verbal instability in these processes, hence the installation of a triangular dynamic, should not be (as it were) overlooked. Metadramatic highlighting can help. Jonson's *Epicoene* pivots on the point. *Troilus and Cressida* invites especially close inspection of it: the fusion of what he hears and sees in the Greek camp during the play-within-the-play engineered by Ulysses results for Troilus in an unshakable faith in Cressida's infidelity—the familiar Shakespearean paradox with regard to jealousy. Yet the pageant works, also paradoxically, because it plays into its stage-spectator's hands and confers metatheatrical power on him. When Pandar urges Troilus to listen to what "yond poor girl" says in her letter—"Do you hear, my lord? Do you hear?" (Shakespeare, *Tro.*, V.iii.97, 99)—he conspicuously fails to shake the self-cast lover's hold on a Truth forged from hearing and seeing. The contents remain within Troilus' power to withhold even from the audience: he at once severs "matter from the heart" and witnessed "deeds" from these "Words, words, mere words" (108-12) and consigns her language, as a metonym for Cressida herself, to the changeable wind. The script thus superimposed is obviously a tragic one for all concerned; we read it by the light of the flames of Troy.

To pursue the generic implications, the errors that constitute comedies regularly separate hearing and seeing, while their resolution reunites them in a climactic experience that compels belief. This is to re*cycle* the medievally miraculous. Versions of "If there be truth in sight, you are …" (Shakespeare, *AYI*, V.i.118ff.) regularly deliver the denouement "as you like it". By contrast, tragedy on the early modern English stage indefinitely defers revelation by interposing interpretation—language itself—between seeing and believing: "Is this the promis'd end? … Or image of that horror?" (Shakespeare, *Lr.*, V.iii.265-66). Attempts by the likes of Hieronimo to manufacture revelation, hence to fuse the miraculous and the tragic, may be gauged against this norm. Tragic protagonists on the Elizabethan stage are pervasively defined by their hope of Truth appearing from outside, failing which they slip across language out of their own field of vision: "Here I am Antony / But cannot hold this visible shape" (Shakespeare, *Ant.*, IV.xiii.13-14). Old Hamlet's ghost appears in "such a questionable shape" (Shakespeare, *Ham.*, I.iv.43) as to set in motion a chain of interrogations purporting to fix the value of "the ghost's word" (III.ii.286); and if the latter is pegged at "a thousand pound" (287) in Hamlet's pre-cooked books by the spectacle of the Mousetrap, the Prince does not trust to the dumb-show any more than most playwrights do: he supplies interpretation to guide his missile, even if some of it haywires the guidance system. The play's clearest point about purgatory, surely, is that the condition is highly contagious.

It is arguably, in fact, the norm for tragic protagonists, the more poignantly because it has become theologically impossible and so cannot be put off to the next world. How better to describe the state of unkinged Richard II, who shattered the mirror because its spectacular presence conflicted with his sense of self-absence, and who falls into a version of religious melancholy? Now that he is physically penned within "ragged prison walls" (Shakespeare, *R2*, V.v.21), the master/waster of time assimilated to a dysfunctional time-piece, his thoughts are set ticking to "set the word itself / Against the word" (V.v.13-14). The failure of seeing-as-believing, whose soundtrack was the self-enchanting conjurations of his own voice, now fragments the "word itself" into "an hundred shivers" (IV.i.289).

Faustus, too, if he were not overqualified for salvation (an audience steeped in the older drama would not miss the ironic force of his title "Doctor"), might have had the wit to answer Mephistophilis, "So, this is purgatory, nor am I out of it". He begins where Richard leaves off, setting biblical verses against each other in the void of non-revelation. The point is hard to miss because the fallout of the Middle Ages, theatrical as well as theological, hangs thick in the air. It is arguably the pinnacle of Marlowe's dramatic excesses in various directions that he provides a master of the revels in the form of the Master of Lies and shows Faustus so tied up in quasi-purgatorial verbal (k)nots that he refuses to believe in hell when he sees it. Some have revelation thrust upon them…

Squeezing the verbal out of the spiritual picture was evidently not a durable option for a Protestant theatre—witness Thomas Heywood's rare recuperation of medieval dramatic spectacle in the national religious cause. Part I of *If you know not me, you know no bodie: or, The troubles of Queene Elizabeth* (probably staged in 1604, published in 1605) is remarkably full of dumb-shows, minimally glossed or not at all, while the English Bible as object acquires a transcendent iconic status. (There is really, after all, no other possible candidate for such a function within Protestant ideology.) Its very presence in Elizabeth's chamber gives her jailor Beningfield the Romish hebe-jebes ("*Sanctum Maria* pardon this prophanation of my hart" [Heywood, sig. E3v]) and opens into extraordinary revelation; angels defend the sleeping princess from murderous friars and place the Bible in her hand, opened to a verse calculated to infuse worldly comfort *sola fide*: "*Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, Shall not be confounded*" (sig. E4r). So far the defeat of superstition by Truth can be conducted emblematically: seeing-as-believing sealed by the Word. But the final emblem of Part I, as Elizabeth makes her triumphant entry into her capital as Queen, marks a counter-current of entry into the symbolic order of language. The Mayor presents her with a purse and a Bible, as if the latter's magic ("blisse", in the Queen's words) will rub off on the former, which she associates with "honor", and crown with *jouissance* the ultimate Puritan happy marriage between Grace and Cash Abounding. The Queen kisses the Bible and personally manages the final miraculous display:

> 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. (sig. G4r)

The catch is that this end is a beginning, that it will henceforth be up to each reader of the unclasped bible to work out his salvation with diligence. Richard II and Faustus conspicuously find such "freedom" less than liberating, and it would logically become less so in proportion to one's belief in something that cannot be seen: one's own promised end. Elizabeth's benediction, then, functions unsettlingly like Puck's epilogue. Of course, it is most unlikely that Heywood thought in these terms, but he may not have known what do for the (literally) proverbial encore. Part II of *If You Know Not Me*, which followed hard upon (just a year later), plunges into its celebration of commerce, Englishness, and, centrally, Elizabeth in a radically different style, down-to-earth chronicle devoid of miracle-play technique: there is not a single dumb-show, no spectacular revelation, and as the sea-fight with the Armada is related by a series of messengers, Elizabeth is as dependent on their human, uncertain, and earnest mediation as is the audience. Heywood's experiment in epiphany was a one-time wonder.

By contrast with Heywood, it seems clear that Shakespeare, across the genres, deliberately played on the triangular relation among seeing, hearing, and believing. To the cases already cited we may now add, precisely, that of his messengers. Their status as fallen angels, mediating what they have seen by means of fallible human words, is shown up by the need, when events might seem beyond belief, for visual supplement or special status. The extraordinary blood-shedding of Macbeth requires a "bloody man" (I.ii.1), who "can report, / As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt / The newest state" (1-3), who unites "words" and "wounds": "So well thy words become thee as thy wounds, / They smack of honor both" (43-44). The heroism of Coriolanus would seem incredible, except as Cominius himself will "report it" (I.ix.2), although even the grudging Citizens will be compelled by the sight of his scars "to put our tongues into those wounds and speak for them" (II.iii.6-7). But the ultimate vehicle of self-conscious mediation must be the hapless messenger of Cleopatra, encouraged by vigorous coaching to slant his eye-witness testimony regarding Octavia ("She creeps", "her forehead / As low as she would have it" [*Ant.*, III.iii.19, 33-34]) to earn the Queen's opinion of his "good judgment" (24)—our own, too.

To the extent that one accepts Shakespeare's responsibility for it, the case of Joan de Pucelle testifies to the issue's dramatic interest for him from earliest days. The question boils down to the relation of the character's "voices" to her own words and deeds, given that she presents herself as a messenger of the divine and performs what both sides regard as supernatural feats. That question was precisely the one posed by the historical Jeanne d'Arc from start to finish—and beyond. It was formally considered first at Poitiers, then at her trial under watchful English eyes, and latterly at the deliberations, at which she was not in a position to testify, that produced her rehabilitation. The Shakespearean treatment stands out against the background less of the recognized sources than of the first tragedy on the subject, *L'histoire tragique de la Pucelle de Dom-rémy*, composed in 1580 by the Jesuit Fronton Du Duc in Lorraine. This, too, is a possible source, as I have proposed elsewhere (Fronton Du Duc, ed. Hillman, l. 529, n. 68), but for present purposes the point can rest strictly comparative.

The interest is simply that the French playwright, himself poised between a miracle play tradition and Humanist aspirations, pursued the triangular dynamic throughout so as to weld seeing, hearing, and believing for the audience and thus establish Jeanne's truth as a touchstone for good and evil characters. Naturally, the choric voice of the Prologue invests her divine mission with authority from the start, but the serious business of conflating seeing with hearing begins with the appearance of Saint Michel, the more pointedly because distinctive features call attention to each component. This is no gently persuasive angel but a stern and commanding one, with what she will later call a "threatening voice" (l. 288).

Yet that voice infuses her own with joyous confidence after his departure—a point picked up by the Doctor of Theology to prove divine origin. Her language up to the moment of her capture, when her human faltering requires, and receives, another vision, sustains this infusion of energy through a style at once jaunty and exalted, not least when she vocalizes the Dauphin's secret prayer about his legitimacy, as imparted by the angel, to prove her own. And she poses the challenge of belief in terms, first, of hearing: "don't judge me by my person, small and slight, / But by what I say, in what manner and whose right / I present myself to you" (ll. 422–24). Jeanne's early convert, Jean de Valois, duc d'Alençon (the same historical personage dismissed as "that notorious Machevile" [*1H6*, V.4.74] by Shakespeare's Duke of York—it takes one to know one), notably aligns himself with Ben Jonson and the rhetoricians ("Language most shows a man: speak, that I may see thee"):

> … when I heard
> Her declarations from her own mouth, fluent word
> By word, in terms so naïve, with a look modest
> And firm, a spirit reflective and self-possessed,
> She seemed to me celestial. …
> … How could any fault be found
> At all with those pronouncements of hers, wise and sound?
> Utterance is the true messenger of the soul;
> It is the one true brush that paints our portraits whole.
> For as metals are tested by making them ring,
> Whatever flaw may lie within a human being
> Declares itself through speech; and the stream makes us know
> Unfailingly the source from which it takes its flow.
> (ll. 614–27)

Notably, but not surprisingly: Fronton Du Duc was a professor of rhetoric. As for distinctive seeing, the angel's appearance would doubtless have carried authority from the mystery tradition, and it would be interesting to know what overlap pre-existed with the visual details derived from Jeanne's trial testimony. In any case, Fronton Du Duc once again blends seeing with hearing: "I recognize the voice, the hair, the radiance …" (l. 1666).[5] But another effect stands out: there is some room for ambiguity, but it is highly likely that in the initial vision, uniquely, the boy-actor playing Jeanne wears female clothing. This amounts to a visual refutation of one of the debunking rumours about Jeanne, namely, that she was a male imposter—a rumour the English themselves needed to debunk in order to paint her as a witch (hence the apparently historical detail, not taken up by the play, that the executioner displayed her naked corpse to the crowd before it was consumed by the fire).[6] The play's visual refutation gains impact from the fact that such cross-dressing was far from normal or innocuous in the Jesuit theatre (McCabe, pp. 178-97). (Indeed, the practice would shortly be forbidden.)

It is, of course, Jeanne's martyrdom that confirms her sanctity for Fronton Du Duc (even if formal sainthood would have to wait until the twentieth century), and that experience again unites the visual and the verbal. Jeanne is effectively silenced in court by resolute unbelievers, when her eloquent defence falls on deaf ears ("no defences / Whatever does she adduce" [ll. 2056-57]); she is physically silenced on the scaffold to prevent persuasion ("the hangman, brutal, / Bridled all her mouth with a bit of twisted metal" [ll. 2313-14]). But as she is carted off to execution she makes the onlookers into hearers, moving them to tears with consolations and a request for their prayers: "So many then the words to which her soul gave motion, / That I might sooner number the waves of the ocean" (ll. 1456-57). This is a vulnerably human Messenger speaking, potentially the weakest link in the signifying chain, as is signalled by the momentary failure of language equal to what he has seen: "my voice, all trembling, / Will hardly come; I'm too shaken, words are no good …" (ll. 2262-63). The greater the impact, then, when his voice rebounds as the vehicle of the non-verbally miraculous: the heart unburnt, the dove soaring from the pyre to the heavenly vault. Those miracles are standard, by the way, not only in sympathetic accounts of Jeanne, but in the discourse of contemporary Catholic martyrdom, *mutatis mutilationibus*. They resemble, for instance, those attached to executed priests and recusants in England, where hearts played a special role, being generally cut out of the more-or-less living body and cast into the fire.[7]

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[5] On the account of the hair and the radiance as derived from the judicial records, see Soons, pp. 115-16.

[6] This rumour makes best sense of the reaction of Burgundy in *1H6* when he first hears about the "maid": "Pray God she prove not masculine ere long / If underneath the standard of the French / She carry armor as she hath begun" (II.i.22-24).

The language of sainthood, as applied by the French, of sorcery and witchcraft by the English, maintains the same epistemological framework in *1 Henry VI*. Fronton Du Duc's insistent fusing of seeing, hearing, and believing through their constant interplay throws into relief Shakespeare's deconstructive procedures, but also their curious self-limitation. It would doubtless have been assumed here that the English view is the right one, but the conjuring scene (V.iii), which shows the unequivocal "Fiends", is extraordinarily belated. Moreover, it functions by splitting off Joan's own voice from her "voices", for the fiends frustrate her most fundamentally—indeed, cast adrift her continuing eloquence, which runs right through to her final curse—by refusing to speak: "O, hold me not with silence over-long!" (13). And until that point, what we see and hear of Joan is sufficiently shifting and ambiguous to keep us off-balance. There is plenty of sexual innuendo from all quarters, but the potentially damning sight of her and Charles fleeing Orléans like "loving turtle-doves" (II.ii.30) comes filtred by the blurred night-vision of biassed Burgundy: "as far as I could well discern / For smoke and dusky vapors of the night …" (26-27). Meanwhile, her voice has the capacity to "astonish" with "high terms" (I.ii.93)—and not just the Dolphin, who in this resembles (and possibly echoes) his precursor in Fronton Du Duc ("la sagesse … dont tu nous étonnois" [l. 527]).[8] Her verbal enchantment of Burgundy himself casts such a spell that we may share his doubt—"Either she hath bewitch'd me with her words, / Or nature makes me suddenly relent" (III.iii.58-59)—and it is not necessarily dispelled by her bathetic gloss: "Done like a Frenchman—turn and turn again" (85). Indeed, from the English point of view, Joan actually acquires touchstone status here at Burgundy's ironic expense. For when Bedford accused Charles of consorting with "witches and the help of hell" (V.i.18), the most notorious shape-changer of all was quick to chime in: "Traitors have never other company" (19). Again, it takes one to know one. My immediate point, though, is that the points of the triangle—seeing, hearing, and believing—are taken apart, each turned and turned again before our puzzeled ("Pucelle or puzzel" [I.iv.107]) eyes and ears. Fronton Du Duc's whole world of wonder is fragmented, dispersed—and therefore, paradoxically, allowed to survive subversively against all odds.

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[7] "Regularly, martyrdom accounts state that the hearts of the executed martyrs leaped out of the fire into which they were thrown" (Marotti, p. 87). On the discourse of martyrdom surrounding English Catholics more generally, see Marotti, pp. 66-94, esp. 85-89 ("Signs and Wonders"); Marotti (p. 78) stresses the specifically Catholic preoccupation with miracles and relics at executions.

[8] On the linguistic overlap at this point, see my translation of Fronton Du Duc, p. 173, n. 68.

Of course, I speak of "wonder" advisedly. After twenty years or so of playing various tricks with the triangular balance (or imbalance) of forces across the genres, Shakespeare's evocations of the miraculous in the last plays recuperate a venerable theatrical formula in a self-conscious way, teasing the belief of on- and off-stage spectators by insinuating discrepancy between seeing and hearing, then uniting the two. *The Winter's Tale* provides the outstanding instance, and not just within the stage-managed scene of Paulina, where music accompanies spectacle but speech sets the seal on it ("If she pertain to life, let her speak too" [Shakespeare, *WT*, V.iii.113]). For the audience has been prepared for that spectacular revelation by the withholding of spectacle: the preceding narrated account—in prose, moreover—of the reunion of father and daughter.

The same double perspective conditions the running competition between the choric Gower and the climactic revelations of *Pericles*. Gower himself not only teases with his own approaching redundancy as a speaker ("More a little, and then dumb" [Shakespeare, *Per.*, V.ii.2]) but, inverting the choric procedures of *Henry V* (and in this way as in others throwing down the gauntlet to Jonson), he presents the spectacular as transcendent: "But tidings to the contrary / Are brought your eyes; what need speak I?" (II.Cho.14-15). Marina, for her part, supplies the first reunion with a musical prelude to the music of the spheres. The second insistently merges seeing and hearing as the basis for belief: "Voice and favour! / You are, you are—O royal Pericles!" (V.iii.13-14); "Are you not Pericles? Like him you spake, / Like him you are" (32-33); "The voice of dead Thaisa!" (34).

Cymbeline, *The Tempest*, and indeed *Henry VIII* provide what might be termed mannerist versions of such a convergence—collocation remade dislocation. The silly glosses of *Cymbeline*'s Soothsayer—a highly qualified professional in the believing department—stumble after the Word divinely deposited on Posthumus' breast. This amounts to a reprise of Heywood's fusion of angel and book, but it scoffs at fallen exegesis. This is perhaps possible because the ultimate revelation is waiting in the historical wings. In *The Tempest* the management of visual and verbal techniques to induce belief is effected by a meta-theatrical magician, not always smoothly, and there is no more effective index of the artifices we and others are asked to believe—the shipwreck, for starters—than the synthetic seal of approval applied by gullible Gonzalo: "set it down / With gold on lasting pillars …" (Shakespeare, *Tmp.*, V.i.208)—words made visible, but only in his imagination.

As for *Henry VIII*, there is a conspicuous failure to harness what we hear and what we see at successive moments of tragic downfall—of Buckingham, of Wolsey, prolix in praise of their King—and throughout the latter's dealings with Katherine and Anne. These discrepancies are set off against Katherine's vision of blessed spirits, which compels belief along both axes. By the time the audience arrives, by this tortuous route, at the purported climax, with Cranmer's conjuring prophecy, it is well prepared to recognize deficiency in what is actually seen. "Thou speakest wonders", announces Henry (Shakespeare [and Fletcher], *H8*, V.iv.55), in the style of Fronton Du Duc's Citizen: "You recount me things that are truly marvellous" (Fronton Du Duc, l. 2361). But the latter "things" flow from others seen, heard, and believed, the supernatural naturalized. Cranmer is a messenger from places swarming with controversy, political and religious. His baptismal prophecy risks drowning with court holy water "This royal infant … in her cradle" (Shakespeare [and Fletcher], *H8*, V.iv.17-18)—*nobody* made visible, neither Mak's parodic Easter dinner nor any Elizabeth we know. Protesting so much will not convince that *All Is True*, if the dumb-show is out of synch. We are being asked to swallow—sight unseen, *sola fide*—a virtual wafer-cake resistant to trans- or any other substantiation. Across our theatrical memories, now, the rug is being pulled out from under ("When You See Me, You Know Me"—or do you?) and we risk having equivocation thrust upon us: "If you know not me, you know nobody". For as another Touchstone observes in a somewhat different context, wittily if unwittingly infusing the "If"'s to come ("If there be truth in sight …") with a Machiavellian trace, "Your If is the only peacemaker; much virtue [*virtù*?] in If" (Shakespeare, *AYL*, V.iv.103-4).

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Elements of a Persuasion Strategy in the English Cycles and Early Moral Plays

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The very existence of the theatre of persuasion which medieval and post-medieval English drama undoubtedly is, to a large extent, might be invoked as evidence equally for or against the rhetorical statement in the title of this collection. I am not aware that critics at large have ever radically antagonized the notion that the cycle plays or early moral plays that have come down to us had for their prime objective to persuade their audiences of the truth of some central tenets of the Christian faith. Yet, more surprisingly, maybe, rare indeed, to my knowledge, have been critical attempts to show *how* these plays may have succeeded in such an enterprise. Armed with too little expertise and within the cramped ambit of an article, I certainly cannot claim to fill the gap but will simply provide a few suggestions likely to develop one day into the sketch of an approach.

For the cycles, I shall borrow my illustrations from the extant plays or surviving remnants, whereas for the early moralities instances will come from *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Mankind*, and lastly from the existing miracle play, the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, whose issues particularly fit the present topic. As to the few references to interludes of the 1500-25 period, they are essentially meant to show that some of the techniques described undergo little change in the interval.

I. Play-area Characteristics and the Blurring of Limits between Play-World and Spectator

Because it frames the whole strategy of ideological persuasion attempted in the medieval plays, I shall begin by investigating the apparently extraneous topic of the play-areas in which that theatre was staged (cycles and moralities, as well as the first interludes down to the 1530s). For the categories of Christian drama, these are, on the one hand, the medieval street or marketplace, with their various stationary or processional forms of performance, and, on the other, the perhaps rarer but just as efficient staging format called "place-and-scaffold or "arena staging". I will then pass on to the apparently standard form of staging the interludes between the 1470s and the 1530s in private or public halls.

To begin with, I wish to highlight the physical and emotional proximity ensured between the play-world space and the world of audience and public life. Turning first to the cycle plays, I shall make an initial point about the world-famous stage direction from the *Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors* at Coventry: "*here Erode ragis in the pagond and in the street also"* (l. 783).

This, too often regarded as a case of purely spatial intrusion of the play-world onto the ordinary world of public life, hides in fact an overwhelmingly emotional violation and ideological stamping down of the spectator's world by the dominant values of the fiction. The physical intrusion of King Herod upon the public space and his unresisted breach of the usual frontier-taboo between "in-play" and "out-of-play" take on deeper significance when one considers the context of the episode; it is framed at first by the arrival of Nuncios, the Messenger, bringing the news, so damaging to Herod's reputation, of the Three Kings' "flight":

> Hayle, kynge, most worthist in wede!
> Hayle, manteinar of curtese throgh all this world wyde!
> Hayle, the most mightiest that eyuer bestrod a stede!
> Hayle, most monfullist mon in armor man to abyde!
> Hayle in thyne hoonowre!
> Thesse iij kyngis that forthe were sent,
> And shulde haue cum ageyne before the here present,
> Another way, lorde, whom the went,
> Contrare to thyn honowre. (ll. 768-76)

Then comes the outcry of Herod's soldiers, who spontaneously refuse to perpetrate the Massacre of the Innocents which Herod has just decreed (ll. 793-800) in an outburst of anger:

> *Myles.* My lorde, kyng Erode be name,
> Thy wordis agenst my wyll schalbe;
> To see soo many yong chylder dy ys schame,
> Therefore consell ther-to gettis thou non of me. (ll. 793-96)

This further explodes the image of Herod as head of a civilised state and turns his brutal violation of the theatrical rule into a fitting analogue of his incensed barbarity, which exceeds even the rough disposition of his soldiers.

Similarly, at moments of dramatic tension, some characters, when seriously involved in the issue of the episode, will not hesitate to shatter the conventional limit severing them from the audience to exchange in the mode of direct or indirect address. Thus Joseph in the same pageant, in a fit of resentment at the apparent unfaithfulness of his young wife, gives the following advice:

> *Josoff.* All olde men, insampull take by me,
> How I am begylid here may you see!
> To wed soo yong a child. (ll. 133-35)

Again, in the Coventry *Pageant of the Weavers*, Joseph, a tired old man unwilling to start again on his journey with Mary, complains to the audience three times over of the difficulty of being married to a young wife (ll. 463-70, 483-90, 565-72).

Yet contaminations of one world by the other far exceed such occasional outbursts of emotional complicity between character and audience. At a much more continuous level, a connivance which is intellectual rather than purely emotional is created in ways and to effects which I will now discuss.

As is well known, the episodes selected by the authors-revampers of the extant plays offer an alternation of scenes set in the world of ancient Palestine with a sequence of supernatural views of our universe and destiny suggested by the Christian myth. Alternating the depiction of natural realities on this side of death and vistas of the mythic story of man's life according to the fundamentals of the Christian faith invites the spectator to constantly travel between two levels of reality and adjust by turns to widely different spatial and chronological conditions, as well as to characters whose status ranges from the quasi-historical (Herod the Great, Joseph of Bethany or sundry shepherds) to myth-oriented figures like Adam and Eve, Noah, the Prophets and so on. Thus hovering over the two categories of the terrestrial and the sacred, the fiction is, by some delicate anastomosis, surgically cross-connected to the audience's native time and space, its cultural reality easily straddling Judea (or Galilee) and East Anglia (or Cornwall). In reaction to the naive scientism of such critics as Marius Sépet and Petit de Julleville, who would charge the playwrights with ignorant inconsequence, later critics, in approaches culminating in the epoch-making re-reading of V. A. Kolvé (*The Play Called Corpus Christi*) argued that such spatial and time combinations served the catechetic purpose of the plays, providing an apt picture of what Hardin Craig, after Thomas Aquinas and Boethius, defines as "vertical time" (p. 16)—an a-chronic, a-topical figure of eternity.[1] If Kolvé's view rightly highlights the doctrinal role of the plays, it does not minimize the basic fact that these plays, customized to the cultural tastes and needs of their audiences, aim at making them equally conscious of the figural dimension of the message and of the daily reality around them. Figurally-oriented intimations of "vertical time" in the plays will therefore be found here and there, as when (in *The Pageant of the Weavers* at Coventry once again) young Jesus, being presented in the temple, replies to the Third Doctor, who enquires about his identity:

> *Doctor III*. Whense cam thys chylde, I marvell soore,
> Thatt speykyth to vs this mystecawlly?
> *Jesus*. Surs, I wasse all you before
> And aftur you agen schal be. (ll. 922-25)

In contradistinction, such intimations are balanced by various tricks meant to shorten the spectacular distance between play and audience. Even the casual reader of the cycles will need no reminder of the almost constant presence in the various episodes of the common run of a humanity strongly smacking of fifteenth-century England. Additionally, the actors impersonating the figures in the drama are clad in contemporary attire, which visually enforces a sense of historical proximity and topical confusion. Further to this, in the case of the cycle plays, at York or Chester, for instance, the local management of the feast provided that some major roles were possibly played by local guild members or citizens, which may further have fuelled a sense of near-identity between local reality and the mythical story. Another well-known and telling device will be found in the almost constant wording of the various town or guild-accounts carefully equating the actor and the character represented.[2] If these various devices do feed a sense of familiar proximity, a much more fundamental feature of paradigmatic importance continuously fashions the audience and play relationship. It is Kolvé again who, among others, evokes it as a major factor in the way the medieval and proto-modern theatrical code operates, highlighting the fact that the potency of convention and playing style continuously keeps audiences, emotionally and notionally involved as they may be, *aware of the spectacle being a performance*. An instance in point is the close connection established in the Towneley Plays (Nos. 22, 23, 24, respectively named *Scourging*, *Crucifixion*, and *Play of the Dice*), between the most dramatic moments of the Passion and Death of Christ and the notion of playing a game. Beyond branding the torture inflicted upon Christ as an irresponsible monstrosity, this serves effectively to place the torturers' crime *somewhere in-between* the historical/mythical event and its ritualistic re-enactment, effectively demanding a response in equivalent terms from the audience (Kolvé, pp. 181-83).

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[1] For a new presentation and rewording of the concept for twentieth-century audiences, see Philippe.

The essential thing here is to realise how the spectator born and bred in such a tradition is steadily invited to take what is shown him/her as a pretence deliberately created for him/her by the scenic object, while keeping in mind the collateral knowledge that a spiritual reality of superior truth is signified *(*i.e., *at once concealed and revealed)* by the theatrical sign contemplated. Such a transparent reading of two meanings in one sign must really be the essence of theatrical perception in such a tradition, one able to reconcile pretence and belief as two antithetic but closely interdependent moments of mimetic reception and spectacular pleasure.[3] Such a tension, manifest in the frequent ironic returns of the word "peasse" (which opens play 23) is at the core of these plays. It keeps alive in the spectator the dual consciousness of the actual sense and weight of the events enacted and, at the same time, of the show being performed. It should rightly, in the strict etymological sense of the word, be referred to as "*illusio*" (or immersion in the "*ludus*"). But in this age of ours, when theatre is strictly conceived as reflecting unsubstantial images of the outward phenomenal world (i.e., what is now regarded as reality), the notion of theatrical illusion is reduced to the faked duplication on stage of the outer world's phenomenal forms and objects, a bogus fabrication of artificial appearances. In her brilliant if slightly petulant libel against Aristotle's professedly deadly influence upon the theatre of the Western World, Florence Dupont ascribes to the spirit of the Enlightenment the total reversal of meaning which the term "illusion" has suffered, as well as its radical impoverishment following the amputation of its former duplicitous depth which leaves it crippled beyond reclaim.[4]

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[2] For evidence that this was common also at performances of French Passions, see Bordier, quoting Michel Menot, who reports an apparently frequent experience: "O ille qui ludebat sanctum Martinum, c'est ung mauvais garçon; et ille qui rex apparebat, c'estoit ung savetier" (Bordier, p. 71n43).

[3] On identifying this moment of dual consciousness in reception, I provisionally, for want of a better term, called it "theatrical diaphora" ("Culture et théâtre", pp. 581-668). I did not know at the time that the phenomenon had been described, though not named, by Honzl, p. 123.

Turning now to the later forms of staging, used for interludes played in private or public halls, we find that the question at stake (that is, the relationship between audience and play-area) has not fundamentally altered. For one thing, the design of the hall is such, and the relative positions of play-area and public so nearly comparable to those in use for cycle plays and moralities, that the same capacity for close relationship between play and audience remains largely unaltered. Actually, the contiguity is such, and the dividing line between players and hearers so uncertain—effects no doubt augmented by poor lighting—that the precise perimeter of the fictional world may remain very loosely defined. The first 185 lines of Medwall's play *Fulgens and Lucres* evidently rely on such an uncertainty to accommodate the two pseudo-characters, A and B, between fiction and audience. The two fellows who first stroll, uninvited, among the public, gradually join the audience and become active listeners. Later on, achieving a theatrical putsch, they intrude upon the play, one after the other and, actively joining the cast, attempt to waylay the plot to their own profit. *Mutatis mutandis*, about the same thing happens in John Heywood's *Play of the Weather*, the interceding character and prospective Vice-figure taking pride of place from the first, whereas the real centre of action, Jupiter, the figure of authority, is pushed aside behind the back curtain. It is nearly certain that the hegemonic theatrical dominance exercised over the play-area by the leading character(s) keeps up much of the confidential exchange between public and fiction, replacing the ideological linkage hitherto ensured by the Christian fiction. But it is also probable that, though drastically different and curtailed of its mythical attraction, the largely socio-political narrative artfully echoing the present local situation in both plays was responsible for welding together, around a new ensemble of "commonalty" values, the assembly gathered in the hall at and around the festive tables.

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[4] See Dupont, pp. 84-152. To her substantial argument, one could, in a totally different perspective, add the remark (usually invoked in defence of the medieval religious theatre and paradoxically strengthened by the Wycliffite pamphlet *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleying*) that this kind of illusion illustrates the neo-platonic argument that such an "art du faux" in fact is "le miroir du vrai", as Bordier excellently summarizes it (pp. 60-79).

I am aware that I may seem to be insisting unduly on the structural relationship between play-area and audience, and on the various devices emphasizing mental proximity between the play-world and the audience's immediate reality. But the correct triggering and upkeep of the code at work, built as it was on the spectator's consciousness as divided in a sustained way between in-play and out-of-play, surely went hand-in-hand with the need to keep a careful balance between a physical intimacy with the show and the antagonistic limitation of emotional involvement in the events presented. Such a balance, I would finally suggest, owes more than has been critically recognised to the layout of the play-area. In my next section, I shall argue that it owes a lot equally to the inner clockworks of the dramatic piece enacted, and I will concentrate upon an element of special interest in that respect: the category of characters who act as mediators between play and audience and whose study has long been neglected.[5] Among such a numerous and varied lot I will select some of the characters who play an essential part in securing (or attempting to secure) the audience's belief in the enactment.

II. The Doubting Twin as Mediator in the Belief Process

I shall concentrate on an apparently minor figure to which critical attention has (to the best of my knowledge) seldom been accorded: that of the reluctant witness as intercessor in the reception process. Certainly, several critical studies have addressed the nature and role of ideologically important characters in the cycle plays, as well as in the moral plays. Yet, most of these seem to have concentrated on the function of the "expositors", the choric figures who, at the close or the outset of some episodes, will comment on the Christian tenets which the plays propose to illustrate. In that respect, the work of Anne C. Gay, M. P. Forrest and Lawrence G. Craddock has proved especially helpful.[6] Yet surprisingly few efforts have been devoted to commenting on and illustrating the function in the cycles and the moral plays of a category of characters who, at the most sensitive moments of doctrinally capital episodes, will suddenly disclose a striking capacity to fathom the innermost meaning of the tenets at stake and, as members of a misbelieving or doubting community, use a sudden wildfire persuasive authority, actively inducing other characters to an on-the-spot conversion. Whatever their origin or status, analysis shows that they belong to the same functional category. This function might be defined as that of the reluctant follower or active doubter, whose classic trajectory goes from initial rejection of any faith in the tenets discussed to a lucid testimonial recognition of their inner worth and a fervent display of moral authority leading others to conversion. To name just a few of the characters belonging to that functional category, Noah's wife is one of the early sketches of the figure in the Chester cycle and the other extant texts. Old Simeon in the Chester cycle, play 11, and in the Coventry Pageant of the Weavers, or Joseph in at least three different nativity episodes, and one of the two midwives both in the Chester Navitity and in the N-Town play, are vivid reworkings of such a figure. Above them all, however, both in the plays and in the evangelic sources, Thomas, one of the eleven disciples, possibly stands as the archetype of the most effective witness, doubter and converter. There seems to be even today a continued importance in the apologetic tradition of a very ancient legendary trend relating to the otherwise minor Thomas figure, giving him pride of place as Jesus' twin, whose capital role is to reflect the inner significance of the Master's teaching, first stressing its discrepancy vis-à-vis human values, but finally bridging the gap between the essence of the divine lesson and its acceptance by his fellow humans.[7] If the figure of the doubter plays an important role in *The Play of the Sacrament,* or in Morality plays like *Mankind*, it is possibly in the cycles that his mediating function is made most spectacular.

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[5] For a recognition of the functional importance of the intercessor or mediating character in late medieval and Early Renaissance English theatre, see Lascombes, "Culture et théâtre", pp. 606-32). See also Débax, *passim*, who has further used and amply developed the concept into a rich functional typology.

[6] I have not yet been able to consult the M.A. Dissertation of D. R. Jenkins (Cardiff University, 1960), promisingly entitled, "The Antagonist, the Nature and Function of Oppositive Characters

It should be noted at first that such characters intervene during episodes and at moments concerned with the incredible breach (by a divine puissance that actually verges upon lawlessness) of the ordinary laws of human life, such as those of human sexual procreation, the irreversibility of death, or the stability of the nature of objects. The first irruption of divine lawlessness in the mythical sequence occurs when God, angry and disappointed by mankind's conduct after its creation, decides to send His son as its redeemer, thereby giving rise to

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in Medieval Religious Drama".

[7] See Kuntzmann, chap. 2 ("La tradition de Thomas le didyme"), and his conclusions, p. 182.

the myth of virginal nativity, which is abundantly illustrated in the episodes selected by the various cycles (York plays, nos. 12-14; Chester plays, nos. 6-9, plus 11; N-Town plays, nos. 9-16).

I shall, for my first sampling, quote from the sixth Chester play, called "The Annunciation and the Nativity", a 722-line play made up of a sequel of independent episodes linked together by the theme of Christ's Nativity.[8] This takes us to the climactic moment of the divine child's birth (ll. 461-547), the key moment I intend to comment on. When Mary's time has come, Joseph gets out to fetch two midwives, Tebell and Salome, to assist her (ll. 469-508), but it turns out that the child is born when they return and the Star shines up over the event. Whereas Joseph and Tebell join in Mary's praise of God's glorious power, Tebell, a specialist in childbirth, marvels that it was achieved "without teen or travailinge" (l. 527). Moreover, her partner, Salome, playing the sceptic, raises the technical objections of worldly science and demands proof of some non-human interference:

> Be styll, Tebell, I thee praye,
> For that is false, in good faye.
> Was neuer woman clean maye,
> And chyld withowt man. (Il. 533-36)

And a stage direction at line 540, which reads, "*Tunc Salome tentabit tangere Mariam in sexu secreto, et statim arentur manus eius, et clamando dixit*", indicates the reason for her subsequent outburst:

> Alas, alas, alas, alas,
> Me ys betide an evyll case!
> My hands bee dryed up in this place,
> That feelinge none have I. (ll. 540-43)

It is important to note that the spectacular pragmatics of the withering hands takes place first, preceding the frightened exclamation of Salome. This highlights the visual event, which is thus made perceptible by everyone (ll. 540-47).

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[8] As in the source, Chester play 6 begins with the Annunciation. Then it quickly passes on to Mary's visit to Elizabeth (ll. 50-122) and to Joseph's fit of jealousy on discovering his young wife's pregnancy (ll. 123-60). When God's angel has briefly comforted Joseph (ll. 161-76), the scene broadens out and stages Octavianus' concern that Jesus' impending birth threatens his worldly power (ll. 177-388). And after a brief account of the Holy Family's flight to Bethlehem, the play tackles the climactic moment of the Nativity proper (ll. 389-553), the key moment I shall comment on.

It also triggers a succession of events which further emphasize the miraculous event, the first one purely visual, whereas the next ones are linguistic. At line 547, a stage direction says, "*Tunc apparet stella et veniet Angelus, dicens ut sequitur*", and the Angel's words are as follows: "Womann, beseech this childe of grace / That he forgive thee thy trespass" (ll. 548-49). Salome then asks mercy from the child God, and her hand is instantly made whole again (ll. 556-63), which should, in itself, be enough to conclude the episode. But with surprising insistence, an Expositor intrudes, commenting on this feat of God's power and adding other miraculous instances of divine intervention (ll. 564-643). This lesson is immediately followed by the return of Sibilla, who proclaims the same to Octavianus, the Roman ruler (ll. 644-98), plus the final return of the Expositor, who addresses the audience so as to instil the lesson in their minds (ll. 699-722). The amount of insistence put here on the lesson and significance of the event is a dubious sign, surely betraying the fear that local audiences might be hard to persuade.

This degree of concern to persuade and convert is further suggested by the fact that the same cycle returns to the topic in a subsequent play, this time in a much more sober mode and through a different compound of emotional and intellective argument. Let us briefly review the passage *De Purificatione Beatae Virginis* (ll. 1-118) which opens play 11 *The Blacksmithes Playe*. This time the doubting figure does not defend scientific materialism, like Salome, but he is an oldish priest. A faithful servant of the pre-Christian religion, in his own terms, his first words show him, if aware of the old sayings of the prophets, perfectly unable to conceive or admit anything like the absolute power of the new God and therefore any breach in the existing order of things. Earnestly as he looks forward to the announced coming of Christ, the prophetic wording in Luke leaves him totally incredulous—hence, his thrice-repeated attempt to correct Luke's "*Ecce virgo concipiet et paret filium etc.*". As in the previous episode, an angel finally intrudes upon the scene to make God's will clear even to the old fool. He then instantly submits to the extraordinary truth thus superimposed upon him, while the old widow, obviously standing as antagonist and witness, speaks in favour of a quiet submission to God's power in tones of quiet triumph. Here, as in the previous situation, the same opposition obtains between, on the one hand, a tolerant acknowledgement of the limits of man's understanding, which entails graceful submission to a superior will, and, on the other, the useless resistance represented by the rational exercise of human volition. Each time the violence of God's power, represented by supernatural signs such as the angel's intrusion and his clearly supernatural message, forces the antagonism to an ending. One can see at this point why the debate is so fierce and the spectacular demonstration so radical, involving supernatural means and an absolute surrender on man's side. We shall find a final instance of this in one of the very few miracle plays which has come down to us in English, *The Play of the Sacrament.*

It is another moot point of doctrine which is at stake here, the bitterly disputed notion of transubstantiation. The play picks up the theme at a time when the demands of rational understanding in Northern Europe coincide with the additional threat posed to European Christianity and its economic dominance by the cultural and military presence on the margins of Europe of both Arabic and Jewish communities. Hence, from the time of the Ottoman successes in the mid-fifteenth century, the figure of the wealthy enterprising Jew duplicates that of the dangerous Turkish soldier. As is well known, this is the way the pattern works in *The Play of the Sacrament*. The Jewish hero Jonathas buys from his Christian counterpart, the merchant Aristorius, a consecrated host pilfered at night from a church, intent as he is on testing whether the doctrine of transubstantiation is valid. When Jonathas and the Jews start inflicting upon the host a precise replica of the Passion suffered by Christ, the host bleeds profusely, involving Jonathas and his four acolytes in degrees of physical harm and momentary loss of sanity.

Two features should be underlined here. A minor remark concerns the structure of discourse on the two sides of the argument before conversion: obviously, the discursive structure is strongly schizoid, that is, internally divided into two antagonistic moments of rhetorical effort at intellectual and/or emotional persuasion. It is unnecessary to underline that each moment corresponds to the argumentative position of one of the two antagonists and therefore to the two successive moments of the mental response of the hero at the centre of the episode. We must be alive to a fundamental detail in terms of audience reception: such an argumentative division seems meant to feed the divided response of the spectator, vacillating between acceptance and refusal of the hero's mental journey, between concern and lack of concern for his plight, or even between deep emotional/intellectual belief in the reality of the event and outright unconcern for or resentment at a situation and issue perceived as worrying or futile play.

More importantly, it is noticeable that in every one of these instances the hero's mental reversal *strictly follows the visual enactment on stage of the incredible event* which, inserted in the sequence of dramatic events, affirms and optically represents the superior might of God. It seems important to underline here (and an attentive micro-reading of the two plays brings plenty of evidence) that the paranormal miraculous fact is not only visually provided on stage: the birth of the Infant and the proof of the virginity of Mary in Chester play ii, with the sudden rewriting in golden letters on Simeon's book of Luke's prophecy; the deluge of blood escaping from the host in the Croxton play. Even more significantly, such events are not only made to be seen and scrutinized at length, but, especially in the Croxton play, they are also closely tied to a constant and fairly minute commentary. This coupling up of the two current and technically most effective channels of theatrical rendition, the visual and the verbal, amounts to a capital form of *ostension* (or spectacular highlighting), which in my view is equivalent to one of the most rhetorically effective forms of theatrical *hypotyposis* in the proto-modern stage tradition. Unable to name it by any existing term known to me, I would suggest that it amounts to an effective self-mirroring technique, in which the mouth verbally depicts what the image shows, and vice-versa.

This supplementation of argumentative force by a visual translation of what the argument aims to posit as truth may, of course, be read in two opposite ways. First, in view of the insistent repetition we have noticed at the end of the Chester Annunciation and Nativity, it may well be that the audience would receive the above device as an unwilling admission that the discursive medium is powerless when left alone, and that it needs a childish visual device to clinch the demonstration, even at the risk of discrediting the whole episode. Such may have been the attitude of the growing numbers advocating the discontinuation of the traditional cycles, or at least a severe purging of episodes dealing with articles of the traditional Catholic faith resented as superstitious.

Conversely, the belief assumed in the possible co-existence in the spectator's consciousness of two possibly antagonistic attitudes as to the truth of what is contemplated leads me to posit that, to some extent, a belief in what is seen, especially in the rhetorical circumstances I have evoked, could be totally evacuated. In unknown agreement for many years with such critics as Clifford Davidson, I have long held the view that the many references to be found in documents about aspects of the fifteenth-century vernacular religious practice in Northern Europe, in particular the emotional outbursts of tears generated by the contemplation of the crude woodcuts (known as images of Man of Sorrows) representing episodes of Christ's Passion, point to a sensitivity to images which we today would easily think abnormally superstitious.[9] Many documents besides the cycle plays themselves show that the Catholic authorities never ignored or neglected this in their conversion strategies. And this again may add weight to my remark on the capacity of the device to determine an influx of emotional belief, however momentary, in the passages at stake.[10]

III. Conclusion

Though the above remarks entail assumptions, I will buttress them with two more views likely to impart greater validity. The two have to do with a critical evaluation of spectatorship, one from a literary, the other from a physiological view-point.

In his analysis of the different aspects of the spectator's reception of theatrical action, Michael Goldman identifies three facets to the concept of action. He names them by terms borrowed, after due adaptation, from Aristotle's description in his *Poetics*. Relating to three different components of what goes by the name of dramatic action, they are: *praxis*, the action effected by the characters in the drama; *poiesis*, that which is performed by the actors enacting the play; and *theoria*, the action as received (registered) by the public. The last term Goldman partly empties of its Aristotelian content so as to stress its link with verbs which refer to "the gaze of lively inspection and active attempt to understand" which the public accords the play they contemplate (pp. 169-70, n. 6 to p. 12). Rather surprisingly, however, Goldman does not immediately fathom the *theoria* concept but immediately turns to the effects upon the spectator of *praxis* and *poiesis*. A few paragraphs earlier (pp. 10-11), however, he had vividly and forcibly described what anyone interested in the reception activity of the public would define as the obverse or complement of *theoria*, an attitude which he derives from what Francis Fergusson calls "histrionic sensibility". Fergusson describes this as the spectator's response to the powerful kinesthetic appeal of any mimetic "acting and action":

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[9] I make bold to assume that Davidson's conclusions regarding the topic in his recent *History, Religion and Violence* are in line with his positions argued earlier in "Sacred Blood", as well as those stated years before by Robinson. Their conclusions generally agree with those of other critics such as Nichols and Duffy.

[10] Lascombes has used Davidson's views and other documents in "Culture et théâtre", pp. 318-98, and returned to the question in "Un statut ambigu", pp. 14-28.

> It should be remembered *that we share in the actor's performance through action of our own. Acting has a powerful kinesthetic appeal.* As we sit in the theatre, we follow the action by internally copying or re-enacting what we see. Here, we are only responding to what the *characters do*; we are also re-enacting the actions by which the actors possess and project their parts. As we leave the theatre we may find ourselves walking or talking like one of the characters—a clear sign of the inner mimesis that acting induces). In watching the play, we internalize that actor-like thrust towards utterance of the self which is the ground of all action in drama. (Fergusson, pp. 236-40; my italics)

The first two sentences of this quotation aptly summarize the phenomenon.

Goldman goes on to sum up the influence of action as "how the play operates, how and to what purpose it engages our imaginations" (p. 11). Fergusson's description obviously needs no complementary gloss. I would just like to point out to what extent it has helped me to see better into the mystery of spectatorship—to understand why many young mothers gape as they lift the spoonful of food to the lips of their reluctant infants; or, again, why old loafers, silently staring at a giant scraper on a building site loading astounding volumes of earth and stone, will have their idle fingers unconsciously mimic the jerks of the machine.

An underlying physiological elucidation of the puzzle came some years ago when Professor Gilbert Lelord, generously answering some of my questions on the powers of the image, explained what was then a fairly new piece of medical information: namely, that specific centres in the brain of the *onlooker* of an act (whatever the act) produce the same or nearly the same sequence of electric waves (alpha waves) as the one called up by the said action in the doer's brain. I suppose I need comment no further on what quality of belief we may credit such a spectator with experiencing, at least during the latest stages of the history of "Homo sapiens sapiens". It is sufficient for the success of a spectacle and its enjoyment by an audience to posit that *belief in what is seen* may last as long as the image remains imprinted in the brain. Quite another problem, of course, is the question of the survival in the memory's archives of the intellectual and emotional effects, together with the middle- or long-term consequences of acts thus visually registered. Technically speaking, the wonderful and disquieting ability of our neuronal circuits thus to imprint in us an echo of the acts we have contemplated suffices to prove that "seeing is believing".

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Dramatic Assumption and the Fracture of Certainty in Shakespeare and Samuel Rowley's When You See Me You Know Me *(1605)*

Catherine Lisak
Université de Bordeaux III

Playing upon the sight and mind of both islanders and spectators in *The Tempest* (1611) are a succession of conjurer's tricks. Act Three, Scene Three, famously stages an impromptu appearance of "strange shapes" (III.iii.17 SD)[1]—insubstantial spirits that spring up before disappearing all at once and produce a banquet for the King and his search party to feast upon; "with a quaint device", the banquet vanishes soon after, when Ariel, "like a harpy, claps his wings upon the table" (52 SD). This episode of "now you see it, now you don't" works upon the weary men's senses as a mirage. It is perceived as a stage-illusion in the eyes of some that shows up false belief in the mind of others. Express belief and disbelief are thus alternatively voiced, as the trick pairs off the credulous believers, Alonso and Gonzalo (Ferdinand's desperate and increasingly penitent father, and the aged, honest, well-meaning lord), against the sceptical disbelievers, Sebastian and Antonio (the jeering, iniquitous brothers of Alonso and Prospero, respectively). The former stand in marvel—"I cannot too much muse / Such shapes" (36-37)—while the latter scoff at their companion's readiness to believe in what they see:

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[1] The edition cited is that of Vaughan and Vaughan.

> A living drollery! Now I will believe
> That there are unicorns; that in Arabia
> There is one tree, the phoenix' throne, one phoenix
> At this hour reigning there. (21-24)

Faced not only with a seemingly inanimate artefact (puppet or picture) come to life but also with his deluded partners, Sebastian parodies the posture of idolaters over-desirous to believe in an image: "Now I will believe . . .". His satire of praise addresses the transferential relationship which the desire to believe establishes between the senses and the spirit, between illusion and ultimate certainty. His mock moral conversion, like perceptual appearance and illusion, falls all the more short of belief as the character grounds his faith in fabulous beasts, the unicorn and the phoenix, the latter being mentioned in connection with the "one tree" or palm tree[2]—an analogy to which mainly the classical tradition assented, not Neapolitan search parties.

Notwithstanding his habitual childish impudence, Sebastian's lines seem to disclose an element of resistance to those prevailing powers that would throw dust in his eyes and make him take a leap of faith in some unconquerable force. It is as if Sebastian were unconsciously standing up to the play's internal dramatist and figure of authority by making Prospero's ability to turn others into elements of ridicule defeat the author of the grotesque himself. Sebastian's guffaws bring down to size the speciousness of the sorcerer's artifice in a way that wins over the audience. He focuses on the pleasure of entertainment one experiences when faced with scenic illusion and regards the ephemeral apparitions for what they are: a visual fallacy, a vain and empty semblance designed to deceive—nothing on which to ground one's convictions.

Antonio adds to Sebastian's hyperbolising cynicism by pronouncing a creed that ostensibly redoubles his companion's mock conversion: "I'll believe both" (24). It is once again the believer's frame of mind that comes under fire. The character toys with the claim that a visionary experience makes the seer a warrantor of truth: "And what does else want credit, come to me / And I'll be sworn 'tis true" (25-26). He goes on to deride Gonzalo's bewilderment in front of such dubious entities—"If in Naples / I should report this now, would they believe me?" (27-28)—by exaggerating the trust he would place in those whose reported sightings cannot be verified—"Travellers ne'er did lie, / Though fools at home do condemn 'em" (26-27)—thus adding an ironic twist to the laconic proverb that "a traveller may lie with authority".[3]

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[2] The "one tree" is referred to as the "sole Arabian tree" in *The Phoenix and Turtle* (l. 2). One recalls the well-known Greek homonymy of ΦοΑ͂νιξ, which means both phoenix and palm tree. In Arthur Golding's 1567 translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the phoenix is said to build his pyre in the tree identified as an Holm-oak or Date palm tree: "Uppon a Holmetree or upon a Date tree at the last / He makes him with his talants and his hardened bill a nest" (15.437-38).

In their reluctance to engage spontaneously in perceptual belief or to lose themselves in awesome wonder, the jeering men change the role that *perception* plays in this scene. From belonging to a search party having so far failed in its quest to find what it was looking for (Ferdinand, Alonso's son), the scoffers become spectators who make us take part in their struggle to take on board whatever it is they do find, as what they see strains belief. All they end up believing is that they are, in fact, seeing things.

So seeing is believing. Or is it? The dubitative question presupposes the certainty it fractures. The episode from *The Tempest* explores this very paradox and this very breakage. The statement would have us give credence to what appears before our eyes—"lo, and behold!"—and regard what we see as a revelation. It would go so far as to make beholder and believer fully overlap, even when these involve two different people. This combined sense of immediacy and communion may partly result from the structure proper of the saying. The copulative verb "is", placed between two gerunds, plays a pivotal role that translates into an unmediated state of being, as it conjoins two subjective states: the state of awareness and recognition (seeing) and that of assent and even faith (believing). Both states imply what David Hume would later call an "immediate impression of the senses"[4] and a feeling of confidence that is enhanced by the assertive verb "is". The copula expresses equivalence and reciprocity (as in the equation A=B), suggesting even the merging of states or the confusion of those who embody those states. It also posits a sense of causality or reliance (A therefore B), which is not grounded upon any rational, defining explanation but upon an "assumption".

Furthermore, whereas the expression, "what you see is what you get", pretends to dig no further than skin-deep, "seeing is believing" urges us to "assume" a role—to get under the skin of the part, and believe that an outward appearance is consonant with reality or substance. However, by appealing to our deep-seated disposition to acquiesce in what we see, it paradoxically instils an uncomfort-

[3] No. T476 in Tilley and Dent, as editors point out.

[4] To believe is to feel an immediate impression of the senses" (Hume, p. 86). Despite the anachronism, I have chosen to quote Hume's eighteenth-century wording because it clarifies the unmediated relation between sight (and, indeed, all the senses) and thought, which the statement "seeing is believing" implies and the scene from *The Tempest* challenges.

able suspicion ("or is it?") that behind this confident claim lurks a swindle by the confidence game. The would-be assurance it professes sounds simply too good to be true, both for a theatre audience and for the performers (and characters) on stage. The conjurer, who would make his audience receive his legerdemain as genuine, shares in the implicit knowledge that all that happens, within the fictional space of the stage, is but a show. The rabbit is pulled out of the hat, the woman's head is severed from her body, and the spectators' expectations are stimulated—to be either satisfied or denied, depending on their assumption and on the act performed: a clever trick, but a trick nonetheless. Similarly, the actor who cross-dresses, or the character who assumes another role through the technique of disguise, denounces the imposture of the image he projects, while seeking to pass himself off for what he is not. Altered appearances, like magical tricks, are displays that rely upon the impression of the senses and shared assumptions between the performer (or the performed) and the spectator. Though these interactions are reciprocal, they are not necessarily defining or definitive.

The concept of an "assumption" includes the act of giving one's assent, agreeing to something, as a matter of fact, although there is no objective evidence for doing so. When applied to the make-believe world of theatre, such acquiescence occurs when perception ("seeing") and conviction ("believing") momentarily conjoin amongst the audience, onstage and off. The merging of perceptions, sensorial and conceptual, is a vivacious and highly subjective theatrical experience; it represents the partaking in an illusion, through a wilful act and a moment's decision. For this reason, I will choose to refer to this experience as a dramatic *assumption*, rather than a dramatic *illusion*, in order to emphasize the voluntary act of participation involved. As the scene from *The Tempest* reveals, not only does dramatic assumption rest on some ephemeral certainty that lasts only the time it takes for an agent of mediation (the actor, the character, the play) to make the audience reconsider its reception of an episode, a scene, or the play itself; it also requires an act of authoritative appropriation on behalf of the onlooker, so that the idea of an "assumption" surprisingly compounds the impetuous leap of faith and the spontaneous decision to take on responsibility in one's choice of interpretation. This understanding of the reception of tricks and stage-illusions of all sorts does not imply a Coleridgean "voluntary Lending of the Will" to the "suspension of disbelief", whereby "the comparing power is suspended, and without the comparing power, any act of Judgement, whether affirmation or denial, is impossible" (Coleridge, "A Letter to Daniel Stuart, 13 May 1816", 4 [1959]: 641). Dramatic assumption implies the constant operation of comparison and consequently the endless change of focus and displacement of certainty that constitutes a spectator's swaying state of being between delusion and scepticism, each time out of a sense of conviction, and with a split minute's decision. I will demonstrate that early modern drama had more than an intuitive understanding of this theatrical experience. To demonstrate this point, I will first investigate the way dramatic assumption is handled in several plays by Shakespeare, before turning to Samuel Rowley's early Jacobean play, *When you see me, you know me*, whose very title spells out the proposition that "seeing is believing".

I

Simply leaving us to believe in what we see is not the note of certainty on which Shakespeare's comedies end. The plays claim to deliver us from their grasp, even as they enjoin us to work out their chief dramatic complications. In the Epilogue to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594-96), Robin reminds his audience of the delusive nature of all that it has just witnessed while striking a bargain with them—that they may readjust their perception of their own dramatic experience by having a possible say in the orientation of the resolution: "If we shadows have offended / Think but this, and all is mended" (V.i.415). As R. A. Foakes argues, the Puck appeals to our imagination and to our authority and responsibility as viewers.[5] The term "shadows" no longer simply alludes to Oberon, the "king of shadows" (II.ii.347), or to the performers of the play-within-a-play (V.i.210). Its all-inclusive quality and shifting dramatic emphasis make it refer to the personified spirit, as well as to the performing actor[6]—to all those, in fact, who cross the stage in some shape or form, or role. When Robin first pronounces the term in Act Three, Scene Two, he already suggests that errors of judgement are inevitable ("mistook") when we allow ourselves to take for granted what we see, as he has done. His apologetic tone is an avowal of guilt and a refusal to take full responsibility for his mistake in interpretation:

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[5] "Shakespeare plays upon our awareness of what he is doing, our ability temporarily to believe anything while knowing it is make-believe, and enable us to enjoy the play as a delightful flight of imagination, and as an artfully constructed masterpiece which gives meaning to the mysterious words Yeats used as an epigraph for *Responsibilities*, 1914: 'In dreams begin responsibility'" (Foakes, ed., pp. 39-40). See also Montrose, "A Kingdom of Shadows", pp. 234-35 and 240, n. 27: "For 'shadow' as 'applied rhetorically … to an actor or a play in contrast to the reality represented', see *OED*, s.v. 'Shadow', sense 1.6.b. The earliest usages cited by are in Lyly, *Euphues*, and Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*".

[6]

> Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
> Did you not tell me I should know the man
> By the Athenian garments he had on? (III.ii.47-49)

By the time Theseus appropriates the term, it has become clear that the ambiguous, and indeed, illusory nature of all human agency onstage may find a possible solution with audience perception, especially when the audience is prepared to enter into a playful, metatheatrical complicity with the characters' and actors' imagination:

> *Theseus.* The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them.
>
> *Hippolyta.* It must be your imagination, then, and not theirs.
>
> *Theseus.* If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. (V.i.210-15)

The play seems to suggest that the responsibility of the audience lies in reaching a compromise both between the players and themselves, and between their impressions that "seeing is believing" and their own moment of hesitation—"or is it?"

The Puck offers a possible compromise at the opening of the Epilogue—the option that, rather than look upon the play as a play, and believe in what we have just seen, we view the play as something dreamt up, thus dismissing our previous certitudes as figments of our imagination: "That you have but slumbered here, / While these visions did appear" (V.i.416-17). For his own comfort, the spectator may reconsider the play as a spell of delirium, a "collective hallucination", "a dream about watching a play about dreams" (Greenblatt, p. 809), though whatever might have seemed self-evident (however unpleasant) is no longer so, because our disposition to believe and our very grasp of make-believe are thrown into disarray. The outcome of this conventional surrender of power may appear comforting, but it may also baffle the audience, for it has become unclear whether the illusion experienced was born from the play or from the audience's imagination (or, indeed, from both). Such suppositions, which toy with our uncertainty, nonetheless heighten our awareness of the aesthetic potential of the play.

In the Prologue to *Supposes* (1566),[7] George Gascoigne defines a "suppose" as "nothing else but a mistaking or imagination of one thing for another, for", he explains, "you shall see the master supposed for the servant, the servant for the master" (Ariosto, p. 92). His definition involves the playing of one role by another character (who assumes that role), with which he associates the dramatic irony that enables doubt to set in amongst the onlookers onstage and the audience. Cecil C. Seronsy reconsiders the meaning of a "suppose" as understood by the early modern world:

> There is no reason to assume that the word "supposes" itself must be limited now or in sixteenth-century usage to mean only "substitutions" of characters for one another in a mere mechanical routine of outward disguise. For Elizabethans it had substantially the same values in meaning as it had for us: "supposition", "expectation", "to believe", "to imagine", "to guess", "to assume". (pp. 15-16)

Seronsy has argued that the idea of the "supposes" acts as the unifying theme in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590-91), because it becomes "a guiding principle of Petruchio's strategy in winning and taming the shrew" (p. 16). It may also be argued that this early comedy investigates the staging of dramatic assumption especially in its Induction—a moment when perception and conviction converge, allowing for a "guess", a "supposition", an "expectation", or a strong "belief" that someone is likely to be a certain person or to behave in a certain way, while instilling elements of doubt within those characters who strive towards such conviction.

Christopher Sly's "assumption of his false lordly role" (Morris, ed., p. 119) is based solely on his desire to believe in what he is not, a desire that is nurtured by the clothes he wears, the privileges he enjoys, and the counterfeiting of roles that takes place all round him: the page in disguise assumes the role of his supposed wife; the actors "join in the Lord's game and imagine that they are not playing before a drunken tinker but before a lord" (Morris, ed., p. 119). In the second scene of the Induction, we observe the way the character is manipulated into believing that he is not the person he thought he was. His initial self-assertiveness—"I am Christophero Sly, call not me 'honour' nor 'lordship'" (Ind.ii.5-6)—is challenged by the Lord's and his servants' yet stronger claim to know who he is. Sly's eroding confidence becomes apparent as he "rehearses certain facts about himself" (Morris, ed., p. 163) in a set of rhetorical questions, spoken in indignation, that belie his temptation to believe that he is someone else: "What, would you make me mad? Am not I Christopher Sly, old Sly's son of Burton-heath, by birth a pedlar, by education a cardmaker, by transmutation a bear-herd, and now by present profession a tinker?" (17-21). The Lord's and servants' ensuing ruse consists in persuading Sly that he may rely on his senses. They begin by working on his perception of the world and of himself, that he may trust what he sees. In order to convince him that "Thou art a lord, and nothing but a lord" (62), they promise to show him a set of paintings, like that of Io portrayed as a maid "beguiled and surprised, / As lively painted as the deed was done" (56-57). Their praising the virtues of aesthetic verisimilitude leads Sly to be won over not only by what he sees, but by what he believes he will see, though the paintings remain out of sight, no more visible, in fact, than the figure of Cytherea, "all in sedges hid" (52).

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[7] Gascoigne's translation of Ludovico Ariosto's *I Suppositi*.

For Sly, not only is seeing believing, but believing is also seeing. Perception and conviction converge in this cross-eyed perception of the world. The character has entered a "virtual reality", conceived to disable his judgement and perception: he is unable to discern the substantial from the illusory and even checks himself to see whether he is awake. As he detects no failings of the senses, he cannot view his surroundings with the slightest hint of scepticism: all suspicion of illusion is therefore lost. In his next set of rhetorical questions, he merely seeks confirmation of a belief he now seems eagerly disposed to entertain:

> Am I a lord, And have I such a lady?
> Or do I dream? Or have I dream'd till now?
> I do not sleep. I see, I hear, I speak.
> I smell sweet savours and I feel soft things.
> Upon my life, I am a lord indeed,
> And not a tinker nor Christophero Sly. (69-74)

For Sly, seeing, like smelling, and hearing or feeling, *is* believing, even if he *sees* only by proxy. Of course, the play's twists and turns provoke Sly's failure to recognize the wiles practised upon him; as with the taming of Katherina, the tricking of Sly turns into a game or sport of make-believe. By the end of the Induction, however, as a last element of irony, it falls to Sly to pronounce the conventional, simple caveat, when he sits down to watch a play: that a comedy (or "comonty") is like a "Christmas gambol or a tumbling-trick" (138), in that it plays acrobatic tricks with audience perception.

The play's spectators may have looked upon Sly with distant amusement, though they may also have identified with what they saw in the Induction, especially as the curtain rose on the play-within-the-play, potentially erasing the illusion. To counteract this dramatic assumption, *The Taming of the Shrew* reminds the audience not to succumb to the propensity for believing in appearances by drawing them towards another perception of the scenic illusion. It fosters our impression that the Lord's tricks have an impact upon Sly's view of the world and himself that is far more disturbing, for instance, than the effect produced on the Lord by the actor who plays the wooer of a gentlewoman: "that part / Was aptly fitted and naturally perform'd" (Ind.i.84-85). For the Lord, at least, verisimilitude remains a matter of aesthetics (however "naturally", the part remains "perform'd").

It remains hard to tell whether the play would have conditioned the audience's own perception of the world around it. There were so many exhortations in the period against giving credit to what was seen that, however much one would like to believe that audiences of the sixteenth century were well equipped to see through appearances, one can only assume that it was something of a problem. Stephen Gosson's *Playes Confuted in five Actions* (1582), among other works, explained that "our eyes" were "muffled", for "in seeing, we see and not perceive" (sig. C5^{v}). His discrimination between sensory sight and intellectual perception was not a message that the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew* shied away from, but where Shakespeare's comedy addressed the issue in playful terms, Gosson's pamphlet presented the debate as a moral debate between good and evil. His was the Manichaean vision of a former playwright and actor whose fanatical animosity against plays had finally led him to take orders. This was his way of dropping the blindfolds, as he saw them, which plays and poems impressed on the people's senses. His anti-theatrical tract denounced disguise, cross-dressing, and all stage-business as so many attempts to lead the moral man astray:

> for a meane person to take upon him the title of a Prince with counterfeit porte, and traine, is by outwarde signes to shewe them selves otherwise then they are, and so with in the compasse of a lye. (sig. E5^{r})

The issue was all the more complicated by the fact that the early modern public were directly encouraged to believe what they saw. Elizabethan peers had maces and coats of arms carried in front of them when they travelled, while the sovereign went on spectacular progresses in order to be *seen* for what she "was". Propaganda displayed the Queen's legitimacy through dress and pomp, and the people were portrayed as committed to this manifest legitimacy, which was supposed to act upon their senses as a revelation. Furthermore, sumptuary laws had been repealed by 1604, once Parliament acknowledged the impossibility of enforcing these strictures regulating dress and style. People of significance who dressed lower than their status not only failed to live up to appearances, but were also guilty of a disinvesting of authority and status, as they transgressed "the reliable register of the hierarchies of class and position" (McDonald, p. 232). Investing such attitudes with existential meaning, and combining the commonplace world-as-stage convention with the clothing motif, *King Lear* strips its "unaccommodated" king of the vanity of his "lendings" (*Lr.*, III.iv.105, 106-7), from his crown, which Lear doffs at the beginning of the play, to his boots (IV.vi.171), and the single final button (V.iii.308). Having done away with these "marks of sovereignty" (I.i.229) and unable to distinguish between appearance and reality, Lear questions, as Sly in his own way did before him, his own sensory perceptions: "Does Lear walk thus? Speak thus? Where are his eyes?" (I.iv.224). Lear finishes by doubting himself so completely that only "Lear's shadow" (I.iv.228) remains, as his sole criterion of truth. The play stages the fracture of certainty through a systematic shattering of appearances, perceptions and illusions, and by referring characters and audience to another vision of the king—a shadow. From the start, it had been felt that the mask may fall, that illusion need not be sustained, simply displaced, in order to resume, through some other figuration of the self, a mere projection.

II

When, in Act Five, Scene Four, of *As You Like It* (1599-1600), Rosalind returns on stage, no longer in the role of Ganymede (hence, disguised as a boy), but this time playing herself, the other characters are thrown into confusion. The disguise that had, till now, ironically ensured that "seeing was believing" has been cast off behind the scenes; or rather it has been redoubled, as Tracey Salinger suggests: "a boy-actor plays Rosalind, who disguises herself as Ganymede, who then plays 'Rosalind'" (p. 74). Ganymede vanishes as swiftly as Rosalind returns—in ghostly fashion—Ganymede's sole substance and existence on stage being wholly a matter of clothing and impression on the visual senses of the spectators. The effect is a breach of expectation, and the fracture of uncertainty spreads to all the onlookers onstage. Far from having secured some form of reassurance, Rosalind's sudden palingenesis is stage business that underscores the unstable and unpredictable nature of theatre proper. Salinger's reading of the play, from the point of view of cross-dressing and gender, leads her to conclude similarly that seeing is no longer believing in the eyes of the stage viewer, who

> knows, or will shortly know, that subjective sight and objective shape are anything but true, since their congruence is based on a knowledge that obtains only within the fictional space established by the play. The Epilogue, bringing us out of the play's fiction and into the early modern theatre, reveals that Phebe's sight and Rosalind's shape are not true. (p. 73)

The anaphoric clauses that the Duke and Orlando pronounce, "If there be truth in sight …" (V.iv.113, 114), express in the conditional a ritualised awakening to the traps laid by the relationship of sight to shape. The dramatic assumption that "you are my daughter" and "you are my Rosalind" (113, 114) is not presented as a foregone conclusion, though it does represent recognition, an act of appropriation, and a gain. On the contrary, as Phoebe revises her readiness to give credit to what she sees, she ends on the feeling that only loss (rather than love) lies in the eyes of the beholder: "If sight and shape be true, / Why then my love adieu!" (115-16). Characters thus sway between a sense of bewilderment and wonder, between the mediation of scepticism and the immediacy of incredulity and marvel.

The play's spectators are also put to the test in this episode, with the unaccountable appearance of a figure that emerges from the woods, whom the speech headings identify as the god Hymen. Stephen Orgel is one critic who admits not knowing what to make of this apparition:

> My students always ask me who that is, and I tell them I don't know; we aren't told, and it must be significant that we aren't told—that in the most rationalized of Shakespeare's comedies, the resolution depends on a mystery; there's finally something in Rosalind's plans that we aren't let in on.… Of the experts consulted, however, about two-thirds declare that the figure is some rustic who has been dressed up as Hymen for the occasion, and the rest assumed it was the god himself, and pointed to the analogous appearance of deities in wedding masques. What struck me here was that not a single one of the critics cited acknowledged that we don't know, we aren't told, saw it as a piece of dramaturgy rather than something to be explained away in the plot. (p. 26)

Orgel's comments seem to guard us against any attempt to offer a logical interpretation of Hymen's appearance, as this would minimize the mysterious nature of the vision and the dramatic assumption at work amongst the viewers. The improvised presence of the figure should stir the audience's communal awareness of theatricality, even if, as the editorial glosses reveal, such a sense of communion and immediacy is broken by the need to fill the growing gap of questioning with answers. Hymen's must remain a dramatic occurrence that deflects the impact of the conditionals, be it only for an instant, in order to give way to a reciprocal inherence of meaning between subject (seeing) and predicate (believing). The saying, "seeing is believing", here operates as a radical appeal to our imagination, reminding us that representation arises out of nothing—out of the empty stage of theatre: Hymen is self-explanatory by his stage presence alone, which spontaneously gives the figure shape, form and dramatic meaning.

Another case in point is when Sebastian re-appears before Viola in *Twelfth Night*. He first denounces the brother that Viola is not, while Viola only half-believes what she sees and assumes she is faced with: Sebastian's ghost. "Seeing is believing" is once again put to the test when a character believes that the shape that appears before him or her—call it magical, ghostly or theatrical—has no substance. Faced with Sebastian, Viola also resorts to the conditional: "If spirits can assume both form and suit, / You come to fright us" (V.i.233-34). To "assume", of course, in this specific context, refers in part to the idea of putting on an article of clothing. Sebastian responds to precisely this meaning of the word when he asserts his existence through the materiality of his clothes, claiming to be a spirit, however "grossly clad" (235). Viola also confirms her own identity by referring to certain garments she had left aside for the sake of disguise: "I am Viola; which to confirm, / I'll bring you to a captain in this town, / Where lies my maiden weeds" (251-53).

However, the idea that a spirit should "assume" a mortal form went beyond the garb it wore. Thus, to "assume" also implies to invest oneself formally ("form and suit") with all that constitutes the identity of the deceased—not just the dress, but the body and what "appeared" to be the very essence of a man, to the point where this counterfeit or simulation blurs the difference between illusion and reality, and places the onlooker in a position of acquiescence, thus ensuring that seeing becomes believing. Editors have often noted the similarity between Viola's line and Hamlet's. Both recall the commonplace debate on the soul of the deceased assuming its mortal form: "If it assume my noble father's person; / I'll speak to it" (*Ham.*, I.ii.244-45). According to Harold Jenkins, "Hamlet alternates between regarding the Ghost as an unknown spirit in his father's shape and as his 'father's spirit' itself" (Jenkins, ed., p. 196). As the critic explains, it is in no way suggested that the figure appears, in Marcellus' eyes, as a mere hallucination, the idea of some delusional fantasy being discarded from the very first lines of his speech. It is Horatio's doubt that is at issue here:

> 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. (I.i.26-32)

The tension that runs in this speech resides in Marcellus' eagerness to witness Horatio change his attitude towards the vision. By hoping that Horatio will confirm his observation—Johnson glossed "approve our eye" as "Add testimony to that of our eyes"[8]—Marcellus implicitly expects him to go so far as to "corroborate the existence of what [he has] just seen" (Spencer, ed., p. 206), thus sharing his own persuasion that the sighting was invested with an intelligent spirit, and contemplating the idea that beyond "this thing" (I.i.24), he is faced with "this dreaded sight" (28), "this apparition" (31). Marcellus expects Horatio to "approve" not simply his "eye" but the common saw that "seeing is believing" as well.

By his sole presence, Hamlet's Ghost stands before the members of the king's guard as the figure of Sebastian before Viola, in a manner that stirs the onlookers' surprise, thus prevailing upon their good faith and impressing himself vividly upon their senses and their mind—like Ganymede, as if by magic—in a way that ensures a moment's dramatic assumption.

This mode of mediation between a character and his audience had already received more than a conventional definition in the Epilogue to *As You Like It*. There the actor claims, "My way is to conjure you" (Epi.10-11), as he confesses to having played a woman disguised as a man—thus reversing the relationship he himself has entertained with the audience. Though it is standard in an Epilogue for the actor to invite his viewers to take leave of the play's make-believe world, his choice of words does not simply entreat the members of the audience to play along with the codes of dramaturgy. As the editor Alan Brissenden reminds us, "to conjure" signifies both to "make a solemn appeal" and to "affect you by magic" (p. 227, n. 11). As the actor who played Rosalind rounds off the play, his phrase engages the audience through the element of marvel and enchantment, recalling their experience of dramatic assumption (as a leap of faith), before focusing on the fracture of certainty by denouncing the scenic illusions for what they are, then by redirecting the authority and sway the (hopefully appreciative) audience finally holds over a play through a spirit of reciprocal devotion:

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[8] As quoted in Furness, ed., vol. 1, p. 7.

> I charge you, O women, for the love you bear to men, to like as much of this play as please you. And I charge you, O men, for the love you bear to women—as I perceive by your simpering none of you hates them—that between you and the women the play may please. (Epi.11-16)

III

Disguise appeals to the dramatic assumption that "seeing is believing" in several ways. When a character like Viola in *Twelfth Night* changes her appearance in order to go walking freely through the crowds, the truism "seeing is believing" becomes tributary to the rules of perspective and is therefore pregnant with meaning. From where the character stands who is deceived by the disguise, seeing is believing seems implicitly to spell out a mistake in judgement. From where the character in disguise stands, Viola can afford to believe in what she sees, because her disguise, maintained for most of the play, gives the other characters time and ample opportunities to "reveal" themselves for what they are, unaware of who she actually is. Ironically, Viola is in a bind, for, unable to reveal her true self to others, she is held to work out a thorough loss of identity. All reciprocity, in this situation, is temporarily forsaken.

Viola decides to enter the Illyrian society, as Cesario, only once she has been presented with the "picture" in full. She enters into the imbroglios of this foreign land knowingly, with the opportunity to experience them first-hand, rather than through the Captain's narrative or her father's past tales. One might say that she goes in search of something that she already "assumes", "supposes", "expects", "knows" or "guesses": her informed ideas need only take shape and flesh. For this to happen, she needs to wear a disguise that will temporarily impair all recognition of her true identity—for all except the captain, of course, who is the one character in the know:

> Conceal me what I am, and be my aid
> For such disguise as haply shall become
> The form of my intent. (I.ii.53-55)

Her disguise does not simply play upon gender deception. Viola is a young woman of aristocratic birth who has taken on the identity of a page to live and work amongst the Illyrians. Though she is hardly a ruler, there is something, in this scenario, that recalls the popular king-in-disguise motif, whereby a king mingles incognito with his subjects. Such characters are able to believe in what they see, as their entourage no longer play along with them for the sake of their rank and power but show themselves in their true colours. Such scenarios, in which a ruler deliberately suspends his true identity and roams in disguise through his city, mingling with his subjects, were made popular with comedies like Robert Wilson's *Fair Em* (1591), William Kemp's *A Knack to Know a Knave* (1594), Robert Greene's *George a Greene* (1599) and such history-chronicle plays as George Peele's *Edward the First* (1593), Thomas Heywood's *Edward the Fourth* (1599), Anthony Munday's *Sir John Oldcastle* (1600), and of course Shakespeare's *Henry V* (1598-99). It is, however, to the use of this convention in Samuel Rowley's *When you see me, you know me* (acted 1603, published 1605) that I would now like to turn for my final analysis of dramatic assumption.

In this play, King Henry VIII decides to wander by night through the disreputable quarters of London to secretly observe his people at work (or not). Reports have reached him that the peace of the realm is poorly kept, and he wishes to see for himself whether they are true. Only two men from court, Charles Brandon and Sir William Compton, are privy to his secret:

> I must imploy your aide and secrecie,
> This night we meane in some disguised shape;
> To visit *London*, and to walke the round,
> Passe through their watches, and observe the care
> And special diligence to keep our peace.
> They say night-walkers, hourely passe the streets,
> Committing the[ft], and hated sacriliege:
> And flightly passe unstaied, or unpunished,
> Goe Compton, goe, and get me some disguise,
> This night weele see our Cities government. (sig. D1^{r})

Rowley's title makes explicit the obvious double meaning of the saying, "seeing is believing", referring, primarily, to the audience's recognition of Henry, and secondarily (and ironically), to the onstage audience's failure to recognise him. The title, however, takes on a third meaning, as we move on in the play: the king feels that he will believe what he sees, only if he does not seem to be what he is in the eyes of those he would check up on. To unmask the thoughts of others, the king must mask his own identity. The character thus plays a double game, tricking those who do see him so as to verify the reports, and sees for himself. He can bring himself to believe in what he sees only because he believes his presence (and what he represents) has no bearing on what he observes, as the disguise enables the characters not to see the social barrier between the monarch and his subjects.

During his escapade, the king falls upon night-watchmen who "sleep secure" (sig. D3^{r}). Though the Constable had instructed Prichall the Cobbler, to "be carefull and examine all" (sig. D1^{v}), the guard and his companion are discovered sleeping on the job. The "fond heedlesse men" (sig. D3^{r}) had been debating the existence of the man in the moon, with the first watchman grounding his belief in what he claimed to have seen:

> *2.* Doe yee thinke neighbour, there is a man ethe Moone?
> *1. Wat.* I assure yee in a cleare day, I have seente at midnight.

This light-hearted send-up of the watchmen's poor sense of observation and of the common saying that "seeing is believing" leads to a set of comic situations that investigate the misperception of appearances. When the watchman (a cobbler by trade), taken by surprise, asks the king in disguise to identify himself, challenging him with his sentry's call, "Stand, who goes there?", he ends up formulating the erroneous assumption that "thou must be a Knave, for art neither King nor Queene, (I am sure)" (sig. D2^{v}). The following episode has the disguised king coming across the city's ruling pimp and bully, Black Will. The moment he appears onstage, the braggart confesses his theft and murder, so that all who see him know him for what he is. Unlike the king, or the man in the moon, when you see Will, you know him. He, too, quizzes the king:

Blacke Will	Sblood come before me syr: What a Divell art thou?
King	A man at least.
Black	And art thou valiant?
King	I carry a sword and a bucklerye see.
Black	A sword and a buckler, and know not me, Not *Blacke Will*?
King	No trust mee.
Blacke Will	Slave, then thou art neither Traveller, nor Purse-taker: for I tell thee, *Blacke will* is knowne and feared though [*sic*] the seventeene Privunces: theres not a sword and Buckler man in *England* nor *Europe*, but has had a taste of my manhood. I am tole-free in all Citties, & the Subburbs about them: this is my Sconce, my Castle, my Cittadell, and but King *Harry*, God blesse his Maiestie, I feare not the proudest. (sig. D3^{r-v})

In presenting this false image of himself, the king actually betrays what he is not. The king tries to pass himself off as a swashbuckler, but his poor acting—he hardly gets under the skin of the part—and his still poorer choice of outfit hardly fools the king of ruffians, the argument being that no one can claim to be a ruffian in London town without Black Will knowing about it. Black Will is not taken in by what he sees at all, and though he may not know who the character is, he quickly guesses the newcomer is lying about his identity. However, rather than pursue the matter and seek to unveil the stranger's true identity, which he unknowingly pronounces, to the amusement of the audience, Black Will goes looking no further than skin deep. He reverts, instead, to a performance of self-revelation and self-display. During this self-exposure, he shares a confidence about his ill-dealings as a whoremaster and asks for secrecy from the man he has just found out was lying: "May I speake freely, and wilt not tel the king ont?" (sig. D3^{v}). It seems odd that a character should willingly expose himself to a stranger whom he has just uncovered as a fake, and turn a blind eye to all elements of suspicion and doubt. But Will's vanity is his blind spot. Flattery gets the better of him, and he is put off his guard.

When it comes to his persona, the commoner abides by the saying that "seeing is believing". "In order to assure thee my valour carryes credite with it" (sig. D4^{r}), he shows off his manly prowess when passing the city gates, which he succeeds in doing simply by being recognised by the guards. He is therefore outraged when the king-in-disguise does not seem convinced by what he sees, his leap of faith being purely rhetorical—"Faith, excellent"—but instils an element of doubt as to what Black Will seems:

> *1. Watch* Hoe comes there?
> *Cob* Come afore the Constable.
> *Wil* What haue ye forgot me so soone? tis I.
> *2. Watch* O, tis M. Blacke William,
> God blesse ye sir, God blesse ye.
> *Black* How likst thou now?
> *King* Faith excellent: but prethe tell me, doest thou face the world with thy manhood, that thus they feare thee, or art thou truely valiant?
> *Blacke Will* Sfoote, doest thou doubt of my man-hood? Nay then defend your selfe, ile giue you a try all presently, betake yee to your tooles sir, ile teach ye to stand vpon Intergatories. (sig. D4^{r})

The scene reveals that to believe what you see is to follow a common practice amongst the city people, a tacit understanding that ensures the peace of the realm, after a fashion. The king starts a brawl from the moment he questions this practice. When it comes to Black Will proper, dramatic assumption is altogether done away with: the character expects the reasoning, "what you see is what you get", to be the only viable approach to his person. When Black Will performs, he performs himself, the outward show of "man-hood" and his "truely valiant" self being but one and the same.

IV

This analysis has attempted to explore the pregnant meanings of the proverbial idea that "seeing is believing". Specifically, it has been argued that the positive, cognitive experience born from the immediate reception of the senses—and the apparent conversion provoked by the sole presence of an image—remains a fleeting experience that just as quickly awakens, within the onlooker, onstage or off, a sense of uncertainty and (self-)doubt. Having ensured the viewer's dramatic assumption, the early modern play swiftly takes care to fracture the spectators' certainty by enhancing all awareness of the stage and its artifice, thus unsettling not only the spectator's belief in what he or she sees, but also the ability to locate the source of the illusion, even as that illusion breaks. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* thus leaves its audience with a labyrinth of optional interpretations that may confuse as much as they aim to facilitate the reception of the play.

"Seeing is believing", indeed, reveals just how complex and varied a dramatic character's relationship to appearances can be within early modern drama. Black Will is as much an "appearance", showing himself for what he is through his corporeal eloquence, as are the serving men who, in their counterfeit roles, aim to deceive Sly. Viola's disguise constitutes a change in appearance, that is, not only in what is apparent (her clothes), but also in status, as she becomes a page and enters the service of a Duke. Both dramatic situations which she assumes are in accordance with the etymological meaning of "apparere", which signifies "to show oneself", as well as "to obey and wait upon". Additionally, the dramatic assumption that emerges from the connexion of sensory perception and intuitive conviction is not simply a momentary perception of appearances; it develops a momentum that, as by an epiphany, gives shape and form to apparitions, such as Hymen, who appears for a while as manifestly as the man in the moon does to

Rowley's watchmen. "Seeing is believing" impels us to consider the exceptional immediacy of an experience, especially in theatrical terms, while the intervening agency of actors, performers, props, and the theatre proper conspires to redefine, over and over, dramatic "assumption"—the onlookers' appropriation and taking charge of what it sees and the outcome of a performance. Dramatic assumption, as a compound of theatrical experiences, revolves around the momentum that theatre achieves, and then turns around, to make it function as an incessant "act of the Judgement or Understanding" (Coleridge, 4 [1959]:641), that is, an act of endless discrimination between varying forms of perception.

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Medieval Theatricality and Spectatorship

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Two apparent paradoxes in spectatorship are suggested by the theme of the present volume. The first is that the spectator imaginatively participates in what is seen and yet is conscious of him or herself as watching it. The second is that the spectator achieves a kind of belief in the reality of the event and yet is aware of it as performance. Although the first concerns the spectator's self-consciousness and the second what kind of reality the theatrical event has for the spectator, both paradoxes point towards a single problematic: the relationship of absorption and action in the experience of the spectator. The present paper concentrates on this topic.

Any spectator will have experienced being so imaginatively focussed on the play that the world around is ignored. This absorption is not distinctive of theatrical experience, however: a good book, or conducting a mobile phone conversation in a busy street can induce the same effect. How this degree of dissociation from the world around is received depends very much on context. Many feel that the private absorption of the mobile phone is impolite in public places, and it is certainly illegal when driving in the UK. Being distracted by one's own thoughts during a conversation can cause irritation, and interlocutors are extremely quick to spot when this is happening. But western societies value a high level of concentration in aesthetic contexts, where it is regarded as offering a purer experience of the artwork. In literary analyses this condition, therefore, often provides the subconscious benchmark for discussion. The implication is that, when one promotes the reality of the artistic event over the larger reality within which it is only an event, *one is right to do so*. In some dramatic performances spectators may be so engrossed that they will think of the fictive narrative represented on stage as happening in reality, and when they thus fall under the control of the actor's and playwright's power to persuade, they are thought to be responding properly to the demands of the genre. The lights go off in the modern theatre to announce that the spectator may be distracted from everything that is not the play.

This encouragement to aesthetic dissociation is very different from the view in the late-medieval *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, whose author objected to plays, and to some paintings, precisely because they could create an emotional, sensual, and imaginative distraction from true reality, failing thus in two respects: by supplanting truth with falsehood and proper spiritual behaviour with pleasure-seeking. If Christ reproved the women who wept at his Passion, how much more would he reprove those who weep at the play of his Passion? (ll. 107-8). The *Tretise* denies that it is good to be engrossed by an aesthetic representation of spiritually important matters, because to do that is to replace spiritual belief with a lower order belief tainted by human artifice and the delights of the senses. The strength of the *Tretise* author's attack, but also its weakness, is that its criteria of value were established not in the world of drama itself but in the realm of spirituality. Since reality is defined as what is *not* mimetic, there is hardly any point in disagreeing with the author about the characteristics of plays; one must simply accept or reject the *value* which he puts on these characteristics. But the *Tretise* author did not leave it there.

In trying to distinguish which kinds of art might be permissible and which not, the *Tretise* author implicitly acknowledged that style was at the root of the problem, rather than the spiritual impoverishment implicit in all the substitutions of mimesis. Some paintings are permissible, he claims, if they avoid "to myche fedynge mennus wittis" (ll. 136-37), but, since sensuality and kinesis in plays means that they cannot avoid feeding men's wits, it is their *relative* danger to the soul which brings them within the scope of judgement. This in turn implicitly acknowledges that, within the realm of artistic representation, spectatorial *choice* is as susceptible to moral judgement as is the use of art to represent spiritual reality. If artistic representation of the sacred is allowed to be educational in some cases, its worth must be judged in relation to the contingencies of style, spectatorial choice, and the effect on the spectator. According to the *Tretise*, then, the more an art work encourages the spectator towards aesthetic absorption, the more spiritually culpable it is, and, by implication, the more the spectator chooses that form of absorption over others, the more spiritually weak they show themselves in their choices of spiritual action. The *Tretise* is thus as much about watching plays as about "pleyinge", and indeed the argument does not seem to imply much distinction between the two categories of action, treating actors and spectators as participants in a common enterprise, though that is in part a consequence of the particular dialogic strategy which the author employs.

While the author rejected those paintings which were too crafted, and plays which were, by their very nature, sensual, that is, delighting men "bodily", his basic premise was that any distracting rather than informing was to be avoided. Unfortunately for modern scholars, he gave less space to discussing what particular styles might be considered as feeding men's wits and therefore as leading to absorption in the artifice and distraction from the real. However, this was also an insightful strategy, for it silently accepted that spectators' wits and bodies could be fed and delighted by many different artistic means. Spectatorial absorption is not the inevitable product of a particular style of presentation. For example, one might wish to associate the extreme end of spectatorial "belief" in the reality of what is seen on stage with traditions of naturalistic, indoor, highly-controlled drama. There, the play aims to sustain as long as possible the conviction that what is seen is not just a believable representation of something which *could* occur but *is* actually occurring. But such a theatrical basis for aesthetic belief is very fragile: the spectator's absorption can be unsettled easily if they spot mistakes in detail, and the effect of the play can be damaged by extraneous non-theatrical circumstances, such as a persistent cough in the audience or a knocking window or a lighting problem. Aesthetic participation thus depends on the continued willingness of the spectator to collaborate: to ignore or, where possible, include elements which are not part of the intended presentation. And this is especially true when the naturalistic style of a play pretends to similarity with the spectator's real life.

Some theatrical approaches go further than naturalism and attempt to blur any distinction between the conditions in which a spectator views and the fiction being represented. A recent award-wining play about people-trafficking was put on, and was watched by spectators, inside a container lorry.[1] This was an extreme attempt to ensure spectators' imaginative belief in an event, and the moral engagement which should supposedly accompany the experience. But one can think of comparable medieval examples in which such an effect was created without any dominant tradition of naturalism. For example, how different in theatrical effect is the container lorry idea from those instances where the permanent architecture of the church, such as an Easter sepulchre with its carvings or paintings of the resurrection, was employed for Easter representations which mixed ritual and drama?[2] In such semi-liturgical events, the world of the viewing spectator must have been so completely suffused with the matter being represented that a different kind of reality was created. In this new reality the spectator, however free to think his or her own thoughts, was physically within the world of the representation, and the biblical and contemporary realms were potentially joined as a single stage-set. One can find such effects operating in street theatre also: the obvious example is the York cycle's *Entry into Jerusalem*, in which Christ so pointedly refers to the city of York's own towers and turrets that his entry is really into a new theatrical world in which York and Jerusalem have shared existence, and, as Pam King has shown, the biblical, civic, and liturgical can all co-exist (King, p. 141). The opportunity is held open to the spectator not just to view the presentation but to view it from a place *within* the action—to be not just engrossed by the event but *incorporated* into it. This seems to me more than just a device to encourage imaginative absorption in what is seen, though it is that. It is a way of declaring that, even when spectators mentally step back from being engrossed in the action, and are conscious of themselves as spectators, they are still within the world of the play, and the stage reality which they observe is also the reality *within* which they observe. Rather than attempting to put to rest a spectator's self-consciousness, this form of theatre attempts to redefine the parameters within which that self-consciousness can operate.

Medieval drama, building on a supposedly shared ideology, attempts to create this theatrical environment in many ways: through employing contemporary modes of language, action, references and stage properties; anachronism linking the biblical past with the present; direct address by characters to audience; the merging of contemporary issues with biblical narrative; and even theatrical activities *shared* by spectator and actors, such as the scatological community singing led by the vices in *Mankind* (ll. 332-43). But such incorporation of the spectator into the fiction suggests as much an anxious desire to assert a world of communal values as confidence that those values could be relied upon to promote an aesthetic belief which could then, in turn, re-confirm spiritual belief. It might be more subtle, more extensive, more varied in its methods, and indeed, as much celebratory as persuasive, but this medieval dramatic approach is still, in one respect, an attempt to put the spectator into the container lorry, in order to determine the nature of their seeing. By incorporating the spectators and their world into the play, the intention is that the spectator will more easily achieve the imaginative absorption which will pay ideological dividends, because he or she will see no alternative reality beyond the play or will, at the very least, think of that reality as coloured by the play. The assumption underlying all this over-determination of the spectator's response must be that spectatorship is *active* and spectators *choose* their level of absorption. The play is organised to influence that choice, precisely because there is no dependable link between belief in the sense of *croyance* and spectatorial belief in the sense of imaginative absorption. Each *may* lead to the other, but the connection is neither predictable nor inevitable, as can be seen if one studies stage "business".

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[1] Clare Bayley, *The Container*, produced by Nimble Fish in association with Underbelly Productions; winner of Amnesty International and Big Issue "2007 Freedom of Expression Award" at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

[2] See Sheingorn, *passim*.

Stage "business" demands from the spectator an aesthetic commitment which has no necessary ideological component. When it seems to be operating on its own terms, the stage world asserts its own reality and commands the assent of the spectator. Thus a character whose words or actions turn the play temporarily into a bravura display of theatrical dexterity is holding the spectators' attention, and asserting the logic of the stage world, without asking them to believe in anything—not even in the larger action which the play's fiction is supposedly representing. Seeing or hearing in these cases may fully absorb the spectator's attention, but this is an aesthetic "belief" in the play which is the stronger because no other kind of belief is being sought. On the other hand, the imaginative hold of stage business, by promoting the immediate reality of the stage in the imagination, can be used to assert stage logic as true, and thus to smuggle in ideological content. In a forthcoming paper, John Marshall has brilliantly shown how stage business might have been used in the Chester *Shepherds* play to resolve into an image of harmony the local racial antagonisms between English citizens and Welsh outsiders present in this border garrison town for commercial reasons. Among the groups sponsoring this play were the Glaziers: members of this guild, dressed as shepherds, walked on stilts at the Midsummer Show, and when the play's Banns were announced, and may have also deployed these theatrical skills in the play itself. If this was the case, then the belligerent Welsh shepherds they represented were culturally recuperated by their attractive theatrical presence and because the play merged their stage identity with that of the civic guild which was presenting them. At a spiritual level also, recuperation was achieved—by permitting the shepherds, whose interests otherwise are limited to food and sheep diseases, to acquire a modicum of Latin and the desire to become missionaries and hermits. This is a "feel-good" play, whose techniques of distraction, cultural appropriation, covert re-evaluation, visual ambivalence, and idealisation have clear parallels in much modern TV and film. It also reveals in its Chester sponsors an all-too-recognisable wish that imaginative absorption in entertainment should enable the spectator to adopt a happier view of the world.

Chester may have supplanted social antagonism with a theatrical harmony based on the supervening power of stage business. But drama's power to build ideologically upon the spectators' absorption depends ultimately on their willing cooperation with the actors' and author's skill. Achieving a deep imaginative participation is not a *sine qua non* of spectatorship, however valued it might be in literary-critical circles. What spectators want is what *they* want, and that may not always be absorption in the event. In contexts where it is possible to do so, people may adjust their relationship to the theatrical action, including their physical proximity to it, so as to predetermine the extent to which they will be absorbed by the event, and also to control any expectations of that involvement which other spectators might have of them. This in turn will limit the play's ideological command over their experience. Even in closed, blacked-out theatres, some spectators choose seats (within their financial capacity) to determine the experience they will have: on the end of a row, or directly in the centre; in the front stalls or a box. They may even do this to avoid the possibility of being physically involved in the action, if the genre of the play makes that likely. Outdoor events (such as medieval urban plays) offer even more scope for this.

At a Grand Pardon which I observed on 25 and 26 July 1996 in St. Anne d'Auray, Brittany, it was possible to discern spectatorial zones defined by distance from the processional route. Being present in these zones meant that one was declaring oneself, by relative closeness to the action, to be a particular kind of spectator.

These zones had notional thresholds, such as the kerb of a pavement, which the spectators themselves acknowledged. Whether one could sit down on the ground, or talk, or talk above a whisper, or move around, or leave the children to move around, or eat an ice-cream were all determined by one's choice of zone. It was also clear from the demeanour of the spectators that they were self-policing these zones, and that their presence in one rather than another might be a matter of compromise between their personal desires and circumstances. Thus a deeply believing spectator with young children might have to compromise personal involvement by standing far enough away from the procession to avoid causing offence if the children started to misbehave. Non-believers who saw in the event only a colourful ceremony ensured that they stood close enough to see but far enough back to avoid being forced to appear and behave as a participating believer. In this example, the full range of spectatorship was evident—from the closest, whose imaginative absorption was such that they had become in effect, actors, participating in the religious action, even if not in the actual procession, to the next circle of watchers, who might be described not just as witnessing but as *bearing witness* to the event, then to those who were simply witnessing it without that level of seriousness, and finally to those furthest away, who were looking at it with mild or quite disengaged curiosity. What was common to this spectatorship, however, was that all those present were *pre*determining the level of imaginative absorption which they would feel, and expressing geographically that liberty to adjust the nature of spectatorship which is more frequently exercised in the mind of the spectator.

Such decisions must surely have been made also by medieval spectators. But the exact nature of imaginative absorption in a play would also have been determined then, as now, by socio-economic factors and gender. A recent experiment, in which Heywood's *Play of the Weather* was performed in its original location in Hampton Court Great Hall, revealed how strongly forces of gender and status, realised through relative proximity to the king and the separation of sexes in the audience, would have varied the experience of the play for different spectators, and would have both controlled and liberated certain kinds of spectatorship.[3] At some points, for example, it might have been safer to *pretend* to be imaginatively engrossed in the play, rather than to show Henry VIII that one understood its meaning by turning to see how he was taking it. The dynamics of spectatorship are established not only by what is shown but by the presence of other spectators, and also by the spectator's consciousness of him or herself as an object of view. It is increasingly evident that to interpret a medieval or early modern play one must interpret those dynamics. The variety of spectatorial experiences at cycle plays makes this case clear. Theatrical engagement must have varied in nature and depth depending on where, with whom, and in what capacity spectators were situated; what they were also doing while watching (such as feasting, in the case of the York Council); and how they might be observed by other spectators. York's Dean and Chapter, for example, watched the plays from a room over the gates of the Minster Close.[4] The nature of their spectatorship was thus already defined by their authoritative elevation above events, and defined in their own minds as well as in the minds of those who watched them watching the plays. The liminality of their location and the reclusiveness of their situation would, in a sense, have separated them from any implication that what was shown could be specifically critical of them, but it might have also acted to intensify their experience of the plays as exemplary.

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[3] This performance was sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and took place 10 May 2007 under the direction of Tom Betteridge and Greg Walker.

One thinks also of the difference between, on the one hand, watching the York crucifixion from a spot in an upper room overhanging the playing place and, on the other, standing close to the pageant wagon at street level. Either spectator could have been deeply absorbed by the play—I do not think that this case is like that of the Pardon, with distance from the action mirroring engagement—but their experiences would have been very different.[5] The watchers in the solar room had a greater freedom to adjust between the scene as action and as contemplated image, but they bought that freedom by losing certain moments of theatrical intensity which could be enjoyed by others not so positioned. In effect, spectators *chose* the nature of their theatrical absorption—where it would occur and what kind of experience it would be—and did so for a variety of reasons within the constraints, financial opportunities and habits of their group. The spectators in the upper rooms lost, for example, the commanding moment when the cross is raised to visibility from an invisible position on the floor of the cart to appear with Christ nailed to it towering above the street-level spectator. That epiphany must surely have been a moment when the *street* spectator was imaginatively held by the action. On the other hand, spectators on the first floor would have then gained physical proximity to the crucified Christ, now raised far above street level, and would have had the sense that Christ's words, "Byholdes Myn heede, Myn handis, and My feete" (*Crucifixion*, l. 255), were actually being delivered straight into their living-room. That effect must have approximated the devotional imagery of Books of Hours. The spectator's situation would indeed have been closely analogous to that depicted in manuscript images, where the female owner of the book is shown privately looking through a window directly into the church where the Holy Family is sitting.[6] However theatrically powerful the physical action of the crucifixion in the York play, some of the spectators, particularly women of a particular class, would have come to the play with imaginations already shaped by the static devotional image, a habit of physical contact with such images (to the extent of kissing depictions of the wound in Christ's side), and for some, if not many, a wish to experience anew and in company devotional pleasures they had enjoyed elsewhere or in previous exposure to this or other plays.

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[4] The York *A/Y Memorandum Book* for 1417 describes the tenth station as "at the end of Stonegate at the gate of the Minster of the Blessed Peter" (*Records of Early English Drama: York*, 2: 713).

[5] Domestic architecture suggests it as highly likely that some watched the plays from upper rooms, and this is supported by the disputes which arose from home owners' desire to have the play stations outside their premises. The *A/Y Memorandum Book* for 1417 states that "in all the years following while this play is played, it must be played before the doors and holdings of those who have paid better and more generously to the Chamber and who have been willing to do more for the benefit of the whole commons for having this play there" (*Records of Early English Drama: York*, 2: 714).

Theatrical absorption, where it occurs, is demonstrably a willed action on the part of the spectator and almost certainly an intermittent form of engagement with the play. Any spectatorial belief in dramatic reality which results from this absorption must therefore be understood in relation to the spectatorial need which drove it in the first place. For example, desire, anxiety, and unrecognised compulsions must have deeply affected the spectatorship of *Massacre of the Innocents* plays, with their sexualised violence hovering on the edge of comedy and horror, the phallic symbolism of the weapons, including the women's distaffs, and the recognisable domesticity of their street abuse. Personal susceptibility to the actions and themes being presented would have partly determined where a spectator became absorbed in the action and when they remembered their spectatorship, mentally standing back from the event. Such sensitivities in some spectators would also have individually inflected the communal, gender-based, cuckold comedy of *Joseph's Trouble about Mary*. The English biblical plays deal with potent contemporary issues, and the evidence of the plays themselves is that medieval spectators must have gone to have fantasies intensified, explored, satisfied, controlled, and made safe. By implication, the nature of spectators' belief in the action before them, and the times at which they exercised their liberty to disengage from absorption in order to reflect self-consciously on what they were seeing, must have been determined by these desires and fears.

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[6] See, e.g., "The Hours of Mary of Burgundy", fols. 14^{v} and 43^{v}, both of which use this "window" motif, the first showing a woman, possibly Mary herself, looking into a church scene, and the second, more pertinent to the present case, though without a depicted spectator, directly onto the historical scene of the crucifixion. The first shows a woman, possibly Mary herself, looking into a church where the Holy Family is seated. The second positions the *reader* as the spectator, looking through a window from the medieval world directly onto the historical scene of the crucifixion.

Frantz Fanon has given an account of his own different experiences of viewing Tarzan films at home in Martinique, where he identified with Tarzan against the villainous Negroes, whom he regarded as African, and then seeing the same films in Europe, where he felt the white spectators' gazes identifying him as the black man, fellow to Tarzan's enemies. Fanon then felt a compulsion to revisit this construction of his identity by seeing the films again and again.[7] It is surely reasonable to consider that such issues of identity would have arisen with medieval plays. One might *assume* that a Jew would have avoided the biblical plays, but equally he might have been driven, as Fanon was, to see himself and his co-religionists portrayed, even if (or possibly *because*) they were portrayed with enmity. He could well have rejoiced in the Abraham and Isaac plays, but have mentally censored their typological reference. Would he have felt the gaze of Christian spectators? One might think that this particular problematic would have been rare, but it could have been less rare than we think, especially on the continent. And other non-racial versions of this problem must have been frequent. One thinks of the complex spectatorship of a local magistrate viewing plays which opposed earthly authority to the heavenly, but located the conflict in a recognisable version of his own late-medieval courtroom, with all the legal language he was accustomed to use in his court-room business, as in the York Passion sequence. One thinks also of the churchman seeing Christ's clerical enemies dressed in contemporary Christian vestments. We know for a fact that one of the earliest Scottish reforming plays did take the next step—*explicitly* identifying Caiaphas, Annas and the Pharisees spiritually with the modern clergy, in whose vestments the actors had been traditionally dressed (John Knox, cited by Mill, p. 291). A clerical spectator's aesthetic engagement with plays must have been affected by such pressures, and the nature of his imaginative absorption would have altered as a consequence. For spectators who felt personally or professionally defensive about the plays' message, spectating may have been less a matter of achieving imaginative absorption in the reality of the play than of managing spectatorship itself as a penitential act.

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[7] This is discussed in Christian, pp. 221 and 225-26. See also "retrospectatorship" in White, pp. 194-216.

The decision to spectate is a decision to act, and to act in a way which has consequences. Drama has long been thought of as collaborative: spectators in a sense give licence to the performer by attending; they give encouragement by applause; they may control their consciousness of extraneous details so as to preserve the illusion of the play.[8] They may be conscious *ab initio* that the act of watching has got ethical implications, and may manage their spectatorship, including the possibility of being absorbed in the show, with such considerations in mind. This becomes particularly obvious, for example, when films show violence.[9] It is true even of well-intentioned televised crime documentaries, which re-enact offences in order to catch criminals but, in doing so, also entertain through mimesis. Recent legislation in the area of child pornography has reversed traditional notions of the spectator as passive recipient of images, and has argued that the spectator's desire to watch encourages the production of the abuse on which it is based. In this respect, modern law is beginning to approach the more sophisticated view of causation held in the Middle Ages: while the image may be the *formal* cause of the spectator's experience, that experience is the *efficient* cause of the image. Recent arguments about the propriety of representing the story of Anne Frank in a musical indicate how the ethics of spectatorship are inflected by genre, and are not simply to do with whether watching is a legitimate act in itself.[10] But in some contexts, where watching can be interpreted politically as bestowing a kind of licence, and maybe even more—a bearing of witness to the legitimacy of what is seen—the only sanction left to the dissenting potential spectator may be "not to see": to turn off the television, to refuse to attend an execution, and so on, and, if they feel strongly enough about it, and if they are able to manage it, to ensure that others "see" their refusal.

If spectatorship is a special kind of action, it follows that the strange combination of absorption and self awareness which the spectator feels when engaged in this action is also special. One does indeed feel that the self-consciousness which attends spectatorship is different from the self-consciousness which attends normal activities. When I look at the countryside passing by the train window, I may also be aware that I am looking at it. I just don't think that my looking is interesting or relevant to the experience, nor that it is a *part* of the experience. Neither is my self-awareness of looking a significant part of the experience. Looking is simply the means by which I see the countryside, and occasional self-consciousness about it is just the consequence of ego or habits of thought. However, the term "theatre", as we know, derives from *theatron*, the place from which the seeing was done, not the location where what was seen took place. And, in a theatrical context, where the event is specifically provided for one's notice, "looking" seems more significant as an action; our self-consciousness of that action, far from being an interruption of the experience, and far less an obstacle to absorption in the experience, is a necessary concomitant of its significance.

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[8] Elam describes these as "transactional conventions" (p. 88).

[9] See, for example, Cubilié's section entitled "Ethics in the Field?"

[10] Anne Frank's only surviving relative complained that other genres were acceptable because more "realistic". See van Gelder.

The collaboration fundamental to theatre rests on the shared assumption that both doing and seeing are active parts of the event. Both those on the stage and those watching are active in the event; without one, the other has no meaning. A spectator is conscious in advance that his or her looking will be an important part of the experience, not just the means by which the event will be "consumed". The onlookers at the Grand Pardon who kept at a distance were not just controlling the effect of the event on them, but also the significance which their watching would have for themselves and for anyone who observed them as spectators. They were resisting any demand that their watching was part of the event itself. It is hard to conceive of a deliberately public act in which someone is not expected to take on the role of a spectator and thus be implicated in the event. The spectatorial role may vary in extent, nature, or significance from genre to genre: at the ritualistic end of theatricality (as opposed to drama), a funeral or even a mass, for example, the action does not absolutely *require* spectators to take place, though, in fact, funerals were among the most striking public performances in the early modern period and still have that status in some communities, and it is only the Orthodox Mass that can proceed without a lay communicant. But the closer one gets to what we would call plays, the more the event demands, from the outset, not just to be seen but to be consciously and publicly witnessed. Self-consciousness about spectating is thus not that normal awareness of self which happens all the time anyway, but an aspect of the activity which is required of the spectator, and upon which the whole event depends.

Temporary periods of imaginative absorption, when one is wholly engrossed in the play and lost to all but its ongoing sensations, give way inevitably to the spectator's returning awareness that he or she is a watcher, that spectatorship is part of the *final* cause of the performance, and that therefore the self-consciousness of watching is proper to the action of spectating, not a distraction from the true business of being absorbed.

Because spectators are purposely given something which they have purposely chosen to receive, their looking becomes part of the event, not just the means of experiencing it, and drama thus stages both events *and* the perceiving of them. The experience is of necessity a binary of imaginative engagement in the events as they go by and reflective self-consciousness about viewing them. But which of these conditions has primacy in the experience of spectatorship? If one of them might be considered entailed by the other, the paradoxical condition of spectatorship proposed at the outset of this paper could be resolved within the definition of a "Hegelian" reconciliation, as posited by Žižek: "not … an immediate synthesis or reconciliation of opposites, but … the redoubling of the gap or antagonism—the two opposed moments are 'reconciled' when the gap that separates them is posited as inherent to one of the terms" (Žižek, p. 106). But it is hard to see that either absorption or self-conscious reflection, both of which are apparently interdependent and inevitable phases within the same action of spectating, could be considered the superordinate term, or that activity which contains both itself and its opposite. Certainly, I would argue that the distinctive quality of spectatorship is not that it permits imaginative absorption in the action or the world of the play. It has this power in common with many activities. But the same is true of self-consciousness of one's actions. One might suggest, instead, that the key term for exploring the paradoxes of spectatorship is "adjustment"—a term which at once reflects the spectator's sense of kinesis and of unforeseen changing experience, while also carrying within itself the notion of measurement, of a capacity to identify, within the flux, the separate stages through which the spectator moves, such as, for example, phases of absorption or self-conscious reflection.

Spectators know that, when they see a play, they are embarking on a process of constant adjustment. If anything, that adjustment is drama's enhancement of the ordinary processes of change which one encounters in everyday living. Just as the ordinary processes of looking, and being self-conscious of one's action, become individually and mutually charged with significance in the theatrical event, so the process of living with change is fore-grounded by theatre through its demand that the spectator adjust between the stimuli which it offers. In Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, Lady Philosophy says, "in this day to day life you live no more than in that moving and transitory moment" (p. 423 [6.16-18]). Drama, on the other hand, powerfully asserts the sensation of the passing moment, mirroring the passage of time through a sequence of events which it presents to its spectators as meaningfully sequenced, requiring that the spectator acknowledges the potential significance of that sequence, but, most fundamentally, demanding that the spectator *bears witness* to the theatrical event by adjusting to its changing demands. Bearing witness to drama is not just a matter of highly-charged looking; it is a commitment to the "life" of the drama in its demands on the spectator to adjust between states. Frequently that adjustment is between moments of imaginative absorption and moments of reflective self-consciousness, but it is implicit in all aspects of the experience. It is also present in the pleasure of mimesis itself, when one acknowledges the gap between the dramatic event and that which it represents. The spectator enjoys adjusting between the representation and what seems to be represented; between attention to the character *and* awareness of the actor. Just as one takes pleasure in an old building because its verticals and horizontals are no more than allusions towards an ideal verticality and horizontality, so one becomes self-conscious of theatrical mimesis in order to enjoy it sometimes *as an allusion*, not just as the illusion achieved when the spectator is wholly absorbed in the action.

Medieval and early modern drama seems to promote adjustment rather than absorption as the leading characteristic of spectatorship, and does so at all levels of its activity. For a final example of this, I would choose the *Killing of Abel*, by the Wakefield Master in the *Towneley Cycle*, which, in a very short space of time, takes the spectator through a series of quite bizarrely different and mutually inconsistent conceptions of the event, and of Cain himself. Over 476 lines, Cain changes from a mythic figure out of the folk world of plough plays and men dressed as animals into a character from biblical narrative. He then passes through a series of recognisable contemporary identities: a bad-tempered neighbour, a bad tither, a flamboyantly cruel master. He then becomes the mouthpiece for the spectator's *own* rebellious thoughts, and thus their surrogate. Finally, he takes the audience through major tonal shift: first as an entertainer whose stage business is conducted with sheaves of corn, then as the first murderer, and eventually as a comic stooge who is made fun of by his apprentice. As a consequence, the spectator repeatedly has to adjust between action, enaction, exemplification, rhetorical play, narrative representation, and game. Cain moves in and out of focus as a Biblical or contemporary character, and the world of the play similarly shifts between localisable, definable space and spaces which are ambiguous in reference or are just the play space itself. The many different kinds of action are imaginatively engrossing, but it is in the adjustments between them that one finds the distinctive pleasure of this dramatic spectatorship, and these adjustments cannot be managed without both imaginative involvement and self-conscious reflection. Early drama thus suggests that we need in one sense to pass beyond the binary of absorption and action with which this paper started, but also to re-instate it as a dual force within the fundamental processes of adjustment which characterise theatre.

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Playing the Monster: Changing Conventions in the Wit Plays

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In early modern times the belief in wonders and miracles was increasingly questioned, especially on the religious level. In his *Dialogue Concernynge Heresyes* (1528) Sir Thomas More, while talking with the Messenger, his fictitious interlocutor, stresses the role of reason and nature in the process of believing in God's miracles, and the relevance of one's eyes in the acceptance of the truth of events:

> In good faith quod I, I mene good ernest now, and yet as wel as ye dare trust me, I shal as I said if ye wyll go with me prouide a couple of witness of whome ye wyll beleue any one better than twaine of me, for they be your nere frendes and ye have been better acquainted with them, and such as I dare say for they be not often wont to lye. Who be they, quoth he I pray you. Mary, quod I, your owne two eyen. (More, p. 127, col. 2 [bk. 1, chap. 6])

According to More, to see something corresponds to believing in its truth, unless there is evidence of falseness.[1] The focus of the whole treatise is the belief in the veneration of saints and the role of images and pilgrimages in religion, so deeply controversial after the beginning of the Reformation.[2] More is not concerned with "natural" wonders, such as monstrous births and fabulous creatures, but his stress on the correct use of one's eyes in detecting truth and falseness can be transferred to the world of nature, especially when—as happened in later decades—the new geographic and scientific discoveries started to call "all in doubt", thus questioning the link between seeing and believing. What medieval travellers had written about far-off lands and their inhabitants began to be put to trial, because for the fanciful eyes of the former new scientifically modern eyes were substituted, eyes that dissolved the aura of mystery and monstrosity grown around what was far and unknown. Nevertheless, the Renaissance continued to trust collections of images of monsters and strange creatures. (For example, as late as 1581 Stephen Batman published *The doome warning all men to the iudgemente wherein are contayned for the most parte all the straunge prodigies hapned in the worlde, with diuers secrete figures of reuelations tending to mannes stayed conuersion towardes God,* "in maner of a generall chronicle"—as the title goes on to declare—where historical events are still linked to portentous signs, and where sciapods and pygmies are listed, and the images of Siamese twins and hairy children are engraved.) Cheaply printed broadsides (but rich in illustrations), on the other hand, widely contributed to the diffusion of news about curious beings and events, so that what had been "seen" by somebody might be believed by many. Print, in its turn, helped enormously to spread images that once were relegated to expensive illuminated manuscripts. Furthermore, "print created a great need for sensational materials to be broadcast, and this need caused ideas that formerly had been lurking in the dark recesses of men's minds to come floating to the surface" (Smith, pp. 280-81). Showing monsters, then, was a way to make people believe in them, even if "the Renaissance was less interested in the far-off monstrous races of Africa and Asia than in the monsters they could see about them—anomalous births, strange events, occurrences contrary to nature" (Smith, p. 267).

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[1] When commenting on the Messenger's tale about two false miracles, More is so strict and severe as to invoke the stake for the abusers (p. 134, col. 1 [1.14]).

[2] For the continuing debate about the interrelation of fact and evidence in religion up to the eighteenth century, see Daston.

All of the three so called "Wit plays" have a monster among their characters, slightly differently defined in the various texts: what follows in this article is devoted to enquiring what creature it is and what its role is within these more-or-less mid-sixteenth-century plays. This monster lives in the world of drama, and is therefore shown to, and seen by, its spectators as fictitious, an "unbelievable" creature only theatre can make "real". Performance substitutes for print, then, in satisfying the Renaissance need for sensation.

I. The Three Plays

A manuscript datable before 1550 (B.M. Add. MS 15233) contains a partially incomplete dramatic text (what remains consists of 1106 lines) whose colophon states title and author: "Thus endyth the play of Wit and Science made by Master Ihon Redford". Little is known of this man, but it is possible to locate him culturally and historically: he was St Paul's choirmaster between 1531 and 1547 (the year of his death), and almost certainly he wrote *Wit and Science* for a children's performance in front of the court or of a courtly audience.

In 1569 the Stationers' Register recorded the licence for printing of an anonymous play entitled *The Marriage of Wit and Science* (1563 lines),[3] later attributed to Sebastian Westcott, who was Redford's successor at St Paul's (perhaps as early as 1548).[4]

Another, later, manuscript appears to be the handwritten copy of a lost printed play, *The Marriage between Wit and Wisdom* by Francis Merbury (B.M. Add. MS. 26782*, c.* 1579), a text which seems to be addressed, not to a courtly or school audience, but to a popular one, and whose players are not children, as is the case for the previous two works. With regard to this version, David Bevington observes that "Perhaps the most fascinating inference to be drawn … is that the dramatist apparently felt it necessary to rewrite the 'Wit and Science' plot for the conventions of the popular stage" (p. 23). This manuscript (770 lines) offers the doubling scheme, a device that was not necessary when a play was performed by a school group, given the abundance of students available. Trevor Lennam does not totally agree with this position, and—taking into consideration Merbury's permanent situation at Cambridge University[5]—maintains that this play also was written for students: "It is doubtful that he [Merbury] wrote it for the popular stage. On the other hand, the supposed printed version, in so far as it is reflected by the existing manuscript, may well have been arranged to make its appeal to a small professional troupe and to audiences that such a company would entertain" (Lennam, *Sebastian Westcott*, p. 111).

Certainly, it is possible to suppose the existence of a much more complete and consistent text, of which what survives is but a mangled version, adapted for a popular audience. Nevertheless, the very survival of *this* text may be attributed to a contemporary reception more favourable than that reserved for the hypothetical first version of the play. When compared with the two other Wit-entitled plays, Lennam admits, *The Marriage between Wit and Wisdom* "quickly loses interest in the pedagogical allegory" (Sebastian Westcott, p. 110), whereas Hanna Scolnicov maintains that this play is such a coherent "humanist parable" as to express "the educational ideals of humanism" (p. 1). Lennam, for his part, after highlighting that the text as we have it shows a certain weariness of the humanist educational themes, declares that the plot changes from Wit's adventures to the Vice Idleness's intrigues.

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[3] Actually, the number of lines is smaller, since Lennam, whose edition is used here, assigns a number also to speech headings, stage directions and act and scene divisions.

[4] See Lennam, *Sebastian Westcott*, p. 14.

[5] See Lennam, "Francis Merbury", p. 210.

Within a forty-year period, then, English culture produced three plays overtly related to each other, which showed the audience's particular interest in their topic and their transformation of it. An interest also manifested in the 1590s, when William Shakespeare, Anthony Munday, Thomas Dekker, Thomas Heywood, and Henry Chettle wrote *The Book of Sir Thomas More*. In Scene Nine of that play, when a company of strolling players visiting More's house offers to perform a play from a list they quote, More exclaims:

> *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom*! That, my lads,
> I'll none but that; the theme is very good,
> And may maintain a liberal argument:
> To marry wit to wisdom, asks some cunning;
> Many have wit, that may come short of wisdom. (ix.64-68)

Even if the play-within-a play performed later by the "four men and a boy" of the little company will result in a *collage* of various dramatic texts,[6] More's enthusiastic choice of this title testifies to its familiarity to the 1590s authors, and to the links between the title role and the humanist content of the plot.

The overt intertextuality of the three interludes ("a fortunate survival", in Happé's words [*English Drama*, p. 144]) is shown first of all by their titles, which mirror the main theme of the plot, so that the three plays, all of them interludes, offer a real workshop of intertextual transformations able to provoke genre variants, and also changes which can be attributed to cultural attitudes at large.[7]

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[6] See Happé, ed., *Tudor Interludes*, pp. 417-18.

[7] The three plays are analysed as an *unicum* in English drama by Spivack, Habicht ("The Wit Interludes" and *Studien*), Mullini, and Norland. Scherb has recently devoted a long article to Redford's interlude only; for *Wit and Science*, see also Lombardo.

II. The Variants in the Plot

The events of *Wit and Science* and those of *The Marriage of Wit and Science* are very similar: Wit, a young student, wants to marry Lady Science, but before achieving this goal, he has to defeat her most terrible enemy, Tediousness. At the first rough duel with Tediousness, Wit is left dead on the ground, but he is soon revived by Honest Recreation, only to fall into Idleness's lap, who blackens his face and dresses him like a fool with Ignorance's costume. Helped by the "glass of reason" given him by Reason (the girl's father), Wit can recognise his situation and get ready to fight with Tediousness once more. The enemy is beaten and beheaded, and the interlude ends with the encounter of the protagonist with Science. *The Marriage of Wit and Science* differs from its direct hypotext because of its division into acts and scenes and, especially, the presence of Wit's young and cheeky servant called Will, who has a relevant part in the play also as love messenger between Wit and Science.

The Marriage between Wit and Wisdom, on the other hand, presents various differences from the previous texts: first, the names of some characters are changed (among them Tediousness is "translated" into Irksomeness); then, the action has a mainly episodic structure, pivoting around Idleness ("the Vice" of the play, a man and not the female character of the other two interludes). Irksomeness is quickly defeated offstage, while the plot thickens with the misfortunes of the Vice himself, so that this interlude also shows the decline of this character, since—instead of being the main device of the action—Idleness becomes the victim of minor thieves, newly introduced. Obviously, allegory remains the principal feature in all three interludes, together with their humanist and pedagogical interests, but it is clear that, especially in the latest example, things have undergone significant cultural changes, the allegorical layer being mainly limited to the characters' names.

Love and adventures are the main aspects of the romantic plot in all three interludes, which also verge on folk drama for the quick reviving of the title hero. According to Spivack, Wit resembles an errant knight, Lady Science is "a proper damosel of romance", and Tediousness is "a Saracen Knight [who] swears by Mahound" (p. 219). The latest version of the story incorporates characters and language from a lower world than the humanist milieu of the other two interludes, while making full use of the dramatic qualities of the Vice, including his capacity for disguise (Idleness boasts of being able to be "all colours like the chameleon").[8]

III. Monsters and Giants

In *Wit and Science* Tediousness is called "your enmye" by Instruction at line 79, and "that tyrant" by Wit (l. 81). He is said to be able "to brayne or to gore ye" (l. 80), and, on his first appearance, he is introduced by the following stage direction: "*Tedyousnes cumth in with a vyser over hys hed*" (l. 140). In his monologue of self-introduction (ll. 141-92), he often mentions his body both as a whole and in its parts, as if to attract the audience's gaze to his physical aspect (a monstrous body?), complaining that some "kaytyves" are disturbing him out of his own "nest" (ll. 142, 146). He also laments that he is sweating "in my skin" (l. 182), thus introducing a subtle metatheatrical dimension, since the phrase simultaneously refers to the character and to the actor's costume, the latter encumbering the player with its weight and thickness. Taken all together, what Tediousness says about himself and what the stage direction suggests make him a visually striking spectacle: he has a "head" and a visor on it, is covered with a heavy "skin", goes about the playing area shaking his "ioyntes" and "lynkes" (l. 167), speaks of his "nose" (later called "snowte" [l. 217]), and menaces with killing—actually with beheading—those who disturb him ("Of goth thy hed / At the first blo!" [ll. 190-91]). He is also armed with a club (he threatens to hit Wit with "this mall" [l. 161]), and blunders through the audience shouting, "Make roome, I say! / Rownd evry way!" (ll. 175-76), like a mummer. Towards the end of the play he is called "feend" (l. 956), a term connecting him with the devil. He boasts of his strength, exactly like a tyrant or evil character in the mystery cycles (Herod, perhaps?), and swears "by Mahowndes" (l. 214, 216), exactly like Herod in the N-Town *Death of Herod*, the Coventry *Shearmen and Taylors' Play*, and the York *Slaughter of the Innocents*, thus signalling that he is a non-Christian, perhaps a "Saracen knight" indeed, as stated by Spivack.[9] As for his vocabulary, it is not romantic at all: Science is called "drab" and "whore" (ll. 155-56), showing in this way that the speaker is against all romance, or rather that he is the classic opponent in a romantic story. Besides that, he employs the Vice's and the devil's way of expressing either wrath or joy ("oh, oh, oh"),[10] which links him back to the moral play tradition. Finally, he is killed offstage, after which "*Wyt cumth in, and bryngth in the hed upon his swoorde*" (l. 964 SD). After all this, one can legitimately wonder what kind of character Tediousness is. But before trying to answer this question, the other two plays must also be taken into consideration, in order to see whether the characteristics of Tediousness outlined by *Wit and Science* remain the same from text to text or are somehow changed.

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[8] The text of *The Marriage between Wit and Wisdom* is quoted from Merbury, ed. Wickham. For a detailed analysis of the changes in the plot, see Mullini, pp. 103-10.

[9] See Velz and Daw, pp. 637-38, for the characterisation of Tediousness as Herod.

In *The Marriage of Wit and Science* it is Science herself who first speaks of Tediousness. Even before naming him, she calls him "enemy" and "mortal foe" (l. 687), and some lines later she explains to Wit:

> Hear out my tale: I have a mortall foe
> That lurketh in the woode hereby, as you come and goe,
> That monstrous Giant beares a grudge to me and mine,
> And wyll attempt to kepe you back from this desire of thine.
> The bane of youth, the roote of ruin and destres,
> Devouring those that sue to me, his name is Tediousness. (ll. 700-5)

Continuing her speech, Science attributes "strong hands" (l. 708) and "rage" (l. 717) to this "monster", and says that in a year "ten thousand suters" have been destroyed (l. 711), thus adding a fabulous quality to Tediousness; she also asks Wit to bring her Tediousness' head after the fight (l. 720), and, in a following speech, adds that the monster's might is great and that he "is monstrous to behoulde" (l. 737). He lives in a "deadly denne … in drowsy darkness hydde" (l. 946, 948) and is armed with a club (l. 1486). His language is not so offensive as his predecessor's, but he similarly boasts and uses the "hoh, hoh!" expression to underline his own words (ll. 967, 980). Just before their second fight, Wit also calls him "monster fell" (l. 1476) and Tediousness declares his will to devour his enemies ("I will eate them by morsels two and two" [l. 1483]). The "Giant" is killed and beheaded on stage, and his head (of which no mention has been made in the text, apart from Science's general observation that he is "monstrous to behold"[11]), is hoisted onto Wit's spear (l. 1524).

In *The Marriage between Wit and Wisdom*, Wit's father, Severity, when advising his son about the perils of his enterprise, calls Irksomeness "a monster fell" (l. 71). The character arrives only after l. 414 (Scene Three), coming out of his "den" to fight with Wit (who, in this play, succumbs quite quickly to his enemy, remaining dead "*on the stage*" [l. 419 SD]): the stage direction says nothing but "*Irksomeness enter like a monster and shall beat down Wit with his club*" [l. 414 SD]). Irksomeness' speech is very short (four lines only), and its main feature, I think, is the first line, "What wight is that which comes so near his pain?" (l. 415), for its linguistic and rhythmic choices, since it is alliterative and contains a word ("wight") more typical of Middle English romances than of the late 1570s. Soon, after thirty-odd lines (in this play Wit's resurrection, too, takes a very short time and is limited to a brief healing encounter between Wit and Wisdom), Wit is ready to attack Irksomeness for the second time. The two exchange a short dialogue, then

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[10] See Débax.

[11] Unfortunately, this interlude has scant original stage directions, and none relevant for the gestures and appearance of Tediousness.

> Here they fight awhile, and Irksomeness must run in a-doors, and Wit shall follow, taking his visor off his head, and shall bring it upon his sword, saying [*Wit.*] The Lord be thanked for his grace, this monster is subdued. (l. 456)

As is clear from these notes, if, on the one hand, the character is overtly called "monster"—thus getting an ontological status, so to speak—on the other hand, he is deprived of most of the features he is endowed with in the other two interludes. What we know of Irksomeness is that he has a visor over his head; he is very similar, then, to his namesake in *Wit and Science*, as if to stress the continuity of a performing tradition about the representation of monsters and the like, especially the devil (Titivillus in *Mankind* is "A man wyth a hede þat ys of grett omnipotens" [l. 461]). What is interesting is that the stage directions mention a *stage*, i.e., a well-defined playing area, by using a word more appropriate for the newly authorized public playhouses of the 1570s than for St Paul's school hall, where the performances of both *Wit and Science* and *The Marriage of Wit and Science* supposedly took place.

IV. Playing the Monster

From the previous lists of features, one can observe that Tediousness/Irksomeness belongs to the long series of monsters in which the Middle Ages is so rich. But he is a syncretic monster, so to speak, since he is a giant and a cannibal, according to Westcott's play, a woodwose and, why not, a green man (if not a Green Knight!). His appearance must be "monstrous", his height taller than human beings', his body very probably hairy or leafy, his weapon a club. The "wondrous Middle Ages" still live on during the Renaissance (as is testified by the many treatises devoted to this cultural aspect),[12] even if "monsters" are progressively losing their menacing Otherness. Monsters are still used as a way to visualize contemporary fears (e.g., of witches), in spite of all the new discoveries and travel literature which confirm that the new lands are not inhabited by the mythical monsters described in the Middle Ages. The many illuminated sources for our ideas of medieval monsters testify that "seeing is believing"—so much so that, when on a stage, a "monster" keeps all its imaginative power, because the performance substitutes for any drawing or illumination. It is the show to which a monster is transferred which is responsible for the visualization of terribleness. It is necessary, then, for the actor playing the monster to wear a costume able to work on the spectators' imagination.

Wild men are common in medieval manuscripts, and so are green men in sculptures and bas-reliefs, but certainly, precisely because of its spectacular origin, what is most famous is the illumination from Jean Froissart's *Chroniques* (*c.* 1450-80) portraying the incident that occurred on 28 January 1397 at the court of Charles VI of France, when a group of persons dressed in wild men's costumes caught fire and died. The well-known "Bal des Ardents" shows that the mummers wore costumes made of green stuff (coloured threads, furs, but also rushes, perhaps), and matching head-gear.[13] The size of the unfortunate players does not appear to be, at least in the illuminations I have seen, larger than that of the people surrounding them. Later images of woodmen can be seen in German culture, but their size is always "human", as it were.[14] If, on the one hand, we can rely on these pictorial sources in order to visualize the costume of Tediousness, on the other, something must be added, precisely that on which the three interludes so much insist—that is, the monster's head. Actually, such a device, beyond showing the character's monstrosity, also increases the actor's height, since it is not a simple visor to be worn on the actor's face, but a big head, thus making a man into a "giant", to be detached later from Tediousness' body in the beheading.[15]

The English court was keen on pageants and disguisings with monsters and giants: documents relate, for example, that there were wild men in the "ryche

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[12] See, e.g., Boaistuau (1560), Paré (1573), and Aldrovandi (1642). It is worth noting, however, that in 1564 François Desprez had published his vast collection of engravings reproducing contemporary people from the various parts of the then-known world, including Brazilians, Africans and Asians, with no hint of wonders or strange features.

[13] There is more than one pictorial version of the event: see BL MS Harley 4380, fol. 1^r, and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Fonds Français 2646, fol. 176^r.

[14] See Kinser.

[15] The tradition of parading giants was well known all over Europe, and is still practised on many festive occasions.

Mount" prepared by Richard Gibson at Greenwich on 6 Janurary 1509; woodwoses in a masque on 4-5 June 1522; monsters and wild men in the Lord Mayor's water pageants for Ann Boleyn on 29 May 1533. Another document makes it clear that giants were made of wood and canvas.[16] Because of the school (if not courtly) performance of both *Wit and Science* and *The Marriage of Wit and Science*, one can surmise that similar structures were used also for the two interludes, or even hypothesize a direct use of props prepared for courtly festivities. If *The Marriage between Wit and Wisdom* was thought of for (or performed by) a troupe of strolling players, perhaps such apparatus was too cumbersome to be carried around the country and a simple larger-than-life head was sufficient to make a giant.[17] What is certain is that the "monster" has a detachable head and a visor, or only a visor to be shown at the end of the fight, in order to make the beheading manifest (and therefore credible), even if it actually takes place offstage.[18]

V. Conclusion

Tediousness/Irksomeness in the three Wit plays is not only that sort of syncretic creature which I have tried to bring forth from the texts: since, being Lady Science's enemy, he must be defeated by Wit, he also occupies the role of the dragon in the popular story of St George, the iconography of which is ample and might have been drawn upon for a rendering in performance. At the same time, Tediousness in *Wit and Science* makes use of the entry style of folk drama, thus reminding the audience of exactly that kind of performance (which is also very much present in the "resurrection" of Wit by means of Honest Recreation's song).[19] Besides that, he employs the Vice's and the devil's way of speaking, which links him with the moral play tradition, even if the pedagogical milieu in which the original play was born tends to transform allegory into metaphor. Tediousness is neither the devil nor a Vice, nor the Turkish knight of folk drama, but the educational interludes embed all the traits of these previous (and contemporary) roles and sub-genres to represent the story of learning under the guise of other well-known plots: "learning is like morality play salvation or like a chivalric quest" (Cartwright, p. 55). Furthermore, one must not forget that both Redford and Westcott were school teachers, almost certainly proud of the performing abilities of their pupils: to play the monster was surely a feat for a child, and both schoolmasters "had a primary purpose of displaying the talents of their young performers" (Mills, p. 164).[20]

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[16] See Lancashire, pp. 141n702, 143n717, 198n1016, 292n1550. See Duffy for connections between *Wit and Science* and court disguisings.

[17] Actually, in Meg Twycross's production with the Joculatores Lancastrienses (1993), Tediousness—with a head which made him taller than the other characters—wore a rough unnaturally bluish-grey fur, had a long red nose, a big mouth, goggled white eyes, and bones hanging from his waist. There was also a little branch of ivy (or another green plant) stuck in his long hair (or beard): all this contributed to suggesting the syncretism of the "creature" as a cruel anthropophagus, a woodwose, and a green man.

[18] Craik, p. 53, observes that "in all three plays he [the monster] has a false head" and that, besides *Three Ladies of London* (*c.* 1581), the "Wit plays" are the only examples of Tudor interludes which specify "the use of vizards and false heads". For the construction of masks and heads, see Twycross and Carpenter, esp. pp. 311-26.

[19] See Axton and Petitt.

Tediousness in *Wit and Science* is the best developed monster of all, but some features are also added to the character by the later adaptations of the play, such as his being a cannibal and a monster—better, a monstrous giant—by *The Marriage of Wit and Science*. This latter detail may well be a metatheatrical aside referring to a very tall chorister who played the role, in a cast formed by such young boys (when asked by Science about his age, Will says he is "between eleven and twelve" [l. 467]).

In the Table (see Appendix), I have listed (in modernised form) words and phrases related to Tediousness/Irksomeness, so that recurrent items common to the three plays are highlighted. What strikes one most, beyond the significantly different number of lines reserved to this character in the three interludes, is that *Wit and Science* never calls him "a monster", while equipping him with other interesting features concerning his appearance and language. On the contrary, *The Marriage of Wit and Science* stresses Tediousness' monstrosity, the only characteristic of his later inherited by Irksomeness. Among the three "monsters", Irksomeness appears to be a stage freak, there only for the sake of the old plot, marginalized by the new stories of petty thieves and prostitutes surrounding the Vice Idleness. All the chivalric aura still present in the previous interludes has been lost, together with the remnants of folk drama, while Merbury has been able to build up a text that draws on other contemporary "hits", such as *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, *Cambises* and *Misogonus*, reworking the now episodic plot for "public audiences (who demanded amusement rather than instruction in return for their money)" (Wickham, p. 164).

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[20] The present article was written before the publication of Mills's study of the "Wit plays", in which a wider perspective on the three interludes can be found, with special attention to the issue of the identity of the young protagonist.

To play the monster, then, seems to have lost all its allegorical and metaphorical strength in early Elizabethan times: Renaissance culture has progressively "destroyed" monsters and cleared the horizon of their menacing and fanciful presence.[21] Travel literature recorded no monsters in the colonies, so that a play written (and perhaps performed) in the late 1570s, while still paying homage to its old main source, cannot ask its audience to believe in its onstage monsters. What it does is simply to use one of them as an obsolete, fabulous and fairy-tale character, once necessary to the story of the nuptials between Wit and Science in a humanist and pedagogical environment, but no longer so for the new urbanized spectators made up of workers and apprentices. What can be noticed is that all three "Wit plays" represent a creature in whose existence Renaissance pedagogy did not believe any longer, and that—when another monster later appears on the English stage—it will be Caliban, repeatedly called "monster", but too human to be true, the real "thing of darkness" able to express the feeling of Otherness of the Renaissance, rather than a figment of the imagination.

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[21] In spite of all this, Smith speaks of "the monster-obsessed Renaissance", because "The monstrous races are still found in Renaissance geographies and histories" (pp. 268, 267). On monsters in early modern times, see also Huet, esp. pp. 13-35.

Appendix: The qualities of the "monster" in the Wit plays

Lines	**Tediousness in W&S***	Lines	**Tediousness in MWS***	Lines	**Irksomeness in MWW***
79	Enemy	687	Enemy	70	Enemy
80	"Brain or gore you"	687, 700, 1516	Mortal foe	71	Monster fell
81	Tyrant	701	Lurks in the wood	74, 75	Foe
140 (SD)	Visor over his head	702	Monstrous giant	414 (SD)	Den, like a monster, club
141, 148	"Body"	704	Bane of youth, root of ruin and distress	415	"What wight …"
146	"Nest"	705	Devours those…	455 (SD)	Visor off his head, [visor] on Wit's sword
155, 158, 163	"Drab"	708	Strong hands	456	Monster
156	"Whore"	710	Drowns in despair		
161	"Bones", "mall"	711	Destroyer of Science's suitors		
167	"Joints", "links"	714	Monster		
169	Shakes [his body]	717	Rage		
175	"Make room!"	720	Head		
182	"my skin"	727	Wretch, common foe		
190	Boasts	737	Monstrous to behold, full of might		
192	"Ho, ho, ho, ho"	946	Deadly den		
214, 216	"by Mahound"	948	hides in darkness		
217	"Snout"	948, 1476	Monster fell		
222	"Horeson"	967, 980	"Hoh, hoh, hoh!"		
956	Fiend	1483	Eats [people]		
956, 963	"Oh! ho! ho"	1486	"Club"		
964 (SD)	Head upon Wit's sword	1524	Head upon Wit's spear		
Lines spoken and %**	70,5 / 1106 (6,37%)		24,5 / 1563 (1,57%)		5,5 / 770 (0,71%)

* *W&S*: *Wit and Science*; *MWS*: *The Marriage of Wit and Science*; *MWW*: *The Marriage between Wit and Wisdom*

** The following totals include mostly full lines, but also the sum of half-lines attributed to the character. The percentages are calculated on the total number of lines per play.

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"…and that before mine eyes" (Cambises): The Furious Passion for Stage Images during the Tudor Period

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When Bottom emerges from his glimpse of life with Titania and her fairies, it might not be as far-fetched as one would think to suggest that his reaction to the "rare vision" (Shakespeare, IV.i.203) he has just seen is basically not unlike that of a Renaissance spectator after seeing the performance of a play. During his time in the forest, an unbelievable spectacle had unfolded before his eyes and enfolded him in its action. Indeed, he was like one of those especially privileged onlookers, common amongst early playgoers, who were drawn into the spectacle. The incredible sights paraded before his eyes seemed to leave him intrigued but on the whole unruffled.

Like many sixteenth-century spectators before him—fictional ones, like A and B in Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucrece*, and less fictional ones, such as the audience member asked by the eponymous character in Heywood's *Johan Johan* to clean his gown (ll. 250-57) or the young woman proposed to by Ambidexter in Preston's *Cambises* (l. 953)—Bottom participated gamely. An ungainly sight amongst so much daintiness, he allowed himself to be led across the invisible border separating spectacle and observers with bashful expectancy but cheerful acceptance. Taking all this novelty in his stride, even performing awkwardly when required, he still retained his spectator status, keeping his “self” resolutely intact. In the light of our present discussion about seeing and believing, we may reflect about the relationship between image and viewer and wonder how far the notion of belief is involved here. During the fairy performance, does Bottom believe his own eyes? And, once it is over, how much of this vision and his participation in it still has an effect on him? On a more general level, were sixteenth-century spectators supposed or even required to believe implicitly in what they saw? Was theatrical spectacle rendered more believable by the inclusion of an audience member? To what extent can we determine how playwrights handled the relationship between seeing and believing? How far can we imagine the lasting impact a play could have on its spectators?

In an effort to throw light on such matters, I should like to discuss the general terms of the proposition and its qualification, “Seeing is believing—or is it?”, in relation to the Tudor period. Then I shall cast a glance at what Tudor playwrights tended to want their audiences to see, attempting, finally, a few concluding speculations about the extent to which audiences may have believed, and even believed *in*, what they saw.

I

The difficulty in answering the question under discussion is already suggested by the manner in which it is posed. The arresting affirmation that seeing does indeed induce belief seems entirely logical when one considers, for example, the importance of eye witnesses in court cases or the fact that, when doubt is expressed, the declaration, “I saw it with my own eyes!”, is often deemed the ultimate proof. When the statement, “seeing is believing”, is applied to Renaissance drama, it seems to proclaim loud and clear the power of visual staging, brooking no argument against the idea that visual effects in the theatre at this time had enough impact to induce the complete adherence of an audience.

However, the statement is then undermined by the graphic hesitation and the tentative question, “—or is it?”, which follow rather like an afterthought. Doubt has set in: this somewhat diffident and halting double-take suddenly blurs all certainty and opens up a debate. Indeed, this juxtaposition is almost a mimesis of the way Tudor audiences could be completely convinced by a sudden flash of visual theatricality, only to come out of the illusion when, just as quickly, the magic fizzled out.

Such uncertainty about the application of the principle is not really surprising, in that, when we consider the medieval and Renaissance periods, we come up against rather a stumbling block concerning the yoking together of the two notions, seeing and believing. When we examine them separately, however, these terms do seem compatible: each of them concerns a vital aspect of life during these times, and both have religious implications.

First, concerning the term "seeing", we may note that Aristotle placed vision at the top of the hierarchy of the five human senses and emphasized that the path to knowledge was through perception of the visible world. Adepts of Aristotle ardently adhered to this hypothesis across the ages, and in the thirteenth century we find it echoed by Roger Bacon, who declared that "nothing is fully intelligible unless it is presented before our eyes" (Camille, pp. 21-22). This theory promoting optical and visual hegemony was borne out even on the most mundane practical levels, as, to a vastly greater degree than is the case today, the ability to observe and to glean meaning from visual signs was quite simply part of daily existence. The eye was an organ that also helped to decipher, to learn and to memorize, and scrutinizing the heavens and the world of nature in general was a vital survival skill. Furthermore, it is a well-known and well-documented fact that interpreting visual signs was fundamental in the practice of religion, and that the hegemony of visual codes led to a passion for images. As well as being profitably deciphered and interpreted, they could provide emotional comfort and sometimes even quasi-mystical experiences. In fact, the contemplation of statues, relics and holy pictures was considered a deeply meaningful act, which could initiate hours of meditation. Through the act of seeing, the faithful could feel close to God and the saints. They could also reinforce their beliefs by reflecting, for example, on particular aspects of Christ's suffering whilst seeking to attain a degree of compassion so deep as to induce a state of considerable emotion and even, on occasion, to provoke tears.

Whilst this was an experience available even to the most humble of Christians, wealthier ones could penetrate one step further into the depicted world by paying actually to appear in artistic representations of religious scenes. Seeing themselves side by side with Christ or rubbing shoulders with the saints in the thick of some biblical scene made them feel closer to God and to the salvation they believed in and so ardently desired. Some of these wealthy benefactors preferred to remain modestly on the borders of the paintings or to feature as miniature figures in the lower register of the picture, a tiny addition to the sacred event portrayed, as in *The Trinity and Mystic Pietà* of Grien. Others, however, had themselves boldly featured as life-size witnesses in close proximity with sacred and biblical figures, as is the case in *The Portarini Altarpiece* of Van der Goes.

It cannot be ignored however, that once the Reformation began, this essentially Catholic passion for religious images was undermined by successive waves of Protestant iconoclastic fever. It became commonplace for those who disapproved of holy pictures and statues to consider them as the equivalent of pagan idols and to advocate their total elimination. But it says much for the strength of this passion that campaigns of wholesale destruction, and the threat of dire punishments for offenders, particularly during Edward VI's reign, failed to eradicate the phenomenon. Unsurprisingly, when Mary came to the throne, hoarded images and cult objects soon emerged from their hiding places. On Elizabeth's succession, the destruction recommenced, but to a much lesser degree, as the queen disapproved of ardent iconoclasts and, despite much pleading on the part of dismayed Protestants to persuade her to the contrary, she even retained a cross and candlesticks in her own chapel. Furthermore, Martin Luther himself had an ambivalent attitude towards religious images. At first totally against them, he later came to tolerate them as long as they were not worshipped in place of God, and he even allowed his translation of the New Testament to be illustrated.

The extreme lengths to which image breakers were ready to go in order to achieve their objectives bears witness to the strength and endurance of those for whom interpreting images was a vital need. Paradoxically, iconoclasts themselves sometimes had recourse to images in order to transmit their own message, thereby using as a means of propaganda the very medium they were out to destroy, employing art as anti-art. This seems to be the case concerning a Tudor group portrait painted by an unknown Elizabethan artist and entitled *Edward VI and the Pope*: *An Allegory of the Reformation*. The Pope, in full regalia, is shown slumped over in a prone position, flanked by two sinister looking monks, and the picture includes an inset depicting a scene of iconoclasm.

Such a degree of fascination with images, amounting, in certain cases, almost to a hypnotic focalisation on visual manifestations of religion, would seem, quite naturally, to connect the notion of "seeing" to the second term of our subject, "believing", a link which seems further reinforced by the fact that clarity of vision was associated with truth, beauty and godliness, whilst blindness had connotations of sin, ignorance and devilish forces. Such reasoning, however, falters somewhat when we realise that, paradoxically, visual representations of the most fundamental of all Christian beliefs, God the father, are relatively rare. There is a marked disproportion—concerning both frequency and constancy—between artistic representations depicting Christ as Son of God made man, and those depicting God the Father. On the one hand, the plethora of images of Christ built up a comfortingly familiar figure, always with the same basic features, who became immediately identifiable, an image which was so frequent and constant that its subject could easily be believed in. On the other hand, however, the much smaller number of visual representations of God the Father, as well as their disparate nature, seems to underline the fact that unlike Christ, who spent time on earth, God the Father has never been seen by the human eye, thereby reflecting the statement in the gospel of St. John that "No man has seen God at any time" (John 1:18). Certain Gothic works of art illustrate the belief that only the blessed dead will see God face to face. In his book about Gothic art, Michael Camille refers to two illuminations on parchment which illustrate this theme. The first one, from a psalter *c.* 1220 (now in Trinity College, Cambridge) shows the unseen godhead, the figure of a man with his face deliberately hidden, presenting the Throne of Mercy to kneeling nuns. In the second one, which is from the *Omne Bonum* (1360-65; now in the British Library), the immense disembodied head of God represents the direct face-to-face vision so resolutely denied to the living. According to Camille, "As so often the Gothic image simultaneously offers something to vision and takes it back, presenting a picture of a promised vision that the viewer will only see after death" (pp. 126-27).

Although visual depictions of God continued to be attempted, even quite resoundingly so in the Corpus Christi cycle plays, in which the role of God the Father was interpreted by actors, they never acquired the same impact and popularity as images of Christ. Perhaps they were too disparate and conjectural to eradicate the sentiment that no truly convincing image of God the Father existed. Nor did they modify the idea that true faith was to a certain extent blind, a precept that could only be reinforced in England as the Protestant Reformation grew in strength, rejecting religious imagery in general and the Corpus Christi plays in particular as relics of a popish past. It would therefore seem impossible to reconcile the supreme act of belief—that in an invisible God—with the supreme trigger of belief: seeing. This notion of blind faith prevents the equation "seeing is believing" from functioning satisfactorily and thereby seems to justify the hesitant double-take in the thematic proposition under discussion.. In fact, to convinced Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, the expression, "seeing is believing", must seem incongruous, as they believe unquestioningly in a God who remains resolutely absent from view. Thus the strength of their faith is judged precisely on their ability to believe *without* seeing. To understand the full implications of this, we may consider the apostle Thomas, who was severely admonished by Christ for his need to see (and to touch) in order to believe. In this episode, Jesus indicates clearly that seeing should not be a pre-requisite to believing:

> But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have *seen* the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall *see* in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not *believe*. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and *behold* my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not *faithless*, but *believing*. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas because thou hast *seen* me, thou hast *believed*: blessed are they that have not *seen*, and yet have *believed*. (*The Bible* [Authorized Version], John 20:24-29; my italics).

Thomas, of course, did not lose his chance of becoming a saint, but the effect of this episode was to burden him for all eternity with the disdainful epithet "doubting".

Further considerations blur the lines of the equation between "seeing" and "believing", for, at the onset of the politico-religious strife which characterizes the sixteenth century, the term "belief" acquired a whole new set of connotations. People's beliefs became a form of identity and a means of differentiation. At a time when some fought for their beliefs, others kept them hidden and vast numbers died for them or because of them, the term could not be used lightly. For all the above reasons, in precisely the most crucial area of their lives, that is, their religious beliefs, people had little access to the very kind of visual codes they were so adept at interpreting in other domains. One such domain was obviously that of theatrical performance.

II

My main interest now in this paper is to reflect on ways in which Tudor playwrights took such tendencies into account when catering for the tastes, ideas and skills of their viewing public. More precisely, I should like to focus on how they capitalized on the population's finely honed skills of observation and interpretation, as well as on their readiness to plight their whole being on an unshakeable belief in something completely unseen and impossible ever to see.

Although, obviously, no ocular proof could ever be provided concerning their faith, the medieval corpus, still being performed at this time, went some way towards satisfying audiences' need to see aspects of their beliefs by presenting illustrations of the biblical scenes so ardently believed in by the population. For these audiences it was not a question of "seeing is believing", but rather of a permutation of these terms: they were *seeing* a theatrical rendering of *what they believed in*. Even as it underwent a process of secularisation, the Tudor corpus continued in this vein by offering episodes which were rather more allusive, in that certain characters and their stances could remind audiences of biblical figures. One example in *Cambises* is the grief-stricken mother holding her dead child, in a visual tableau very similar to that of Mary with Christ when he has just been taken down from the cross. Whole episodes could be decoded and interpreted in the same manner as biblical scenes: for example, in the play *Apius and Virginia*, the scene (vii) where Virginius kills his own daughter could be viewed as a typological take on the Abraham and Isaac episode. Similarly, in *Cambises*, the execution of Sisamnes in front of his son (ll. 413-73) could be interpreted as an inversion of the same episode.

By making full and intelligent use of the audience's double, almost paradoxical, capacity involving, on the one hand, impressive interpretative skills and, on the other hand, a readiness to believe unquestioningly and without any visual "proof", playwrights must necessarily have contributed to the development of spectator skills, fostering talented, discerning playgoers. Audiences would necessarily have become adept at interpreting theatrical codes with no need to have things spelled out to them, yet at the same time they must have been willing, for the time of the performance, to believe the unbelievable, ready to accept whatever judicious and astute playwrights could throw at them. Perhaps Bottom's calm acceptance of the fairy world is an expression of this.

I shall now select some examples of what Tudor playwrights tended to want their spectators to see. The selection is difficult to make among the tumult of sights with which they bombarded their audiences. It is important to underline the fact that the choice to show so much was not an easy one to make at this time, given that such techniques were frowned on in influential quarters, that is to say by adepts of esteemed figures in the world of literature such as Aristotle and Horace. It could have been the stipulation in Aristotle's *Poetics* that character and plot were more important than spectacle which led to a belief that showing was somehow quite crude, a view endorsed some four centuries later in Horace's *Ars Poetica*. In rather the same vein, and even if he did not always practise what he preached, Thomas Heywood, in his "*Londini Speculum*, The Third Show", was later to express the following view: "The vulgar are better delighted with that which pleaseth the eye than contenteth the care" (cited by Bevington, p. 199n32). Similarly, followers of Seneca preferred narrative techniques in plays, as can be seen in Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc*. As well as this reticence in literary quarters concerning showing, the choice to put the accent on spectacle was rendered even more difficult because playwrights had to contend with the fact, alluded to earlier in this discussion, that for reasons based on religious strife, iconography could be deemed suspect.

Nonetheless, some sort of unstoppable force seems to have led Tudor playwrights to flout such precepts and to flaunt boldly their riot of stage images. Perhaps it was quite simply because they were in tune with public tastes that they were able to forge ahead regardless with their own particular brand of vividly graphic and startlingly spectacular theatre.

There is such a vast amount to be said on this subject that I shall be able only to skim the surface here. My comments will correspond to three permutations of the terms of the topic: first, "seeing and believing"; then, "seeing and not believing"; and, finally, "not seeing but believing".

Concerning the permutation, "seeing and believing", I shall restrict my comments to one play, Thomas Preston's *Cambises*. The main point to be made here is that Tudor playwrights seemed to want to show as much as possible to their audiences, and I have chosen this particular play because it spells out this general tendency so graphically. The emphasis on seeing is left in no doubt, as the tautology in the full form of my title quotation indicates: "I shall see the office done, and that before my eyes" (l. 439). Similar mentions of the act of seeing abound in *Cambises*. Devoid of any attempt at subtlety, the play leaves bare and visible to the naked eye its metatheatrical mechanisms. The play practically forces the spectator's gaze onto an impressive array of stage images, while pounding out in fourteeners a running commentary which could almost be described as a metatheatrical handbook, since it stipulates the hows, whys and wherefores of what is being shown and thereby indicates how the actors could play the scenes. The four scenes of cruelty in *Cambises* all follow the same basic pattern: the king's fury, the condemning to death of a victim and the execution. In classical drama, that of Seneca, for example, such events are carried out rapidly and can be relegated to the off-stage space and the choric function. But in Tudor drama, obsessed with showing, they tend to be long and drawn-out in order to wring every drop of emotion from the audience. It is of course possible, perhaps even probable, that the playwright had in mind the Aristotelian formula of catharsis, especially as Preston was a university-educated academic. However, I tend to think that he may also have been catering to the popular taste for the emotional contemplation of holy pictures. This activity, mentioned earlier in this paper, could solicit in the viewer feelings of overwhelming sadness at Christ's suffering and feelings of anger towards those who caused it. It is possible that the practice came back into its own during Mary's reign and had not yet been stamped out. In Preston's play, the central tableau of each of the principal episodes, the actual death of the victim, is not shown abruptly. It has to be carefully prepared for by a mixture of verbal and visual codes, so that the audience can receive it to full effect and at exactly the right moment. In preparation for this culminating image, there is an immense build-up, as words, gestures and attitudes pertaining to the threatened outcome go around in ever more tense circles. An almost palpable rhythm is achieved by contrasting the slow pace with furious exhortations to speed. Tension is stretched to the breaking point by means of an accumulation of verbally-suggested images accompanied by gestures with weapons—for example, in "At heart of child I mean to shoot, hoping to cleve it right" (l. 534), or "he shall die by dint of sword or else by choking rope" (l. 689). These effects are reinforced by the superimposition of concrete elements, such as the sinister appearance of an executioner or the blood-stained hands of murderers. The stretched-out pace gives the audience time to prepare for the culmination. They know that the final death scene will be carried out in full view. They fear it and at the same time crave it as part of the thrill of theatre.

The central tableau of three of these scenes represents the execution, respectively, of a judge, a child and the king's brother. They are each executed in a different way, by sword, arrow and dagger. Verbal captions accompany the pictures of their demise; for example, when the spectators see the executioner put Sisamnes to death, they also hear the commentary, "Behold oh King, how he doth bleed being of life bereft" (l. 461). Even when the victims are dead, the audience's gaze is directed to the atrocities committed on their corpses. Sisamnes, for example, is flayed, as indicated in the famous stage direction, "Flay him with a false skin" (l. 464 SD), as well as in two separate verbal captions: first, "*draw thou his cursed skin straight over both his ears*" (l. 438), then, twenty-five lines later, "*Pull his skin over his ears to make his death more vile*" (l. 463). In the same way, the child's heart is cut out and offered to his father: "Behold, Praxaspes, thy son's own heart! Oh how well the same was hit!" (l. 563). No visual detail is spared or allowed to be missed by the audience. Further stage directions indicate almost a choreography for the murder of Prince Smerdis: first, "*They lay hands on him*"; then, five lines later, "*Strike him in divers places"*; and finally, "*A little bladder of vinegar pricked*" (ll. 718 SD, 722 SD, 726 SD).

Such examples of the preoccupation with showing and seeing abound in the Tudor corpus and are handled in such a way as to induce the spectators' willing suspension of disbelief. Even though in *Cambises* there is a heavy, plodding insistence on what is shown, Preston is a gifted enough dramatist to avoid the trap which Shakespeare intentionally lets Bottom and his fellows fall headlong into, and which can be described as creating a situation in which seeing is not believing. Much to the delight of their courtly spectators, these rude mechanicals simply do not credit the audience with the power either to imagine or to discriminate between the imaginary and the real. Of all of them, though, Bottom has more of an inkling about what creates theatricality. Even though he confuses comic and tragic effects, he feels instinctively that, for example, to create "a monstrous little voice" (I.ii.48) for Thisbe would somehow be more entertaining than to use Flute's naturally treble pipes. However, even he never grasps the fact that illusion and imagery are the dramatist's resources. The fact that Shakespeare would include in his play such metatheatrical issues says much about the spectator skills of sixteenth-century audiences. He knew they would be amused by the mechanicals' incapacity to induce their noble spectators to believe what they saw.

My third permutation, "not seeing but believing", involves what could perhaps be described as "virtual vision" and occurs when the spectators are led to believe they have actually witnessed an imaginary action or event. This aesthetic technique could, of course, be resorted to for practical reasons, as, with the best will in the world, and even if amateur dramatists like the mechanicals believed it possible, playwrights could not show in a graphic or concrete way all the elements needed for every play. But it was, above all, a technique which could intensify the audience's mental participation.

In a manner which was rather different from the Senecan recourse to straight narration, Tudor playwrights used techniques which could stimulate the audience's imagination to such a degree that they came quite close to the act of seeing. I will refer to this group of techniques as belonging to the principle described by André Lascombes in his work on ostension as "le regard speculatif" (the speculative gaze). One of the functions of the speculative gaze is to direct the spectator's attention to the right place at the right time, training this virtual gaze onto a part of the spectacle which is activated, while directing it away from elements which, though possibly physically present in the playing area, are currently inactive.

Nor is this speculative gaze always optical; more often than not, it includes the spectator's faculty of imagination and the way it has been stimulated by the playwright or theatre practitioner. The situation can even arise whereby the audience's attention completely bypasses what is optically perceptible on the stage to become absorbed by action which is taking place outside their line of vision. This happens in certain cases of teichoscopy, where the audience, completely engrossed in what is happening "within", may hardly notice the characters who are actually standing in the playing area. The most spectacular occurrences of this technique in the Tudor corpus are probably those found in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, for example, when Gammer, Cock and Tib stand at the door of their house observing and commenting on the extraordinary antics of Hodge inside. Completely by-passing the entirely visible characters, who are probably huddled around the doorway, and guided by the comments of Hodge within and by the sound effects of his actions, the speculative gaze of the audience is entirely focussed on this optically invisible offstage space (I.v.10-44).

The fluidity of the staging is another means of activating the speculative gaze, as the neutral nature of stage settings lent itself to quick and easy metamorphoses, which spectators needed to keep track of. They had to be aware, for example, of whether the space functioning earlier as a street had now suddenly become a house or a palace. Strangely enough, the neoclassically inspired structure consisting of two houses was no less flexible than the empty stage and called for just as much alert observation on the part of the spectator. Even though the houses were permanent fixtures, they allowed great fluidity—for example, between onstage and offstage spaces—and they inspired exits and entrances that provoked speculation and anticipation on the part of the audience. Even in the highly connoted house in *Johan Johan*, with its numerous properties, the speculative gaze remains active. It is called upon, at one point, to abandon Tyb preparing the meal and to follow Johan Johan to the priest's house (l. 313).

I shall briefly mention here some other areas which could capture and direct the speculative gaze. Among these were the proxemics, which in Tudor theatre were quite vigorous, stylized and geometrical. Often leading to bouts of clowning or fisticuffs, they could alert the spectator to changes of mood, attitude or mounting tension. Split scenes and framing devices were more sophisticated ways of organising the proxemics and of guiding the speculative gaze to a particular aspect of the action.

Other procedures which involved showing in a virtual way and thus catered not to the eye but to the mind's eye could be described as narrative-based techniques. There are a whole wealth of them, ranging from simple lists which can conjure up objects and places to vignettes which provide the mind's eye with vivid glimpses of activity not shown on the stage—for example, the church episode in *Apius and Virginia* (recounted in ii.241-43 and 642-49). Then there are the spectacular panoramas, such as those depicted throughout Heywood's *Play of the Wether*, when each of the characters brings into the playing area his own time and space. At the more sophisticated end of the scale, there are the various types of metalepsis and general storytelling, like the miracles recounted by the priest in *Johan Johan* (ll. 537-82). As well as enhancing the depth and substance of a play, such techniques can contribute actively to the audience's mental participation in the dramatic issues. For example, in *Apius and Virginia*, the spectator is confronted with four different images of Virginia. Only two of them are actually visible, but those existing in the mind of Virginius and that of Apius are vividly communicated and become just as convincing.

All the above-mentioned techniques helped Renaissance spectators to follow and enjoy a play, which would seem to suggest that, in a similar way to Bottom, audiences could take in their stride the strangest and most amazing sights. Whilst remaining receptive to the metatheatrical aspects they were allowed to glimpse, they could permit themselves to be fascinated and transported during the time of the play, believing in what they saw as it was happening. But the question I would like to raise now is what happened to this belief once the play was over and the theatrical magic had fizzled out?

III

In Bottom's case, which, of course, is a caricature but is perhaps nonetheless instructive, after having been fleetingly transported into another world, rather like a spectator at a play, he is left with an overall impression, which, of course, he describes as "Bottom's Dream" (IV.i.214) and which, though imprecise, has a resounding effect on him. He is reeling from the experience, to such an extent that his sensory perceptions are completely shaken up. However, he refers to it as chiefly a visual experience, a "most rare vision" (203). The niceties of it seem unimportant and in any case go unmentioned. But after his initial shock, the general experience seems to inspire him. In fact, despite his confusion concerning the details of what he saw, Bottom appears refreshed and somehow more clear-minded. He is still the same person, but his qualities appear enhanced. Fired with an even more exhilarating enthusiasm than before, he is keen to spread the theatrical message. This multi-faceted message, threaded through the play since the first appearance of the mechanicals, involves a number of aspects pertaining to theatrical activity, including its ubiquity in this golden age of theatre and its technical functioning. It is a message which places the accent on theatre as a fully-fledged art and, in fact, shows the difficulties involved in putting on a play. One of Shakespeare's aims here appears to involve the development of spectator skills, either to spark off or to cater to an awareness among the play-going public as to how theatre functions. The artisans' scenes abound with metatheatrical terms and involve much pondering about staging techniques. They also point out the pitfalls and evoke the fiasco that can result when the aimed-for effects misfire. Yet this message is full of indulgence for those who try but do not quite make the grade. Bottom's role in spreading the message is of prime importance. After his experience in the woods, he becomes less obsessed with his own personal performance and acting talents and more concerned with the play as a whole. He bolsters up the flagging enthusiasm of his fellows, ensures that they have all the right properties and costumes and that they meet the deadline, and then sets out to lead his troupe to success at the Duke's court. It is, in fact, Duke Theseus who rounds off this theatrical message with some indulgent comments to Bottom: "your play needs no excuse. Never excuse" (V.i.341-42). For even if it is "a palpable gross play", it has been entertaining and "hath well beguil'd / The heavy gait of night" (353-54).

Bottom's experience in the forest seems to suggest that what counted was not an unshakeable belief in individual elements of the spectacle, which can turn out to be artificial and fickle once the sparkle has faded. What is important here is the building up of an overall belief in the theatre itself. Couldn't we say that, in a similar way to Bottom's experience, in the Renaissance theatre, seeing is a trick which is not intended to provide pure truth from beginning to end? The visual show is there primarily to be enjoyed, but also to allow access to certain metatheatrical aspects made accessible by the playwright. In order to profit from the show, isn't the main thing to believe this pack of lies for the duration of the performance, to revel in all its capricious and vacillating sights and sounds, and to end with a belief—a lasting one this time—in the quality and enjoyment of the theatrical art in general?

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"No longer shall you gaze on't, lest your fancy / May think anon it moves": Seeing and Believing in the Moving Statue in *The Winter's Tale*

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According to Aaron Landau, "Hermione's 'revival' marks the culmination and most provocative phase of the transition from inquisitive rationalism at the beginning of the play to a total and willing suspension of disbelief later on" (p. 36). This "suspension of disbelief" lies at the core of the final scene of *The Winter's Tale* and is more than necessary for seeing and believing that Hermione's statue actually turns to life, that marble can become human flesh. It is achieved through a kind of education, and even re-education of human perception. Éliane Cuvelier has stressed the vital role of sight in this play: "The world of *The Winter's Tale* is obsessed with the senses of sight; the source of it is the unsettling of Leontes' own vision" (p. 39). She also demonstrates the impact of Leontes' wild imagination on his own perception by showing that his jealousy derives from melancholy, a disease that in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance was thought to distort the relation and the interaction between perception and imagination.[1] In the first acts of the play, Leontes' infected vision leads him to imagine his innocent wife Hermione is committing adultery with his long-standing friend Polixenes. This misreading of the signs paves the way to a tragedy, with Hermione's trial and death at the end of Act Three. Act Four introduces a complete reversal of the plot, thanks to the character of Time, who indicates to the spectators that they have to imagine that sixteen years have gone by:

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[1] Cuvelier builds her analysis upon the theory of the three ventricles explained in Thomas Vicary's *The Anatomie of the Bodie of Man* (1548).

> I turn my glass, and give my scene such growing
> As you had slept between. Leontes leaving
> Th'effects of his fond jealousies, so grieving
> That he shuts up himself, imagine me,
> Gentle spectators, that I now may be
> In fair Bohemia… (IV.i.16-21)

Even though the intervention of Time on stage is used to justify the huge gap in time between Acts Three and Four, this short interlude adumbrates the complete change in the dramatic plot of *The Winter's Tale*. From Act Four, the world of the play seems to have been turned upside-down: the original deathlike atmosphere that pervaded the first three acts is metamorphosed into its opposite, the idyllic pastoral world, bathed in the warmth of springtime, foreshadowing the renewal and the rebirth of Hermione.

After the rigour of the cruel tragedy that was displayed to the audience in the first acts, the main action of the last two acts is centred on some of the characters' attempts to cure Leontes' sight in order to prevent his imagination from distorting his perception of reality. The scene of the moving statue dramatizes the redemption of Leontes' perception when Paulina cures and heals his sight and imagination so he can actually see Hermione's statue move. While in the first acts Leontes could only see what his wild imagination made him believe, in the final act he has to use his imagination in the right way to see and interpret reality properly, in other words to believe that his wife's statue can actually move and become human. The restored harmony between perception and imagination in the final scene is also imbued with a metadramatic dimension, insofar as the final show of the moving statue encapsulates the vital role of imagination in Renaissance drama: spectators have to use their imagination, their inward eyes, actually to see the dramatic action and believe in it.

Sixteeen years after his wife's supposed death, Leontes is still mourning, until Paulina stages the resurrection of the Queen of Sicily in the gallery of her house:

                                        But we came
To see the statue of our Queen. Your gallery
Have we passed through, not without much content
In many singularities; but we saw not
That which my daughter came to look upon,
The statue of her mother. (V.iii.9-14)

Paradoxically enough, when welcoming the visitors to her gallery to show the statue of the dead queen of Sicily, Paulina first deludes their senses and stimulates their imagination, the better to restore their perception of reality and their ability to read signs. The term "gallery" could refer to the galleries in some Elizabethan houses, which were decorated with paintings and sometimes with statues. In the preface to his translation of Giovano Paolo Lomazzo's treatise *A Tracte Containing the Artes of Curious Painting, Carvinge and Buildinge* (1598), Richard Haydocke indicated that noblemen bought Italian, and German works of art to ornament their houses: "many noblemen then furnishing their houses with the excellent monuments of sundry famous and ancient masters, both Italian and German" (p. 6). In Jacobean England, the most famous example was Lord Arundel, who had two galleries built in his mansion, one for paintings and another for his statues.[2] In Elizabethan English, "gallery" could also refer to the balcony built above the stage where musicians used to sit or where other actors could stand, such as Juliet in the well-known balcony scene.[3] This detail underlines the vital role of perspective on the Elizabethan stage, in that a scene can be seen from a multiplicity of angles, depending on the position of the actors on stage. The polysemy of this particular term, which mingles visual arts, architecture and drama, may suggest that Paulina's gallery has been built in order to play on perspective and multiply different angles to see the works of art she exhibits in her gallery, thus preparing the visitors' eyes for tricks of perspective. The characters have gone through and left the gallery when they arrive on stage in Act Five, Scene Three ("Your gallery / Have we passed through …"), to reach a chapel where Hermione's statue stands, as Paulina reminds the visitors before the statue actually moves: "Quit presently the chapel, or resolve you / For more amazement" (V.iii.86-87). This chapel is probably different from the one mentioned by Leontes at the end of Act Three, when he swears he will visit his dead son's and wife's tombs: "Once a day I'll visit / The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there / Shall be my recreation" (III.ii.237-39). This theatrical space is fraught with a religious atmosphere, since Perdita is tempted to kneel in front of her mother's statue: "And do not say 'tis superstition, that / I kneel and implore her blessing" (V.iii.43-44). Before unveiling the statue to the visitors' eyes, Paulina comments on the work of art by insisting upon some details, as if she was attempting to influence the spectators' perception of the statue:

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[2] From 1613 to 1614, this art collector visited Italy along with Inigo Jones, becoming familiar with the works of Italian masters such as Titian and Veronese, and studying the architecture of Palladio. Upon his return to England, he had two galleries built in his mansion situated between the Strand and the river Thames, near Somerset House, where the Queen lived. Two portraits made by Daniel Myrtens in 1618 show Lord Arundel's galleries. The one depicting his wife Aletheia reveals his collection of paintings, which were exhibited in his gallery on the ground floor. In the second one, which is the better known, Lord Arundel, sitting in an armchair in the left corner, points to his collection of antique statues situated in a refined gallery overlooking the Thames.

[3] In architecture, "gallery" is also synonymous with "corridor", as is indicated in the *OED*: "A long narrow apartment, sometimes serving as a means of access to other parts of a house, a corridor".

> As she lived peerless,
> So her dead likeness I do well believe
> Excels what ever yet you looked upon,
> Or hand of man hath done. Therefore I keep it
> Lonely, apart. But here it is. Prepare
> To see the life as lively mocked as ever
> Still sleep mocked death. (14-20)

While insisting on the spectators' sight ("what ever yet you looked upon", "Prepare / To see"), Paulina stimulates their imagination before they can actually see the theatrical illusion. They are invited to imagine a funerary statue ("her dead likeness"), which is in keeping with the style of Elizabethan and Jacobean funerary sculpture ("To see the life as lively mocked as ever / Still sleep mocked death"). In the English Renaissance, funerary statues looked as if they were live.[4] At the time, colours were used to make them look more realistic—here

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[4] In the Renaissance, changes in style in funerary sculpture arise from a new function of funerary statues. While in the Middle Ages the tomb was used to remind beholders of their ultimate fate, in the Renaissance, the funerary monument turns into a kind of living portrait of the dead, helping the aggrieved family to remember their beloved as they were in their lifetime. As John Weever underlined in *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (1631), the tomb recorded the actions of the dead when he or she was alive: "A monument is a thing erected, made, or written, for a memoriall of some remarkable action, fit to bee transferred to future posterities" (p. 1). For instance, funerary masks were used to carve the features of the dead person's face. Another trend in the Renaissance was the funerary statues carved in a reclining position, and the statues represented as sitting—the first one in England was carved by Maximilian Colt for Lady Margaret Legh's tomb in 1605—or, as if praying, facing each other. Lady Saville's tomb, carved in the 1630s, reveals the dramatization used to represent the dead on monuments: Lady Saville is kneeling in prayer at the centre of the monument, and her family is depicted on each side. The links between the living and the dead are thus preserved in this petrified dramatic scene.

Hermione's statue is painted ("the colour's not dry"). The confusion between death and sleep is another prominent feature of the sculpture of this period: statues were carved in such a way that the effigy looked asleep.[5] Thus, by giving details to the spectators to assist them in imagining Hermione's statue, Paulina teaches the audience how to see it. However, once the statue is revealed to the visitors, Leontes' vision first seems to have been restored, in that he notices the statue's wrinkles: "Hermione was not so much wrinkled" (28). This detail, which threatens the illusion Paulina is trying to create, clearly indicates that without being fully aware of it, the king of Sicily sees reality as it is, that the statue is only the old queen who is standing still. Thus, Paulina is now the one who distorts reality, who tries to make it look different to dramatize Hermione's resurrection. Despite Leontes' remark about the statue's wrinkles, Paulina manages to sustain her play-within-the-play by continuing to delude her visitors into believing it is a real statue.

The perception of the statue is altered by the use of perspective, since the object is seen from different angles. The main prop in this scene is probably placed at the back of the stage between the two doors, where the curtain hiding it must have been fixed. The columns on the Elizabethan stage reinforce the trick of perspective, as the stage is split into different levels. The play on different perspectives is also heightened by the different positions of the characters on stage. They become spectators looking at a "dumb and frozen show" and are observed by other characters. Paulina's play-within-the-play is multiplied by a series of short embedded plays within her own show. Once she has unveiled the statue, she observes and describes Leontes' reaction in front of the statue, of her show: "I like your silence; it the more shows off / Your wonder" (21-22). When facing his dead wife's statue, Leontes is momentarily turned into a statue, as he stands still and speechless. Thus for a moment the audience and the other characters can see two statues on stage. This embedded play is strengthened a few lines later, when Leontes is petrified for more than twenty lines while Perdita and other characters are commenting on the statue. The contamination between the spectacle, namely the statue, and the spectator, namely Leontes, is complete, since the king of Sicily has become the frozen reflection of the statue, as Paulina brings out in her speech: "If I had thought the sight of my poor image / Would thus have wrought you" (57-58). Here the term "image", which meant statue in Elizabethan English, and the verb "wrought", which could refer to what is carved, reinforce the reverberation between the statue and the spectator. Accordingly, on stage, two scenes are presented to the audience simultaneously, a frozen, dumb show and an animated one.

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[5] The best-known example is the statue of Night carved by Michaelangelo, which is part of the De Medici funerary monument in Florence. This statue, with its closed eyes, looks asleep, as if on the verge of waking up. When the De Medici chapel was opened in 1544, Giovanni Strozzi described it as a living statue: "La Notte, che tu vedi in si dolli atti / Dormir, fu da un Angelo scolpita / In questo sasso; e, perché dorme, ha vita: / Destala, se nol credi, e parleratti". This is cited by Gross, p. 92, who translates as follows: "Night, which you see sleeping in such sweet attitudes, was carved in this stone by an angel; and because she sleeps, she has life. Wake her, if you don't believe it, and she will speak to you".

The tricks of perspective used by Paulina seem to be highly efficient, since the spectators' sight is completely deluded by the artificial double of Hermione—they believe that the statue is alive: "Would you not deem it breathed, and that those veins / Did verily bear blood?" (V.iii.64-65). In this case, the trick of perspective is natural. By respecting the veins in the marble, the sculptor would have created the illusion that the statue has veins just like a human being. The confusion between the marble statue and a human body is further sustained by the signs of life which seem to be present in this block of marble. Polixenes perceives warmth in this lifeless body ("The very life seems warm upon her lip" [66]), while Leontes imagines the statue's eyes are moving: "The fixture of her eye has motion in't, / As we are mocked with art" [67-68]). These hesitations and the deluded visions the characters have in front of the statue are highly reminiscent of the myth of Pygmalion, which partly inspired the scene of the moving statue.[6] In the *Metamorphoses,* Ovid underlined Pygmalion's distorted perception of his own work of art, when he could not tell the difference between ivory and flesh: "he often toucht it, feeling if the woork that he had made / Were verie flesh or Ivorye still" (bk. 10, ll. 273-74). Nevertheless, in *The Winter's Tale* Leontes' apparent delusions are ironic, in the sense that what he imagines is what he actually sees—the statue is alive, since it is the real Hermione. When Leontes claims that "No settled senses of the world can match / The pleasure of that madness" (V.iii.72-73), he is still unaware that these tricks of perspective have been implemented to restore the harmony between his senses and his fancy. Because his melancholy has been cured, he can interpret signs and perceive reality and even recognise his own sins. When he discovers Hermione's statue, he is amazed by its inanimate condition:

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[6] Many critics have studied the impact of the myth of Pygmalion in this play, such as, to name but a few, Mueller, Rico, and Barkan ("Living Sculptures"). Chapters are devoted to *The Winter's Tale* and Pygmalion by Bate and Gross.

> Does not the stone rebuke me
> For being more stone than it? O royal piece!
> There's magic in thy majesty, which has
> My evils conjured to remembrance. ..." (37-40)

Leontes can read Hermione's heart beyond her artificial posture and make-up, and even the theatrical show put on by Paulina. The statue acts as a frozen mirror, reflecting what Leontes used to be in the first acts of the play—a man with a heart of stone. The man who used to think he could see the evils of others and punish them now sees his own evils in the lifeless reflection of his dead wife. This new awareness plays a part in the process of redemption, which can be achieved only when the statue starts moving, as it does with the help of the spectators' imagination.

The quotation in my title ("No longer shall you gaze on't, lest your fancy / May think anon it moves" [60-61]) appears half-way through the scene, when Paulina calls upon the imagination of the visitors and of the audience, so that her final show, the moving statue, can actually be implemented. The spectators can see the statue coming to life only because they are willing to believe it can actually move. The imagination of the spectators endows the statue with the breath of life. The vital role of imagination in the play has been highlighted in the scene before, when secondary characters narrated scenes which took place offstage and revealed the name of the sculptor who carved Hermione's statue: Giulio Romano. In this scene, three Gentlemen depict scenes of reunion between some of the main characters of the play, such as Leontes, who meets his daughter Perdita. Their narrations suspend the dramatic action, as the scenes which they describe were not shown to the audience or even related: "Then have you lost a sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of" (V.ii.42-43). The audience have to use their imagination to see what happened offstage. These imagined scenes foreshadow the following scene, in that the characters have the same attitudes. Camillo and Leontes stand speechless: "There was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gesture" (V.ii.13-14). This meaningful silence adumbrates Leontes' silence when he is facing the statue in Act Five, Scene Three, where his reaction betrays his emotion: "I like your silence; it the more shows off / Your wonder" (V.iii.20-21). This echoing between the two scenes is sustained by the third Gentleman, when he depicts the emotion felt at the narration of Hermione's death: "Who was most marble there changed colour" (V.ii.89). The metaphor of the marble hints at the statue, which has colour, supposedly because it is painted, and which resembles a living body. These echoes between the last two scenes reveal the articulation between the word and the image, since Scene Two is entirely verbal, while the statue scene is highly visual. Barkan has pointed out that these two scenes were built around a chiasmus: "the verbal without the visual is empty while the visual without the verbal is frozen" (*Gods Made Flesh*, p. 286).

While the spectators' imagination is required to see scenes which cannot be seen and to perceive what is beyond belief, that is to say, a moving statue, other ingredients are also necessary for Hermione's resurrection to happen. Imagination without emotion is useless. Leontes can believe in the moving statue because he first experiences wonder: "I like your silence, it the more shows off / Your wonder". This strong emotional reaction to a work of art is reminiscent of the emotion felt by the sculptor Pygmalion when discovering the statue he has just carved in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (bk. 10). When Ovid described the sculptor's gift, he used the phrase "mira feliciter arte", translated by Golding as "by wondrous Art" (10.265). Thus the emotion of wonder cannot be dissociated from the act of artistic creation. A few lines further, the sculptor seems to be experiencing the emotion he is trying to induce in the spectators, as he regards his own work of art with fascination: "He woondreth at his Art" (10.271). Accordingly, the sculptor is trapped by the emotion he attempted to create. These echoes between the two texts reveal the vital role of emotion in sculpture but also in drama.

To conclude, the "suspension of disbelief" mentioned by Landau turns out to be the very first step in the process of restoring the harmony between imagination and perception in *The Winter's Tale*. The audience's sight, both that of the characters looking at the statue coming to life and that of the public of the Globe, is educated and altered by different tricks of perspective, while their imagination is constantly stimulated. However, even though Paulina reminds the beholders that faith is necessary to believe in a moving statue ("It is required / You do awake your faith" [94-95]), wonder has turned out to be a vital element in the success of Paulina's dramatization of Hermione's resurrection. As Hymen reminds the spectators in the final scene of *As You Like It,* this emotion cannot be dissociated from the dramatic experience: "Feed yourselves with questioning, / That reason wonder may diminish / How thus we met, and these things finish" (V.iv.133-35).

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Acting (and Feeling) Responsible: Lindsay's Pauper and the Problems of Perception

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The aim of this brief paper is to examine, via a familiar dramatic example taken from the work of the Scottish poet and courtier, Sir David Lindsay, how what we see—or don't see—in early drama affects our judgement (i.e., what we *believe*) in profound and deeply unsettling ways. But I also want to suggest that the themes of this volume—seeing and believing—point up a deeper truth about early drama: its deep involvement of spectators—the *seers*—in the processes through which it creates its meanings.

Drama has always, of course, been a fundamentally collaborative process, in which writers, performers, spectators and the spaces in which performances occur all have their roles to play in the creation of the overall effects—and affects—of a production. But late medieval and early Tudor drama, I think, took this process a stage further than much of the repertoire of the modern theatre. Not only did the drama afford its audiences a remarkable range of emotional responses (in that respect it was the equal of the modern stage), but with those responses came an overt focus on audience responsibility for making sense of what was happening onstage. What Tudor spectators *saw*—and what they believed as a result—was thus foregrounded as a central part of the process of performance and reception: something overtly acknowledged in the deep structures of the plays as part of their processes of meaning-creation.

As I have argued elsewhere, early drama did not seek to prompt *catharsis,* in the sense of an emotional journey completed during the performance.[1] It was not, that is, sufficient unto itself as a form. Rather, it aimed to initiate an emotional journey that would continue after the performance ended. And it did this as part of a fundamentally social process, its interests growing out of the communities that produced it, reflecting their agenda and preoccupations.

All performances, of course, seek to involve their audiences emotionally. Cicero, describing the aims and attributes of the ideal orator, claimed that he should learn to demonstrate, to delight, *and to move* his audience. But this desideratum applied especially powerfully to the types of performance central to early drama. It was the Passion plays' affective power, for example, that was identified in the fifteenth-century anti-theatrical tract, *The Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* as their most troubling and dangerous aspect. By evoking their audiences' pity for a mere show of suffering, the *Tretise* claimed, these plays stimulated audience emotions in bad faith, distracting simple, well-meaning folk from contemplation of their own real sins, and so thwarting God's will:

> Ofte syþis by siche myraclis pleying men and wymmen, seynge þe Passioun of Christ and Hise seyntis, ben movyd to compassion and devocion, wepynge bitere teris.… But þe wepyng þat falliþ to men and wymmen by þe siȝte of siche myraclis pleyinge, as þei ben not principaly for þeire oune synnes, ne of þeire gode feiþ wiþinneforþe, but more of þeire siȝt wiþouteforþ, is not allowable byfore God but more reprowable. (Walker, ed., p. 198)

But such criticism underestimates the subtle self-awareness of these plays. Early drama was not a detached, rational reflection on religious truth or the human condition; it was a deeply engaged emotional response to these things. It utilised and exploited the imperfect, often unpredictable, emotional dimensions to human experience even as it acknowledged their limitations; and it relied upon those very dimensions of human experience to achieve the full range of its own effects. The Mystery Plays and Moralities did not treat their spectators as passive recipients of knowledge; rather, they encouraged them to be active and responsive spectators—*witnesses* to what they saw in every sense of the word—and used that witness as part of their creative process.

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[1] See Walker, "Cultural Work". A number of the points made in the current essay are explored at greater length and with greater use of textual evidence in that chapter. I am grateful to the editors for the opportunity to cite it here.

A play is, of course, more than simply a rhetorical text divided among a number of speakers. Its essence lies in the dynamics of performance itself, in the unique range of emotional resonances created when actors perform before live audiences. When the circumstances of those performances were, as with early drama, not cordoned off from everyday life in a theatre but created in the very spaces in which everyday life was lived, the opportunities for such emotional engagement were particularly powerful. My chief example of how this might work in practice comes from Lindsay's magisterial drama, *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, a play performed before large, socially diverse audiences in the town of Cupar in Fife in 1552 and in Edinburgh in 1554.[2] Famously, during what initially appears to be an interval in the proceedings, while the principal characters are not in the acting area and the audience has been told to disperse for refreshments, a man dressed in ragged clothes steps out from the crowd into the playing place and begins to beg for alms, apparently threatening to disrupt the proceedings fatally. In response to this intrusion, the actor playing Diligence, the drama's herald and interlocutor figure, turns directly to the audience (and the civic officers among them in particular), accusing them of not maintaining "ane well keipit place",

> Quhen sic ane vilde begger carle may get entres.
> Fy on yow, officiars, that mends nocht thir failyies!
> I gif yow all till the Devill, baith Provost and bailyies.
> Without ye cum and chase this carle away,
> The Devill a word yeis get mair of our play! (ll. 1940-45)

The ragged man remains defiantly in the place, however, and responds to Diligence's attempts to remove him with insults and disobedience.

The man proves, of course, to be an actor playing the part of a beggar named Pauper, and his lines are all scripted, as are those of Diligence himself. But, in the brief period before the audience becomes aware of these facts, his apparent intrusion confronts each spectator (individually and collectively) with a fundamental question, and it asks them to respond, not as spectators at a play, but as themselves.

In performance the scene creates an instant of profound disorientation, a dramatic moment that seems at first to be one thing, yet proves to have been another, but which, for a brief time at least, is both together, or neither, leaving audiences suspended in a moment of pure, dangerous possibility and forced to rely upon their own intellectual resources and moral values for guidance. And in that moment, seeing and believing are manipulated to profoundly unsettling effect.

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[2] For further analysis of the scene in question, see Walker, "Spoiling the Play", and McGavin.

For the duration of that period during which the audience is unsure of who or what he is—and what they are watching happening before them—Pauper threatens disturbingly to collapse the distinction between "actors' space" and "audience space", creating a liminal event poised uncomfortably between the two. If we, for a moment, imagine ourselves among those original spectators in Cupar or Edinburgh, how might we have reacted to Pauper's arrival in the acting space? What might we have thought, and more importantly what might we have *felt*? Suddenly, unexpectedly, someone has crossed the powerful divide between "us" and "them", audience space and stage space, and events seem about to go embarrassingly wrong for all concerned. At that moment we would all, quite suddenly, become participants in something apparently spontaneous and unpredictable—an event taking place in real time in which we are personally involved. In that instant we are not just spectators any longer but also our everyday selves: citizens, neighbours, members of a community, perhaps even one of the civic officials, the "Provost and bailyes", whom Diligence identifies as personally "to blame" for the intrusion. And the acting space itself stops being a space set apart; it too steps out of role, as it were, and threatens to become part of our own world again, a realm in which the "normal" rules of courtesy and social deference, law and order, apply. Unsure of both our/their own role and the nature of the space we/they inhabit, each spectator is prompted to look at Pauper and ask themselves, "is he one of them or one of us?", and, "if he is one of us, what is he doing onstage?". At that moment the awful prospect arises that it is actually *we* who are responsible for Pauper, and not the actors: one of *our* number is threatening to spoil the play, and it is down to us to do something about it.

In that moment of realisation, "social responsibility" becomes an immediate and *felt* issue for each audience member individually, rather than just a "theme" of the play, something to be looked at and thought about in the relative comfort of personal detachment. What is be done about the plight of the rural poor is a recurring issue in Lindsay's play, but nowhere is it addressed more insistently or powerfully than here, at a point, paradoxically, when the play does not seem to be securely identifiable as a play at all. Suddenly we feel—and thus we *are*—responsible for something that is happening "onstage", and each of us might react in a different way. In this moment, Lindsay's "Interlude" (the punning, ambivalent term used in the surviving text to identify the scene) offers a telling example of the cultural work of early drama in general: a striking instance of its capacity to address its audiences on an intensely personal, affective (even visceral) level, provoking equally personal and *affected* responses ("Oh my God, what should I do?"). If this is didactic theatre, it is so in a special, heavily marked sense, for which the words "didactic" or "educational" seem hardly sufficient. A scene like this teaches us on the level of felt experience as well as imparting lore or knowledge.

Critics have quite rightly drawn attention to the capacity of early drama, and of the medieval biblical plays especially, to present religious events and doctrinal truths through spectacle and stage picture, on the principle of "behold and believe!"—not so much representing the events of the Passion, as performing them afresh for each new generation of believers to witness. But we should not lose sight of the emotive dimension to this process. In scenes such as the entrance of Lindsay's Pauper, the action implies not just "behold and believe", but "watch, listen, and *feel* the truth of this". A spectator was thus not simply *shown* a performance but engaged by it. All of the physical senses, and all of the modes of communal life (social, moral, spiritual) were to differing degrees appealed to, stimulated, affronted, teased, and provoked by dramas such as these; and their responses cannot always be predicted.

Creating a sense of moral and social responsibility was thus a key element of early drama's cultural work. The Pauper episode in Lindsay's *Satyre* represents it in a stark and immediate form, but it is implicit throughout the surviving canon. Early drama was and is always drama to some purpose beyond mere education or entertainment. It raises questions of (and issues challenges to) its audiences and patrons, and of those scholars who seek to understand and describe it. And each spectator might react to that challenge in a different way. The complex, often unpredictable reactions that take place in different spectators as they attempt to reconcile what they see—or what they think they are seeing—with what they believe (about themselves, their world, and their responsibilities within it) create equally complex and unpredictable effects. And the fact that this process takes place in the special, intensely marked real time of a performance makes the experience all the more volatile and powerful. Such is the special power of the early theatre as both an artistic and a socio-political phenomenon.

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Being Seen is Believing: Spectacle, Ethics, and the Others of Belief in Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy

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There is no question that Tudor revenge tragedy's graphic violence stimulates in audiences a combination of visceral pleasure and moral superiority. But how can these two responses, which the specimens of the genre elicit in varying mixtures and degrees, coexist? How does a revenge tragedy permit the audience to enjoy murderous carnage without provoking self-censure at the empathetic experience of bloodlust? Such staged bloodlust might be supposed to produce outrage and disgust in audiences on a massive scale. The explanation for this coexistence of rectitude and pleasure cannot but implicate the protagonist, the revenger, insofar as the spectator's response grows out of his vicarious engagement with revenge. The spectator's predicament finds its immediate source and correlate in that of the revenger. Thus how can the revenger enjoy a murderous rampage without suffering the pangs of conscience?

René Girard sensibly answers that it comes down to belief: "In order to perform revenge with conviction, you must believe in the justice of your own cause. The revenge seeker will not believe in his own cause unless he believes in the guilt of the intended victim" (p. 283). But because belief is always an intersubjective—even theatrical or staged—process, I want to argue that a fuller answer to the question of the revenger's and spectator's guilt-free pleasure may be found in the title of this volume. No, I do not mean to suggest that "seeing is believing", as though seeing were a straightforward empirical act, but instead that believing is a matter of "being seen", that is, being recognized by a spectator in the widest sense of the term. What separates the revenger from a homicidal maniac is that others believe his subject position to be morally warranted. Because the revenger's mission must have credibility, the vengeful act operates according to the logic of belief, whose intersubjective parameters Michel de Certeau sets out succinctly: "belief occurs between the recognition of an alterity and the establishment of a contract" (p. 192).[1] The believer enters into a symbolic pact with an *other* or an object in the hopes that the present disadvantage of suspending the need for collateral security—a surety or proof—will receive remuneration at some future point. As indicated by its etymological roots in the Latin "creditus", belief presupposes an economy of exchange whereby an other, for future profit, places confidence in the believer's ability to make good on his belief. Like trust, beliefs are an inescapable mediator in everyday social relations, for if we did not give symbolic "credit" to people, our lot would surely be a lonely and frustrated one.

At first glance, de Certeau's formulation adds nothing illuminating to what critics of revenge tragedies already know well. As John Kerrigan notes, the exchange of injury, an eye for an eye, makes up the simplest of revenge plots (pp. 4-6). The protagonist of the Elizabethan revenge tragedy must recognize the murderer as owing the victim symbolic compensation for what he has done, whether or not—and generally not—the murderer recognizes his claim. The credibility of revenge depends upon an economy of exchange in which retaliation satisfactorily settles the debt. Hieronimo cautions himself to "be not credulous" (III.ii.39) after reading Bel-imperia's letter, which exposes the murderers. Before he can act, he must believe in the culpability of the accused. Since the murderers belong to the highest echelon of aristocratic society, the revenger, usually of an inferior status, has no recourse to the legal system. The revenger must then take the administration of *lex talionis* into his own hands. Because of his deep-seated conviction about observing contracts, tallies, and scores, he very much holds, not merely a belief, but a belief in belief's social efficacy. The symbolic accounts must be balanced at all costs.

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[1] My paper builds upon de Certeau's opening conceptualization of belief, but does not do justice to the detailed and sophisticated arguments of his intriguing essay.

The application of de Certeau's formulation to revenge, however, implies another distinct yet interrelated symbolic contract into which the revenger enters. The protagonist holds an obligation to the dead victim through kinship or erotic ties that demand that loved ones be remembered—that their scores be properly settled by their survivors. The revenger acts in the second economy of exchange as though it were, strangely enough, not just his belief, but the dead victim's belief, which spurs him on to action. The victim trusts that the revenger will carry out retribution on his behalf. That is not to say that the revenger receives nothing in this economy by fulfilling his obligation to his father, son, or lover. Once completed, the act of vengeance will discharge the revenger of responsibility and guilt, and will, as *Antonio's Revenge* spells out clearly, confer on him supernatural favour. When Antonio finishes stabbing Piero literally in exchange for his "father's blood", Andrugio's ghost signals the termination of the contract and the settling of all debts: " 'Tis done, and now my soul shall sleep in rest. / Sons that revenge their father's blood are blest" (V.v.81-82). Revenge tragedies solicit our belief in revenge most pressingly when the ghost of the victim, as in *Antonio's Revenge* and *Hamlet*, appears on the stage to establish the symbolic contract with the protagonist. The ghost is the most powerful guarantor of the credibility of the protagonist's revenge, because he makes visible the kinship demand upon the protagonist.

These two overlapping economies or contracts—the belief in the applicability of *lex talionis* to a villain and the belief in the obligation to the dead—interpellate the revenger as a mediator or factor. Like a functionary from a collection agency, the revenger retrieves from the debtor the outstanding payment owed to the creditor. Nonetheless, if the protagonist bore no personal or familial connection to the victim, he would be a mere vigilante, not a revenger. If he had no grounds for retaliation, his loved one being killed accidentally or justly, he would be only a murderous feudist. His peculiar interpellation gives every indication that his mission does not originate from his own impulses and desires. He finds himself discharging his duty to the dead by resolving the imbalance in the economy of the *lex talionis*, an economy centred not on himself but on two other parties, the victim and the villain. Revenge simultaneously restores two social rituals that have failed the victim: the administration of justice and the performance of mourning. Because the victim has been unjustly killed by someone in power, his obsequies cannot be carried out properly.

But the stakes that the revenger fights for are much larger than mere local contracts between individuals. Society around the protagonist is seriously affected by the injustice. Bel-Imperia chides Hieronimo,

> for shame Hieronimo,
> Be not a history to aftertimes
> Of such ingratitude unto thy son:
> Unhappy mothers of such children then—
> But monstrous fathers to forget so soon
> The death of those whom they with care and cost
> Have tendered so, thus careless should be lost. (IV.i.13-19)

In revenge, the other of belief is not merely the dead victim. Through shaming, Bel-imperia rouses Hieronimo to take up on behalf of his son the terms of the symbolic contract of vengeful remembrance. If belief requires the recognition of alterity, there are two kinds of others, who give credibility to revenge: the dead victim to whom the revenger is obligated and other survivors who believe in such obligations. This distinction only stands to reason, for, as de Certeau sensibly asserts, "thousands of procedures produce believers by creating the belief that 'there are many others who believe'" (p. 202). There is no such thing as a religion, or for that matter, a belief, of one adherent. In *Antonio's Revenge*, the title character is immediately supported by his mother and three conspirators, who make up the plexus of believers in which he locates his credible actions. It is through the process of identifying with other believers that an individual comes to embrace a belief, and it is no different for the revenger, who, in seeing others mirror his predicament, gives credence to the course of action he must take. Hieronimo simultaneously finds himself and his son reflected in the person of Bazulto, an old man who makes a humble supplication on behalf of his murdered son. Not only does Hieronimo read his own paternal grief in the father's "lively image" (III.xiii.161), but he also takes him to be the shade of Horatio, who has left the dark depths to beg for justice. The old man's supplication inspires Hieronimo with shame for neglecting to execute "sweet revenge" for his son (III.xiii.161). The others of belief, such as Bel-Imperia and Bazulto, speak with force for the dead victim whose accounts have not been settled.

The revenger assumes his role from other believers and, in carrying out the role, defends their belief in justice and in mourning the dead. To put it another way, the revenger believes in belief—in the importance of symbolic exchange as a basis for mediating social relations. Debts owed to individuals must be paid.

Flagrantly unrecognized debts owed to the dead cast aspersion on the symbolic order's overall integrity. The law becomes a mockery when a terrible injustice is left unresolved. Thus the suspension of symbolic reciprocity has not just personal but devastatingly global effects, most notably witnessed in the misgovernance of the state and disturbances in the supernatural realm. Marcellus's fear that "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (I.v.100) arises from the malodorous symptom of the ghost.

The revenger finds himself as a champion of the Other of others, or, rather the "Big Other", through taking up the cause of the "lower case" others, those persons who validate belief. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the Big Other refers to the imaginary agent to which neurotic or "normal" subjects attribute the regular operation of the symbolic order.[2] It is a fantasy linchpin that, in arresting the contingent movement of the signifier, makes comforting sense out of culture's incomprehensible and inconsistent alterity. The revenger desperately projects onto social discourse's contingency and arbitrariness the principle of reciprocity, equity, adequation. When Titus fails to receive from the Emperor recognition of, let alone restitution for, the wrongs done to his family members, he appeals to the gods to send Justice earthwards, clinging to an imaginary agent that not only confers dignity and purpose on their meaningless deaths but also salvages for Rome reason within barbaric madness (IV.iii.52-53).[3] By championing the Big Other who obeys the principle of contractual reciprocity, the revenger serves society at large. Settling the earthly debt allows the revenger to recover the metaphysical balance between the supernatural world and this one—as though the principle of exchange were so vital for the maintenance of everyday reality that its significance extended to the great beyond. He keeps the symbolic order intact, for without the belief in exchange there is no ground for any belief. The world that has lost touch with the foundational belief before belief is surely depicted in Jacobean revenge tragedy, famously exemplified by *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. There, no one seems to believe in belief anymore, because the Big Other is a "big joke". Without a belief in the symbolic order's integrity, all beliefs decay into cynicism and, for those who do not slip into madness, morality becomes a game that one needs to cheat at to get ahead. Thanks to the earnest Elizabethan revenger, that defender of the economies of "justice", the living and the dead can both rest in peace, knowing that a rational and moral symbolic order still holds society together.

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[2] See Žižek, p. 18, for a discussion of the Big Other.

[3] After Titus is cheated of his hand in the hope of redeeming his sons, he no longer believes in earthly economies of exchange (III.i).

Surplus Revenge

Yet Elizabethan revenge tragedies readily attest to the fact that the revenger's service to society cannot be the entire story. No matter how apparently selfless, the protagonist experiences tremendous pleasure in slaughtering the villain or villains, for they are his personal antagonists, too. The villain has, of course, dealt a direct psychological wound to the protagonist by killing his loved one. From this perspective, the revenger is never an impassive proxy, insofar as the individual upon whose behalf he acts must have been dear to him. As Richard Hillman traces the pattern in early modern revenge tragedy, the protagonist perceives "the injury as rendering his existence meaningless" (p. 1). Because identity formation establishes itself in a dialectical relationship with someone else, the existential crisis of revenge tragedy occurs through a counterpart's outrageous murder. If any given individual's world consists of the various gravitational bodies around whom his sense of self revolves and rotates, the violent removal of the protagonist's beloved throws his world out of orbit and his time out of joint. In killing the beloved, the villain savagely strips from the protagonist his role as son, father, or lover. Thus, over and beyond the familial debt to the dead, the revenger stands to gain personally from paying back the villain. Revenge offers the narcissistic pleasure of reasserting one's self with murderous aggression after having suffered a traumatic blow to one's self-image. The revenger stabs the villainous other with the shards of the broken mirror of imaginary identification.

The protagonist is a kind of "moonlighter", in that he seeks on the sly to make a profit in his own imaginary register, while officially labouring to protect the symbolic order's integrity for the good of all. The imaginary register, which Lacanian psychoanalysis describes in part through the mirror stage, strikes a chord with class-driven pre-modern society, for a significant power differential exists between the revenger and his antagonist, who invariably holds a more elevated aristocratic, if not royal, status. Although Lacan theorizes contemporary identity formation through positing a specular encounter between subject and social reflection, his ideas are deeply rooted in Kojève's commentary on Hegelian dialectic of the master and servant, which initiates for Hegel the arc of history and the establishment of society. As Katherine Maus states, "Renaissance revenge tragedy taps the repressed frustrations" of a highly stratified society dependent on "displays of dominance and subservience", by "presenting the delicious spectacle of subjects hoodwinking and finally annihilating their superiors" (p. xii). The revenger's quest for vengeance opens up the brutal struggle for domination subtending the coalescence of the classes and promises to yield the tremendous narcissistic pleasure of striking down the master, who keeps in place one's lowly, servile identity. If all acts of identity formation constitute, at their basis, an imaginary struggle to dominate the other, then the revenger's act against his social superior stands as an even more profound bid for self-aggrandizement. It releases the fundamental narcissism articulated by Kojève's explanation of the emergence of civilization out of the death-struggle to be recognized by the other. The Elizabethan revenger cannot avoid the enjoyment of avenging his own oppression as a servant held thrall to the master's command.

The imaginary struggle described by Kojève underscores the inequity inherent in premodern identity formation across the classes. Neither the established master nor the retaliatory servant operates according to the principle of reciprocity so fundamental to a belief in revenge. To assert oneself as master by dominating someone as servant is to embrace an egregious imparity. In a class-structured society, the ego craves unequal power, pure and simple. It cannot but express the will to dominate when the alternative is cringing servitude. Doubtlessly, the pleasure derived from slaying the master cannot be openly broached in revenge tragedies without the protagonist losing the moral high ground and the audience denouncing his actions. Nothing is more repellant than the naked narcissism of others, and, in the absolutist early modern state, no one is vilified more than the traitor, the figure who seeks to overthrow royal authority.[4]

If a revenge tragedy is going to be successful in eliciting guilt-free pleasure from the audience, then the revenge must appear necessary, not as the means for asserting the revenger's identity, but as a duty to society. The restitution of the Big Other, the preservation of the superego, must coincide with the villain's death in order to conceal the revenger's imaginary desires. The villain's death is an obligatory sacrifice that protects, first and foremost, the integrity of the symbolic order. Then, and only then, can the revenger experience narcissistic pleasure without any guilt. His pleasure is a stolen surplus, a profit in excess of the economies of revenge. It is a surplus, because the protagonist labours on behalf of others. He need not acknowledge any personal contract with the master. For all intents and purposes, he is not collecting what is due to himself. As a result, the pleasure simply accrues to the revenger as a by-product from the settling of the victim's account. The revenger enjoys his expenditure of violence guilt-free because he believes in revenge's capacity to make a difference for others, and what convinces him of the importance of retributive justice is precisely the others of belief. The others of belief are the guarantors of the revenger's credibility.

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[4] See Smith, *passim*.

The Spectacle of Revenge

If believing is being seen, then the protagonist's credibility as a revenger stands or falls upon the skill with which he elicits recognition from others. Although numerous scenes of recognition may occur throughout any given revenge tragedy, the case for the revenger's credibility is made the strongest for onstage and offstage spectators through a spectacle occurring frequently—but not always—at the play's climax. *The Spanish Tragedy* is considered to be the first play to establish for the genre the convention of making revenge a *coup de théâtre* (Maus, p. xvi). But during the period, spectacles did not provide the playwright with merely metadramatic opportunities to reflect upon the business of theatre, players, and play-going. A wide range of spectacles constituted public events that solicited belief in aristocratic and royal status. Elizabeth's progresses, the Accession Day tilts, and courtly masques were all acts of heraldic display designed to capture the recognition of the other.[5] This is not to say that theatre and heraldry are opposed to one another in a false binary, but to suggest that theatrical spectacle might have more to do with heraldic identity formation than has been previously appreciated.

In the world of revenge tragedy, where questions of class disparity coexist with a desire for social stability, heraldic rituals commonly circle around the main action. At the beginning of Act Two of *Antonio's Revenge*, a dumbshow depicts Andrugio's funeral procession, during which a herald takes charge of solemnly bearing the dead Duke's helm and sword and arranging the coffin's drapery. This heraldic spectacle would not have been lost on Elizabethans, since the College of Arms orchestrated lavish and symbolically grandiose funerals to celebrate the noble household's status and strengthen the English nobility's image in the public eye.[6] Besides mentioning the tournament in praise of Lucibella's excellence (I.ii.252-53), *The Tragedy of Hoffman* includes in its *Dramatis Personae* a herald, who conducts a ceremony to disinherit Jerom, the son of Ferdinand, the Duke of Prussia, and to adopt the disguised revenger, Clois Hoffman, as heir (II.i.486-93). Heraldry, with all its pomp and circumstance, engineers belief in class position. These two heraldic displays, no matter how marginal to the plots of their respective revenge tragedies, underscore the genre's awareness of the importance of acquiring recognition from the other in order to legitimate social identity. Consistent with his society, the revenger capitalizes on this recognition as well.

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[5] For an introduction to sixteenth-century English processions and spectacles, see Strong.

Perhaps it is no accident that the first extant English revenge tragedy should have a protagonist whose office intersects with heraldry. Regardless of whether or not his title alludes to the Earl Marshal who presided over the College of Arms,[7] Hieronimo clearly discharges the duties of a herald in orchestrating the masque at the banquet for the Ambassador of Portugal (I.iv.138). Apart from a staged skirmish, it involves three knights presenting scutcheons to the King of Spain. Hieronimo, who literally assumes the role of herald in proclaiming the identities of the famous English heroes behind the three coats of arms, permits the King to exercise his wit through paralleling Spain's and Portugal's current situation with former military struggles against England.[8] The identified coats, according to the King's commentary, are supposed to mollify the ambassador, whose country has been defeated by Spain. In inviting spectators to find in the scutcheons allusions to the present, the masque seeks the recognition of the Spanish King's gentle supremacy but, even more significantly, captures the gaze of the English playgoers, who see their nation glorified directly through the arms once borne by fellow aristocratic countrymen. What Hieronimo stages is less a metadramatic production—a play-within-a-play—than a variant on a helm show, the public display of knights' coats of arms. During the Elizabethan tilts, participating nobles would hang their scutcheons upon a tree or present decorative shields to the queen.[9] This type of spectacle hearkens back to the medieval practice of jousting knights exhibiting their aristocratic credentials to heralds.

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[6] For descriptions of such funerals, see Gittings.

[7] Hieronimo is a knight marshal, an officer in the royal household who held military or administrative authority (*OED*), but for the Elizabethan period the title resonates with that of Earl Marshal. See Wagner, p. 197.

[8] Boas, pp. 397-98, and Edwards, p. 26n., point out the historical inaccuracies of these English triumphs in the Iberian peninsula, indicating the clearly ideological function of the heraldic display.

[9] See Keen, pp. 204-5, and Young, p. 46.

Heraldic spectacle could take a humbler but no less memorable form in day-to-day activities wherever a coat of arms was emblazoned. Guillim's *A Display of Heraldrie* describes the way in which arms are designed to secure recognition from others:

> How great the dignities and estimation of Armes ever hath been, and yet is, we may easily conceive by this, that they doe delight the beholders, and greatly grace and beautifie the places wherein they are erected; so also they doe occasion their spectators to make serious inquisition whose they are, who is the owner of the house wherein they are set up, of what Familie there is descended, and who were his next, and who his remote Parents or Ancestors. (Guillim, p. 2)

The coat of arms does not provoke disgust in the viewer at aristocratic narcissism in the same way that Kojève's brutal master-and-servant struggle might. Heraldic display makes an individual's narcissism socially acceptable. It recruits public recognition by capitalizing on aesthetic pleasure. It establishes the dignity and status of the noble household without emphasizing the violent power struggles that made possible and maintain its status. The spectacle solicits the recognition of others to engineer belief. It seeks to capture the imaginary gaze of the Big Other, the Other of others.

I want to argue that the revenger makes use of the spectacle as a kind of heraldic display for his own cause. He occupies a subject position akin to the herald who engineers belief by capturing the imaginary gaze of the Big Other. Just as a coat of arms, a coronation, or a masque appeals to the beholder to validate the noble aristocrat's social superiority, the spectacle of revenge solicits belief from the plexus of onstage spectators and confirms for the revenger the credibility of his identity as a revenger, that is, someone whose retaliation is justified. The ghost or the co-conspirator or the sympathizer returns the revenger's call to the imaginary Big Other, as if the revenger's actions were officially acknowledged to protect the symbolic order. The revenger has nothing to hide because his vengeance is not a private matter between him and the villain—that is, something worked out behind closed doors. Even though the dancing maskers in *Antonio's Revenge* persuade Piero to dismiss the courtiers and the attendants from the room, Antonio takes full responsibility for his actions when the first Senator asks, "Whose hand presents this gory spectacle?" (V.vi.1). By being seen by others, the revenger makes public the symbolic contracts that motivate his actions: Hieronimo explicitly tells the court about the bloody handkerchief symbolizing his vow to avenge Horatio's death, and answers the distraught fathers that he killed their sons in exchange for his, hoping that heaven will continue the murderers' afflictions (IV.iv.72-151). The socially acceptable spectacle fogs up the mirror stage of violence from which the protagonist narcissistically profits.

By deploying spectacle for the purposes of vengeance, the playwright puts the offstage spectators in the position of onstage ones. The work of spectacle solicits our belief in revenge too. The degree to which we believe in revenge's symbolic efficacy in fulfilling moral contracts determines whether or not we identify with the revenger and thus determines whether or not we tacitly and vicariously enjoy his surplus pleasure at slaying the master. Revenge would lose its credibility if the revenger's narcissistic pleasure were to show through the economies of exchange too clearly, and it would become apparent that the spectacle for the Big Other is really only the revenger's solipsistic mirror stage of murderous self-aggrandizement.

Ethics and the Other of Belief

Up until now, I have discussed the spectacle of revenge as if it were successful in soliciting belief, but I would like to submit that the ways in which specific revengers succeed or fail in orchestrating their spectacles engender various ethical effects. Revenge tragedies do not always elicit recognition from the other and may even expose the violent narcissism inherent in the protagonist's enterprise. If belief is a matter of being seen—for it has been my contention that revenge tragedies advocate, to one degree or another, the credibility of revenge—then the onstage spectator encourages the offstage spectators to view the violence from his or her ethical perspective. The other of the spectacle either buys into the belief of revenge or disturbs belief's economy.

Of all Elizabethan revenge tragedies, *Antonio's Revenge* stands out as the most obviously manipulative and the most ethically suspect, if it is not read as a parody of the genre. The spectacle of revenge coincides with an entertainment presented to the villain Piero. Disguised as festive maskers, the conspirators perform a "measure", a stately dance noted for its elegance and gravity (Gair, ed., IV.v., n. 4.2). This spectacle of revenge takes place before the Ghost of the murdered Andrugio, Antonio's father, who, just prior to the conspirators getting down to business, finds the best seat in the theatre: "Here will I sit, spectator of revenge, / And glad my ghost in anguish of my foe" (V.v.22-23). The ghost positions himself between the music houses, the galleries where the musicians would play for the audience. Looking down upon the scene from his raised location, he can be seen by all offstage spectators (Gair, p. 28). As the other of the spectacle, he is a guarantor for Antonio's credibility, modeling our own spectatorship. When the spectacle has reached its gory conclusion, the ghost's incantatory words, "'Tis done, and now my soul shall sleep in rest. / Sons that revenge their father's blood are blest" (V.v.81-82), anticipate the gratitude and blessing of the Venetian Senators, who are relieved to have rid themselves of the Duke (V.vi.1-35). When initially confronted by the senators, Antonio and his co-conspirators vie to be seen as the chief instigators of the spectacle, because they apparently reckon that it confers heroic glory on the doers. In this play, the plexus of believing others who simultaneously strike down the tyrant are unimpeachable guarantors of revenge's credibility in preserving the symbolic order. When Maria, mother to Antonio, calls upon the conspirators to mourn for the dead, no one mentions the child Julio, son to Piero, whom Antonio slaughtered for blood to sprinkle around his own father's hearse (III.iii.65-66). If the dead will have what is due to them, the play does not explain why the horrific slaughter of Julio is at all justified in light of Piero's comeuppance. The bloodlust exhibited by Antonio's sacrifice of the innocent Julio—a deed superfluous to the settling of scores—rather forcefully depicts the surplus pleasure inherent in revenge. The scene's ethical insight into the revenger's narcissism loses its force as the play reaches a conclusion in which revenge is championed for restoring the symbolic order.

The Tragedy of Hoffman might stand at the opposite end of the ethical spectrum from *Antonio's Revenge*, if we view the eponymous character as the play's chief revenger. It opens with the protagonist proclaiming the justness of avenging his father's death, which occurred before the play begins. Soon after, when opportunity throws his way Otho, the son of the Duke of Luningberg who executed Hoffman's father, Hoffman carries out vengeance through a parodic coronation, a ritual usually orchestrated by royal heralds. He places on Otho's head a heated iron crown that roasts out his brains, executing his enemy's son with the same instrument of torture used against his own father. Even though this spectacle differs dramatically from typical revenge tragedies in occurring, not at the climax, but at "the prologue to the'nsuing play" (I.i.237), two more parodic coronations taking place later on reinforce the association of the act of vengeance with ironic heraldic display (II.i.481-93; V.iii.2582-84). But, even more crucially for my purposes, Hoffman's opening spectacle with its minimum of onstage spectators deviates dramatically from that of *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Antonio's Revenge*.

In this scene, the only guarantor of revenge, the other of belief with whom the offstage spectators can identify, is Lorrique, Hoffman's accomplice, who explains his recent betrayal of his master Otho by appealing to innate villainy, irreligiosity, and cowardice (I.i.89-90). As though performing spectacles for one another, Hoffman shares with Lorrique his excitement over the people they ensnare in their deadly deceit: after witnessing Ferdinand's and Jerom's poisoning, he asks Lorrique, "Art thou not plumpt with laughter"? (IV.ii.1663). His henchman eventually betrays Hoffman's secret plottings, leaving him alone in his vengeance. This single, discreditable, fair-weather spectator contributes to our alienation from revenge.

But the opening spectacle rather radically disturbs the economy of revenge with another onstage spectator—of sorts. When first soliloquizing upon his situation, Hoffman vows to his father's corpse, which he keeps hanging from a tree:

> I will not leave thee, untill like thye selfe,
> I've made thy enemies, then hand in hand
> Wee'le walke to paradise. (I.i.23-25)

And after torturing Otho to death, he calls out to the visible cadaver, "Father I offer thee thy murtherers sonne" (I.i.239), as though it were a witness to the grim scene. The play makes us dis-identify with the subject position of Hoffman's spectator, simply because it is abject, a moss-covered skeleton. If the ghost of Andrugio from *Antonio's Revenge* and the ghost of Andrea from *The Spanish Tragedy* feast their eyes on the spectacle of revenge, the silent anatomy's empty eye sockets fail to reflect Hoffman's deeds. No actual ghost haunts the stage. The other of revenge's belief, like Vindice's Gloriana, is a psychopath's grotesque delusion, the materialization of death. Given the few onstage spectators, Hoffman's acts of revenge are thus shown to be unequivocally private spectacles feeding his narcissism. Disguise and secrecy allow him to prolong the pleasures afforded by vengeance. When Saxony, Rodorick, and Mathias chance upon Hoffman's solitary cave, grimly guarded by the skeletons, they enter Hoffman's interior world, secretive, private, perverse, where festishized cadavers are left unburied. Martha, Otho's mother, describes it as "the dismal'st grove / That ever eye beheld . . . Some basiliskes, or poysonoous serpents den!" (ll. 1999-2000, 2005 [V.i]). If anything, the remote grove, in which the spectacle of revenge is entombed, obstructs the public gaze. The play exposes the revolting pleasures that Hoffman takes in inflicting violence and gives us no vantage point from which to relate to his spectacle.

If we view, however, the survivors as usurping Hoffman's role of revenger later in the plot, then the play's implicit ethical stance toward revenge quickly loses ethical ground. The ministers of justice, namely Martha, Saxony, Rodorick and Mathias, problematically employ the same vengeful language that motivates the villain. Upon realizing that her son's bones hang beside the remains of Hoffman's father, Martha tells Lorrique, "Let them hang a while / Hope of revenge in wrath doth make mee smile" (ll. 2129-30[V.i]). Is she also not performing for a cadaver? Furthermore, Mathias advocates imitating Hoffman's diabolical deception to carry out vengeance:

> Revenge should have proportion,
> By slye deceit he acted every wronge,
> And by deceit I would have him intrapt;
> Then the revenge were fit, just, and square. (ll. 2200-3 [V.i])

With geometric terms, Mathias appeals to the economy of exchange, even as his mode of vengeance mirrors Hoffman's madness. To swear vengeance against Hoffman, the revengers form a ring around Lorrique and lay their right hands on his head (ll. 2245-47 [V.i]). This circle centred on his head creates a human crown, anticipating the repetition of the ghastly coronation ritual that initiated the action. If the play has up till now exposed the perverse narcissism driving the spectacle of vengeance, its finale appears to re-mystify revenge by depicting it as the basis of social contracts for establishing community. The co-revengers serve each other as the other of belief. The concluding coronation ritual seeks justification for a brutal act that the play earlier on did not allow us to accept. Now, it promises to restore the symbolic order, left in shambles by the tyrant Hoffman, who rules Prussia. This crown is a fitting emblem of revenge itself, which, like Fortune's wheel, comes full circle and at the same time promises no end. Is the spectacle an ethically fashioned irony, which bitterly foregrounds the perverse pleasures behind all kinds of vengeance? Or is the irony only a further obfuscation designed to sanctify a "purer" revenge beyond that which Hoffman has perpetrated? I would tend to go along with the latter case: the play's probing critique of revenge gives way to the acceptance of a socially expedient vengeance, as though Chettle were, after indulging in Hoffman's mad antics, salvaging for his spectators a justified, credible mode of vengeance.

Hamlet questions the ethics motivating the spectacle of revenge with more generic sophistication and psychological depth, certainly, than does *Hoffman*. The play gradually undercuts the oppressive presence of the spectral spectator established in the first act. This other of belief, upon whom Hamlet's revenge depends, diminishes in influence as the play progresses: in the scene with Gertrude, only Hamlet can see and hear the ghost, and in the graveyard scene, a natural place for supernatural visitations and hauntings, there are only earthly remains—the play has finally exorcised the purgatorial spirit. The other of belief decays and cools into Yorick's skull, which does not return Hamlet's philosophically subdued gaze. In stark contrast to *Antonio's Revenge*, the father's ghost does not gain admittance to the theatrical death of his murderer. Why should he be absent from this momentous scene? Perhaps because the spectacle is not engineered for him, the other of belief. Without premeditation, Hamlet reacts to the first strike of Claudius. He is not carrying out revenge by settling old scores, but retaliating in the heat of moment to someone else's staged spectacle. With the ghost's absence, the final scene encourages us to forget revenge. The offstage spectators are thus dissuaded from viewing the finale from the point of view of Hamlet's father. The finale is not Hamlet's spectacle, in contrast to Hieronomo's, Antonio's, or even Martha's, but, more significantly, that of Claudius and Laertes.

As a result, the play calls into question much more sharply than does *The Tragedy of Hoffman* the way in which spectacles are deployed to legitimate the narcissism and violence of social authority. The duel between Hamlet and Laertes stages the early modern variant on the aristocratic tournament, Kojève's master-and-servant struggle for imaginary supremacy. It mirrors Hamlet's father's formal combat with old Fortinbras, a duel whose terms were "ratified by law and heraldry" (I.i.99). We are prepared to suspect the veneer of noble ceremony as early as Hamlet's diatribe against "customary suits" (I.ii.79-89) and prepared to discredit revenge couched in armorial garb as early as the speech on the "rugged Pyrrhus" (II.ii.450). The honour of Pyrrhus's vengeance is undermined by his bloodthirsty savagery. He has "sable arms" signifying his "black purpose" (477-78), while his complexion is "smeared / with heraldry more dismal": "Head to foot, / Now is he total gules, horridly tricked / With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons" (480-83). Heraldic discourse, in directly betokening narcissistic violence, loses its power to legitimate Pyrrhus's deeds. Laertes, the naïve revenger, has an appropriately naïve attitude toward ceremony and spectacle. His desire "to cut [Hamlet's] throat i' th' church" (IV.vii.144) expresses less blasphemy than a confidence in public support for his violent cause. He intends a noble sacrifice that should be recognized by the community; conversely, he is outraged by the fact that his father received no heraldic funeral, "nor hatchment o'er his bones, / No noble rite nor formal ostentation" (IV.v.239-40), and curses the Doctor roundly for presenting not enough "ceremony" at Ophelia's interment (V.i.231-52). Try as he might, Hamlet cannot—unlike Laertes—find ready belief in revenge through spectacle. Neither Pyrrhus's speech nor the Mousetrap can incite him to action. Indeed, Hamlet's meditation on Fortinbras's "rousing military parade", in Girard's words (p. 288), only serves to expose the manipulation inherent in heraldic display, which moves men to dare death and danger for an "eggshell" (*Ham.*, IV.iv.56). By the time we arrive at the finale we understand that Hamlet has repudiated the typical revenger's role by not orchestrating a self-validating spectacle. Spectacles are not vehicles of justice but are designed to entrap the gaze of the other. As the scene closes, the play seems to communicate that the revenger must break the spell of the spectacle if the cycle of vengeance is to broken,[10] just as Laertes deviates from his allocated role at the last moment to seek forgiveness.

Although Hamlet refuses to stage a heraldic display for his own vengeance, this metatheatrical play does not abandon the logic of spectacle entirely. In a way, this play's finale commits an ethical relapse not unlike that of *Hoffman*, but far subtler. If individuals are warned not to take revenge into their own hands, the play still displaces the principle of symbolic reciprocity onto a higher, albeit inscrutable, plane. The lesson we learn is that the potential revenger should bide his time in waiting for the heavens to restore the imbalances and injustices within the symbolic order. Before the finale, Hamlet resigns himself to providence:

> let us know,
> Our indiscretion sometime serves us well
> When our deep plots do pall; and that should learn us
> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will. (V.ii.7-12)

In other words, the potential revenger should submit to his role in a higher spectacle of divine retaliation. Those who take violence into their own hands are "Hoist with [their] own petar" (III.iv.207), as Laertes realizes too late: "Why as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric, / I am justly killed with mine own treachery" (V.ii.336-37). Though killed in the final scene, Hamlet is not killed with his own treachery but resigns himself philosophically to fate. Horatio, the surviving other of belief with whom we identify, will "Truly deliver" to Fortinbras Hamlet's narrative of "purposes mistook / Fall'n on th'inventors' heads" (426-28). He bears witness to retribution crystallizing from apparently contingent events. As John Holloway says about the play, "chance turns into larger design, randomness becomes retribution" (cited in Kermode, p. 1188). Are we to believe that if we wait long enough, a divinely orchestrated spectacle ensnaring the villain in his own web will enact our vengeance for us? The Big Other—God, providence, fate, karma, etc.—will not only take care of the symbolic order but also realize quite conveniently the revenger's own narcissistic wishes. Because the Big Other ultimately runs the show, Hamlet's own surplus pleasure is concealed behind the force of necessity. But really, why should the finale correspond with Hamlet's vindication, when the court has witnessed him murder the king. He is a traitor. As Greenblatt observes, Hamlet does not "establish unequivocal and unambiguous public confirmation of his uncle's guilt" (p. 1664).

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[10] Girard posits that the play urges us to break out of the ceremony of the sacrificed scapegoat if we are to forge a better society.

In this string of revenge tragedies that I am examining, *The Spanish Tragedy* rather unexpectedly offers the most compelling ethical platform from which to view the genre. At first glance, it seems to advocate a belief in revenge comparable to that of *Antonio's Revenge*, in that its final spectacle is also performed in front of a spectral spectator. From the play's opening, the ghost Andrea, in the company of Revenge, eagerly awaits the death of Balthazar, who killed him in battle.[11] At the play's conclusion, when the carnage has reached its climax in Hieronimo's suicide, the ghost exclaims, "Aye, these were spectacles to please my soul!" (IV.v.12). Andrea, whom Revenge calls the chorus of the tragedy, gives the offstage spectator cues as to how to respond throughout the plot: from impatience when the action slows down, to satisfaction when the finale provides the long-delayed vengeance. Because this onstage spectator from the supernatural realm tempts us, the spectators, to identify with his superior perspective on the dramatic action, is the play not manipulating us into guaranteeing the credibility of Hieronimo's vengeful actions?

Not entirely. Although the ghost of Andrea gives the spectator more to identify with than does the corpse of Hoffman's father, his credibility falls deeper and deeper into disrepute from his opening monologue. Andrea confesses that in Hades he has been the victim of administrative indecision. Minos, Aeacus, and Rhadamanth cannot reach an agreement as to where he should dwell in the afterlife—with lovers or soldiers. The three judges thus send him to Pluto, the infernal king, to pronounce his doom. Before the king and queen, Andrea exhibits courteous humility, so much so that Proserpine begs her husband to be allowed to decide the shade's fate. Having received royal permission, she sends him to Revenge, with whom he watches the ensuing tragedy. The climax of this tragedy, the spectacle of revenge, which in no uncertain terms pleases Andrea's soul (IV.v.12), and which has presumably been staged for him by omniscient Revenge at Proserpine's bidding, has come about through arbitrarily circuitous means. If it were not for the ineptitude of the three infernal judges and the caprice of a king who foregoes his duty to indulge his wife, there might have been no vengeance. Andrea, whose initial status in the underworld seems dubious, quickly finds himself in the Queen's favour. Why? He has made her smile (I.i.78). The god Revenge, like Hieronimo, is a kind of Marshal whose spectacles obeys royal whim; he does not serve any ultimate legal code, supernatural audit, or impartial authority.

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[11] See Hillman's "Out of their Classical Depth" for a genealogy of the pagan eschatology that is superimposed upon the nominally Christian world of early English tragedy, including *The Spanish Tragedy*.

What is shocking about Andrea's spectatorship is that this other of belief has not entered into any contract with Hieronimo, who for all intents and purposes labours to avenge his son's murder, no one else's. Why does Horatio not haunt his father or at least attend the final spectacle? Does he not rest in peace, now that his murderer has been violently dispatched to Hades? These questions are left unanswered. We are not even prompted to ask them. Horatio's death, which appears significantly more unjust than does Andrea's, has little bearing on underworld politics or law, and the retaliation against Balthazar satisfies less a supernatural accounting for Hieronimo's family than the desires of another shade, whose death on the battlefield hardly warrants "credible" vengeance. In contrast to the subsequent Elizabethan revenge tragedies previously discussed, all of which offer the possibility of an ultimate—even supernatural—justice where all accounts are balanced in the symbolic order, *The Spanish Tragedy* rather radically punctures the fantasy of the Big Other in the person of Andrea. Who is Andrea that he can preside over the doom of the dead? In the final scene, Andrea says to Revenge that he will beg Proserpine to permit him to dispense justice to his friends (Horatio and company) and foes (Balthazar and company). After describing what rewards his friends deserve, he requests Revenge to let him judge his enemies and then, as if given this responsibility, delivers their sentences of eternal torment. Revenge does not hesitate in going along with the desires of this self-appointed and self-interested judge—an ambitious courtier who has made Proserpine smile, an unsuitable substitute for the noble Astraea or the blindfolded Themis. It is not just that Hieronimo's spectacle has been performed for the surplus pleasure of another shade, but that this shade has so easily usurped the divine office of administering justice, pronouncing doom on others. What would Hieronimo think of Andrea after suggesting earlier by his "Vindicta mihi" speech (III.xiii.1-4) that a Christian judge presides over all human actions? The play thus exposes the Big Other, the Other of others, as an alienating, arbitrary narcissism that the revenger unwittingly serves. The Big Other is not beyond the imaginary register of revenge but already implicated in it. To view Hieronimo's spectacle from the perspective of Andrea is to realize the incredible and discreditable contingency of vengeance.

The Spanish Tragedy, despite being the recognized progenitor of Tudor revenge tragedy, holds a strange and disturbed relation to its progeny. Subsequent dramatists liberally plunder Kyd's motifs in bits and pieces but avoid and conceal his grim vision of collapsing revenge into the Big Other. *The Spanish Tragedy* offers spectators such a comfortless view of the ultimate horizon of vengeance that an entire genre emerged on the Tudor stage to recuperate the fantasy of a revenger serving justice. Andrea is the traumatic spectral spectator that the others of belief in subsequent Tudor plays strive to displace and domesticate if not exorcise. Kyd creates a persistent nightmare from which Tudor revenge drama desperately tries to awaken.

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