

Connotations

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**Of the Locke and the keys
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Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate

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The Pivotal Position of *Henry V* in the Rise and Fall of Shakespeare's Prose

ROBERT CROSMAN

Only five of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays have more lines of prose than of verse. All are plays attributed to the middle of his playwriting career, and four are comedies, the fifth being a history play, 2 *Henry IV*. With the help of a useful chart at the end of Brian Vickers' book on Shakespeare's prose, one can trace an interesting rise and fall over time: the proportion of prose in Shakespeare's plays increases with some regularity until about 1600, and then it begins to decline, ending at about where it began.¹ The comedies have a higher proportion of prose than the other two genres, and the histories have more than the tragedies, yet the rise and fall can be traced in all three genres, and climaxes for all three between 1596 and 1601, if current dating of the plays can be trusted.

The two major variables in this story are genre and chronology. Comedy's link to prose is easy to see, but even that apparently obvious connection is complicated by the other, less easily understood variable, chronology. What is probably Shakespeare's first comedy, *The Comedy of Errors*, is about 13% prose, and with the exception of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice*, the proportion of prose rises in every comedy until it reaches a preponderance in *Much Ado*, *As You Like It*, *Merry Wives*, and *Twelfth Night*, then gradually declines to 21% prose for *The Tempest*. And the histories (1 & 2 *Henry IV* and *Henry V*) written during the period (1596-1599) when prose was in the ascendant are nearly half prose, and one of two tragedies written during the same period, *Hamlet* (c. 1600), shows a high proportion of prose lines, almost one-third, although *Julius Caesar* (c. 1599) does not.²

Apparently Shakespeare's use of prose was linked to certain ideas of decorum, of what was "appropriate" to certain moods, characters and

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debcrosman00201.htm>>.

situations. In the stage conventions of the 1590s, which Shakespeare did more than anyone to establish, prose is more appropriate than verse for comedies and for comic scenes, more appropriate for lower-class than for upper-class characters, and more suited to “realistic” speeches than to “idealistic” ones. But although these conventions make the comedies the richest loci of Shakespearean prose, the mixed genre of the history play is the best place to test their strength. There, as we shall see, Shakespeare began altering the conventions by writing prose for nobles to speak, and began writing prose for situations that were neither comic nor “realistic.”

The question I ask in this paper is “Why?”—why did prose suddenly take over Shakespeare’s histories (2 *Henry IV*: 54% prose lines), as well as his comedies (*Merry Wives*: 89.5%), and even make inroads into tragedy (*Hamlet*: 31%)? And then why did the trend reverse itself, and Shakespeare’s use of prose gradually decline, so that by the end of his career he was writing comedies with less than a quarter prose, and a history (*Henry VIII*) with almost none at all? My answer has something to do with Elizabethan hopes for a continuation of a popular monarchy, and with the death of those hopes on the accession to the throne of James I. But let us go back to early 1597, the probable date of *1 Henry IV*, and take up the story there.

Before writing *1 Henry IV*, Shakespeare had already managed to write six history plays, none of them containing more than 14% prose (2 *Henry VI*), and four with none at all, including *Richard II*. Yet the very next history, *1 Henry IV*, is nearly half prose—over half, probably, if we were to count words rather than lines. Whatever happened to make Shakespeare discover prose happened rather suddenly in *1 Henry IV*.³

“What happened,” most students of Shakespeare would answer, “was Falstaff.” Falstaff is the presiding genius of Shakespeare’s prose. Not only does his arrival lead to a decisive turn toward prose in the rest of the second tetralogy, but his appearance in a comedy, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, coincides with the high-water mark of Shakespeare’s use of prose in any of his plays. In most productions of the two *Henry IV*s this disreputable character is so diverting that he quite steals the show, but Shakespeare made Falstaff disreputable not for his own sake, but as a partner, a lightning rod, and ultimately a foil for the prince. So at

the very least we must modify our first assessment and say "what happened was Falstaff-and-Hal."

In fact it is Henry, not Falstaff, who fires the first substantial salvo in Shakespeare's prose revolution. Falstaff enters on a line that is only one foot short of being blank verse—it is even conceivable that Shakespeare wrote it as verse and then changed it, by some such deletion as the one provided by my bracketed insertion:

FALSTAFF Now Hal, what time of day is it, [my] lad?

PRINCE Thou art so fat-witted with drinking of old sack and unbuttoning thee after supper, and sleeping upon benches after noon, that thou hast forgotten to demand that truly which thou wouldst truly know. What a devil hast thou to do with the time of the day? Unless hours were cups of sack, and minutes capons, and clocks the tongues of bawds, and dials the signs of leaping-houses, and the blessed sun himself a fair hot wench in flame-color'd taffeta, I see no reason why thou shouldst be so superfluous to demand the time of the day. (1 *Henry IV* 1.2.1-12)

To most critics who comment on this speech, Hal seems merely to be filling the choreic role of introducing his fat companion with a character-sketch, but Hal *is*, after all, the more important person here, who has just been censured in the previous scene by his father the king ("riot and dishonor"). Hal's first, low-comedic speech on the subject of liquor and bawds seems amply to confirm his father's characterization—by associating with a person such as he describes, Hal is apparently condemning his own character along with Falstaff's.

Yet this first speech is also a mocking diatribe against Falstaff's character, accusing him of gluttony, lechery, and (by implication) of dissembling ("What a devil hast thou to do with the time of the day?"). When he quibbles with Falstaff's question, Hal is already engaging in what will become Falstaff's favorite figure, *asteismus*, "the returning of a different sense of a word" (Vickers 92) before his companion has a chance to do so. In short, it is not Falstaff but the prince who initiates the luxuriant, disingenuous style we associate with the former. But added to this style is something uniquely his own—a stinging wit based not only on logic but also on perfect moral pitch: the "lowness" of Hal's subject-matter is redeemed by the clarity with which he sees its baseness and labels it as such. At this point Shakespeare's use of prose is still

comic, if you will, but something new is present: a dignity and discernment that we associate with his well-born characters, and with blank verse. Talking to Falstaff, Henry must speak prose, perhaps, but being a prince and an English folk hero he must not sound foolish.

Both Jonas Barish and Brian Vickers have written valuable analyses of Hal's first speech. Both find ways of making its rhetorical structure visible in the way they print it on their pages, and both demonstrate that it has a rising, climactic shape that illustrates careful planning on Shakespeare's part, and something akin to forensic genius on Hal's, if we are to credit him with the speech's artistry:

Improvisation needs ground rules [Barish writes], and Hal's construction of a certain syntactic frame gives him freedom: he does not have to worry about what to do with his clauses, or where to put them. Having erected a rapid scaffolding that presupposes some degree of balance and likeness, he can proceed to forget it and concentrate on the details; he can extemporize, as he does, with lordly abandon. The suspended sentence, for him, is no stranglehold, but a set of strong struts. Shakespeare may be planning his effects with the utmost care, but Hal, at least, seems to be talking with perfect naturalness.⁴

Yet for Vickers the brilliance of *Hal's* prose is somehow made to redound to *Falstaff's* credit, and despite the fact that he speaks first, speaks brilliantly, and speaks from an independent, even a dominant position of logical and moral clarity, Hal is made to seem little more than Falstaff's straight man.⁵

Milton Crane's book, *Shakespeare's Prose*, seems also rather to scant Hal's role in this linguistic universe. At one point he observes that while the other characters can be assigned to one of the two "worlds" of verse or prose, "Hal's position remain[s] always ambiguous."⁶ Then he observes that "The Prince, in general, takes his cue from his company, speaking prose in the tavern and verse in the court with equal facility" (87). When finally Hal speaks verse to Falstaff (5.3.39 ff.), Crane attributes this to a character-change: "Hal is now no longer the boon companion, but the valiant knight, and reproves Falstaff in straightforward verse" (87).

The implication of these various pronouncements is that Hal is the central character of this play only in the sense that he binds everything together—the two plots, the two "worlds" of court and tavern, the two

styles of verse and prose—like connective tissue, perhaps, a reactive character who “takes his cue from his company.” And indeed Hal is a hard character to sort out in terms of style, a chameleon poet whom we can sometimes catch in an indeterminate middle-state:

PRINCE What, stands thou idle here? Lend me thy sword.

Many a nobleman lies stark and stiff
Under the hoofs of vaunting enemies,
Whose deaths are yet unreveng'd. I prithee,
Lend me thy sword.

FALSTAFF O Hal, I prithee, give me leave to breathe awhile. Turk Gregory never did such deeds in arms as I have done this day. I have paid Percy, I have made him sure.

PRINCE He is, indeed, and living to kill thee.

I prithee, lend me thy sword.

FALSTAFF Nay, before God, Hal, if Percy be alive, thou gets not my sword; but take my pistol, if thou wilt.

PRINCE Give it me. What, is it in the case?

FALSTAFF Ay, Hal, 'tis hot, 'tis hot. There's that will sack a city.

The Prince draws it out, and finds it to be a bottle of sack.

PRINCE What, is it a time to jest and dally now?

He throws the bottle at him. Exit.

FALSTAFF Well, if Percy be alive, I'll pierce him. If he do come in my way, so; if he do not if I come in his willingly, let him make a carbonado of me. I like not such grinning honor as Sir Walter hath. Give me life, which if I can save, so; if not, honor comes unlook'd for, and there's an end.
[Exit.] (5.3.39-61)

Crane describes this scene as “wound up in prose” (87), which indeed it is in Falstaff's speeches. But as Bevington demonstrates by setting up Hal's speeches as verse, they scan, although the hard-breathing urgency of “lend me thy sword” twice ends a speech on a truncated line. Is this a comic scene? Yes, at least as long as Falstaff holds our attention, but our concern for the Prince and his weaponless state, for which Falstaff can't or won't provide a solution, gives it a serious, suspenseful undercurrent. The tension of moods is reflected in the tension of styles, to which the prose/verse tension contributes a great deal. What from a purely formalistic point of view looks like an anomalous mixture of verse and prose—not merely within a single scene, but within several of Hal's short speeches!—becomes from a more fluid Shakespearean

perspective a growing versatility in Hal's style, so that he will eventually be able to express himself in *any* style, from the most bombastic Falstaffian prose to the noblest, most princely verse, and to move quickly from one decorum to another, as his needs change.

The principle governing Shakespeare's writing of Hal's speeches is that the Prince speaks "every man's language," and speaks it better than the man himself, whether it be the one-word Drawer Francis, whose "Anon, anon, sir!" Hal plays tricks with, or Falstaff, who is continually bested by his princely protegee, whether in the discussion of Falstaff's cowardly behavior at Gadshill, or in the subsequent roleplay of King and Prince, in which Hal instructs Falstaff how to impersonate both characters. Indeed, when the time comes Hal knows how to convince his father that he is fit to wear the crown, and after his father's death he wears it most becomingly.

Given that there are two plots in the Henry IV plays, one of them comic, and that Hal moves back and forth between the two because he is the person in whose body England's hopes of reunification are located, the Prince must continue speaking prose to characters not capable of speaking verse. Still, there is a remarkable difference in tone and mood between Hal's first appearance in *1 Henry IV*, scolding and ridiculing Falstaff for his crimes and vices, and his belated first appearance in *2 Henry IV* and his mock-elegy to "small beer." The mood here modulates from ridicule of Poins's lack of clean linen to sadness at Hal's father's illness, and then to a frank discussion of his difficulty in *expressing* that grief:

PRINCE By this hand, thou thinkest me as far in the devil's book as thou and Falstaff for obduracy and persistency. Let the end try the man. But I tell thee, my heart bleeds inwardly that my father is so sick. And keeping such vile company as thou art hath in reason taken from me all ostentation of sorrow.

POINS The reason?

PRINCE What wouldst thou think of me, if I should weep?

POINS I would think thee a most princely hypocrite.

PRINCE It would be every man's thought, and thou art a blessed fellow to think as every man thinks. Never a man's thought in the world keeps the roadway better than thine. Every man would think me an hypocrite indeed. And what accites your most worshipful thought to think so?

POINS Why, because you have been so lewd and so much engraft'd to Falstaff.
 PRINCE And to thee. (2.2.42-60)

In this scene, from which Falstaff is significantly absent, Hal modulates from a decorum that matches prose to levity, to a decorum that uses prose to express the private and sincere, as opposed to the public performance of conventional scripts that hide the true, human feelings. Other characters in Shakespeare's plays have bared their souls in speeches that smack of the confessional, and Falstaff has previously done so in prose—"Bardolph, am I not fall'n away vilely since this last action? . . . Well, I'll repent . . . Company, villainous company, hath been the spoil of me" (1 *Henry IV* 3.3.1-10)—but Falstaff's was a rhetorical turn, the preparation for a jest, or the complacent self-revelation of a soul unable fully to believe in its own damnation. While Falstaff shifts the blame for his spiritual condition onto the shoulders of his "villainous company," Hal blames Poins and Falstaff only for bringing his *reputation* into disrepute. In vindicating himself against the low esteem in which the world holds him, and hinting again at the amendment he has already promised, Hal speaks serious truth in prose, making it the medium, and perhaps the index, of his sincerity.

II.

Although the conventional wisdom is that Falstaff is the presiding genius of Shakespeare's prose, Hal and Falstaff interact very little in 2 *Henry IV*—once in the scene (2.4) where Hal and Poins spy on Falstaff and hear him defame them; the other at the end of the play, when the Prince disowns Falstaff, in verse—and yet as we have seen the Prince goes on finding occasions to speak prose. Indeed, it is after the fat knight's disappearance, in *Henry V*, that Hal, now King Henry, speaks his greatest prose.

Many of the prose-speakers of *Henry V* are comic characters—Bardolph, Fluellen, the Dauphin when he's being especially foolish—or those who associate with them, like Orleans and the sober Gower. But Henry, in disguise, has a great prose scene defending "the King" against the

charges of Bates, Court, and Williams that their ruler is better off than they.

The before-battle scene is a recurrent one in Shakespeare's histories and tragedies, yet this (4.1) is the only one in which the general engages in talk with his troops. Such behavior is extraordinary. In order to play his part, Henry must disguise himself, for as he remarks at line 100, it is inappropriate for a commander and his men to speak honestly before a battle, lest they show fear and thus discourage one another. Yet he exposes himself to precisely such a danger, and indeed to a far worse one, since the soldiers show that they have no stomach for Henry's war, and are disposed to blame him for their lack of enthusiasm.

The apparent indecorum of doffing the royal garments in order to mingle with his social inferiors enforces the further indecorum of speaking of serious matters in prose. Bates, Court, and Williams, being common soldiers, are presumably not capable of verse. But the deeper point is that the relationship between the King and his subjects must be understood even by the uneducated, because *all* subjects have a part to play in a successful reign. Surprisingly, Henry's argument is not that the King is better or wiser than his subjects, and thus to be trusted. Rather than boasting of his strengths, Henry confesses the King's weaknesses:

KING . . . though I speak it to you, I think the King is but a man, as I am. The violet smells to him as it doth to me; the element shows to him as it doth to me; all his senses have but human conditions. His ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man; and though his affections are higher mounted than ours, yet, when they stoop, they stoop with the like wing. Therefore when he sees reason of fears, as we do, his fears, out of doubt, be of the same relish as ours are. Yet, in reason, no man should possess him with any appearance of fear, lest he, by showing it, should dishearten his army. (100-12)

Henry's argument is that though they have different roles to play (his word for social role here is "ceremony") king and subjects are essentially one flesh, the "band of brothers" he will shortly assert them to be in his rallying speech (4.3.60). Thus the common soldiers, though they play a different role, are as essential to the success of the common enterprise as is the king, and they must assume the same responsibility for

acquitting *their* role as the King does his. This point Henry makes most clearly when he argues that the King is not responsible for the damnation of those soldiers who will die tomorrow in a state of sin: to deprive them of that responsibility would also be to deprive them of the dignity of free moral agents, who alone have the means to determine their own salvation or damnation.

Here as elsewhere Henry evokes the best energies in his troops by paying them the complement of treating them as equals. To do so he must “disguise” himself in the borrowed cloak of prose, but as so often in Shakespeare, the donning of a disguise does not so much disguise the truth as reveal it in a new and impressive way: only by dissembling his identity can the King reveal his common human nature. The soldiers do not at present realize *who* it is who is arguing for the King’s essential humanity, but we in the audience know, and by exchanging gloves with Williams, Henry arranges for them to learn his true identity after the battle.

The King is but a man—Richard II discovered this fact when Bolingbroke rebelled against him, and it filled him with despair:

Cover your heads, and mock not flesh and blood
 With solemn reverence. Throw away respect,
 Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty.
 For you have but mistook me all this while.
 I live with bread like you, feel want,
 Taste grief, need friends. Subjected thus,
 How can you say to me I am a king? (3.2.171-77)⁷

What Richard could not endure thinking about becomes Henry V’s greatest strength, however. And when his common humanity is at issue, Henry speaks prose, the language of common mortals.

III.

French royalty is capable of speaking prose on occasion, as in the Princess Katherine’s English lesson (3.4), or when the Dauphin is being particularly silly (3.7). But these are comic scenes. The last and to my

mind the greatest instance of Shakespeare's stretching the decorum governing the use of dramatic prose is in the interview between Henry and Katherine. The participants are royal, not base, and the occasion—a proposal of marriage—is not what we would call “realistic” in the sense of needing the blunt statement of unpleasant truths. Only comedy, the third of our three touchstones for prose scenes, is present, both in the comic associations of love and marriage, and in the wit that Henry brings to his task, but the scene has the fundamentally serious aim of ending the war and accomplishing Henry's mission of reestablishing Plantagenet rule in France by joining the ruling families of the two kingdoms in marriage. For such a scene, Shakespeare was quite capable of writing brilliant verse, as he had often done for wooing scenes in the past.

Why then did Shakespeare write it in prose? The obvious answer, that the two speakers are inexpert in each other's language, is not entirely satisfactory. For one thing, King Charles, Queen Isabel, and the Duke of Burgundy have all just expressed themselves in flawless English verse—why is Princess Katherine alone portrayed as unable to speak English? It could be argued that having written the earlier scene where Katherine is learning her first few words of English, Shakespeare was now forced to continue portraying her as essentially ignorant of English, but since an indefinite time has elapsed since her first introduction to English Katherine could now be portrayed as having gained a command of the language similar to the others at the French court, or Shakespeare could have omitted the earlier scene entirely. No, Henry doesn't speak prose because the Princess speaks broken English; rather the reverse—she is given broken English to speak so that their interview can be conducted in “*Franglais*,” and in prose.

The purpose, I suppose, is in crude terms dramatic variety. Henry has already been displayed as endlessly eloquent, both in verse and in prose: eloquent in the best sense of the word—that is, he fits (as Hamlet urged) the word to the action, the action to the word. He has language for every occasion, and for every audience. In one memorable scene, he apparently convinces God himself to “think not upon the fault / My father made in compassing the crown!” (4.1.290-91). In short, Henry shows himself equal to every rhetorical task that a King must deal with, including the hardest of all—that of removing the robes of ceremony and speaking

as a mere man, prey to the same frailties and doubts as any less exalted mortal—this of course was the feat that neither of his two predecessors, Richard II and Henry IV, was able to accomplish as King, and their inability to do so played some part in their being subject to rebellions from those who saw them as arrogant and uncaring.

Now Henry, who has conquered France not merely with his arm, but also with his words, has France and Katherine in his power—is he going to insist on his rights of conquest, or recognize that in asking for her hand he must beg for her love? He begins ineptly with a stale verse conceit—he is a conqueror who has been conquered by love (5.2.98-101). When Katherine fails to understand this conventional (and self-congratulatory) gallantry Henry begins again, this time more simply, in prose: “Do you like me, Kate?” (108-09). This leads to another bit of romantic gallantry (110-11) for which he is roundly rebuked.

The “like an angel” tactic was a mistake, Henry recognizes, but at least he has now got the measure of the opposing army, and can improvise a new strategy. Now the “soldier” persona can be made to justify a style that Henry calls “plain” and “blunt,” though it is neither. Rather it is eloquent in a folksy way, rhetorically complex but earthy in its vocabulary, boasting, under the guise of apology, that Henry is unable to do what Katherine has just condemned as deceitful, i.e. play the role of courtly lover:

before God, Kate, I cannot look greenly, nor gasp out my eloquence, nor I have no cunning in protestation—only downright oaths, which I never use till urg'd, nor never break for urging. (144-47)

This is both deceptive and true. It is true that Henry does make a point of keeping his promises, but not for lack of cunning.⁸ Yet Henry’s claim to be a tongue-tied soldier is pure moonshine, as the audience is by this time well aware. Thus we can both appreciate Henry’s “deception,” and at the same time marvel at Katherine’s capacity, and our own, to be taken in by it.

That Henry’s conquest of Katherine’s heart is a masterpiece of rhetorical composition is amply documented by Vickers: *antemetabole* (ll. 110-11; 136-38; 242-44), *epanorthosis* (163-66), *gradatio* (166-69), *epistrophe* (238-40),

as well as more pervasive qualities of “parallelism and disjunction” (p. 167), “symmetry” (p. 169) and its apparent opposite, as in the sweet disorder of Henry’s French (ll. 184-85; 217-18). Yet this scene will not yield its secret to a purely formal analysis, and clearly Shakespeare has used anti-rhetoric as largely as rhetoric itself—not merely Henry’s claims to lack of eloquence, but the false starts, the changes of direction, the lapses into and out of French, and of course the transition from verse to prose. Improvisation governs its movements as much or more than any foreseen rhetorical strategy, just as in a battle, unforeseen dangers and opportunities arise and must be met. And (as in battle) what is happening is unclear—is Henry courting Katherine or threatening her? Is he trying to disguise his role-playing, or to demonstrate how well he knows how to play his role? Is he being witty or serious? Are we expected to laugh, to be impressed, or perhaps to cry? When Katherine yields:

KING HENRY Wilt thou have me?

KATHERINE Dat is as it sall please de roi mon père.

KING HENRY Nay, it will please him well, Kate. It shall please him, Kate.

KATHERINE Den it sall also content me. (247-51)

does she do so lovingly, or is she bowing to the inevitable? So many linguistic and cultural codes are being voiced here, both reinforcing and interfering with one another, that we are prevented from making any sure interpretation, even of such obvious things as the behavior and motives of the characters standing before us. As is true in our own lives, there are mysteries in this scene that we can guess at, but not know.

Yet it invites us to interpret, and I *will* interpret. The key to this scene, and to the entire play, and to its hero and his career in this and in the two earlier plays he inhabits is *mastery*. Henry masters Katherine as he had earlier mastered Francis the Drawer, Hotspur, his father, Falstaff (from their first scene together, not merely at the end of *2 Henry IV*), the bishops, the plotters, the army, England and France, and for a time God himself. He achieves this personal mastery by being in control of the arts of language, of war, and of princely rule. Above all, with God’s help he has mastered himself. Scholar, soldier, statesman, he is the complete Renaissance prince, and when he promises to add to these roles that of loving, faithful spouse—a role, Shakespeare everywhere

implies, as difficult and dignified as Henry's other principle social role, that of King—he paradoxically adds to his own unique accomplishments and yet merges with every one of us, who are or have been or can expect to be spouses. In suing for Katherine's love, Henry is "only a man."

IV.

Prose, by the end of *Henry V*, is the language of common humanity, an index of the royal speaker's connectedness with his non-noble subjects, and with his future wife. William Shakespeare, a commoner who enriched himself in the public theater and then retired to live the life of a gentleman, complete with a coat of arms that he bought from the College of Heralds, shows every sign of having believed in aristocracy, but an aristocracy constantly refreshed by an infusion of common blood, common language, common sense and practicality. And during Elizabeth's reign, at least, he seems to have believed in kings who supported and were supported by "the people," kings who never forgot that at base they too were merely men, and who knew how to speak the common language when occasion called for it. That common language was prose.

But then he stopped writing histories. Hamlet, the most like Henry of all Shakespeare's tragic heroes, speaks a good deal of prose, but much of it mimics mad-talk, and we must not forget that until the last act Hamlet is the play's principle clown, hence a speaker of *comic* prose. Still, a scene like 2.2, where Hamlet speaks verse only in his closing soliloquy and in the speech he recites about the death of Priam, contains prose that is neither mad nor comic, including the "advice to the players," and the magnificent "What a piece of work is a man" speech. Yet for all his nobility Hamlet comes to grief, just a Henry did, the will of God working in mysterious ways. Othello, Lear, Macbeth, Antony—all speak prose on occasion, but none are in a position to "ennoble" it, because they are themselves so deeply flawed, while masterful, regal characters like Duke Vincenzo and Prospero "lower" themselves to speak prose only to base characters, like Lucio and Caliban.

There is an idealism in Shakespeare's portraits of Henry, Hamlet, Rosalind and Viola that disappeared, for whatever reason, after about 1600, and was replaced by a darker, more pessimistic view of human nature. After about 1600 man did not delight Shakespeare so much as in earlier years, nor woman neither.⁹ And with that delight in common humanity went his delight in noble, non-comic prose, though he continued to use prose for certain wonderful effects that I have neither time nor space to discuss here.

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NOTES

¹*The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose* (London: Methuen, 1968) 433.

²I have obtained percentages by dividing the number of prose lines in each play into the total number of lines, as listed on p. 72 of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington, 3rd ed. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1980). Quotations of Shakespeare's plays in this essay are from this edition. Many will want to quarrel with my dating, which is also taken from Bevington, but few will disagree that the plays with a high proportion of prose were written toward the middle of Shakespeare's playwriting career.

³The play written before *1HIV* with the most prose lines (39%) is *Love's Labour's Lost*, a difficult play to date. It was published in 1598, but may have been written substantially earlier and then revised in 1596 or 1597. If it could be proved that *LLL* was written close to its date of publication, or that in revising it Shakespeare added to its proportion of prose, then the curve of Shakespeare's increasing use of prose would be made smoother. But since it is a comedy in which a number of nobles behave foolishly, but who use prose only when they talk to non-noble, comic characters, the relatively high percentage of prose in *LLL* does not indicate much of a departure from the conventions.

⁴Jonas Barish, *Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy* (New York: Norton, 1970; 1st ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1960) 49.

⁵Vickers 90-95 *passim*.

⁶Milton Crane, *Shakespeare's Prose* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1951) 85.

⁷The classic statement of the predicament Richard finds himself in is Ernst H. Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957), especially chapter two, "Shakespeare: King Richard II." Of the passage just quoted, for example, Kantorowicz writes (30-31): "The king that 'never dies' here has been replaced by the king that always dies and suffers death more

cruelly than other mortals. Gone is the oneness of the body natural with the immortal body politic, 'this double Body, to which no Body is equal' [the quotation is from an Elizabethan legal text, Edmund Plowden's *Commentaries or Reports*]. Gone also is the fiction of royal prerogatives of any kind, and all that remains is the feeble human nature of a king: [quotes *Richard II* 3.2.171-77]. The fiction of the oneness of the double body breaks apart. Godhead and manhood of the King's Two Bodies, both clearly outlined with a few strokes, stand in contrast to each other."

⁸Henry keeps his promises because God expects kings above all men to be honorable, and Henry expects it of himself: "If I live to see it, [i.e. the King breaking his promise]" he tells Williams, "I will never trust his word after" (4.1.194). Yet he is as resourceful as his creator in cunningly disguising self-praise as an apology. Compare, for example, Henry's claim (to Katherine) that he is too simple to lie to the disingenuous rhetoric of Shakespeare's prologues before each act of *Henry V*, in which the playwright confesses to an incapacity to show things that he is actually enacting in the imaginations of his audience *as he apologizes* for being unable to do so. Both Henry and his creator have perfected the art of creating a false impression without actually lying.

⁹In my article, "Making Love out of Nothing at All: The Issue of Story in Shakespeare's Procreation Sonnets," *SQ* 41 (1990): 470-88, I argue that the speaker of the sonnets, whether real or fictive, manufactures an intimate relationship with a nobleman that, by the end of the sequence, ends unhappily. If the story the sonnets tell is as I describe it, one of an attempt at verbal mastery over a person of high degree, and if the most commonly held dating of the sonnets is correct, then the sonnets too reflect another instance of the ultimate failure of verbal world-mastery in Shakespeare's work coming near 1600. If the story the sonnets tell is autobiographical even in part—the way, say, Proust or Joyce are autobiographical in their fiction—then a more personal reason for the darkening of Shakespeare's faith in commoners and nobles to speak to and understand each other may be found there.

Multiplicity of Meaning in the Last Moments of *Hamlet*

JOHN RUSSELL BROWN

Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies have had an even more durable life than comedies. Especially at the Globe Playhouse, a varied audience crowded to see the rise and fall of kings, or the working out of revenge and passion. They watched horrific stories concluding with an ultimate test in which the hero, and sometimes the heroine, faced violence and disaster. Death came in many forms, but always brought with it a reevaluation of the hero's life as means of support were taken away: the individual was separated from his or her fellows, endured loss and escalation of pain, and was exposed to intense scrutiny. The audience was invited to judge the hero's response and ultimate resource. Perhaps these tragedies were so popular because they offered audiences an opportunity to assume the role of God, the all-knowing assessor who had long been the exclusive possession of remote and authoritative clerics: they could watch as man suffers, and so judge his ultimate worth. In the words of John Webster, writing his first tragedy in 1612 (partly in imitation of Shakespeare):

... affliction
Expresseth virtue, fully, whether true,
Or else adulterate. (*The White Devil* I.i.49-51)¹

Death brought a final truth-telling. In his second tragedy, a couple of years later, Webster's heroine is told in the very first scene:

... believe't
Your darkest actions—nay, your privat'st thoughts—
Will come to light. (*The Duchess of Malfi* I.i.314-16)²

The coming to light of a man's "privat'st thoughts" is what Shakespeare implied as he explored the possibilities of tragedy in *Julius Caesar*,

a chronicle play concluding in numerous deaths, and gave his most thoughtful character words which liken the protagonists to horses who are judged for resources of spirit in painful trial:

There are no tricks in plain and simple faith;
 But hollow men, like horses hot at hand,
 Make gallant show and promise of their mettle;
 But when they should endure the bloody spur,
 They fall their crests, and like deceitful jades
 Sink in the trial. (IV.ii.22-27)³

So, later Hamlet moves through the tragedy with a secret within him, and defies his audience to guess at it. Yet he never seems able to name it, and very rarely lets "fall his crest." Towards the end of *Hamlet*, the hero tries to share his own sense that a bloody spur is about to probe to his very "heart":

Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart; but it is no matter. . . . It is but foolery (V.ii.208-11)⁴

Earlier he had rounded on Guildenstern who had tried to "sound" him and "pluck out the heart of [his] mystery": "'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe?" (III.ii.356-57, 360-61). In his first encounter with his mother, he had warned that nothing external, neither words, nor clothes, nor breath, tears, facial expression, "Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief," were able to "denote" him truly:

These indeed seem,
 For they are actions that a man might play;
 But I have that within which passes show—
 These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (I.ii.77-86)

Perhaps the probing of a mystery as the hero confronts affliction and death—with a last rush towards understanding and judgment—accounts for the success of all these tragedies which have endured into our own days. We are interested in the hero's inner consciousness at least as keenly as we await the fulfilling of barbarous revenge, or the overthrow of a monarchical government grown tyrannical, or the disappointment

or satisfaction of love and lust. *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* remain the most performed and studied plays in the history of theatre despite the out-dated themes and narratives which are their ostensible subjects. Should we see them as offering an entrance to the midnight hour when all men must unmask? At any rate, let us pretend that this is so, and pay particular attention to the final moments of *Hamlet*. Has Shakespeare provided the means, in words or action, whereby this hero comes, at last, to be "denoted truly"?

* * *

One of the first things which an audience learns about Hamlet—the single figure dressed in solemn black at a Court festivity—is that he uses words with startling agility. He plays on words that sound alike, or nearly alike:

King. But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son—

Ham. A little more than kin, and less than kind.

King. How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

Ham. Not so, my lord; I am too much in the sun. (I.ii.64-67)

The king withdraws from this exchange, and his mother begins more lovingly, on a different tack. But still Hamlet takes words that others have used and returns them changed or challenged:

Ay, madam, it is common.

...

Seems, madam? Nay, it is. I know not 'seems'. (I.ii.74-76)

Although the prince is speaking in public, he uses verbal rhetorical devices most critics in Shakespeare's day would consider unseemly. Cicero in *De oratore* (II.lx ff.) had insisted that wordplay tactlessly handled belonged to buffoons or pedantic scholars. George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) considered:

... sentences that hold too much of the mery & light, or infamous & and vnshamefast ... become not Princes, nor great estates, nor them that write of their doings ...⁵

Ben Jonson, in his *Discoveries* warned that “we must not play, or riot too much with [words], as in *Paranomasies*,” but added that there is no sound “but shall find some Lovers, as the bitter’st confections are gratefull to some palats.”⁶

Hamlet’s first words are rhetorically complicated, and also challenging and puzzling. Does he pretend to be flippant or boorish in order to keep his thoughts to himself, or to contain his pain? Or does he express rational criticism in savagely sarcastic comments spoken only to himself? Or is the energy of his mind such that he thinks and speaks with instinctive ambiguity? Words are restless within his mind, changing meaning, shifting form, extending reference, awaking others close in sound but different in meaning.

This part of Hamlet’s character—for ambiguous and complicated speech is a distinctive element of the “mind” with which Shakespeare has endowed his hero—this characteristic operates on various levels. We soon see that in private he continues to use wordplay as a disguise in which to taunt and trick both adversaries and friends, so that he is not fully understood and they are encouraged to disclose hidden thoughts:

Pol. Do you know me, my lord?

Ham. Excellent well. You are a fishmonger.

Pol. Not I, my lord.

Ham. Then I would you were so honest a man.

Pol. Honest, my lord?

Ham. Ay sir. To be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand. . . . (II.ii.173-79)

Fishmongers smell, when among other men; a *fishmonger* was a name for “fleshmonger” or bawd; a *fishmonger’s* wife and daughter were said to breed, fish-like, in great quantity . . .⁷ And so, Hamlet’s mind runs on to “so *honest* a man,” a word meaning “honourable,” or “chaste,” or “truthful, genuine.”⁸ “Modesties . . . craft . . . colour”; “I know a hawk from a handsaw” (II.ii. 280-79, 375): wordplay gallops easily, or abruptly it makes a bold and mocking challenge. Hamlet can deliver one message and at the same time another contrary one; “if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no *discourse* to your beauty (III.i.107-08); or again, “. . . he may *play the fool* nowhere but in’s own

house . . ." (III.i.133-34); or again, "The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body. The King is a thing . . . of nothing" (IV.ii.26-29).

Words are wanton in Hamlet's mind, feeding his aggressions and his fears. Sometimes we get the impression that he is revealing more than he knows, as if his unconscious, rather than conscious, mind controls his speech. Why should he punish Ophelia openly before the actors perform *The Mousetrap*? Is he looking at his mother and step-father all this time, or wanting to do so? Does he want *them* to hear? Or is he forcing himself to be pleasant in public to a girl he distrusts, and failing so thoroughly to do this that he concludes with talk of churches, hobby-horses and an epitaph which is puzzling even to himself? His play upon *cunt, no-thing, jig, do, die, hobby-horse* (III.ii.115-32) is doubly vulgar: not only a run of obtrusive and brutal sexual innuendo, but also an unprincipled assumption that his predicament is a rite or carnival of common validity. In effect Hamlet is creating a paronomasia of performance, moving from politeness to brutality; and it seems to come out almost unbidden.

Even when Hamlet's wordplay is intentional and nicely judged, it is not always clear to what purpose he uses it. To confuse or to clarify? Or to control his own uncensored thoughts? The energy and turmoil of his mind brings words thronging into speech, stretching, over-turning and amalgamating their implications. Sometimes Hamlet has to struggle to use the simplest words repeatedly, as he tries to force meaning to flow in a single channel. To Ophelia, after he has encountered her in her loneliness, "reading on a book," he repeats five times "Get you to a nunnery," varying the phrase only by word-order and by changing "get" to "go." And after he has visited his mother "all alone" in her closet and killed Polonius, after she has begged him to "speak no more" (III.iv.88), and after his father's ghost has reappeared, Hamlet repeats "Good night" five times, with still fewer changes and those among accompanying words only. But, of course, in performance, in the heat of passionate encounter, the effect and meaning of these simple words can change with each repetition. It is an actor's instinct to vary them, using them as rungs of a ladder to grow towards a climactic emotional effect, rather than as firm stepping-stones on which to cross an unruly

river. So Hamlet seems to be struggling to contain his thoughts even by use of these simple words, rather than enforcing a single and simple message as a first reading of the text might suggest; and the words come to bear deeper, more ironic or more blatant meanings.

In soliloquy, Hamlet gives wordplay such scope that we receive an impression of a mind working simultaneously at different levels of meaning and consciousness. As soon as he is alone, we hear that he wishes "this too too *sullied*" (or *sallied*, or *solid*) "*flesh would melt*" (I.ii.129?).⁹ From *melt*, particularly appropriate if linked to *solid*, Hamlet's mind springs onwards to two other verbs: *thaw*, bringing further physical associations of cold and change, and dissolution; then on to *resolve*, with a range of old and new associations—dissolve, melt, inform, answer, dispel doubt . . . "*resolve itself into a dew*"—that is something almost intangible, now; and mysterious; and also, in association with some senses of *resolve*, there is a suggestion of *due*, with a hint of necessary "payment" or "judgment."¹⁰ And so Hamlet's mind reaches "the Everlasting" (with a look backward, perhaps, marking a contrast with that which *melts*, *thaws*, and does *not* last)—the powerful, non-*fleshy* presence who *fixes* (no melting or resolving now) his *canon* (both law and instrument of destruction) against *self-slaughter* . . . Hamlet's mind breeds one meaning out of another, using words in several senses, activating new words so that they interact with each other. The energy of this wordplay is amazing: unsettled, serious, self-lacerating, mocking, self-critical, reckless; and bringing a sense of victorious and heady achievement as words bend, buckle, extend their meanings, and sharpen their attack.

Even in soliloquy, Hamlet is not always in control. Sometimes he halts momentarily, as if alarmed by what he has said:

. . . 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub:
. . . . (III.i.63-65)

Here the thought-process is abrupt and oscillating, so that scarcely any two modern editors punctuate this passage in the same way; many resort

to dashes and numerous dots. At other times Hamlet makes a conscious withdrawal, as if the management of words has tired or perplexed him too painfully:

Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretched heroes
the beggars' shadows. Shall we to th'court? For by my fay, I cannot
reason. (II.ii.263-65)

Farewell, dear mother. . . . Father and mother is man and wife,
man and wife is one flesh; so my mother. Come, for England. *Exit.*
(IV.iii.52, 54-56)

In this second example, Hamlet has rendered the king speechless, but he pursues him no further, preferring to go off-stage, silent and under guard, to journey to England.

Hamlet may be still less in control in the grave-yard, when both he and Laertes have had to be restrained physically. He tries to use simple words, but then asserts "it is no matter" and leaves abruptly with a taunting riddle:

Hear you, sir,
What is the reason that you use me thus?
I lov'd you ever. But it is no matter.
Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.
(V.i.283-87)

Much of the dramatic action of this tragedy is within the head of Hamlet, and wordplay represents the amazing, contradictory, unsettled, mocking, fecund nature of that mind, as it is torn by disappointment and positive love, as Hamlet seeks both acceptance and punishment, action and stillness, and wishes for consummation and annihilation. He can be abruptly silent or vicious; he is capable of wild laughter and tears, and also polite badinage. The narrative is a kind of mystery and chase, so that, underneath the various guises of his wordplay, we are made keenly aware of his inner dissatisfaction, and come to expect some resolution at the end of the tragedy, some unambiguous "giving out" which will report Hamlet and his cause aright to the unsatisfied among

the audience. Hamlet himself is aware of this expectation as the end approaches, and this still further whets our anticipation.

* * *

Towards the close, Hamlet has a short exchange alone with Horatio, which seems intended to "set up" the final encounter with Laertes, the Queen, Claudius, and the whole Court, and to make absolutely clear the nature of his own involvement. The passage exists in two good versions; the second Quarto of 1604, and the Folio of 1623, which is now thought to represent Shakespeare's revision of the earlier version.¹¹ This second text adds fourteen lines in which Hamlet seeks to justify, as "perfect conscience," his determination to kill Claudius with his own "arm"—or rather to "quit" him, which implies repaying as well.¹² He then asks whether he would not be "damned" if he did nothing to eradicate "this canker of our nature" (V.ii.68-70). But even this later addition to the play does not establish a "plain and simple faith."¹³ We notice that Hamlet expresses himself in rhetorical questions which seem to qualify his momentary certainty. And only minutes later, as the last encounter approaches, his reluctance to tell all ("Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart; but it is no matter," ll. 208-09) and a further intrusion of vigorous and baffling wordplay cloud over these ultimate issues once more.

Immediately before the King and Queen enter on stage, Hamlet's words, spoken as he again finds himself alone with Horatio, are so tricky—or perhaps tricky—that they baffled the original compositors of the text and have set modern editors at variance.¹⁴ Neither the Quarto nor Folio makes sense and various emendations have been proposed. *No/knows; has/owes; leave/leaves; ought/all; of what/of ought*, all collide and change places with each other in the different versions. Today a text might read, "Since no man, of aught he leaves, knows aught, what is't to leave betimes?" or "Since no man of ought he leaves, knows, what is't to leave . . .," or ". . . no man owes aught of what he leaves, what is't . . .," or ". . . no man knows of aught he leaves, what is't . . ." (Was the speech ever absolutely clear in Shakespeare's autograph manuscript, or in his head?) With Hamlet's next words, as trumpet and drums

announce the King's arrival, the play's hero contrives yet another avoidance-tactic, refusing to talk further with a surprisingly curt "Let be."

Encountering Laertes in front of the whole court, Hamlet speaks again very simply: "Give me your pardon, sir. I have done you wrong" (l. 222). But then he refers to his own supposed "madness" as if it had been entirely real, and as if that absolved him of all responsibility for his actions:

Who does it, then? His madness. It be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd;
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy. (ll. 233-35)

That sounds straightforward enough, but what is his madness? Is it a "sore distraction" by which he has been punished, or is it his own invention and a somewhat theatrical disguise? To what extent is Hamlet creating a cunning smokescreen of words and questions, under which to hide his intent to kill the King? Soon all the action is over, the Queen, Laertes, Claudius and Hamlet all dead; and yet no more mention is made of "madness."

However, the action is held up artificially at the very last minute: the playwright delays his hero's death at the midnight hour for concluding speeches and the audience is encouraged to expect that the hero will unmask and everything will be clarified. But then, even now, this does not happen. Hamlet's final words are so famous that for us they carry an air of assurance with them, but if we try to imagine them as they were heard for the first time, we may appreciate that much is still concealed, and much is just as ambiguous as it was in his characteristically vigorous and volatile use of words throughout the play. We may wonder whether Hamlet is playing consciously with words at the very moment of his trial by death; and, if so, for what purpose.

In his last words to Claudius, Hamlet has already insisted on a final sexual pun: "Drink off this potion. Is thy *union* here?" (l. 331; italics mine).¹⁵ But when he knows that he is himself dead, almost at once he is concerned about how much is "unknown," and insists that Horatio should live to tell his story "aright." But that is his friend's duty: he

himself uses his last moments very differently, and speaks almost at once in an earlier manner:

I am dead, Horatio. Wretched Queen, adieu!
 You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
 That are but mutes or audience to this act,
 Had I but time—as this fell sergeant, Death,
 Is strict in his arrest—O, I could tell you—
 But let it be. . . . (ll. 338-43)

Wordplay has come back, as if unbidden: "This fell sergeant, Death, / Is strict in his arrest" plays on *strict* as "cruel," "inescapably binding," and, perhaps, as "morally severe"¹⁶ (this last sense is common in Shakespeare's plays). And *arrest* can refer equally to the stopping life and to stopping the "act" which the audience is watching and Hamlet performing. Then, once more, the wordplay is stopped with "But let it be . . ." And yet, when he tells Horatio, a second time, that he is as good as dead, the "potion" becomes "The potent poison"; and in a strange phrase (Shakespeare using *o'ercrows* for the only time), the poison is said to shout in triumph over his spirit, rather than taking possession of his body:

O, I die, Horatio.
 The potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit.
 (ll. 357-58)

For Shakespeare, this may also have been a reminiscence of the father's spirit who had "faded on the crowing of the cock" (I.i.162).

Hamlet has already heard the "warlike noise" of Fortinbras' approach, and now he gives his "dying voice" to this young soldier for the next King of Denmark:

He has my dying voice.
 So tell him, with th'occurents more and less
 Which have solicited—the rest is silence. (ll. 361-63)

The last line here is Hamlet's last line, and it is as multiple in meaning as any in the play. *Solicited* takes attention first. Is this a gentle solicitation or an urgent call? The word had been used in both senses by Shake-

speare. Perhaps the second is the most likely here, since *solicited* and *silence* are linked a little in sound and may therefore be held in opposition. But the main problem is "the rest is silence." What can this mean?

First perhaps, it means "All that remains for me to say must be unspoken." This reading seems to make Hamlet withdraw intentionally from saying more, as he has done frequently in the course of the play: "Let it be." Wordplay allows him to escape without revealing his secret. Alternatively, he may feel overmastered in his mind, as he is in his body, and here acknowledges that this is so and that he can manage no more words, except this last mocking pun, for *rest* could *also* mean the taking of ease, or a pause in action (or music).

A second reading would have Hamlet assert that the remainder of his life can have nothing to say or will make no noise, perhaps no "warlike noise"—the volleys may still be ringing in his ears, or the first sound of drums for Fortinbras' approach. So he might speak of his failure to tell all, and die making an excuse for his rashness or ineffectuality.

But, then, *rest* may equally well refer to a time *after* life, a release from the "*unrest*" of life. In the same vein, Hamlet has told Horatio to:

Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story. (II. 352-54)

In association with *silence*, *rest* need not imply any existence after life; what follows life is unknown, possibly without life of any sort; in any case it makes no noise here and now.

However, yet another interpretation is not so agnostic or irreligious. Hamlet *could* mean that "the rest" of an after-life has nothing to say about matters of the world, such as the succession of Fortinbras; so death is a "quietus" devoutly to be wished (III.i.75). Horatio's conventional and specifically religious consolation which follows immediately may seem to substantiate this reading:

Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy *rest!* (II. 364-65)

But *has* Hamlet lost his fear of those "dreams" which may follow when "we have shuffled off this mortal coil" (III.i.67)? Having killed the King

and voted for his successor is he ready to go into the dark, and accept his own "rest" without blenching? This would be a huge reevaluation of earlier attitudes for which the discourse on the fall of a sparrow (V.ii.215-18) is the sole (but not necessarily unequivocal) textual authority. If this is the "correct" reading, however, we may wonder why Shakespeare should follow the earlier account of Hamlet's attitudes with such an "ambiguous giving out," in glancing, unreliable wordplay, at this crucial last moment?

A defence of sorts can be made for each of these four different meanings of Hamlet's four last words, but they tend to cancel each other out if they are all allowed into the reckoning. Instead of choosing between them, I find myself ready to suggest yet a fifth reading which does not attempt to express the "virtue" within Hamlet, that mystery which passes ordinary show; this fifth interpretation could indeed co-habit with any of my earlier suggestions. Perhaps when the playwright directed Hamlet to say "the rest is silence," he was allowing himself to speak through his character, telling the audience and the actor that he, the dramatist, would not, or could not, go a word further in the presentation of this, his most verbally brilliant and baffling hero. The author is going to hide like a fox, leaving all of us standing at a cold scent.

In several earlier passages, we may have heard something of Shakespeare's own voice in what Hamlet says. "Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you . . ." (III.ii.1-2) and the several other old saws and modern instances delivered to the Players on their arrival at Elsinore, in their rehearsals, and during their performance, are all possible authorial statements. Hamlet's quick retort to Polonius' dramatic criticism, his managing of several scenes as they are developing—"I must be idle," "For England?" "This is I, Hamlet the Dane," "But it is no matter," "Let be,"¹⁷ and so forth—could also be partly Shakespeare's words as they propel the plot forward. At the close, Hamlet is aware of his deeds as an "act" that is closely watched by "mutes or audience" (V.ii.330) who need to be told what has happened so that his name shall not be "wounded": something of Shakespeare may be in all this as well, and perhaps in the rather dismissive:

So tell him, with th'occurents more or less
Which have solicited

This might suggest the impatience of an author dealing with issues ("more or less") that only censorious (politically committed or politically correct) audience-members would wish to pick on.

There is example for a final authorial voice in other plays. Of course, Prospero's "I'll drown my book" and "Now what strength I have's mine own" come much later in Shakespeare's career. But about this time, we have in *Troilus and Cressida*, "Hector is dead: there is no more to say" (V.x.22);¹⁸ in *Twelfth Night*, "But that's all one, our play is done" (V.i.393);¹⁹ in *The Merchant of Venice*, "Portia. You shall not know by what strange accident / I chanced on this letter. Antonio. I am dumb" (V.i.278-79);²⁰ and in *Love's Labour's Lost*:

The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo.
Exeunt. (V.ii.922-23)²¹

This last example is doubly strange. The line is printed in larger type than that used for the rest of the Quarto version of the play, and is without a speech-prefix. The Folio text regularizes the type-face, but is responsible for adding the concluding line, "You that way; we this way". Keeping in mind these other speeches in which Shakespeare may take over from his characters, we might think that here, through Hamlet, he is announcing that he has "no more to say," still less any further mystery to disclose.

I do not know which of these five meanings to prefer, but the actors of Shakespeare's company seem to have been unsatisfied with them all. The Folio text contains numerous small additions to the Quarto which are thought to have been drawn from what actually happened on stage in performance.²² Among these is an addition to Hamlet's part, following "The rest is silence." What Burbage the actor added is represented by four letters: "O, o, o, o." Then follows the stage-direction. "Dies." What can this mean? Did Burbage believe that he needed extra time to express pain or disbelief, or to struggle or panic? We have no idea what the four O's were intended to mean and still less notion of what Shakespeare thought about them (the Folio was, of course, published after his death),²³ but this addition became well enough established to get into print, and it serves to remind us that, however serious Hamlet's last words were intended to be, they had to be spoken

while he faced the physical reality of death itself. The actor's way of accepting or resisting the "strict arrest" will become part of the meaning of the last moments of the play, casting further complications on the task of dealing with what Hamlet says and with the wordplay.

Exactly *how* Hamlet dies—how he dies physically—will continue to contribute to our view of him after the "silence" which follows the moment of death. Fortinbras enters asking "Where is this sight?" and Horatio directs attention to all four bodies on the stage. After all is said and done, the way in which Hamlet dies, whether in pain or with mockery, or with some sense of fortunate release, will still be manifest in his facial expression and in the manner in which his body lies on the stage—in contrast to how the others had died and are also mercilessly displayed.

* * *

Why should Shakespeare choose to conclude this tragedy with words that give the final presentation of its hero a multiplicity of possible meanings?

The most difficult answer would be to say that *all* meanings are meant to be present, co-existing. This might please critics and scholars who puzzle over the text in their own time and are able to build up complex impressions, but how could an actor attempt to suggest them all? How could an audience-member grasp them all in the exciting moment of performance, in an "upshot" in which purposes are easily mistook (V.ii.389)? A more acceptable answer might be that the audience, and each individual member of that audience, is left to interpret as they wish, according to their own "business and desire, / Such as it is" (I.v.136-37). In this case, the actor's task might be to avoid making any very clear statement of Hamlet's final thoughts or inner mystery. Yet that is easier to say than do, and we might rather argue that the multiple meanings are there so that the actor of Hamlet can choose which one he wishes to emphasise, according to the way in which he has responded to the varied challenges in his journey through the text, and according to what he feels himself best able to embody. Such a choice is likely to be intuitive, rather than intellectual; but it could also be governed by the

actor's (and his director's) view of how the play can speak most excitingly to the audience which comes to see their work.

However we choose to explain his decision, we must accept the fact that Shakespeare chose, very positively, to provide a multiplicity of meanings at this crucial moment. His hero was, above all and in the final test, alive in his mind, drawn restlessly into engagement with his imagination, perhaps a little in the same way as his creator had been as he worked. Death, for such a person, could not be held in a single grip, in the fix of words used in a single sense, without "tricks, in plain and simple faith." Such dramaturgy involved a choice which went against most of Shakespeare's earlier practice. At the moment of his death, Titus Andronicus could hardly have made himself more plain to our understanding:

Why, there they are, both baked in this pie;

...

'Tis true, 'tis true; witness my knife's sharp point.

(V.iii.60-63)²⁴

Romeo dies drinking poison; there is wordplay here, but wholly controlled and limited:

Here's to my love! O true apothecary,

Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.

(V.iii.119-20)²⁵

Juliet also plays on words without confusing her simplest meaning:

Yea, noise? Then I'll be brief. O happy dagger.

This is thy sheath. There rust, and let me die.

(V.iii.168-69)

Richard III and Richard II both die with single-minded speech, although in earlier scenes they had both used wordplay to express their turbulent and cunning thoughts.

Marlowe, Shakespeare's most imaginative and inventive contemporary, ended his tragedies as their heroes narrowed the target for their thoughts; and he gave them words in which to express themselves unmistakably.

After Shakespeare's time, John Webster, for all the punning and allusive subtlety of his dialogue, took definition still further in the last moments of his leading characters. Shakespeare's Hamlet, however, dies mysteriously, and he is aware that he never makes a full statement of his thoughts:

Had I but time . . .

O, I could tell you—

But let it be.

(ll. 341-43)

The most unequivocal impression given by the hero at the close of this tragedy is that his mind is unvanquished: his imagination is still exploring strange shapes and future eventualities—what is still unknown, and even silence itself.

Of course there are many ways of accounting for the tragedy as a whole. It is a Revenge Tragedy, and a Tragedy of Blood (or of lust and love); it is a Metaphysical Tragedy in which the nature of death, certainty, and life are all weighed and variously judged. It is also a Tragedy of State, the story of a kingdom ruled by an ambitious, treacherous, and smiling king, in which the "rabble" can rise up to follow the insurrection of a young man who has a private vendetta to pursue, but no clear political programme. The plot and characters, the drive and liveliness of the dialogue, the clashing rhetoric, all support these various strands of the play; and they are supported by on-stage action which is often exciting, sensational, and visually opulent. But the heart of the tragedy is Hamlet himself, a person whose mind is unconfined by any single issue. As he moves towards the last encounters, we can sense a self-aware superiority: "... Laertes. You do but dally. I pray you pass with your best violence" (301-02). He is attracted, still, to light-minded wordplay and assonance: "strict . . . arrest," "o'ercrows . . . occursents," the pun of "dying voice" (the sound he makes is growing faint). There is mockery in "potent poison," the ring and relish of a mountebank. Impatience and a constantly frustrated desire to have matters under control can be heard in repeated *comes* and in many short replies, commands and messages. Tenderness mixes with bitterness—"Absent thee from felicity awhile . . ."—and with ambiguity. "The rest is silence"

could be a joke, a profound searching of the unknown, a resignation to the fate of a sparrow, the voice of bitter despair, or a matter of fact.

At the risk of sounding too unambiguous for such a play, I would say that, through Hamlet, this tragedy affirms the world of the mind over against the world of matter, the unresolved and independent conscience over against the answers that can be provided by others or demanded by society in its political, religious or familial manifestations. In so far as Hamlet commands our attention while the tragedy unfolds and is completed, we prefer his ambiguous, spirited, free affirmation that the "rest is silence" to the attempted suicide and sentimental consolation of Horatio, or to the political homage of Fortinbras, and his call to arms and to a fresh start.²⁶

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NOTES

¹The Revels Plays, ed. John Russell Brown, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1966).

²The Revels Plays, ed. John Russell Brown (London: Methuen, 1964).

³Arden Edition, ed. T. S. Dorsch (London: Methuen, 1955).

⁴Quotations are from the Arden Edition of *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen, 1982).

⁵Eds. G. D. Willcock and A. Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1936) III.vi., p. 153.

⁶Ben Jonson, *Works*, eds. C. H. Herford, P. and E. Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1947) 8:623.

⁷See Jenkins' note, pp. 464-66.

⁸See *OED* †2.a., 3.b and c.

⁹On the textual ambiguities of this line, see Jenkins' note, pp. 436-38.

¹⁰See *OED* "resolve" *vb.* I.2.†b. To analyse, examine (a statement). *Obs.*

¹¹See, especially, the editors' comments for the New Oxford Shakespeare (*The Complete Works*, gen. eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor [Oxford: Clarendon P, 1986] 735).

¹²See *OED*, "quit, †quite" II.10. To repay, reward, requite.

¹³*Julius Caesar* II.ii.22.

¹⁴Almost any modern edition will serve as an introduction to the problem. The variants quoted below derive from editions by Harold Jenkins, J. Dover Wilson, G. Blakemore Evans and Terence Spencer, and others.

¹⁵See Jenkins' note.

¹⁶See *OED* "strict," esp. 10-15, and "stricture."

¹⁷III.ii.90, IV.iii.47, V.i.250-51, V.ii.209 and 220.

¹⁸Arden Edition, ed. Kenneth Palmer (London: Methuen, 1982).

¹⁹Arden Edition, eds. J. M. Lothian and T. W. Craik (London: Methuen, 1975).

²⁰Arden Edition, ed. John Russell Brown (London: Methuen, 1955, 1959).

²¹The Quarto version, quoted from the Arden Edition, ed. Richard David (London: Methuen, 1951, 1956).

²²See Harold Jenkins, "Playhouse Interpolations in the Folio Text of *Hamlet*," *Studies in Bibliography* 13 (1960): 31-47.

²³We may reflect that its repetitious simplicity is not far from Bottom's death-line as Pyramus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or the slightly more sophisticated end for Thisbe.

²⁴Arden Edition, ed. J. C. Maxwell (London: Methuen, 1953, 1961).

²⁵Arden Edition, ed. Brian Gibbons (London: Methuen, 1980).

²⁶This article is based on a paper read at a symposium on Paronomasia at the University of Münster in July 1992. It benefits in many ways from the discussion there, both formal and informal, and its welcome stimulation. I cannot note all the effects of this occasion in the body of this paper, so I hope this general note may be taken as an indication of my gratitude and indebtedness.

From Etymology to Paronomasia: Wallace Stevens, Elizabeth Bishop, and Others

ELEANOR COOK

Wallace Stevens was a paronomastic¹ by second nature, as well as by family custom and the accident of historical timing. Age fifteen, he punned on "condescension," complaining to his mother of condescension from fellows in their twenties but surmising that eleven- to fourteen-year-olds regarded his company as an "ascension."² Age fifty-six, he invented a pun on the word "inarticulate": ". . . a dream they never had, / Like a word in the mind that sticks at artichoke / And remains inarticulate" (OP 78). He allowed himself a comment on this: "rather an heroic pun" (L 366, 27 August 1940). And age seventy-two, he wrote to a friend about Reinhold Niebuhr: "an admirable thinker . . . but a dull writer." "Notwithstanding his name, he is far from being Rhine Wein."³ He was born to paronomasia. His father was a punster: "Dear Wallace—just what election to the Signet signifies I have no sign. It is significant . . ." and so on to a total of eleven puns (L 26, 21 May 1899). It was part of the times. Stevens' father was named Garrett Stevens, his mother's maiden name was Zeller, and, yes, when they married in 1876, a local Pennsylvania newspaper commented that Stevens' father had "furnished his house complete from 'Zeller' to 'Garrett'" (SP 6).

Yet in the nineteenth century, though puns were immensely popular, their presence in poetry was another matter. Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear perhaps, but poetry properly so called? It was a time when the line of wit was less favoured than the line of vision, when the claims of charm poetry were paramount as against the claims of riddle poetry. As Northrop Frye observes in his essay, "Charms and Riddles," "Charm poetry . . . dominated taste until about 1915, after which a mental attitude more closely related to the riddle began to supersede it, one more preoccupied with the visual and the conceptual."⁴ Paronomasia is related

to charm verse, to follow Frye's argument, and also Andrew Welsh's in his *Roots of Lyric*,⁵ but charm verse does not generate, does not display, obvious word-play—quips, quibbles, riddles—as in the metaphysical poets or Christopher Smart, let alone James Joyce. The paronomasia of Donne is (to offer a generalization) more spectacular than the paronomasia of Spenser, even though some techniques and functions are similar.

So also, some techniques and functions are similar in the work of Wallace Stevens and Elizabeth Bishop. (Bishop lived a generation after the high Moderns, including Stevens; he was born in 1879 and she in 1911.) But one would want to begin by saying that Bishop's kind of word-play follows a Spenser-Herbert line (she was devoted to the work of George Herbert.) Stevens' kind of paronomasia occasionally does so (for example, in his visionary poems). But Stevens the witty and wicked paronomastic is the heir to Donne, to Byron, to Carroll, to Hopkins, and the like.

The *Oxford English Dictionary*, in good nineteenth century fashion, takes a low view of word-play. Definitions of pun and of paronomasia are more neutral, though, as it happens, they were published earlier (1909 and 1904 respectively; see the Introduction to the *OED*). The section including the term "word-play" was not published until 1928 but despite Eliot and Pound and Joyce and Stevens—perhaps because of them—it is very stern: "a playing or trifling with words; the use of words merely or mainly for the purpose of producing a rhetorical or fantastic effect," etc. ("play" *sb.* 7.b.) The three definitions are not altered in the second edition of the *OED*.

It is true that paronomasia has often excited warnings in rhetorical handbooks, chiefly about its overuse or its low status. "Marry, we must not play, or riot too much with them [i.e. words], as in *Paronomasies*," as Ben Jonson says (*Timber; or Discoveries*). Or, 1593, Peacham: "This figure [paronomasia] ought to be sparingly used"; antanaclasis "may fall easily into excesse" (*The Garden of Eloquence*). Or, 1730, Dumarsais: "On doit éviter les jeux de mots qui sont vides de sens." For him, Augustine provides a proper pattern (*Traité des tropes*). To which Fontanier later adds that paronomasia is better in Latin than in French ("ces jeux de mots ont en général moins de grâce dans notre langue que

dans celle des Latins"; *Des figures du discours*, 1827). Quintilian, referring to Cicero, says that word-play is "non ingratae, nisi copia redundet" ("not unattractive save when carried to excess," as the Loeb translation has it; IX.iii.74). At the other end of a scale of significance, paronomasia might be built into the language by divine decree in order to teach us. As Augustine says: "it happened not by human design but perhaps by divine decision [etsi non humana industria, iudicio fortasse divino] that the grammarians have not been able to decline (or conjugate) the Latin verb *moritur* (he dies) by the same rule as other verbs of this form The verb cannot be declined in speech just as the reality which it signifies cannot be declined (that is, avoided) by any action" (*De civitate Dei* XIII.11⁶). Ernst Robert Curtius offers more examples in his *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*.⁷ And, to leap forward to an English poet who admired Augustine, Coleridge delighted in word-play of every type and purpose.⁸ The mid- to late-nineteenth century could not plead precedence for its low view of this rhetorical device.

I have used the term "paronomasia" throughout as a general synonym for punning and for word-play. That is, I have not distinguished such categories as, say antanaclasis. Nor do I distinguish the pun (low humour, below the salt) from word-play (a superior wit), as, for example, Freud distinguishes them.⁹ Leo Spitzer noted in 1950 how the later term "pun" (used from 1662, says the *OED*) has come to include a whole series of earlier rhetorical figures for word-play.¹⁰ Similarly with the modern use of "paronomasia," which has become an umbrella for word-play in general.

In treating paronomasia, it is possible to analyse types of puns, the most familiar division being between homonymic and semantic puns. It is possible to place paronomasia in a generic context as Frye and Welsh do, where it is associated with very early forms of writing, both charm and riddle. It is possible to consider paronomasia in relation to non-literary contexts, for example, logical or linguistic or psychological or, I dare say, neurological contexts. How is punning related to logical thought or, more widely, to rational thought? The answer, I suppose, would be: as Homer to Plato, to take that ancient quarrel as a pattern. How is paronomasia related to linguistic skills as they develop in an

individual or in the practise of a society? Roman Jakobson observes: "In a sequence in which similarity is superimposed on contiguity, two similar phonemic sequences near to each other are prone to assume a paronomastic function."¹¹ How is paronomasia revealing psychologically? Freud, of course, is very fond of interpreting it. As for a neurological context, I am thinking of Oliver Sacks and the workings of memory, since punning develops very early in children and has mnemonic force. I am assuming that I don't need to spend time over the various types of argument that defend word-play.

My own interest lies in the area of poetics. Here, I think that a simple pun, one without further reverberation, would be classified as a scheme rather than a trope. But schemes can move toward tropes when they begin to tell fables about themselves. It is these fables, including their use of etymology, that interest me especially in the poetics of paronomasia.

I want to begin with one aspect of such fabling, and how it helps us to read twentieth-century poetry. The following question seems to me a useful one for reader and writer both. What words come with so venerable a history of paronomasia that no self-respecting modern poet can use them without making choices? That is, poets may use these words if they wish, but they must decide what to do about the standard paronomasia—whether to distance it, or merely to acknowledge it, or to carry on with it. I'm not, of course, talking about entire huge classes of possible puns, but rather about certain words where specific paronomasies (Jonson's handy word) have been used so often and/or so memorably that the words carry a punning sense. It takes great skill to extend the fabling history of such words. New puns are a delight, Stevens' on "inarticulate" and "artichoke," for instance. But re-capping or re-dressing altogether an old fable offers more challenge and more riches.

Let me start with the common word "turn" and the suggestion that a poet cannot use the word at the beginning or end of a line without thinking about the original descriptive energy of the word. Consider the following stanza from Bishop's poem, "Twelfth Morning; or What You Will":

The fence, three-strand, barbed-wire, all pure rust,
 three dotted lines, comes forward hopefully
 across the lots; thinks better of it; turns
 a sort of corner . . .¹²

Bishop has, in fact, given us not just one but a whole family of etymological connotations. The fence turns, turns the corner of a lot and those "lots" offer a variation of the standard pun on *stanza*, meaning "room," of which more in a moment. Those are fenced lots, so that the fence can turn with the line: "turns / a sort of corner." Well, so it is, there on the page, a sort of corner. And there it is, I think: this word that cannot be used at the beginning or end of a line, without remembering the tradition of word-play on "turn." "Turn," which is what "verse" means etymologically. "Turn," which is what "trope" means etymologically. "Turn," which in enjambment describes what the reader is doing, albeit with an eye rather than the etymological leg of enjambment, as it walks the line, and strides or limps or hops over the end of the line, and back, westward, to the start of the next line.

Stevens uses the word repeatedly at the beginning of a line in his well-known 1916 poem, "Domination of Black":

I heard them cry—the peacocks.
 Was it a cry against the twilight
 Or against the leaves themselves
 Turning in the wind,
 Turning as the flames
 Turned in the fire,
 Turning as the tails of the peacocks
 Turned in the loud fire,
 Loud as the hemlocks
 Full of the cry of the peacocks?

If the word "turn" appears in mid-line, that, I think, is another matter. We should need a stronger signal for our paronomastic antennae to start waving.

Are there other such common words? I should think so. The word, "leaves," for example, also has an extended paronomastic family: (1) leaves of a tree (the common topos links them with the dead: Homer through Vergil through (in English) Milton and Shelley and so on;

(2) leaves of a book; and (3) that which is left or leavings. These are standard and a poet can go on from there. Or a poet may decline the paronomasia on "leaves" but never in ignorance. An uninvited paronomasia is apt to commit a solecism.

In a stanzaic poem, the word "room" anywhere in the line wants testing, just in case the old pun on the Italian *stanza* is at work. Thus in Stevens, 1916, "Six Significant Landscapes," no. 6:

Rationalists, wearing square hats,
 Think, in square rooms,
 Looking at the floor,
 Looking at the ceiling.
 They confine themselves
 To right-angled triangles.
 If they tried rhomboids,
 Cones, waving lines, ellipses—
 As, for example, the ellipse of the half-moon—
 Rationalists would wear sombreros.

"Square rooms"? We first read a conceptual analogy, then see that Stevens has not written a "square-room" stanza. That is, his stanza doesn't look square on the page, nor is it schematically square, for I suppose a square stanza is symmetrical, say four-by-four, a tetrameter quatrain. At least, that's what John Hollander suggests:

Why have I locked myself inside
 This narrow cell of four-by-four,
 Pacing the shined, reflecting floor
 Instead of running free and wide?¹³

Modern poets are not the only ones to play on the word "room" in this standard manner. Hollander's "narrow cell" compacts two of Wordsworth's punning tropes for *stanza*, here a sonnet stanza: "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room; / And hermits are contented with their cells." Wordsworth's sonnet also speaks of "the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground."¹⁴ (Lewis Carroll might say of it: "I measured it from side to side, / Fourteen lines long and five feet wide.") These are figures of right-angled rooms or plots, whether square or rectangular. If you look at Stevens' stanza, you will see that he has curved the unjustified right margin so that it is itself a half-moon ellipse or, it may be, a

sombrero. This kind of punning on *stanza* belongs also to a class of visual word-play; Stevens' poem is almost a shape poem.

But then, so is Bishop's stanza or fenced lot. Look again, and you will see a visual mimesis. The fence or "three dotted lines" comes forward as if in an optical illusion such as Wittgenstein's famous example of the duck and the rabbit. Here are three lines of print, and behold, a mimesis of the fence and a prolepsis of what Bishop's own lines will turn into at the end: an ellipsis, three dots, a kind of fence at the end of the stanza.

Stevens also punned on the marks for ellipsis in several letters to his wife: ". . . (Notice my Frenchy way of punctuating? Très chic, n'est-ce pas?) . . ." (16 August 1911).¹⁵ Then, four days later: "I fell asleep over a French book and had the most delightful dream . . . [sic]."¹⁶ The next pause offers five dots, a progression of points (L 171). Two years later, "The cats have grown very large!!!" (7 July 1913, L 179). Stevens implied they'd been eating birds, so that the nine dots may have to do with the nine lives of felines. This, by the way, is before Beckett's punctuating pun in his title, "Dante . . . Bruno. Vico . . . Joyce" where each dot (not counting the period) stands for a century. For word-play on the two dots that constitute an umlaut, here is James Merrill in his poem, "Lost in Translation":

The owlet umlaut peeps and hoots
Above the open vowel.¹⁷

I've been speaking of common words charged with a history of etymological suggestiveness ("turn," "leaves," "room") and also of visual paronomasia. Are there some less common words that require etymological or paronomastic awareness when we read twentieth-century poetry? I think so. Take the words "immaculate" and "maculate."

Here is the opening of Bishop's poem, "Seascape":

This celestial seascape, with white herons got up as angels,
flying as high as they want and as far as they want sidewise
in tiers and tiers of immaculate reflections;
the whole region, from the highest heron
down to the weightless mangrove island
with bright green leaves edged neatly with bird-droppings
like illumination in silver . . .
it does look like heaven.

I pass by the ambiguity of “got up” meaning both “costumed” and “ascended.” This pun opens up, in the most delicate way, the argument for a naturalistic origin for angels (like white birds, like swans, as Stevens suggests in *Notes toward a Supreme Fiction*). Bishop like Stevens is not a believer but she is usually quieter about her skeptical strain. “Got up,” then, so that they can fly “in tiers and tiers of immaculate reflections,” up to the highest heaven, if that echo sounds faintly in “the highest heron.” “Immaculate” is here used in an etymologically pure way (from *macula*, or spot) meaning perfectly unspotted. Bishop delicately evokes older doctrinal uses, again as with “got up,” setting them aside. (I’m also reminded of Dante’s heaven in Bishop’s “tiers and tiers of immaculate reflections”—of his “di bianco in bianco” [from tier to tier] playing against his “tanto bianco” [so white] in a flying passage in the *Paradiso* [XXXI.16, 14].)

And this is surely the point of the line about the “pure-colored or spotted breasts” of the “big symbolic birds” in her later, powerful poem, “Brazil, January 1, 1502”:

A blue-white sky, a simple web . . .
 And perching there in profile, beaks agape,
 the big symbolic birds keep quiet,
 each showing only half his puffed and padded,
 pure-colored or spotted breast.
 Still in the foreground there is Sin

“Pure-colored or spotted”: this is the language of ornithological field-guides. It would sound peculiar to describe a song-sparrow or a wood-thrush as having a maculate breast. But it is, or should be, impossible to miss that history of “immaculate” and “maculate,” which enables us to read the symbolism of the big symbolic birds.

As for Stevens, he was more irritated than Bishop with the language of whiteness, perhaps because he was more vulnerable. Pure poetry, if not doctrinally immaculate poetry, appealed strongly to him when he was young, and he reacted with proportionate bitterness later. See especially *The Man with the Blue Guitar*:

The pale intrusions into blue
 Are corrupting pallors
 The unspotted imbecile reverie (xiii)

"Unspotted" is the Germanic word corresponding to "immaculate." Stevens earlier in this sequence calls the moon "immaculate," which may just make us smile when we recall its spots. In *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, many a kind of whiteness is punningly evoked and dismissed. Words like "immaculate," Stevens implies, can themselves be lunatic ("imbecile") or even "corrupting." Word-play here enters an entire field of association, reminding us to test our whitest, unspotted, immaculate, moony, candid, pure ideals and idealization. We need to remember this when we read Stevens' canto on whiteness in *Notes toward a Supreme Fiction* (I.iii). The word "immaculate" does not itself remain immaculate in Stevens.

Eliot also liked the punning possibilities of the word, "immaculate," at least in the form of "maculate," which he used for "apeneck Sweeney":

The zebra stripes along his jaw
Swelling to maculate giraffe.

Stripes to spots, that is, and also distinctly spotted. "Still," as Bishop would observe, "Still in the foreground there is Sin," perhaps a shade relentlessly in this 1918 poem ("Sweeney among the Nightingales").

Another example of paronomasia may owe its modern prominence to Eliot, and that is the pun on Latin *infans* (unspeaking) and English "infant." Here is Eliot in 1919, in *Gerontion*:

The word within a word, unable to speak a word.

Eliot's allusion to a sermon by Lancelot Andrewes is well known, as is Andrewes' punning paradox that the infant Christ is the Word who is "infans" or unable to speak.¹⁸ The paradox of *fans atque infans* is listed in Lewis and Short, a dictionary in which Stevens said he delighted.¹⁹ He adapted the double pun in the paronomasia of a fan and an infans in the poem "Infanta Marina." The lovely infanta is appropriately one of his muse-figures, that is, one who enables him to speak even if she herself is "infans," waving her fan, some palm-tree metamorphosed into a Florida infanta. Later infans in Stevens may also carry this paronomasia: "It is the infant A standing on infant legs" (1949, CP 469). "Infant, it is enough in life / To speak of what you see" (1946, CP 365).

Bishop is too good a word-smith not to be aware of such histories. She acknowledges this at the end of her poem, "Over 2000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance" (the reference is to a large Bible):

Open the heavy book. Why couldn't we have seen
 this old Nativity while we were at it?
 —the dark ajar, the rocks breaking with light,
 an undisturbed, unbreathing flame,
 colorless, sparkless, freely fed on straw,
 and, lulled within, a family with pets,
 —and looked and looked our infant sight away.

"Infant" first because of the Nativity scene that is seen and not seen. Bishop once saw it in the old Bible, but has not seen it in her actual travel in biblical lands. "Our infant sight": a sight of an infant, of the infant. But sight itself is also infant in the sense that sight is always "infans" or unspeaking. We translate it into words. Yet how can we look and look our infant sight away? In different senses. As when we look away to our heart's content (Bishop's repeated "look" works to prolong this moment of looking). Or "look away" in the sense of removing "infant sight," averting our eyes? And if removing sight, then what follows? Speech, words? Or grown-up sight, and what would that grown-up sight be? In this simply worded but intricate paronomasia, Bishop has laid out our possible responses to the Nativity scene. It's remembered from a book. It's not to be seen by travelling to the area where it happened. It's desired. It might fulfil desire and at the same time necessarily translate desire into something ordinary and familiar, so that we would be back where we started in one way if not another.

Have the moderns invented new types of puns, as distinct from extending the repertoires of older types? If a portmanteau word is Lewis Carroll's invention, then the answer is yes. A portmanteau word is a paronomasia that presents the technique and the result all at once. Here is how puns work, it seems to say, and here is a new one, a neologism. "'Twas brillig and the slithy toves . . ." etc. "Slithy"? "Slimy" and "lithe" come into our minds, thanks to Humpty Dumpty. They came into Stevens' mind too, but he decided to take Lewis Carroll one step back. Why not simply say "ithy"? As in "Analysis of a Theme":

We enjoy the ithy oonts and long-haired
Plomets, as the Herr Gott
Enjoys his comets.

"Ithy" as in "slithy"? Or is it "ithy" with a short "i"? The short "i" seems to invite words like "mythy" and "pithy," words that are more serious than "slithy-ithy" words, portentous words, comets as omens. We recall Jove's "mythy mind" in Stevens' well-known 1915 poem, "Sunday Morning." And we recall E. H. Gombrich's persuasive play on the associations of "pong" and "ping" in his *Art and Illusion*.²⁰ A long-i'd "ithy" seems to call for more squiggly or whooshing Lewis-Carroll words: slithy, slimy, writhing, scything. (Though there are, to be sure, "lithe" and "blithe.") But then there is the prefix "ithy," from Greek *ithus* or straight, and not at all squiggly, as in "ithyphallic" (the only example in the Oxford Concise), which described the phallus carried in festivals of Bacchus as well as the metre used for Bacchic hymns or generally for licentious poems (the trochaic dimeter brachycatalectic). An "oont," by the way, is a camel.

There is a similar phenomenon in Stevens' late poem, "Long and Sluggish Lines":

... Could it be that yellow patch, the side
Of a house, that makes one think the house is laughing;

Or these—escent—issant pre-personae: first fly,
A comic infanta among the tragic drapings,

Babyishness of forsythia, a snatch of belief,
The spook and makings of the nude magnolia?

....

Wanderer, this is the pre-history of February,
The life of the poem in the mind has not yet begun.

Stevens' syntax tells us how to read the suffixes, "-escent" and "-issant." So does the Oxford Concise Dictionary, at least for one of them: "-escent," "forming adjs. denoting onset of a state or variation of colour etc. (deliquescent, effervescent, florescent, iridescent) . . . pres. part. . . . of vbs. in -escere." The suffix "-issant" on the other hand makes no appearance in any Oxford dictionary or in Webster either. But then, I

have not been able to find any word at all with this suffix, apart from one coined by Stevens himself: "The grackles sing avant the spring / Most spiss—oh! Yes, most spissantly. / They sing right puissantly" ("Snow and Stars"). This is also from a pre-spring poem, a rather ill-tempered one (grackles are not happy birds in Stevens). Stevens' seemingly invented suffix is itself a pre-history of words, if we accept his own coinage as the first blooming "-issant" word that we have in English. "Spiss," though obsolete, is listed in Oxford and Webster; it means "thick, dense, close," including close intervals in music. Florio gives a form of it. But then we might hear a long "i" in "-issant," and hence a family of French words in this Ur-paronomasia.²¹

Paronomasia through neologism: this is one type of paronomasia that Bishop does not use, for she is not given to neologisms, whereas Stevens delights in them. His play with neologisms and with unusual words ("oonts") makes us listen for the paronomastic force of any unknown words as a way of defining them. It's a useful training. Such paronomastic testing of the unknown, together with the paronomastic history of the known, works to make us aware of the possible paronomasia in all our words—for all that, in our syllables, letters, and punctuation marks as well. Letters? Stevens' Alpha and Omega in his *An Ordinary Evening in New Haven*, for example. Or Anthony Hecht's recent brilliant pun on the "voiceless thorn," both the plant protuberance that breaks your skin and the Anglo-Saxon letter for a breathed rather than voiced "th" sound ("thorn" not "the"):

And the wind, a voiceless thorn
goes over the details,
making a soft promise
to take our breath away.²²

An audible paronomasia may be noticed here: try sounding out "th," as in a soft wind, then stopping, as directed in the breath-taking pun of the enjambed last line. Hecht's crows are morticians; they do not "caw" but call out *cras* or "tomorrow," as Latin crows did. Language so tested and so paronomastic displays its own vitality. Words do have a life of their own, and paronomasia makes us acutely aware of this.

Stevens' instinct for word-play was part of his general delight in the history of words. Bishop also delighted in the diachronic life of words,

their etymological family history, their various cognate relatives, and so on. In her work, words tremble with the energy of their own histories, and the potential for paronomasia is always there. Sometimes her word-play is made obvious, laid out for us. Sometimes it is hidden but it will rarely if ever be riddling. The subtleties and challenges are not combative, and the poems can be read without realizing how rich they are. Riddling paronomasia stops you short.

Nor does Bishop experiment with the limits of word-play. At least, this is what I think Stevens is doing in his poem, *The Comedian as the Letter C*, that difficult personal Bildungsroman. Yet her fewer and quieter examples of paronomasia are as remarkable as Stevens' own.

Stevens' paronomasia, especially in his early work, was also part of his revolt against the gentility and piety of the times, what he sardonically called "the grand ideas of the villages" in "The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad." In the last fifteen or twenty years of his life, this shifted, as he centered his work increasingly on "the possibility of a supreme fiction, recognized as a fiction, in which men could propose to themselves a fulfilment" (L 820, 1954). The supreme fiction was to be, in effect, the heir and successor to Christianity. Bishop stays away from such questions. But she is like Stevens in working paronomastically to undo some effects of her religious heritage.

Andrew Welsh in his *Roots of Lyric* writes that "If Hopkins' oracle [in the poem, "Spelt from Sybil's Leaves"] is one form of poetry particularly suited to the play of language through various kinds of punning, perhaps the richest development of all the powers in the poet's language is the poetry of religious paradox."²³ We know this also from Herbert, and many a writer before and after Herbert. But if a word-play can affirm religious paradox, it can also undo religious paradox. Stevens knows this full well, and a whole taxonomy of paronomastic undoing (or what he would call "decreation") could be deduced from his work.

Yet another type of word-play is at work in Bishop's poem, "Twelfth Morning; or What You Will," a particularly interesting type which might be called allusive, though older readers would have found the term redundant, since one meaning of the word "allusion" used to be "a play upon words, a pun" (OED 2.; the illustrative quotations range from 1556 to 1731). James Merrill, by the way, has remarked that modern poets

may sometimes even substitute word-play for allusion: "The lucky 18th century reader—having read literally *tous les livres*—could be trusted to catch every possible allusion. This is no longer the case; some of us substitute word-play to make our texts resound."²⁴

In Bishop's poem, allusive paronomasia allows her to speak back to Eliot, and to extend the fabling paronomastic history of the word "turn." For consider Eliot's use of the verb "turn," notably in *Ash Wednesday*, where "turn" at the end of a line comes close to being an Eliot signature. ("Because I do not hope to turn again . . ." etc.) Consider Eliot's "Journey of the Magi," the best-known twentieth-century poem in English on the subject of the Three Kings. And then consider Bishop's poem, set on the Feast of the Epiphany or the Three Kings, and centered on a black boy called Balthazár. Eliot: "three trees on the low sky, / And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow." Bishop: "the black boy Balthazár, a fence, a horse." "The fence, three-strand . . . the big white horse." If this were Eliot's poem, the number three in the three-strand fence would work differently. It would turn triune, perhaps trinitarian, an emblematic numerological punning. And Bishop's later question would sound much different:

Don't ask the big white horse, *Are you supposed*
to be inside the fence or out? He's still
 asleep. Even awake, he probably
 remains in doubt.

If this were Eliot's poem, you would know for sure whether the horse were inside the fence or out, or, worse, sitting on the fence. Bishop does not foreground any of these effects. She keeps doctrinal and political matters peripheral to the main matter, which is song on this day of the epiphany, and a poor child in a small town in a remote area—rather like the original epiphany, we are given to understand. But her different paronomasia on "turn" itself turns Eliot's many turnings, alerting us to the different uses of the number three and of the white horse in her poem.

Bishop carries on other examples of word-play from Eliot and Stevens, both of whom are gifted allusive paronomastics.²⁵ Bishop has heard what they are doing, and signals that she wishes to do something

different. To make such a challenge is easy but to live up to it is extraordinary. Bishop does so.

I want to end with an example from Stevens that I heard only recently, thanks to Bishop, who herself heard and repeated and enlarged this pun, speaking back to Stevens. Here is the opening stanza of Part III of Stevens' 1942 masterpiece, *Notes toward a Supreme Fiction*:

To sing jubilas at exact, accustomed times,
To be crested and wear the mane of a multitude
And so, as part, to exult with its great throat

"Crested?" I previously recognized the metaphor of the multitude as a lion and the intricate word-play on *tuba-jubilate*, for one meaning of *juba* is "crest."²⁶ But I had not considered etymology sufficiently. The etymon for "crest" is Latin, *crista*, a crest, as on a bird or animal. Stevens thereby suggests another origin for the word "Christian" than the actual Greek origin, where Christ signifies "the anointed one," the equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah. He is using false etymology to suggest what is for him a true origin of the word "Christian," that is, a naturalistic origin. False etymology can be just as useful for poetic fables as true etymology.²⁷ Stevens' punning is genial enough; he is now past the satires of the twenties and early thirties. And he is writing on the third note to the supreme fiction, "It Must Give Pleasure." Bishop heard all this, I think. In her poem, "Brazil, January 1, 1502," she enlarges the etymological pun, and she is much sharper than Stevens.

Just so the Christians, hard as nails,
tiny as nails, and glinting,
in creaking armor, came and found it all
Directly after Mass, humming perhaps
L'Homme armé or some such tune,
they ripped away into the hanging fabric

Bishop has overgone Stevens, a rare feat. Here, not just one but all three Latin meanings of *crista* are at work: crest, as on a helmet, for Bishop is at pains to emphasize the armor;²⁸ crest, as on a bird, by analogy with the bird-women at the end; and crest, as in sexual use. Nor is Bishop's word-play genial. It sets all the Latinate uses against the Greek

origin for the name of Christ, as Brazilian history itself would do, all too often, false etymology here becoming a true fable of false dealing.

A decade ago, we would be considering the deconstructionist challenge to older views of paronomasia. Now we are more likely to be considering a historicist challenge. Both concur in limiting the functions of word-play, as of all formal effects. It is the writers themselves who know the true seriousness in which paronomasia may partake, the true sense of *serio ludere*, the sense in which North Africans listened to Augustine's sermons, some sixteen hundred years ago.

The African, particularly, had a Baroque love of subtlety. They had always loved playing with words; they excelled in writing elaborate acrostics; *hilaritas*—a mixture of intellectual excitement and sheer aesthetic pleasure at a notable display of wit—was an emotion they greatly appreciated. Augustine would give them just this.²⁹

We who seem to have so much trouble with the space between *serio* and *ludere* have something to learn from these ancient Africans, as from our modern poets.

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NOTES

¹I have made a noun out of the *OED*'s adjective, "paronomastic." Or should I say "paronomasian"?

²*The Letters of Wallace Stevens*, ed. Holly Stevens (New York: Knopf, 1966) 5 (23 July 1895); abbreviated in the text as L. Other abbreviations are: OP, *Opus Posthumous*, rev. ed., ed. Milton J. Bates (New York: Knopf, 1989), SP, *Souvenirs and Prophecies: The Young Wallace Stevens*, by Holly Stevens (New York: Knopf, 1977). Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from the poetry are from Stevens' *Collected Poems* (New York: Knopf, 1954) and may be located through the title index.

³Unpublished Letter, 13 August 1952, to Barbara Church, Huntington Library. Quoted by permission of the Huntington Library.

⁴Northrop Frye, *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth, and Society* (Bloomington: U of Indiana P, 1976) 142.

⁵Andrew Welsh, *Roots of Lyric: Primitive Poetry and Modern Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978).

⁶*De civitate Dei* . . . , trans. Henry Bettenson, ed. David Knowles (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972) 521.

⁷*European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask from the 1948 *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1953, 1973) 299-301.

⁸Cf. Owen Barfield, "Coleridge's Enjoyment of Words," in *Coleridge's Variety: Bicentenary Studies*, ed. John Beer (London: Macmillan, 1974) 204-18.

⁹Freud's "puns" are "Kalauer," though James Strachey says the term is wider than in English. "Calembourgs" is offered in brackets. From *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* ("The Technique of Jokes"), vol. 8 of *The Standard Edition of . . . Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1905, 1960) 45.

¹⁰"Puns," *JEGP* 49 (1950): 952-54.

¹¹"Linguistics as Poetics," in his *Language in Literature*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1987) 86.

¹²Quotations from Elizabeth Bishop are taken from *The Complete Poems, 1927-1979* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983).

¹³"Others Who Have Lived in This Room," in his *In Time and Place* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986) 37. The allusion works both schematically and thematically.

¹⁴William Wordsworth, *The Poems*, ed. John O. Hayden, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale UP, 1977, 1981) 586-87.

¹⁵Unpublished letter, Huntington Library. Quoted by permission of the Huntington Library.

¹⁶Unpublished portion of a letter, 20 August 1911 (L 171), Huntington Library. Quoted by permission of the Huntington Library.

¹⁷James Merrill, *From the First Nine: Poems 1946-1976* (New York: Atheneum, 1984) 352.

¹⁸See T. S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951) 349-50. See also K. K. Ruthven, "The Poet as Etymologist," *CQ* 11 (1969): 9-37, esp. 18.

¹⁹See my *Poetry, Word-Play, and Word-War in Wallace Stevens* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988) 40n24. See also Richard Howard's richly paronomastic and allusive and funny poem on Stevens and Frost and the Lewis and Short Latin lexicon, ". . . Et Dona Ferentes," *Raritan* 8 (1989): 30-33.

²⁰E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969) 370-71.

²¹This French alternative was suggested by members of the Symposium on Paronomasia, chaired by Professor Inge Leimberg, Münster, July 6-8, 1992. Given Stevens' pleasure in the French language, it is very likely.

²²Anthony Hecht, "Crows in Winter," from his *The Transparent Man* (New York: Knopf, 1990) 65.

²³*Roots of Lyric* 251.

²⁴James Merrill, under "Comments," *UTQ* 61 (1992): 390.

²⁵See, for example, my "The Senses of Eliot's Salvages," *EinC* 34 (1984): 309-18. For Stevens, see my *Poetry, Word-Play, and Word-War*, chap. 4 and *passim*.

²⁶"Riddles, Charms, and Fictions in Wallace Stevens," in *Centre and Labyrinth: Essays in Honour of Northrop Frye*, eds. Eleanor Cook et al. (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1983) 229-30.

²⁷Cf. the numerous examples given by Ruthven.

²⁸To Professor Inge Leimberg, I owe the observation that the "arma Christi" would include those very "nails" figuring in Bishop's description of tapestry and her metaphor of armor. The connection with the nails of the crucifixion is made by Bonnie Costello in her *Elizabeth Bishop: Questions of Mastery* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1991) 148; Leimberg's suggestion helps to confirm this. To Professor Maria Elisabeth Brockhoff, I owe the persuasive argument that Bishop's word "fabric" is punning musically, as in German *Gewebe* (fabric) in the musical sense. The soldiers also "ripped away into the hanging fabric" of the Mass, tearing out from its entire *Tongewebe* the original secular song, "L'Homme armé"—tearing out not simply the melody, but, tragically, the militarism.

²⁹Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1967) 254.

Actaeon's Dogs in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the Wolf Pack in *Ysengrimus**

F. J. SYPHER

Anthony Brian Taylor, in his illuminating, carefully researched article, "Arthur Golding and the Elizabethan Progress of Actaeon's Dogs," points out the vigor of Golding's enthusiastic translation of a passage in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (III, 206-24), and shows that Golding's rendering of the lines was admired in the Elizabethan period, especially by Shakespeare. Taylor's emphasis is upon Golding and the influence of his English version, but his article serves equally as a reminder of the vigor of Ovid's Latin verse.

Ovid was highly regarded by his own contemporaries, and his boastful claim to immortal fame—at the end of the *Metamorphoses*—may be admitted to have been an accurate prophecy. All through late antiquity and the medieval period, Ovid's works continued to be read, even though Christian readers were more partial to the *pietas* of Vergil than to the pagan sensuousness of Ovid. And during and after the twelfth century, the age of narrative romance and of love poetry, there is extensive evidence of Ovid's influence, as in, for example, *The Romance of the Rose*, and in the work of Chrétien de Troyes.¹

The influence of Ovid is pervasive also in the poem known as *Ysengrimus*, a beast epic of 6,574 lines of polished Latin elegiac verse composed around 1149, apparently by a Ghentish author, sometimes referred to as Magister Nivardus.² In this work the stories of Reynard the fox and Ysengrim the wolf are woven into a carefully constructed mock-epic in twelve episodes, in which the protagonist, Ysengrim, is presented as a rapacious monk-abbot-bishop who constantly tries to take

*Reference: Anthony Brian Taylor, "Arthur Golding and the Elizabethan Progress of Actaeon's Dogs," *Connotations* 1.3 (1991): 207-223.

advantage of the other creatures around him. The story opens with the wolf's triumphant consumption of a stolen ham, but after a series of encounters in which he is repeatedly bested by his adversaries, Ysengrim is finally devoured by a ravenous herd of swine, led by Abbess Salaura, a mighty sow. It is a story filled with bitter indictment of the Church's greed, but composed with riotous humor and consummate literary art.

There are numerous echoes of Ovid in *Ysengrimus*,³ but, amazingly, none of the commentaries seems to have remarked on the fact that the wolf pack in the episode known as "The Animals' Pilgrimage" is modelled on Ovid's presentation of Actaeon's dogs. Ovid's text is in Taylor's article (219, 221); the passage from *Ysengrimus*⁴ is as follows:

Iam brevis undenos conflauerat hora sodales:
 Ante alios omnes Gripo Triuenter adest,
 Abbatis socer ille fuit, cursuque rapaci
 Ysengrimigene tres comitantur auum:
 Magna salus ouium, Larueldus Cursor, auique
 Cum facie nomen Grimo Pilauca tenens,
 Et numquam uel pene satur Septengula Nipig;
 Griponis subeunt pignora deinde duo:
 Guls Spispisa prior, post natus Gwulfero Worgram;
 Hos inter sequitur Sualmo Caribdis Inops
 Et proles amite Griponis, Turgius Ingens
 Mantica, quo genero Sualmo superbus erat,
 Sualmonisque nepos, Stormus Varbucus, et audax
 Priuignus Stormi, Gulpa Gehenna Minor,
 Hinc patruus Gulpe, Sualmonis auunculus idem,
 Olnam cognomen Maior Auernus habens. (IV, 741-56)

In a brief moment he had stirred up eleven comrades. Gripo Threebelly arrived ahead of all the others. He was the abbot's father-in-law. And at a greedy pace three children of Ysengrim's ran along with their grandfather, the great protector of sheep, Larveld Swiftfoot, and Grimo Gooseplucker, who had the face as well as the name of his grandfather, and Nipig Sevengullet, who was never, or almost never, full. Then followed Gripo's two children: first Guls Spispisa, and the next born, Gwulfero Worgram. Together with these came Sualmo Alwaysinwant Charybdis; and Gripo's aunt's offspring, Turgius Hugebag, a son-in-law of whom Sualmo was proud; and Sualmo's nephew, Storm Varbuc; and the bold stepson of Storm, Gulpa Gehenna Minor; hence Gulpa's paternal uncle, who was also the maternal uncle of Sualmo, Olnam, had the cognomen Avernus Major.

The dogs' names in Ovid's work are Greek, whereas the wolves' names in *Ysengrimus* mix Germanic and Latin elements; but in both texts there is a linguistic counterpoint between the Latin narrative and names in a different language. A number of the medieval poet's wolf names are translations of Ovid's Greek names into Netherlandic equivalents, and in a few instances the names in *Ysengrimus* are strikingly similar to Golding's English names. The following list presents detailed explanations and comparisons.⁵ The wolves are listed in order of appearance:

1. *Gripo Triuenter*. Neth. *grijpen* "to grip"; Lat. *tri-* "three" + *uenter* "belly." Cf. Ovid's *Ladon* "catcher"; Golding's "Ladon."⁶ Cf. below, no. 4.

2. *Larueldus Cursor*. Neth. *laar* "open land" + *veld* "field"; Lat. *cursor* "runner." Cf. Ovid's *Nape* "land"; Golding's "Laund"; Ovid's *Thous* "swift," Golding's "Swift."

3. *Grimo Pilauca*. Obsolete Neth. *grim* "grim"; Lat. *pilare* "to pillage" + Vulg. Lat. *auca* "goose." Cf. below, no. 6. Cf. also Ovid's *Alce* "might," Golding's "Wight" (meaning "strong").⁷

4. *Septengula Nipig*. Lat. *septem* "seven" + *gula* "gullet"; Neth. *nipjen* "to nip." Cf. Ovid's *Harpalos* "greedy," Golding's "Snatch"; also Ovid's *Ladon* "catcher" as in no. 1 above.

5. *Guls Spispisa*. Neth. *gulzig* "greedy"; *spijs* "food." Cf. Ovid's *Harpya* "harpy," Golding's "Greedigut"; Ovid's *Labros* "gluttonous," Golding's "Jollyboy."⁸

6. *Gvulfero Worgram*. Neth. *wolf* "wolf" perhaps with a suggestion of Neth. *golf* "gulf"; Neth. *worgen* "to strangle" + *ram* "ram." Cf. Ovid's *Lycisca* "wolfish," Golding's "Wolfe"; Ovid's *Nebrophonos* "fawn killer," Golding's "Kilbucke." Cf. above, no. 3. Cf. also Ovid's *Theridamas* "beast-conqueror," Golding's "Kildeere."

7. *Sualmo Caribdis Inops*. Neth. *zweigen* "to swallow"; Lat. (from Greek) *Charybdis* (the Sicilian whirlpool, applied metaphorically to a greedy person); Lat. *inops* "needy."

8. *Turgius Ingens Mantica*. Lat. *turgere* "to swell"; *ingens* "huge"; *mantica* "bag."

9. *Stormus Varbucus*. Neth. *storm* "storm"; obsolete Neth. *vaar* "fear" + Neth. *buik* "belly." Cf. Ovid's *Aello* "storm," Golding's "Tempest"; Ovid's *Laelaps* "hurricane," Golding's "Spring."⁹

10. *Gulpa Gehenna Minor*. Neth. *gulpen* "to gulp"; Lat. (ultimately from Hebrew) *Gehenna* (a biblical name for hell); Lat. *minor* "lesser."

11. *Olnam Maior Auernus*. Neth. *al* "all" + *nemen* "to take"; Lat. *maior* "greater"; *Auernus* (Vergilian equivalent of hell, cf. *Aeneid* IV, 126). Cf. Ovid's *Pamphagus* "all eating," Golding's "Eateal."

In general, Ovid's (and Golding's) names and descriptive adjectives are designed to reflect typical characteristics of dogs: their behaviour (running, climbing, hunting, stalking), sound (barking, ringing), appearance (color, coat, teeth), breed (place of origin), as well as agility, strength, ferocity, and greediness. By contrast, the wolves in *Ysengrimus* are characterized in ways that emphasize the greed which is at the core of the poet's satire: taking (*Larueldus*, *Gripo*, *Nipig*, *Pilauca*, *Worgram*, *Olnam*), violent force (*Grimo*, *Stormus*, *Cursor*, *Gvulfero*), food (*Spispisa*), belly (*Triuenter*, *Mantica*, *Varbucus*), great size (*Turgius*, *Ingens*), devouring (*Septengula*, *Guls*, *Sualmo Caribdis Inops*, *Gulpa Gehenna Minor*, *Maior Auernus*).¹⁰

Strong as is the satirical intent in this passage of *Ysengrimus*, one senses also the author's delight in creating comic linguistic coinages by juxtaposing barbarous words with elegant Latin versification. He obviously also enjoys his presentation of this villainous wolf pack according to the conventions of the epic catalogue of forces, including a dizzyingly confusing array of genealogical relationships. The ensuing battle between the wolves and the other animals parodies the siege of Troy, and so offers yet another parallel between the wolves' Germanic names, and their Greek models. Finally, the total number of wolves, eleven plus one, inevitably suggests—in this context—an infernal parallel to the twelve disciples. Note, for example, the last two, with the epithets *Maior* and *Minor*, like St. James the Great, and St. James the Less. The master of this pack would of course be the devil.

Coming back to the passages in Ovid, one wonders what other traces through the centuries might have been left by Actaeon's hounds as they have charged down innumerable paths with ringing voices and unquenchable élan.

NOTES

¹See the discussion and examples given by Gilbert Highet in *The Classical Tradition* (1949; New York: OUP, 1957) 57-69.

²An elaborate investigation of the problems surrounding the author's identity is given by Jill Mann in *Ysengrimus: Text with Translation, Commentary and Introduction*, *Mittellateinische Studien und Texte* 12 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987).

³A lengthy list of Ovidian parallels is given by Ernst Voigt in his edition of *Ysengrimus* (Halle, 1884; rpt. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974) lxx-xxii (there is no reference to Actaeon's dogs in this list).

⁴Text from Voigt's edition 238-39. Translation from the English version by F. J. Sypher and Eleanor Sypher, *Ysengrimus by Magister Nivardus* (New York: Printed at the Stinehour Press, 1980) 117-18. Translators differ in their interpretation of the family relationships in the passage. See, in addition to the two English versions already noted, the Flemish verse translation by Van Mierlo (cited below n5), and the German version by Albert Schönfelder, *Isengrimus: das flämische Tierepos*, *Niederdeutsche Studien* 3 (Münster: Böhlau Verlag, 1955). See also the French version by Elisabeth Charbonnier, *Recherches sur l'Ysengrimus, traduction et étude littéraire*, *Wiener Arbeiten zur germanischen Altertumskunde* 22 (Vienna: Verlag Karl M. Halosar, 1983).

⁵These interpretations are the result of an independent consideration of the passage, and, to be sure, there are points in which commentators differ. See bibliographies—in works already cited—for full reference to commentaries, beginning with those by Mone (1832—the *editio princeps*), Grimm (1834), Bormans (1836-37), etc. The most balanced literary appraisal of the poem is given in the learned and finely appreciative study by J. Van Mierlo, *Het Vroegste Dierenepos in de letterkunde der Nederlanden: Isengrimus van Magister Nivardus* (Antwerp: N. V. Standaard Boekhandel, 1943); originally published in *Verslagen en mededeelingen der Koninklijke Vlaamsche Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde* (1943): 281-335, 489-548. See also the notes in Van Mierlo's translation: *Magister Nivardus' Isengrimus: het vroegste dierenepos in de letterkunde der Nederlanden*, with illustrations by Désiré Acket (Antwerp: N. V. Standaard Boekhandel, 1946). Netherlandic words in the present discussion are quoted from: *van Dale's Nieuw groot woordenboek der Nederlandse taal*, eds. C. Kruyskamp and F. de Tollenaere, 7th ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950).

⁶Golding's use of Ovid's *Ladon* seems odd. Taylor suggests that Golding simply did not read the textual commentary closely enough to note the gloss that explained the name as "to take, seize or catch" (Taylor 219n7). But one wonders if Golding might have intended to suggest a meaning such as *laron* (or *ladrone*) "thief." Cf. also "to lay on" i.e. "attack" as in Shakespeare's "Lay on Macduffe" cited in *OED*, s.v. *lay* verb 55.b. The hound's appearance (*Ov. substricta ilia* "lean flanks"), rendered by Golding as "gant as any Greewnd" (i.e. "gaunt as any greyhound"), suggests a lean and hungry look, and is paralleled in *Ysengrimus* by the Latin epithet *inops* "needy" applied to the wolf *Sualmo*.

⁷The name *Alce* is said by Taylor to be translated by Golding as "Royster"; but Golding's "Wight," in the sense of "strong" (see *OED*, s.v. *wight*, adjective), may, I would respectfully suggest, in fact be his translation of *Alce* (and not of *Leucon* "white"). In this case Golding would mean the descriptive phrase in his line—"Royster, beautie faire and white as winters snow"—to be taken as an

appositive to "Royster," to complete the translation of *Leucon* as "Royster." ("Royster" may also contain an echo of the white color of the inside of an *oyster* shell, but I should not wish to press this suggestion too far.) In this analysis, *Leucon* would not be translated twice (as suggested by Taylor 210-11, who, in order to make the point, has to change the initial letter of "beautie" to a capital). Note also Golding's use of the word *wight* in the sense of "strong" in l. 263, "little Wolfe, as wight as any other"; note also Golding's use of the spelling "white" when he clearly intends the color, in the line on Royster, and again in l. 265.

With the name *Grimo* in *Ysengrimus*, compare also Golding's "Savage" for Ovid's *trux* "savage" (l. 211)—the word does not appear to denote a name in Ovid's text as quoted by Taylor, but it was apparently so interpreted by Golding, even though *trux* is a Latin word—not Greek like the other names in the passage. Cf. also Ovid's use of the adjective *ferox* "fierce" (l. 214).

⁸I would offer the suggestion that Golding's "Jollyboy" (for *Labros* "gluttonous") is not necessarily a mistranslation based on confusion with Latin *labrosus* "with large lips"; as "a great and large flewd hound" he could well qualify, by virtue of his size and big mouth (and jolly disposition) as a gourmand among the hounds (cf. Taylor 219n7). Here again, Golding would be rendering Ovid's Greek name for the dog, not only in the English name but also in the descriptive terms attached to it. One could almost imagine that the echo of the Latin word for "with large lips" in the Greek name affected Golding's composition not as an error of translation but as a kind of punning inspiration. Ovid himself could not have been unaware of the conspicuous play on words between Greek *labros* and Latin *labrosus*.

⁹Golding's "Spring" as a rendering of Ovid's *Laelaps* "hurricane" is not necessarily a mistake if one takes the name in the sense of "spring forward and catch suddenly" like a whirlwind (cf. Taylor 209). Sports aficionados will recall the nickname of the American middleweight boxer of the 1960s, Reuben "Hurricane" Carter.

¹⁰Compare the author's similar treatment of the names of the members of the herd of swine in *Ysengrimus* VII, 141-48, e.g. Salaura (mentioned earlier, whose name is composed of French *sale* "dirty" + Lat. *aura* "air"). The whole subject of literary names, stock names, and generic names for animals was clearly of interest to all three authors, and one wonders to what extent the two Latin poets were drawing on terms that were actually in current use as animal names. Certainly a number of Golding's English dog names are still in use. The substitution of personal or literary names for generic animal designations suggests the strong currents of interchange between literary tradition and popular culture, as in the familiar example of French *renard* "fox" from the Germanic personal name *Reinardus* (cf. German *Reinhard*), replacing O. Fr. *goupil* (from Lat. *uulpeculus*). In this connection an informative fourteenth-century text is presented in Taylor's article in 220n10, with reference to a hare (called *Couart* in the beast fable literature) as "the coward with the short tail." The word *coward* has a perplexing etymology, since the Latin antecedent, *caudatus* "tailed" can mean both "possessed of a tail" and "deprived of a tail." The gloss "with a short tail" nicely combines both significations. In reference to *Ysengrimus*, see the citations for Book III, 659, in *Ysengrimus* by Magister *Nivardus* (n4 above) 219.

A Complementary Response to Anthony Brian Taylor*

CHARLES MARTINDALE and SARAH ANNES BROWN

This article provides a useful, scholarly account of the reception of Actaeon's dogs in Elizabethan literature via the mediation of Golding. Taylor rightly concludes that Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses* was extremely important both for Elizabethan poetry in general and for Shakespeare in particular. Taylor is also right to underline the importance of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the general culture. Partly through the accessible vernacular of Golding's translation the *Metamorphoses* may as readily resurface in a popular ballad or in a dictionary used by generations of schoolboys as in a courtly entertainment. It is likewise important to remember that when an Elizabethan writer read the *Metamorphoses*, his reading did not take place within a contextless vacuum, but was part of a complex of receptions, including allegorical exegesis (although this aspect of Ovid's reception has arguably been overemphasised). A gloss in a dictionary or a note in Regius or another popular edition becomes a vital part of "Ovid" and what he "meant" for readers at the time. Paradoxically Shakespeare, because he was not the most orthodoxly learned of readers, may have been less dependent on conventional scholarly views than others. Indeed the pattern of his career suggests that, with Seneca or Ovid, he may have started with an orthodox view of the character of their works only to modify it by a more independent reading later on. *Macbeth*, which Shakespeare probably prepared for by reading a couple of the plays in Latin, represents a more thorough-going engagement with Seneca than, say, *Richard III*. The same may be true of Shakespeare's reading of Ovid,

*Reference: Anthony Brian Taylor, "Arthur Golding and the Elizabethan Progress of Actaeon's Dogs," *Connotations* 1.3 (1991): 207-223.

which moves from the stylish but partly decorative allusions in the early plays to a profound recreation and appropriation of an Ovidian mixed mode in the late romances.¹

Golding, we can agree, was part of the furniture of Shakespeare's mind. But just for that reason we have to be circumspect when formulating the relationship in specific cases. Taylor's account of *Othello* 5.2.372-73 may be vitiated by its excessively intentionalist framework. In this passage, according to Taylor, Shakespeare "is thinking of Golding" and of the traditional allegorical associations of Actaeon's dogs, first with traitors without and secondly with disruptive passions within. But the use of the word "fell" or the presence of a "Spartan" dog (regularly a type of canine ferocity) does not prove the conscious reference to Golding's Ovid which would be needed to justify Taylor's ingenious reading. Intertextuality may provide a more useful exegetical framework for the modern interpreter than either "allusion" or "source."

It is not necessary to try and uncover tenuous verbal correspondences in order to establish Golding's importance for Shakespeare. His presence is simultaneously more submerged and more diffuse than Taylor's analyses of the plays he mentions would suggest. For example, if we take *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the reasonably certain confirmation of Golding's presence in the play might be used as evidence not only to prove that Shakespeare read and retained much of Golding (which we know already), but also to provide the basis for an exploration of the influence of "Ovid" (incorporating Golding and the exegetic tradition) on the play as a whole and an anchor for the possibility that the role of the legend of Actaeon in the play is not confined to references to his dogs. Taylor quotes Pistol's warning to Ford that he should take care not to be cuckolded by Falstaff:

Prevent,
Or go thou like *Sir Actaeon*, he,
With *Ringwood* at thy heels. (2.1.112-14)²

Taylor has shown that the name Ringwood had become common currency via such works as "New Mad Tom of Bedlam" and he suggests that the reference to "Sir Actaeon" strengthens the case for specifying Golding as a source because in his *Metamorphoses* Actaeon is called the

unluckie Knight. Taken by itself this is not an entirely convincing argument because mythological figures were commonly referred to in this way. In *Troilus and Cressida*, for example, Diomedes is referred to as "Sir Diomed" (4.5.109). Although Taylor's brief in this article is limited to the subject of Actaeon's *dogs* it might have been interesting to cite the explanation of the Actaeon story which Golding provides in the prefatory epistle to his translation.

All such as doo in flattring freaks, and hawkes, and hownds delyght
And dyce, and cards, and for too spend the tyme both day and nyght
In foule excesse of chamberworke, or too much meate and drink:
Uppon the piteous storie of Acteon ought too think.
For theis and theyr adherents usde excessive are in deede
The dogs that dayly doo devour theyr followers on with speede.
(Epistle 97-102)³

This might almost have been a thumbnail sketch for another "unluckie knight"—Falstaff himself—even though the two obvious allusions to Actaeon in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* serve only to connect the hunter with potential cuckolds. But this common association (based on the fact that Actaeon was transformed into a stag and thus had horns) is only one of the ramifications of the Actaeon myth. As we have seen, the dogs may be interpreted allegorically either as treacherous servants or as self-consuming passions.

Both of these interpretations could be related to Shakespeare's treatment of Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The self-important knight lords it over his adherents like a huntsman in charge of a pack of dogs, dismissing them summarily in the following words:

Rogues, hence, avaunt! Vanish like hailstones! Go!
Trudge, plod, away o' th' hoof, seek shelter, pack!
(1.3.76-77)

Immediately after he has left we learn that Pistol and Nym are just as disloyal as the "hound" followers in the first allegorisation of the legend to which Taylor refers. Pistol wishes Falstaff as bloody an end as Actaeon—"Let vultures gripe thy guts" (1.3.80)—and Nym and Pistol declare their intention of betraying Falstaff's projected amours to Ford and Page respectively. Taylor himself provides added evidence for an identification

of Falstaff and Actaeon by compiling various instances where the characters of Nym and Pistol are associated with dogs.

The image used by Mistress Ford when considering the best way to deal with Falstaff's importunities is suggestive of the second common interpretation of the Actaeon myth mentioned by Taylor, implying as it does that Falstaff will fall victim to his own self-consuming desires and be hoist with his own petard:

How shall I be revenged on him? I think the best way were to entertain him with hope, till the wicked fire of lust have melted him in his own grease.
(2.1.62-65)

This image is echoed in Falstaff's rueful account to "Brook" of the tribulations his wooing has involved:

. . . And then, to be stopped in like a strong distillation, with stinking clothes that fretted in their own grease. Think of that—man of my kidney—think of that—that am as subject to heat as butter, a man of continual dissolution and thaw. It was a miracle to scape suffocation. And in the height of this bath, when I was more than half stewed in grease like a Dutch dish, to be thrown into the Thames . . . (3.5.104-11)

This speech is also a reminder of another point of contact between Falstaff and Actaeon—both are punished via water—and by adding the theme of metamorphosis to his reiterated complaint Falstaff makes his resemblance to Actaeon seem even more pointed in the following speech from Act 4:

If it should come to the ear of the court how I have been transformed, and how my transformation hath been washed and cudgelled, they would melt me out of my fat, drop by drop, and liquor fishermen's boots with me.
(4.5.88-92)

Actaeon is also prevented by *pudor* from returning to his *domum et regalia tecta* after having been metamorphosed.

Herne is the ostensible model for Falstaff's assumption of antlers, but his soliloquy shows that the classical rather than the English analogues are uppermost in his mind. His first thoughts are of Jove because he too metamorphosed himself to further his success in love. The

comparison seems to give him confidence and he begins his speech with a swagger:

Now the hot-blooded gods assist me! Remember, Jove, thou wast a bull for thy Europa; love set on thy horns. O powerful love, that in some respects makes a beast a man; in some other, a man a beast! (5.5.2-6)

But as he continues Falstaff appears to sense that his fate is of a different order; his comment "When gods have hot backs, what shall poor men do?" (5.5.11-12) suggests that Falstaff has remembered that mortals are rarely in control of their metamorphoses and his claim that he is "a Windsor stag, and the fattest, I think, i'th'forest" (5.5.12-13) serves to link him once more with Actaeon, a victim of a goddess' power rather than with the triumphant, shapeshifting Jove. If we are indeed meant to think of Actaeon as well as Herne then Falstaff's enthusiastic reaction to being met by both women, "Divide me like a bribed buck, each a haunch. I will keep my sides to myself, my shoulders for the fellow of this walk" (5.5.23-25) becomes an ironic forecast of his failure, and is consistent with a strand of offal imagery associated with Falstaff at different points in the play. Mrs Page vows that "revenged I will be, as sure as his guts are made of puddings" (2.1.28-30), Ford refers to him as a "hodgepudding" (5.5.152) and Falstaff himself reacts to his dunking in the following way:

Have I lived to be carried in a basket like a barrow of butcher's offal, and to be thrown in the Thames? Well, if I be served such another trick, I'll have my brains ta'en out and buttered, and *give them to a dog for a New Year's gift.*
(3.5.4-8)

As Falstaff makes his *début* in the Henry IV plays it is interesting to observe that he is compared to a deer at the end of *1 Henry IV* when he is pretending to be dead. Hal observes:

Death hath not struck so fat a deer today,
Though many dearer in this bloody fray.
Embowelled will I see thee by and by.
Till then in blood by noble Percy lie. (5.4.106-09)

The verb "embowelled" alludes to embalming but also suggests the ceremony of disembowelling a deer. As Falstaff is not really dead this

early identification of him with a deer is an appropriate prelude to the comic reworking of the story of Actaeon in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Another important feature of the Actaeon legend is the idea of trespassing on tabooed territory—the hunter crosses the divide between the worlds of humans and gods with terrible results.⁴ An echo of this way of viewing the legend may be found in Falstaff's brush with "fairyland," although, as in another retelling of the Actaeon legend, the story of Faunus in the *Mutabilitie Cantos* of *The Faerie Queene*, the punishment is very mild—apart from a few pinches and the mortification of being caught out in his folly, Falstaff comes to no real harm.

At Falstaff's first entrance Shallow's complaint and Falstaff's response may be taken as constituting a comic equivalent to Actaeon's misdeeds:

SHALLOW Knight, you have beaten my men, killed my deer, and broke open my lodge.

SIR JOHN But not kissed your keeper's daughter? (1.1.104-06)

The very ludicrousness of such a comparison is eloquent of Shakespeare's attitude towards Ovid's story in this play. He adapts the *Metamorphoses* in a way which minimises its troubling aspects and turns its violence into comedy. Falstaff's complacent account of Mistress Page's apparent favour towards him contains faint but disconcerting resonances from Ovid's account of Actaeon:

SIR JOHN I have writ me here a letter to her—and here another to Page's wife, who even now gave me good eyes too, examined my parts with most judicious oeillades; sometimes the beam of her view gilded my foot, sometimes my portly belly.

PISTOL Then did the sun on dunghill shine.

NIM I thank thee for that humour.

SIR JOHN O, she did so, course o'er my exteriors, with such a greedy intention, that the appetite of her eye did seem to scorch me up like a burning-glass! (1.3.51-60)

The eye contact between Diana and Actaeon becomes particularly significant if the epiphanic potential of the story is emphasised. Although the water sprinkled by Diana on her victim is the apparent cause of his metamorphosis Ovid's choice of vocabulary implicates her gaze as a

submerged but perhaps more convincing explanation for Actaeon's change. We are told that "in latus obliquum tamen adstitit oraque retro / flexit et, ut vellet promptas habuisse sagittas" (3.187-88), "she stood turning aside a little and cast back her gaze; and though she would fain have had her arrows ready . . ." (Loeb translation). The verb *flecto* is frequently used to describe the action of bending a bow as when Apollo sees Cupid "adducto flectentem cornua nervo" (1.455). Because Diana's wish for her arrows immediately follows the use of this verb her glance is involved with a means of punishment. In the light of this emphasis upon the destructive force of Diana's scrutiny the alleged intensity of Mrs Page's examination of Falstaff seems a little sinister. The fact that it alights on different parts of his anatomy in turn might recall Actaeon's gradual metamorphosis: "She sharpenes his eares, she makes his necke both slender, long and lanke. / She turnes his fingers into feete, his armes to spindle shanke. / She wrappes him in a hairie hyde beset with speckled spottes" (3.231-34). Diana, as well as mistress Page, is associated with the sun, "Such colour as appeares in Heaven by *Phœbus* broken rayes . . . Such sanguine colour in the face of *Phœbe* gan to glowe / There standing naked in his sight" (3.216-20).⁵

If it seems implausible to compare Mistress Page to Diana a glance at Golding's translation, whose robust and earthy qualities are excellently demonstrated by examples quoted in Taylor's article, may help to justify the parallel. In place of Ovid's "vincla duae pedibus demunt" (3.168), we have "Two losde hir buskins from hir legges and pulled of hir hose" (3.197) and the grimly portentous words Diana addresses to Actaeon, "nunc tibi me posito visam velamine narres, / sit poteris narrare, licet!" (3.192-93) become, in Golding's translation, more pettish and taunting, "Now make thy vaunt among thy Mates, thou sawste *Diana* bare. / Tell if thou can: I give thee leave: tell heardly: doe not spare" (3.227-28). Taylor praises Golding's treatment of scenes of action or descriptions of the countryside but suggests that "Golding had little appreciation of Ovid as the pagan poet of the flesh—his interest is liable to pall rather quickly when faced by elaborate descriptions of beautiful youths by pools or nymphs in flight before gods." In saying this Taylor is perhaps describing Golding in an unnecessarily deprecating way, even though he is eager to convince us of his importance. At the beginning of his

article we are told that Golding emerged from the “impoverished poetical milieu of the 1560s.” But although the way in which he portrays Diana and other “romantic” figures may be unorthodox it is this very robustness which constitutes part of his charm. He is not filled with awe by his classical subject matter but instead feels quite happy to call a nymph a “blab” (4.287) or Narcissus a “foolische noddie” (3.521). We might recall Chaucer’s Manciple, that “boystous man,” who turns Ovid’s tale of Apollo and Coronis into a fabliau and makes it clear that he has no truck with pandering to aristocrats (or gods) asserting, with all the bluff independence of a self-sufficient *bourgeois*:

Ther nys no difference, trewely,
 Bitwixe a wyf that is of heigh degree,
 If of hir body dishonest she bee,
 And a povre wenche, oother than this—
 If it so be they werke bothe amys—
 But that the gentile, in estaat above,
 She shal be cleped his lady, as in love;
 And for that oother is a povre womman,
 She shal be cleped his wenche or his lemman.⁶

But Golding is more than a wayward, if engaging, original—he is a poet. In the following translation of the song Polyphemus sings to Galatea we sense the fresh enjoyment of the natural world that Taylor attributes to his *Metamorphoses*, but also a rhythmic beauty which would seem to refute Taylor’s claim that Golding’s metre is invariably inflexible and ungainly:

More whyght thou art then Primrose leaf my Lady *Galatee*,
 More fresh than meade, more tall and streyght than lofty Aldertree,
 More bright than glasse, more wanton than the tender kid forsooth,
 Than Cockleshelles continually with water worne, more smoothe,
 More cheerefull than the winters Sun, or Sommers shadowe cold,
 More seemely and more comly than the Planetree too behold,
 Of valew more than Apples bee although they were of gold:
 More cleere than frozen yce, more sweete than Grape through rype ywis,
 More soft than butter newly made, or downe of Cygnet is (13.930-37)

We might compare this piece with yet another passage from Chaucer, the Miller’s description of Alysoun:

Therto she koude skippe and make game,
 As any kyde or calf folwyng his dame.
 Hir mouth was sweete as bragot or the meeth,
 Or hoord of apples leyd in hey or heeth.
 Wynsynge she was, as is a joly colt,
 Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt

 She was a prymerole, a piggesnye⁷

Golding's translation of Polyphemus' song is not materially different from Ovid's Latin as far as the content is concerned although it seems so like a "native" production. By contrast on another occasion Golding's taste for associating women with natural phenomena makes him elaborate Ovid's "excipiunt laticem Nepheleque Hyaleque Rhanisque/ et Psecas et Phiale funduntque capacibus urnis" (3.171-72) into "Then *Niphe* nete and cleene / With *Hiale* glistring like the grash in beautie fresh and sheene, / And *Rhanis* clearer of hir skin than are the rainie drops, / And little bibling *Phiale*, and *Pseke* that pretie Mops, / Powrde water into vessels large to washe their Ladie with" (3.200-04). Diana's Englished attendants might remind us that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as well as *The Merry Wives of Windsor* owes something to the tale of Actaeon, for they do not seem worlds away from Titania's fairy followers.⁸

The question of Golding's possible influence on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* raises another point about Shakespeare's attitude towards the translation. While it may be reasonable to conclude that Shakespeare never lost his affection for Golding's book, that does not preclude the possibility that he could see its potential for comic readings. Ovid's text can and has been variously received; his tale of *Pyramus and Thisbe* could be a romantic one, in pathetic style, of young love thwarted, or its potential for obscene or untragic possibilities could be explored. The mechanicals' play is, we grant, not simply a parody of the Golding version, but that version may have helped to suggest approaches that a sceptical, elusive and many-minded playwright might have been able to exploit. It is important to remind ourselves that Shakespeare, if no scholar, was, at least by modern standards, a competent Latinist who was certainly not dependent upon Golding for his reception of Ovid.

The 1560s may not have been the “drab age” portrayed by C. S. Lewis⁹ but Golding’s naivety must have been apparent to Shakespeare from the viewpoint of the sophisticated 1590s. It may even be possible to separate the influence of Golding from that of Ovid in Shakespeare’s work—that of Golding being predominant in such “English” plays as *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and, despite its Athenian setting, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

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NOTES

¹For a justification of this theory see S. A. Brown’s forthcoming Ph.D. thesis *Some Aspects of the Poetic Reception of Ovid’s Metamorphoses*.

²Shakespeare quotations are from *The Complete Works*, gen. eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1986). Italics are ours.

³The song which the “fairies” sing to Falstaff at the end of the play (5.5.93 ff.) is a similar condemnation. The resemblance of this song to one in Lyly’s *Endimion*, written in 1591, makes an interesting parallel because it includes a criticism of Corsites’ intrusion onto tabooed territory and accompanies his transformation into a leopard. However as the words of this song first appear in an edition of 1632 its composition may postdate *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

⁴Shakespeare’s awareness of this theme in the Actaeon legend is established by the following speech from *Titus Andronicus* when Tamora responds to Bassianus’ ironic comparison of her with Diana:

Saucy controller of my private steps!
Had I the pow’r that some say Dian had,
Thy temples should be planted presently
With horns, as was Actaeon’s; and the hounds
Should drive upon thy new-transformed limbs,
Unmannerly intruder as thou art. (2.3.60-65)

⁵Shakespeare may have imported the idea of scorching from a neighbouring tale, that of Semele who was a victim of Juno’s jealousy. We are told that Semele’s “corpus mortale tumultus / non tulit aetherios donisque iugalibus arsit” (3.308-09). It is quite possible that Shakespeare, who was extremely familiar with Golding, would have associated groups of stories, such as those concerning the house of Cadmus, together in his mind.

⁶*The Manciple’s Tale* 212-20, quoted from *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 1957).

⁷*The Miller’s Tale* 3259-64, 3268.

⁸For a discussion of the presence of Actaeon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* see Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis & the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1986) 262-63. One specific point of contact is the epithet "Titania" which is used to describe Diana in this tale.

⁹C. S. Lewis uses this phrase to describe the style of the mid sixteenth century in *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1954).

A Comment on Roy Battenhouse, "Religion in *King John*: Shakespeare's View"

CHRISTOPHER Z. HOBSON

For many years, Roy Battenhouse's interpretive focus on Christian topics and typologies in Shakespeare has served as a counterweight to the emphasis of much standard criticism, old and new, on Shakespeare's acceptance of absolutist values. Thus, in a period when Tillyard's and Dover Wilson's readings of the Lancastrian cycle still held sway, Battenhouse's study of "Falstaff as Parodist and Perhaps Holy Fool" helped undermine the "good rule vs. misrule" orthodoxy about those plays. Battenhouse's current study of *King John* implicitly challenges both still-influential Tillyardian readings and more fashionable New Historicist interpretations of the play, though he mentions neither.

King John poses the problem of obedience in a situation in which disputed royal claims and the king's own weakness and wickedness put the sacral basis of authority in doubt. Tillyard's reading in *Shakespeare's History Plays* argued the problem away, contending that the issue of loyalty is never seriously in doubt because John, unlike Richard III, is not utterly wicked (225-26). Readings influenced by Tillyard, such as that of E. A. J. Honigmann in his introduction to the Arden text (which I take to be influential because of the semi-canonic character of these texts), have gone beyond this facile view yet still assume that despite his questionable actions, John is the hero of his own play (lxviii-lxxiii). New Historicist critics view the play much more as an exposure, arguing that it puts on view, particularly in the Bastard, a machiavellism that is either cynically affirmed (Manheim 122) or barely

*Reference: Roy Battenhouse, "Religion in *King John*: Shakespeare's View," *Connotations* 1.2 (1991): 140-49; Sandra Billington, "A Response to Roy Battenhouse, 'Religion . . .,'" *Connotations* 1.3 (1991): 290-92.

“contained” by an endorsement of “the lesson of the Tudor homilies” in the final scene (Vaughan 73). All these views, though disparate, share the assumption that Shakespeare accepts the power of the state, understood as royal power, as a final good. Roy Battenhouse argues, instead, that Shakespeare questions royal power in the name of a higher morality.

Battenhouse’s entry into the text is through a comparison of the handling of religious issues in *King John* and *Troublesome Reign*. He is right to point to a more even-handed treatment of John’s confrontations with the papal emissary Pandulph, and to draw the conclusion that “each is shown to be a counterfeiter of religious duty” (140). In Pandulph’s case the main demonstration of the falseness of religious duty is Pandulph’s long speech (3.1.189-223) arguing for French King Philip to break the peace he has just made with John, an exercise in casuistry that uses a flawed major premise (Philip’s first vow is to champion the church) to support an ethically unacceptable conclusion (Philip should break his word to John).¹ As Battenhouse notes, this ignores “Philip’s baptismal vow to serve Christ” (145); from another standpoint Pandulph’s premise equivocates among several possible meanings of serving the church. In John’s case, the demonstration of religious insincerity is more circuitous, and I am not sure that Battenhouse does full justice to it. John gains stature when he defies Pandulph on nationalist grounds (3.1). Battenhouse’s argument is that this portrait of John as proto-Protestant, based on Foxe, is undercut by subtleties of tone and juxtaposition: “Shakespeare’s John is noticeably more boastful and scoffing” than his counterpart in *Troublesome Reign*, and his claim of needing “no assistance of [Pandulph’s] mortal hand” (3.1.84) is vitiated by his deals for political advantage with Philip and others (Battenhouse 141-42). Yet John’s braggadochio could have struck audiences positively, and the comparison of his claims to independence with his deal-making is a relatively subtle irony. The most forceful undercutting of John’s claims comes not with these nuances but with John’s submission to Pandulph in Act 5, which Battenhouse mentions but does not stress. Here, if anywhere, the defiance of Act 3 is shown retrospectively to have been based on political advantage rather than principle.

Nevertheless, Battenhouse's basic point that John and Pandulph are shown as equally false in their use of religious claims—in contrast to the more conventionally Protestant treatment in *Troublesome Reign*—is correct. Indeed, Battenhouse could have emphasized more than he does the pervasively false use of religious claims in the play. One of the notable features of *King John* is the swearing of oaths that are later dishonored (e.g., the oaths of Philip, Lewis, etc., to support Prince Arthur against John). I had not realized, before reviewing the text with Battenhouse's thesis in mind, how often these oaths stress their "holy" and "religious" character: Philip's protection of Arthur is "divinely vow'd" and "religiously provoke[d]"; later, Salisbury's intention to avenge Arthur is sworn by "a vow, a holy vow," which Pembroke and Bigot "religiously confirm" (2.1.237, 246; 4.3.67, 83). Every one of these "holy" vows is broken. Not simply John and Pandulph's respective claims as defenders of their faiths, but the entire practice of religious avowal is systematically devalued as it is shown to spring from momentary political advantage.

This treatment, in turn, is consonant with the largest intellectual issue in the play, the degree to which royal authority is derived ultimately from God, a commonplace found in the homilies and even in a relatively liberal thinker like Richard Hooker.² Battenhouse, in referring to John's "borrow'd majesty" (141), endorses the idea that John's title is usurped, as does Sandra Billington in her comment on his article (290). The Bastard echoes this claim, both in referring to the French campaign in Arthur's behalf as "honourable" (2.1.585), and in his subsequent (and much-debated) reference to the dead Arthur as embodying "The life, the right and truth of all this realm" (4.3.144). Nonetheless, "borrow'd majesty" is a *French* charge against John (1.1.4), not neutral background information. The legitimacy of John's title is *in doubt*, and, as Sigurd Burckhardt first pointed out nearly thirty years ago, the play presents a test of standard ways of resolving such questionable claims, and finds them wanting.³ The confrontation of John, Philip, and the Citizen before Angiers, in which the latter (Hubert in some editions) thrice pledges fealty to "The king of England, when we know the king" (2.1.363; similar statements at 270-71, 331-33), wittily satirizes the commonplace that the

true king should be recognizable by his bearing; the subsequent indecisive armed clash disproves the convention that disputed claims can be resolved through a trial by combat in which God's favor determines the victor. The ensuing deal between John and Philip, itself canceled by the arrival of Pandulph, implicitly acknowledges that sacral claims to kingship are either empty or, at best, unknowable.

Burckhardt's claim was that in *King John* Shakespeare questions the idea that secular rule is religiously based. Battenhouse implicitly distances himself from this claim by arguing that a religious basis for kingship is reintroduced into the play through its "providential" ending (140, 145, 148). By this he apparently refers both to the unforeseeable events that check the ambitions of Lewis and the Bastard, and to the deathbed confession of Count Melun, which restores the loyalty of the English nobles. These combine to support the rallying of all English forces around the child Henry III on the basis of loyalty to "old right" (5.4.61). Battenhouse's argument here is both vague—I hope I have distilled his thesis correctly—and unconvincing. He is at his best in arguing that Arthur represents a model of holiness;⁴ it is less easy to show that Arthur's sacrifice is what effectively restores dynastic legitimacy. Battenhouse does not examine the point that the nobles' loyalty is restored only when they learn that Lewis means to betray them. He intriguingly proposes, in effect, a kind of spiritualized version of the "king's touch," in that Arthur's holiness softens Hubert, while in turn Melun cites love for Hubert as one reason for his confession (147)—but Melun's English grandfather is an equally potent reason (5.4.42). (It could be argued that Melun's two references point to the two *emotional values*—Christian humility and English patriotism—that the play counterposes to dynastic intrigue. But Battenhouse needs to discuss the point.)

More importantly, the presumptively providential events provide no answer to the serious dilemmas of obedience that the play has raised; a play that argued that such events will always intervene to resolve questions of loyalty would be intellectually trivial. Finally, in citing the nobles' affirmation of "old right" (presumably meaning both their former loyalty to England instead of France, and their traditional relationship of fealty to the monarch), Battenhouse does not sufficiently distinguish

his analysis from those that see the ending of the play as a belated endorsement of "the Tudor homilies" (Vaughan). If the play's crazy-quilt plot means anything, it is that a king who first signs away English claims (2.1), then defends royal prerogatives against the pope (3.1) only to squander his subjects' loyalty through his wickedness (3.2-3, 4.2) and his submission to the pope (5.1), may still be defended in preference to engaging in civil war (4.6). To sustain such an argument requires either appealing to the absolute duty of obedience (as Tillyard assumed Shakespeare did, and as Vaughan argues that he did as a kind of unconvincing closure), or endorsing a machiavellist conception of state-effectiveness (as argued by Manheim, and in part M. M. Reese [285]), or, finally, it requires suggesting a third standard that provides a conditional moral basis for obedience. I have argued elsewhere that a third standard is found in the final scene, and particularly in the final speech.⁵ Neither Battenhouse nor Sandra Billington, in her comment, gives this speech the attention it deserves. The Bastard's closing lines,

. . . Nought shall make us rue
If England to itself do rest but true! (5.5.117-18)

at first glance seem merely a conventional warning against rebellion. But while they do contain such a warning, the standard trope by which "England" refers both to the nation and to the person of the monarch allows these lines to work also as a warning against the type of royal misconduct that John has so flagrantly displayed. Such a reading is underlined by the number of times previously in the play that the conventional trope has been used (e.g., 1.1.1, 20, and 24, referring to France; 2.1.201-203; 4.3.142-43).⁶ The danger of royal misconduct is also stressed when Salisbury, pledging fealty to Henry, tells him that he is "born / To set a form upon that indigest / Which he [John] hath left so shapeless and so rude" (5.7.25-27). In this light the Bastard's warning that "England" shall never be conquered "But when it first did help to wound itself" (112-14) can be read as a complex statement referring to the royal conduct that causes rebellion as well as to the rebellion itself. This is not an endorsement of rebellion; rather it is a moral criticism that links obedience to just rule.

The view of King John suggested here is consonant with the argument of Annabel Patterson that in *Coriolanus* and elsewhere Shakespeare works toward a social model in which the interests of different classes and the crown are “negotiated” (Patterson 141-46 and *passim*). It is fascinating that a relatively early play like *King John* presents a similar conception even if in less complex form. Roy Battenhouse’s discussion has helped us to see that the issue of religion in *King John* is more nuanced than standard treatments allow—that Shakespeare takes an independent and critical attitude toward religious justifications for royal conduct and at the same time uses religious typologies (through the character of Arthur) to criticize his royal characters. I disagree with Battenhouse’s treatment of the restoration of authority at the end of the play, since I see it as a plea for mutual responsibility of monarch and subject, rather than a simple reaffirmation of “old right.” But this difference is not, after all, nearly as large as the difference that separates both Battenhouse and myself from Tillyardist and New Historicist conceptions of Shakespeare as an apologist for absolutism.

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NOTES

¹The speech is analyzed in the classic treatment of Shakespeare’s rhetoric, Joseph, *Shakespeare’s Use of the Arts of Language* 184-85.

²See the “Exhortation concerning good Ordre and Obedience,” as cited by Tillyard 65-66, and Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity* VIII, 3.1-2.

³See Burckhardt, esp. 125-31.

⁴Here he picks up a suggestion in his *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1969) 407n.

⁵See my “Bastard Speech: The Rhetoric of ‘Commodity’ in *King John*” 107-109. A view similar to mine has been advanced by David Womersley, but he bases it on the Bastard’s character development and accepts the orthodoxy of the final speech (497 and *passim*).

⁶The Arden note on 2.1.201-203 comments that “this quibble on the identity of king and country . . . drives home the moral of the history” (Arden edn., 32n). Just so. Such a double reading of countries’ names was, of course, part of standard Elizabethan usage and would scarcely need to be established in audiences’ minds.

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A Response to Matthias Bauer, "Count Malvolio, Machevill and Vice"

J. J. M. TOBIN

Dr. Bauer's richly suggestive argument, "however tentatively" held, deepens our understanding of the nature and function of the endlessly intriguing Malvolio by transcending the pursuit of particularized source models in favor of the generic and typical. May I, as one who has argued from a position midway on the spectrum between the absolutely specific and the truly generic¹ join the discussion of *Twelfth Night* in the first three issues of *Connotations*² and offer two points about Gabriel Harvey as a source for Malvolio, one in terms of the capital letters so ingeniously interpreted by Dr. Leimberg and one which more generally supports from a Harveian perspective the idea of the spoilsport steward as parodic Machiavellian.

When I argued earlier that much of the diction in the comedy derived from *Have with you to Saffron-Walden* (1596) and to a lesser extent Harvey's *Four Letters* (1592),³ I did not read carefully enough Harvey's *Ciceronianus* (1577).

Harvey's *Ciceronianus* addresses itself to the question of what constituted a proper Latin style and how far Cicero should be the model for the acquiring of that style. This is a charming work full of interesting ideas and marked by an unusual self-deprecating tone. In the midst of it Harvey praises the unsurpassed scholarship of "our *Cheke* in the knowledge of languages" (43; italics mine),⁴ and apologizes for his earlier extreme Ciceronianism with a bit of preterition, "I am compelled by a sense of shame to omit mention of those curls and curling-irons, with which my whole style was elegantly frizzed in every part" (63). These are further elements in our linguistically deficient Sir Andrew

¹Reference: *Connotations* 1.3 (1991): 224-243.

Aguecheek⁵ and the paronomasia at his expense on tongs (curling irons) and tongues (classical language). But most interestingly for the basic parallel between Harvey himself and Malvolio, the steward who is most memorable as he tries to find meaning in the capital letters, M.O.A.I., written in "the sweet Roman hand" of 'Olivia' is Harvey's admission that he was at one time entranced by capital letters:

Sed o mansuetiores Musae, vt ego non modo istas politularum formularum delitiolas, atque flosculos consecabar: sed quibusdam etiam literis grandiusculis oculos, atque animum pascebam meum, siquando in orationibus, aut epistolis, quas tum bene multas ad honoratissimum Mildmaium perscripseram, hominem de Academia nostra praeclare meritum, & mihi multis sane nominibus colendissimum, vel pro Senatu, Populoque Romano, S.P.Q.R. & imitatione quadam, pro Britannis, S.P.Q.B.: vel pro patribus conscriptis, P.C. quibus & Regios interdum consiliarios, & sacrorum antistites, & collegiorum, atque Caenobiorum praesides, & nonnunquam etiam alios designabam: vel pro eo, quod vltimo salutationis loco ascribi solet, salutem plurimam dicit, S.D. tantum in medio [25] posuisssem? Vel denique quod Caput erat, pro *Ioue optimo Maximo*; cuius tum nomine ipso mirum in modum recreabar; prisco, & solenni ritu, IVP. O.M. tanquam in marmoreo quodam, celebrique monumento, a vetere aliquo Romano illius numini locato, incidissem. Vix credibile est, quam mirifice hisce fuerim maiuscularum literarum emblematis delinitus. (64)⁶

I suggest that here is not the key to unlocking the meaning of "M.O.A.I." but the stimulus for Malvolio's fascination with Olivia's capital letters, letters and letter for which the Illyrian steward is pleased to thank, in a perfectly Latin manner, not god, but "Jove" (II.v.173, 178).⁷

In the matter of Malvolio and Machiavelli it is all too true that, as Dr. Bauer has rightly pointed out "the similarity between 'Malevolo' and 'Malvolio' [in *Pierce Penilesse*] has been noted by J. J. M. Tobin, who does not, however, make reference to Machiavelli" (241). Because I see the merit in Dr. Bauer's linking of Machiavelli and Malvolio, I am doubly chagrined for having missed a second chance to link Machiavelli to Malvolio. George Watson has written of ". . . Malvolio and Polonius—farfical versions of the Machiavel, who conceive of themselves as policed and earn the mockery of audiences."⁸ We know that Shakespeare borrowed from *Have with you to Saffron-Walden* for aspects of Polonius as well as for Malvolio, although the fact that, whatever their linked farfical Machiavellianism, these two characters are never confused with

one another is further evidence that Shakespeare's use of source material is in each instance malleably unique and that specific, personal allusions are not his interest.

In *Have with you to Saffron-Walden* Pierce Penilesse, the Respondent in this dialogue, makes some astute observations on the differences between cause and effect. In its rhythm and subject of logical tautology, with the added issue of insanity, this passage made up the rhythm of Polonius's analysis of Hamlet's lunacy:

As though the cause and the effect (more than the superficies and the substance) can bee seperated, when in manie things *causa sine qua non* is both the cause and the effect, the common distinction of *potentia non actu* approuing it selfe verie crazed and impotent herein, since the premisses necessarily beget the conclusion, and so contradictorily the conclusion the premisses; a halter including desperation, and so desperation concluding in a halter; without which fatall conclusion and priuation it cannot truly bee termed desperation, since nothing is said to bee till it is borne, and despaire is neuer fully borne till it ceaseth to bee, and hath depriu'd him of beeing that first bare it and brought it forth. So that herein it is hard to distinguish which is most to be blamed, of the cause or the effect; the Cause without the effect beeing of no effect, and the effect without the cause neuer able to haue been (59-60; italics mine)⁹

Carneades, one of the interlocutors, urges the Respondent to continue with the life story of Gabriel Harvey and hopes that there will be no interruption:

Better or worse fortune, I pry thee let vs heare how thou goest forward with describing the Doctor and his life and fortunes: and you, my fellow Auditors, I beseech you, trouble him not (anie more) with these impertinent Parentheses (60).

Polonius is eager to describe the crazed desperation of Hamlet, interrupting and delaying his narrative by parenthetical pieces of self-criticism. His most comical lines are those devoted to premises which necessarily beget conclusions, (the inverse of Malvolio's comically mistaken premise which begets a false conclusion) "for to define madness, / What is it but to be nothing else but mad," and to much play on the relationship of cause and effect:

Mad let us grant him then. And now remains
That we find out *the cause* of this effect,

Or rather say *the cause* of this defect,
 For this *effect* defective comes by *cause*.
 (2.2. 100-03; italics mine)¹⁰

We now know from Harvey's private notations, his *Marginalia*, that he had a certain admiration for aspects of Machiavelli. Shakespeare of course had no knowledge of the unpublished writings of Harvey, but he certainly knew of Harvey's very frequent references in his published English writings to Machiavelli in *Four Letters*, *Pierce's Supererogation*, etc., admittedly critical, and his odd, ironic creation of the spirit of Machiavelli in his Latin verses (which also revealed his self-congratulatory and hubristic response to his meeting with the Queen at Audley End) in *Gratulationes Valdenseses*, especially in Book II where Machiavelli speaks *in propria persona*. This element, tho' the word is overworn, this link with Machiavelli, in a strongly-evidenced source suggests from another Harveian angle how right Dr. Bauer is to argue for a comically Machiavellian Malvolio.

One final point: years ago in an introduction to an American edition of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, I drew attention to the fact that "*The Prince*, apart from the ending, is written in a direct, unadorned, indeed apothegmatic style. The pithy judgments about fortune, initial impressions, virtue and vice, the aphorisms about war and cunning pleased an age which delighted in similar examples of compact wisdom from Erasmus through Bacon."¹¹ This truth should have pointed me toward Dr. Bauer's insight re: the Illyrian steward and the parodic version of the Florentine politician, but a link has been established independently by Brian Vickers, stressing Malvolio's role as an overreaching politician:

. . . it was an ingenious idea of Shakespeare's to cast the letter laid to deceive him into the style of the very authors which an ambitious politician would study, the style nourished on the pregnant aphorisms of Machiavelli and Guicciardini and boiled down to precepts at their barest: the English versions might be the aculeate memoranda of Gabriel Harvey's *Marginalia*, or Bacon's *Essays* in their first form (1597) or indeed in many cruder examples of the 'Advice' literature. The precept in the form of a bare imperative, such as we find it in this letter—'let thy tongue tang arguments of state'—is more characteristic of Harvey and the cruder works (or Polonius) . . .¹²

Dr. Bauer has deepened our appreciation of the comically politic Malvolio, and I, for one, will now imagine the steward's imaginary readings of his favorite politic author, as he comes again to that notorious chapter 17 and smiling as he notes its Vergilian quotation, "Res dura, et regni novitas me talia cogunt / Moliri, et late fines custode tueri" (*Aeneid* I.563-64), doubtless reflecting on the justice of Dido's severity as quite as appropriate for a grieving sister and daughter, a countess, as for a regal widow, inhabiting a vulnerable sea-coast and needing an equally appropriate protector, himself the very man.

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NOTES

¹Shakespeare did not attempt to write a comedy *à clef* with Malvolio as a recognizable Harvey. Certainly Manningham, an alert and presumably representative member of the Middle Temple audience, makes no mention of Gabriel Harvey, D.C.L., in his *Diary*. Rather it was that Shakespeare found in the figure of Harvey as gull, with his characteristics of egocentricity, puritanism, and social presumption, a workable model for the creation of Malvolio." "Gabriel Harvey in Illyria," *ES* 61 (1980): 327. Henk Gras seems to have gone beyond my argument when he says "yet he has also been interpreted more specifically as a satire on Puritans, as referring to the Harvey-Nashe controversy (Malvolio being 'Gabriel Harvey in Illyria'. . .)," in "*Twelfth Night, Every Man Out of His Humour*, and the Middle Temple Revels of 1597-98," *MLR* 84 (1989): 551.

²Inge Leimberg, "M.O.A.I. Trying to Share the Joke in *Twelfth Night* 2.5 (A Critical Hypothesis)," *Connotations* 1 (1991): 78-95; John Russell Brown, "More About Laughing at 'M.O.A.I.' (A Response to Inge Leimberg)," *Connotations* 1 (1991): 187-90; and Inge Leimberg, "Maria's Theology and Other Questions (An Answer to John Russell Brown)," *Connotations* 1 (1991): 191-96.

³From Nashe we have such details as: the proper name "Cesario" (Viola's alias); the issue of beards and barbering; the tongues commanded by Bishop *Andrewes* (compare Sir *Andrew* and his lament that he had not bestow'd his time in the tongues, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, echoing in his last name that of the distinguished Grecian Sir John Cheke); and the tutoring of Harvey "Pythagoreanly" (compare the instructional method of Feste in the guise of Sir Topas in IV.ii); but also the outlandishly colourful costume of Harvey when he met the Queen who thought he looked "like an Italian"; Harvey being called a "pedant," as is Malvolio, strangely, at III.ii.75; Harvey "pranking himself immeasurably" for two hours and Malvolio "practicing behavior to his own shadow this half-hour" (II.v.16-17); Harvey and the theme of counterfeit madness (compare the question put to Malvolio by Feste

as Sir Topas at IV.ii.114); "Peggy Ramsey" associated with Gabriel Harvey's hypocritical brother, Richard, and Malvolio as "a Peg-a Ramsey" at II.iii.76, and much ado about "ale," "cakes," and "ginger." "Malvolio and his Capitals," *AN&Q* 23 (1985): 69-70.

⁴Gabriel Harvey's *Ciceronianus*, introd. and notes by Harold S. Wilson, trans. Clarence A. Forbes, University of Nebraska Studies in the Humanities Nov. 1945, Studies in the Humanities 4 (Lincoln: U of Nebraska, 1945).

⁵See note 3 above. Both Lancelot Andrewes and Sir John Cheke are frequently referred to by Harvey in *Four Letters* and *Pierce's Supererogation*.

⁶As Forbes has it (65), "But O ye gentler Muses, I was not content with eagerly pursuing such charms of elegant phraseology and such flowers of rhetoric. How I did feed my eyes and mind also with certain capital letters, whenever I had a chance to insert them in speeches or in the epistles which I was then writing in great numbers to the most honorable Mildmay, a man of distinguished service to our University and one whom I must esteem highly on many accounts. For instance, I wrote S.P.Q.R. for 'the Senate and People of Rome' and, by a sort of imitation, S.P.Q.B. for the Britons; P.C. for the 'Conscript Fathers,' alluding sometimes to her Majesty's councillors, or religious dignitaries, or heads of colleges and cloisters, or sometimes still others; and simply S.D. for what is customarily written as the closing salutation, 'with kindest regards.' Or finally—and this capped the climax—for 'Jupiter Optimus Maximus,' from whose very name in those days I derived marvellous refreshment, I wrote according to the ancient and consecrated custom IVP. O.M., as if I were cutting the letters on some famous monument of marble, set up by an ancient Roman to Jupiter's godhead. It is hard to believe how strangely fascinated I was by these emblems of capital letters."

⁷Editors usually suggest the possibility that "Jove" is a replacement for "God," made in order to satisfy the statute against profanity of 1606. I do not doubt that it is a possibility.

⁸"Machiavel and Machiavelli," *SR* 84 (1976): 645.

⁹References to *Have With You to Saffron-Walden* are to *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, vol. 3 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966) 1-139.

¹⁰Arden Edition, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen, 1982). Cf. "More Elements from Nashe," *Hamlet Studies* 5 (1983): 55-6.

¹¹*The Prince*, trans. Christian E. Detmold, Introduction by John Tobin (New York: Airmont, 1965) 4.

¹²Brian Vickers, *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose* (London: Methuen, 1968) 235.

Towards Tolerant Pluralism in Renaissance Drama Studies (An Answer to William W. E. Slights)*

BROWNELL SALOMON

William W. E. Slights' cross-grained reading of the central point of my essay may unintentionally have been abetted by a minor change in my original manuscript made at a late stage of the editorial process. At the editor's urging, I willingly revised the conclusion with the intention of giving greater prominence to the suggestion that *The Malcontent's* fairy-tale form was perhaps the basis for the doubleness T. S. Eliot ascribed to the play. Regrettably, that final emphasis was achieved at the expense of the fuller closure of the original. Slights' objection to the published version runs as follows:

The precise nature of the interaction between pessimistic theme and optimistic technique does not emerge clearly from the conclusion of the essay, however. We are left with the suggestion that "the fairy-tale form is the 'something behind'" the play that Eliot mystifyingly postulated half a century ago. (303)

My original final paragraph had afforded a clearer sense of Marston's overall artistic purpose, and it is offered here:

Thus while Marston exploits universal aspects of comic form in *The Malcontent* with a self-aware grasp of their typicality and familiarity—the fairy-tale structure and personae homologous to the *Odyssey*, genre conventions, theatrical character types, and rhetorical stylization—he also authorizes these selfsame elements to convey the play's serious values. It is a parodistic, ludic approach which ought not to be taken for flippancy. The doubleness of Marston, in the sense of an unexpected disjunction between form and content, provides a

*Reference: Brownell Salomon, "The 'Doubleness' of *The Malcontent* and Fairy-tale Form," *Connotations* 1.2 (1991): 150-63; William W. E. Slights, "Fairy-tales, Form, and the Future of Marston Studies," *Connotations* 1.3 (1991): 302-07.

standpoint from which to enlarge our perspective on his quirky yet thoughtful masterwork.

But in any event, even without that recapitulation my essay in its entirety is clear on the point that analysis is confined to the unique form and meaning of *The Malcontent*, and that there is no intention of extending it to any other Marston play. It is puzzling and wholly without justification, then, for Slight to charge me with making “the assumption that there are two sides to every story, character, theme, and tone generated by Marston, indeed, two sides to John Marston” (303). I did maintain, however, that two extant admissions in the playwright’s own words are incontrovertible signposts to his method: his penchant for “serious jest and jesting seriousness” in the literary scourging of “beastliness,” and his confession on another occasion that he allowed himself “to affect (a little too much) to be seriously fantastical.” More convincing proof that Marston could “affect” a deliberately paradoxical, two-pronged, simultaneously ludic and earnest approach to serious topics would be impossible to imagine. My aim was to reveal it as the controlling method in *The Malcontent*.

In exasperation Slight asks the rhetorical question, “Why must critics always be on the look-out for ‘doubleness,’ contrasting pairs, dichotomies?” Bearing in mind the well-known fact that humanity’s binary thinking process is observable even in ancient Greece,¹ I venture an answer with respect to my own endeavor that might be extended to literary criticism in general. Of necessity the answer is a contingent one. Antinomies or dichotomies do constitute a valid unifying strategy—and are not merely an arbitrary imposition—only if a commentator can persuade us of their validity by the sheer weight of supporting evidence, by its compelling variety and consistency (e.g., most if not all of the work’s major characters, its manifest rhetorical or imagistic texture, key formal elements like plot-structure, generic categorizations), and especially by the presence of authenticating external knowledges from biography or history. I hold my essay up to judgment by all of those measures, particularly the matter of historical corroboration.

Indeed, Slight believes that my close analysis of the way Marston employs self-conscious literariness in *The Malcontent* is somehow

inconsistent with “a rigorously historicized approach” to the play in relation to its milieu. But ironically, after raising the banner of the New Historicism and saluting its catchphrase (“local pressures”), Slights proceeds to surrender his one illustrative example to an historical misconception. Specifically, he argues that Maquerelle’s satiric comments in *The Malcontent* (5.5.24 ff.; Revels ed.) relative to “sexual and political barbarism at court” have a Jacobean topicality, and that such “Pointed language of this kind relentlessly destabilizes the religious perspectives in Marston’s play” (305). That is simply not the case. In my “Doubleness” essay I invoke my earlier analysis of the play precisely because it establishes the historical context of Marston’s fideistic religious earnestness and its inseparability from his satirical impulse. I quote there at length from *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man*, whose author Theodore Spencer points out the

striking fact that the three chief satirists of the 1590’s, Donne, Hall, and Marston, men who used literature to expose the evil in human nature, all ended in the Anglican Church. Hall became a clergyman about 1600, Marston in 1608, and Donne in 1614. And though we know nothing about Marston’s ecclesiastical views, it is significant that both Hall and Donne occupied a religious position that was the logical consequence of the skeptical attitude toward man of Montaigne in his ‘Apology for Raymond Sebond.’²

Not surprisingly, both Marston’s *The Dutch Courtesan* and *The Fawne* have three borrowings from the latter Montaigne essay alone. Moreover, we know that John Calvin wrote only one poem during his life, and that poem contained an imitation of Juvenal. Thus it would appear that the defining attributes of the satirist, savage indignation and topicality, not only do not destabilize expressions of conservative religious attitudes in satirical literature but indeed work hand in glove with them.

Slights is not the only New Historicist who wrongly assumes that critical readings attentive to formalistic detail universally exempt themselves from assessing the impact of topical circumstances or the cultural milieu upon the text. Leah S. Marcus, for instance, insists that a “massive unease” with topicality is associated with “twentieth-century formalist methodologies—New Criticism, for example, which tended to view all attempts at ‘local’ reading as incompatible with the essential

nature of literature as a thing apart.”³ In an endnote (223n26) we learn the “key text” which constitutes her sole, all-purpose offending example: Cleanth Brooks’ *The Well Wrought Urn*, written over four decades ago! That sample is about as judicious as comparing the Model T and the Concorde as modern forms of transportation. Biased thinking of this kind is only too easily refuted, however; citations to historically predicated, text-centered, recent interpretive analyses of English Renaissance plays and masques abound in my book-length bibliographic guide for Garland Press in 1991.

How best, then, to serve the future of Renaissance drama studies? Slights calls for a “shift to a more historicized view of the drama” generally, and for “a rigorously historicized approach” to Marston’s plays in particular (306, 305). But surely no single methodology can offer itself as the cure-all of criticism, especially one whose rigor is so frankly subject to the vagaries of its practitioners. I am rather more comfortable with tolerant pluralism, whereby one or more approaches—cultural materialist, feminist, folkloric, structuralist, performative, and so forth—may compel our allegiance by demonstrating interactions with the playtext at as many points as possible.

Finally, thanks go to Slights for pointing out a typographic error: the series of Propp’s Functions given on page 158 should of course be numbered 23-31, not 23-32.

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NOTES

¹See G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1966).

²Theodore Spencer, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man*, 2nd ed. (1949; rpt. New York: Collier Books, 1967) 203-04, quoted in my essay, “The Theological Basis of Imagery and Structure in *The Malcontent*,” *SEL* 14 (1974): 271-84.

³Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988) 32.

The Malcontent Redux: A Response to Brownell Salomon and William W. E. Slights*

EDMUND M. TAFT

"A good wit will make use of anything."
(2 *Henry IV* 1.2.246-47)¹

Brownell Salomon's recent essay on *The Malcontent* in the second issue of *Connotations* raises two important issues, one about the play itself, and the other, implicitly, about the proper way to study it. Salomon's essay is perhaps best described as an extended meditation on the various ways in which "doubleness" (of language, character, theme, genre, technique, and so on) characterizes Marston's play; at the end of his discussion, Salomon offers his own contribution to the traditional approach to *The Malcontent* by demonstrating that its plot evinces yet another kind of "doubleness": fairy-tale form versus a realistic story of intrigue and counter-intrigue.

In the next issue of *Connotations*, William W. E. Slights responds to Salomon and is, well, not impressed. His banshee cry of indignation focuses on the, supposedly, moribund critical method Salomon employs. Slights questions the utility of Salomon's critical vocabulary and suggests that his conclusion is trivial:

Folklorists have known for decades that everything from the *Odyssey* to comic strips can depict a hero returning home, confronting a false hero, performing difficult tasks, being recognized, and so forth. (305)

The scorn here is palpable, but wholly unwarranted, in my view. In this response I want to show how useful Salomon's essay can be, and I also

*Reference: Brownell Salomon, "The 'Doubleness' of *The Malcontent* and Fairy-tale Form," *Connotations* 1.2 (1991): 150-63; William W. E. Slights, "Fairy-tales, Form, and the Future of Marston Studies," *Connotations* 1.3 (1991): 302-07.

hope to make a larger point about the need for “negative capability” in matters literary, from both sides of the yawning critical and theoretical gulf that divides us these days.

It must be admitted at the outset that Salomon overstates his case a bit. That a “unitary morphological system underlying the folk tale” (157) has been established is in some doubt. Propp’s syntagmatic approach to structure, which Salomon makes use of in his argument, differs markedly from the paradigmatic method of Lévi-Strauss, which relies on a “deep structure” of binary oppositions, e.g. dark/light, above/below, active/passive, and so forth.² More recent structural studies of the fairy tale or folktale, such as those by Dundes and Jones, challenge the universality of Propp’s method: Dundes points out that North American Indian folktales manifest a different structure than Indo-European tales; and Jones argues that “Snow White” and other fairy tales of “persecuted heroines,” though Indo-European in origin, evince their own distinctive structural patterns.³ Moreover, Propp’s “functions”—significant actions characters take in the course of the tale—simply cannot be established in a completely value-free way.

These and other objections notwithstanding, recent theory, especially poststructuralist theory, has *not* invalidated the work of Propp and other structuralists; instead, it has called structuralism into question—no more, no less. Unlike Slights, I find real significance in the fairy-tale “narrative spine” Salomon argues for, in part because it seems intuitively right, and in part because it leads to the important question of how some Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights make their audience aware of genre. Just as there was no sign put up in the theaters to indicate “Another Part of the Forest,” there was no extra-textual signal at the Blackfriars or the Globe to indicate whether the audience was about to watch a tragedy, comedy, or tragicomedy. How then does a playwright assure his audience that it is at a comedy or a tragicomedy, not a tragedy?⁴ Put another way, how do we know that it is a question of *when*, not *if*, Dogberry will “get his man”? How do we know that Angelo’s nefarious schemes will never be executed? The answers are surprisingly subtle and important for understanding comic and tragicomic technique. In *Measure for Measure*, the audience senses that the Duke can shed his disguise at any moment, thus guaranteeing that

“doubleness” again and again. Does Slight’s really believe that old-fashioned critics have invented “doubleness” in Richard II, Hal, Falstaff, Bolingbroke, Henry V, Vincentio, Prospero, Bussy D’Ambois, Bosola, Perkin Warbeck, and, of course, Altofront? Does he really maintain that the plays that contain these characters fail to enact “doubleness” on almost every level, including plot, character, form, and technique? Certainly part of Marston’s genius is to recognize this fact rather early on and to up the ante, so to speak, by writing a political play so full of contrasts and oppositions that they become the dominant mode of discourse and action in it.

Salomon does a real service by analyzing the ways in which Marston attempts to make “doubleness” complementary instead of contradictory. His analysis prompts me to ask afresh if Marston succeeds in making Altofront and his alter ego Malevole complementary. Perhaps the play is rendered incoherent because of Marston’s failure to harmonize the two personalities of Altofront, but I am beginning to think that a sophisticated, well-worked out relationship may exist. In short, like Hal in *1 Henry IV*, Altofront has found a way to have his cake and eat it too. Malevole is the person Altofront might have become if he had truly lost all heart and given in completely to the feelings of cynicism and frustration that must have nearly overwhelmed him when he lost his Dukedom and his wife. Altofront needs to let off a little steam, just as Hal needs a chance to be a typical young man and sow his wild oats for a while. Both characters rationalize their activities, one explicitly and the other implicitly, by making their actions part of a plan to restore the common good.

Marston’s special interest in the limits of Stoicism supports my hypothesis. Over and over in his plays, Marston shows us that stoic philosophy is flawed because passion will out; it simply cannot be eliminated or suppressed for long.⁵ Thus, Altofront needs to give Malevole free rein, for that is the only way, finally, to get rid of him. Moreover, the difference between Malevole and Altofront is that the latter manages not to lose his heart—the capacity to feel love for others, whether they deserve it or not. The heart—a central motif in *The Malcontent* (How’s that for an old-fashioned analysis?)—is what Mendoza and Malevole lack—but not Altofront. The heart is what gives Pietro

the ability to reform, and why Mendoza and Ferneze cannot. So Malevole is the escape valve that saves Altofront's capacity to rule with compassion, a capacity he demonstrates as the play ends. Whatever the validity of such an analysis, the central point is to demonstrate the evocative power of Salomon's essay.

Slights objects not only to Salomon's dichotomizing, but also to his use of a quotation from T. S. Eliot. Apparently Eliot is passé now, along with Plato, structuralism, and lifelike characters—all signs, I suppose, of being mired in "terribly sticky old methods" (302). Yet I think Salomon is exactly right to identify fairy-tale form as the "'something behind, more real than any of the personages and their action' which Eliot senses in *The Malcontent*" (Eliot 189-90; quoted in Salomon 161-62). In 1934, when *Elizabethan Essays* was first published, Eliot was already trying to make the transition from poet to playwright, and he was finding it difficult at best.⁶ The problem was how to convey his deepest intention—an overall vision of a Christian reality behind appearances to the contrary—in a *play*, where competing voices of powerful characters might well drown out the essence of what he had to say. Eliot was drawn to Marston (1) because the latter, like Eliot, had faced the problem of moving from poetry to drama; (2) because Marston, again like Eliot, shows in his address "To the Reader" and elsewhere in the printed version of *The Malcontent* an obsessive concern about being misinterpreted;⁷ and (3) because both Marston and Eliot, presumably, wished to impart much the same message to their respective audiences through the identical medium—poetic drama.⁸ Eliot felt the force of Marston's vision but could not account for it by any technical means he knew, thus his bewilderment, quite frankly stated, coupled with a good deal of admiration for Marston's achievement. A little imagination allows us to share Eliot's confusion. No Jacobean play I know, not even *Lear*, portrays more powerfully than *The Malcontent* the stench and corruption, the heartlessness and depravity, of a world seemingly without hope. Yet most readers sense a firm eschatological vision at the heart of Marston's play. How does he do it? Since Salomon's suggestion seems insignificant to Slights, perhaps he can enlighten us on this point. If not, then perhaps he should allow that Salomon's insight carries real force.

I want to conclude this response with what is probably a fruitless plea for tolerance. Traditional versus postmodern criticism is a war that need not be fought. But to avoid battle, both sides must exercise some "negative capability." Can't we agree that most authors strive for unity but in many ways fail to achieve it? That they use language but that language also uses them? That their insights are usually accompanied by corresponding blind spots? That literary works and "local pressures" may both be sources of a work of art? That authorial intention is complex and its recovery always in some doubt? That the idealized universal reader or spectator (which I use throughout this essay) is a fiction, but sometimes a useful one? And so on. I think agreement on most of these issues is possible, but in all probability will not solve the problem. The real divide may not be literary at all, but political, in the widest sense of the word. Feminism and cultural materialism seek change, and so does new historicism, though it despairs of finding any. To these newer new critics, structuralism often seems unyielding, hierarchical, and committed to the status quo. And all to often old-line critics see fresh approaches as nothing more than "hurly-burly innovation." Thus, we view each other as stereotypes, and alas, these stereotypes contain more than a little truth. Perhaps the answer is to evolve more neutral methods of analysis—an impossible dream according to some. In the meantime, a little respect (on both sides) would go a long way.

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NOTES

¹All Shakespeare citations are from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 4th ed., ed. David Bevington (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

²See Alan Dundes's introduction to Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd ed., rev. and ed. Louis A. Wagner (Austin: U of Texas P, 1968) xi-xvii.

³Steven Swann Jones, "The Structure of 'Snow White,'" *Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion, and Paradigm*, ed. Ruth B. Bottigheimer (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1986) 183n11.

⁴I am indebted to an unpublished paper by Joseph Price for this important and provocative line of thought. The example from *Measure for Measure* is also Price's.

⁵Note, for example, the unresolved conflict between control and passion in *Antonio's Revenge*, and the emphasis on Neo-stoicism in *Sophonisba*.

⁶T. S. Eliot, *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934).

⁷See "To the Reader," ll. 12-22; "Prologue," ll. 1-2; "Vexat censura columbas" (20); and the Induction, ll. 51 ff. (in which Webster may reflect Marston's anxiety) in the Revels Plays edition of *The Malcontent*, ed. G. K. Hunter (London: Methuen, 1975).

⁸Two fine discussions of the genesis of Eliot's plays and the critical and methodological difficulties he faced in turning from poetry to drama are both by Richard Badenhausen: "'When the Poet Speaks Only for Himself': The Chorus as 'First Voice' in *Murder in the Cathedral*," *T. S. Eliot: Man and Poet*, ed. Laura Cowan, 2 vols. (Orono, Maine: U of Maine P, 1990) 1:239-52; and "'Communal Pleasure' in a Uniform Culture: T. S. Eliot's Search for an Audience," *ELN* 29.3 (1992): 61-69.

Puzzling Marston and Homer (A Response to Brownell Salomon and William W. E. Slights)*

JOSEPH A. PORTER

William W. E. Slights, "Fairy-tales, Form, and the Future of Marston Studies," responds helpfully to some disconcerting features of Brownell Salomon's earlier essay, "The 'Doubleness' of *The Malcontent* and Fairy-tale Form," including the latter's purported revelations about how Propp's fairy tale format fits not only *The Odyssey* but also *The Malcontent*, and so provides the key to the "doubleness" T. S. Eliot found in the play. Slights throws useful cold water on some of Salomon's argumentative recklessness, and on his partiality for the idea of doubleness. "Why," Slights asks, "must critics always be on the look-out for 'doubleness,' contrasting pairs, dichotomies?" (304). They—specifically Salomon—needn't and shouldn't, is Slights's answer to his own rhetorical question.

But why does Salomon do it? Only to validate Eliot's remark after all these years?¹ While such a desire may figure among Salomon's motives and rationales, his essay shows lineaments of a more interesting reason for privileging doubleness.

As an example of "double-layered meaningfulness" in the play's action Salomon cites V.iv.84 s.d., "*Starts up*":

Malevole's sudden springing to life . . . several uncertain minutes after Mendoza had apparently poisoned him in cold blood before the audience's eyes . . . is a *coup de théâtre* that produces not only an abrupt comic surprise but also a chilling reminder that Mendoza's amoral viciousness might well have been fatal. (154)

*Reference: Brownell Salomon, "The 'Doubleness' of *The Malcontent* and Fairy-tale Form," *Connotations* 1.2 (1991): 150-63; William W. E. Slights, "Fairy-tales, Form, and the Future of Marston Studies," *Connotations* 1.3 (1991): 302-07.

Here Salomon seems at best only half right. Malevole's starting up may certainly produce a surprise in performance, and possibly with a comic effect.² Even this claim, though, suffers from the reductive essentializing Slights notes elsewhere in Salomon's argument. For while "comic" goes some way toward characterizing the effect, at least in some performances, the rubric only begins to do justice to the moment, which might easily produce uncomic effects of uncanniness and nightmarishness. As for Salomon's claim that Malevole's starting up produces a "reminder" that his apparent death by poisoning might have been as real as it has seemed until his action, to me this claim is wrong and hardly comprehensible.

Badly as the notion of doubleness serves Salomon here and elsewhere, the category of doubleness does nevertheless fit this moment of the play, and others, precisely and usefully—and in ways that Salomon adumbrates on occasion despite his schematic rigidity, and that Slights, for all his suppleness, ignores.

As Slights remarks, it seems wrong to insist on contrastive pairs in accounts of character or literary genre. As he must also know, there are more legitimate contrastive pairs, such as the one on which the *coup de théâtre* in question depends, i.e., dead versus alive. Mendoza, satisfied that he has poisoned Malevole, rendering him "dead on a sudden" (V.iii.43), advises Celso to arrange the masque of the psychopomp Mercury leading the "dead" dukes' souls—Mercury whose caduceus "of life and death . . . hath the sole command"³—and then at Mendoza's exit the seemingly dead Malevole "*starts up and speaks*" (75 s.d.). Thus one need hardly be "on the look-out for 'doubleness'" to notice that this moment is about the death-life contrastive pair and their mutual exclusiveness.

However a different contrastive pair, one perhaps even more absolute and mutually exclusive, figures in the moment. It figures pervasively and at times consciously in Marston's textual carpet, and Salomon takes some of its measure.

Mendoza's stage direction at the beginning of the episode reads, "*Seems to poison MALEVOLE*" (35 s.d.). *Seems?* Apparently the stage direction means that, to the audience, Mendoza appears to poison Malevole. That is, for performance of the immediate local action, the stage direction "*poisons MALEVOLE*" would serve as a nearly exact equivalent. Marston's

stage direction does not, that is, mean anything like "*seems to poison but clearly does not*," for if it did there would be no *coup de théâtre* forty lines later.

For a reader, on the other hand, the stage direction eliminates the possibility of any surprise about Malevole's continuing to live: "seems to poison" entails "does not actually poison." Thus during the forty lines in question, while some in a theater audience suppose Malevole dead, the reading audience knows him to be alive. In a sense, then, the life-death opposition here flushes out a second contrastive pair, the opposition of stage and page, or of speech and writing,

This particular drama-specific doubleness seems to be of peculiar concern and moment in *The Malcontent*. Marston acknowledges as much in the introductory letter "To the Reader," as Salomon notes (155). In other, less explicit ways, too, Marston's concern with this particular doubleness endemic to drama shows in the play. At the passage under consideration, for instance, we have Mendoza's commanding Celso to script a show involving Mercury, patron both of eloquence and of writing, as well as mention of death's tonguelessness and Malevole's plain tongue. Finally, when the action returns to the realm of legible, inaudible speech headings and stage directions, readers may be struck by the second clause of "MALEVOLE. (*starts up and speaks*)" (75). Since "*speaks*" goes without saying in speech headings, the utterly redundant word invites attention here, and it may exhibit a flicker of Marston's responsiveness to the pressure of drama's distinctive duality.⁴

Salomon's essay exhibits some rather similar responses to the problematic fact of the play's existence in the paired and mutually exclusive realms of script and performance. In his passing suggestion that the play's "'correct' tonal balance is left to the performers to determine" (157) we may glimpse a line of inquiry for future Marston study, into such matters as how distinctively Marstonian this particular instance of the doubleness of drama might be, and whether it privileges or traduces either of the paired realms.⁵

As to Salomon's "*pièce de résistance*" (Slights 303), the roping of Homer, along with Propp, into his discussion of *The Malcontent*, Slights's doubts about its value seem well-taken. Indeed Salomon veers so sharply and unexpectedly from Marston to Homer that further questions about his

rationale arise. Possibly some resonance of the continuing lively debate about whether the Homeric poems' origin is oral or scribal has contributed to Salomon's classical excursus.⁶

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NOTES

¹For Eliot's 1934 remark about Marston's doubleness, and the conversation it has spawned, see Salomon 151. See also MacDonald P. Jackson and Michael Neill, eds., "Introduction: Select Bibliography," *The Selected Plays of John Marston* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), for a survey of critical takes on Marston's "deliberate Mannerist disjunctiveness" (xxi). Could Salomon's marshalling of Marston, Homer, and Propp actually be a move in a shadow campaign to rehabilitate Old Possum?

²John Webster, probable author of the Induction and five other additions, one of which immediately precedes Malevole's springing up, seems to imitate the moment at V.vi.149 (148?) s.d. in *The White Devil*, ed. John Russell Brown (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1960). Webster's additions to *The Malcontent* would be more than "somewhat disruptive" (Slight's 307) were they "editions," as Slight's text has them (307).

³*Certain Satyres V.34, The Poems of John Marston*, ed. Arnold Davenport (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1961) 88.

⁴The verbal doubleness of writing and speech and the dramatic doubleness of page and stage figure widely, even pervasively, in critical discourse of recent decades including, in English Renaissance study, such Derridean works as Jonathan Goldberg, *Writing Matter: From the Hands of the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990), the "performance-centered" discourse that Harry Berger, *Imaginary Audition: Shakespeare on Stage and Page* (Berkeley: U California P, 1989), terms "the new historicism," and the articles and responses by Paul Budra, Paul Yachnin, and Mark Thornton Burnett about *Doctor Faustus* in *Connotations* 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3.

⁵Paul Budra, "Doctor Faustus: The Play-Text or the Play?: (A Reply to Mark Thornton Burnett)," *Connotations* 1.3 (1991) 286-89, bridles engagingly against "The contemporary critical tendency . . . to see texts everywhere, to see nothing but texts" (287), and he scores several valid points. Yet he fails to carry the day with such a bald assertion as "That drama was not thought of as text in this period needs little proof" (287). Marston in *The Malcontent* is not the only playwright of the period who (at least at some moments) shows evidence of thinking of drama as text.

⁶The issue of the oral or scribal origin arises notably in the works of Martin Bernal—*Black Athena* 2 vols. to date (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1987, 1992) and *Cadmean Letters: The Transmission of the Alphabet to the Aegean and Further West Before 1400 B.C.* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990)—and in the controversy that has accompanied them. See also Hugh Lloyd-Jones, "Becoming Homer," *New York Review of Books* 39.5 (March 5, 1992).

A Letter in Reply to Joseph A. Porter

To the Editor:

Joseph A. Porter's "response" to the *Malcontent* debate is directed toward both Slight's and my essays, but in actuality addresses neither of them. No sustained critique of either paper, there are only desultory musings from one who prefers to take potshots ("argumentative recklessness?") rather than commit himself to issues. The comments on Marston's stage directions extrapolate the notion of doubleness, but lead to a most precious conclusion. There is, as well, a teasing reference in footnote 1 to the moot question of whether Marston's disjunctive technique is in any way indebted to Mannerism.

The epoch style known as Mannerism (foregrounded virtuosic technique, etc.) may have been an actual influence upon Lyly, Donne, Shakespeare, Marston, and others; but it was so vague and diffuse an influence as to remain an interpretive conundrum. For, just as plausibly, it may have been simply a contemporaneous cultural analogue (cf. *La Vida Es Sueño* and *The Tempest*) and no direct influence at all. I of course based my argument for doubleness upon concrete textual evidence and Marston's self-declared inclinations, not upon suppositional influence. Had Porter posited a solid implication of Mannerism for *The Malcontent*, or brought to bear any relevant historical or modern document, I would have risen to the occasion. But I won't take the mere bait of his wisecrack about "a shadow campaign to rehabilitate Old Possum." My essay stands firmly on its own evidential foundations.

Porter's final sentence tosses out another critical moot point (the oral or scribal provenance of Homer's epic poetry) that is, once again, critically extraneous. It goes without saying that my essay would tend to support the partisans of orality (but not conclusively, as with the question of priority regarding the chicken or the egg).

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One Constructed Reading Self after Another (A Response to Thomas F. Merrill)*

HAROLD R. SWARDSON

Thomas F. Merrill's challenge to my criticism of *Paradise Lost* and to "the critical persuasion" I represent gives me an opportunity to make clear what my critical persuasion is, and to examine some points of conflict with his.

The immediate point of contention is my complaint against the inconsistencies in *Paradise Lost*, a complaint that for Merrill disappears with a shift in the reader's perspective: "While such 'inconsistencies' may be apparent to those restricting *Paradise Lost* to standards of literary decorum, they cease to be so when perceived as instruments of religious insight" (257). "Religious insight" is for Merrill both necessary to and generated by a response to "religious style," which he, as his main business, shows functioning in *Paradise Lost*.

What Merrill shows, the inability of those in Hell to remove traces of the Heavenly from their words, strikes me as interesting, useful, and undeniable, whether or not I would call it a manifestation of religious style. I profit from the demonstration that what the fallen angels don't want to admit keeps breaking through, perpetually "rupturing" and "destabilizing" their discourse. These profane speakers cannot avoid evoking images of the sacred. In showing us this Merrill, holding up Picasso's *Guernica*, reminds us of a general truth about serious, including religious, readers: that exposure to images of evil will evoke in them images of good—just as exposure to social absurdity will evoke in them social good sense, the norm every social satire depends on.

*Reference: Thomas F. Merrill, "The Language of Hell," *Connotations* 1.3 (1991): 244-57.

But readers can be serious in different ways, and that's how Merrill and I part company. Assuming that we each want to know exactly what we are parting from I want to correct his identification of my party as "those restricting *Paradise Lost* to standards of literary decorum." It's not a matter of literary decorum; it's a matter of personal decorum, ethical decorum, reader decorum.

Notions of reading decorum depend on what kind of reading Self has been constructed. The Self that, under my name, was reading *Paradise Lost* thirty years ago had been constructed under the tutelage of New Critics to whom literary decorum and ethical decorum, *Self* decorum, were never separated. This is best seen in their taking sentimentality as the great violation. The cardinal sentimental response was a contradictory response, wanting things "two ways at once."¹ It violated a code in which the law of non-contradiction had an ethical value. A reader who accepted an author's invitation to approve victory in war but disapprove the necessary means to that victory had violated an ethical standard in the same way that acceptance of similar invitations encountered in the world violate it.²

The part assigned to non-contradiction shows how much this New Critical Self was constructed on the model of Socrates, a figure my own teachers certainly had in view. Theirs was the Socrates of the early dialogues, the literary figure who, following a logic yet unnamed, makes very sure each value he is invited to share is consistent with the other values he holds. Taking the law of non-contradiction, extended to include emotional or axiological non-contradiction, as a first principle superimposes on all other values the value of the integrity of the Self. The personal integrity dramatized by Plato in Socrates makes taking logic with this kind of seriousness very attractive to people of a certain moral ambition.

Not surprisingly, the New Critical tutelage I speak of produced a reader-centered criticism in which authors were conceived as issuing invitations to response which self-respecting readers had to examine closely. Sentimentality was, in fact, often defined as "unexamined emotional response." Examination was conducted by the reason, fitting responses together into an internally consistent whole—as required by the conception of an integrated Self. This was to be done seriously,

whatever the invitation. It was not the momentousness of the values that mattered so much, it was the way the soul (our Self) dealt with them, guided by a conception of its own wholeness, or health (haleness). If Socrates (I see my teachers pointing to his performance in the *Crito*), facing the hazardous real world, could take such care, with a logic still unshaped, to keep his values consistent, then we students, facing a harmless fictional world, should be embarrassed not to try, with a logic shaped to our hand, to keep our values consistent. Moral ambition fixed on such a model is not embarrassed to proceed, without descent, from Crito's invitation to betray Athens to Bret Harte's invitation to sigh at a baby's moral regeneration of Roaring Camp.

Of course the author whose invitations fit together would produce a literary whole (getting a work complimented for its "organic unity"³) but that was his or her business. The reader's business (the privilege of this early assertion of "autonomy") was to get full value out of what "stood up" to the tests of rational examination, and for the sake of Self respect, reject what didn't. Readers tutored by New Critics rejected, as we know, a lot of celebrated works because they were written in "sentimental style," one that encouraged satisfying emotional responses and discouraged inspection of what these responses were based on and how they were related to each other.

Obviously this kind of tutelage is liable to generate an over concern for consistency. It makes readers pick at the margins of a work, for they must be integrated too. (The Socratic, like the Christian, saint sees *every* invitation as a crisis.) It tends to make them intolerant not just of contradiction but of ambivalence. At its worst this tutelage produces a reader to whom the fruits of ambiguity and mystery are denied. Even at its best, though, careful distinctions (like that between ambivalence and contradiction⁴) are required.

No reading Self is constructed without hazards, however, and different tutelage equips us to see another's hazards better than we see our own. Such perspicacity is always an impediment to sympathy. The impediment to my sympathy with Merrill, and maybe an indication of a real hazard for him, is my inability to distinguish the "religious style" he speaks of from "sentimental style." I get an invitation from Milton to disapprove of the unfallen Mammon admiring "the riches of Heav'n's pavement,

trodd'n Gold" (I, 682), and through this to disapprove of gold as an object of enjoyment alternative to "aught divine or holy else enjoy's / In vision beatific" (683-84)—a disapproval in harmony with my Christian estimate of material riches and display, summed up in "gold." But elsewhere I get an invitation to approve of gold in Heaven, notably at the point where Satan is reminded of his "sad exclusion from the doors of Bliss" (III, 525). The doors appear to him, arrived from Hell, as

a Kingly Palace Gate
With Frontispiece of Diamond and Gold
Imbellisht . . . (505-07)

How am I to take "gold" here? As an emblem of the divine or holy that's to be "enjoy'd / In vision beatific"? That's all I can think of. It's the only way I can integrate it into *this* context. And that makes trouble if I want to integrate the whole poem.

This complaint may be marginal but there is no doubt that responding to these two inconsistent invitations sympathetically throws me into violation of what I consider reading decorum. It may not be what we usually think of as sentimentality but it does what sentimentality does: it destroys the integrity of the reading Self that I (or agents working in or on me) have constructed.

What would make me call what I am responding to "religious style" rather than "sentimental style," and so reconcile the invitations and feel some sympathy with Merrill's construction? Only a demonstration that what I see is not an "inconsistency" but really a fruitful ambiguity. That is just what Merrill provides, but he does not provide it for me. He provides it for those who, with a different tutelage, see the fruitfulness established when an inconsistency is called "linguistic transsubstantiation" (244), "dynamic entanglement" (246), or "religiously salutary confusion" (251). I can't see through these terms to what is supposed to be fruitful. I can't see what is salutary in the confusion. And I can't see how, unless I abandon reason and "the common sense point of view" Merrill reproaches me with (254), I'm going to see more.

So there is no ground for sympathy (feeling alike) between Merrill's religious reading Self and my reading Self, which I suppose would be called classicist. I do, however, see ground for sympathy outside those

Selves: they are both getting harder and harder to construct. Both Christian and classicist materials are losing the strength once conceded them. Neither of us, however, can blame postmodernism in general for this loss, for both of us draw on developments within postmodernism, Merrill, as I read him, drawing mainly on developments in continental theory and I drawing mainly on developments in American theory. For my part I am very happy to put the moral ambitiousness of that New Criticism reading *Self* under the shelter of reader-response criticism, where its autonomy, if not its arrogance, gets much fuller theoretical justification than it had back when reader-response lacked even a name that would let us locate it in the New Criticism—that is, back before Stanley Fish introduced reader-response criticism with (tickling connection) a book on *Paradise Lost*.⁵

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NOTES

¹Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946) 272. The kind of response criticism I see in these New Critics went on at the same time as but was different from the structure criticism that came to dominate the New Criticism, and establish the current conception of it. The response criticism appears mainly in undergraduate textbooks, beginning with Cleanth Brooks, Jr., John Thibault Purser, and Robert Penn Warren, *An Approach to Literature* (New York: F. S. Crofts, 1936) and Brooks' and Warren's *Understanding Poetry* (New York: Henry Holt, 1938). I distinguish it and argue its importance in the New Critical revolution in "The Heritage of the New Criticism," *College English* 41 (1979): 412-22.

²Joseph Heller in *Catch-22* (New York: Dell, 1962) provides an example of such an invitation. I offer a full analysis in "Sentimentality and the Academic Tradition," *College English* 37 (1976): 747-66.

³The use of "organic unity" is quite different from its use in structuralist New Criticism, where it came under postmodernist attack. The expression was used (in my undergraduate classroom, at least) to depreciate "mechanical unity." The latter unity could be found in a tragedy that adhered to the classical "unities" but it would get no compliments in response criticism unless it contributed to an affective unity.

⁴I discuss this distinction at length in "'Sentimentality' in Teaching," *The Philosophical Forum* 17 (1986): 217-41.

⁵*Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (London: Macmillan, 1967).