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In Memory of Ruth C. Wallerstein

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*"God be at your table!":
Cup, Minister, and
Perverse Gospel in
Shakespeare's Hamlet*

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In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "distracted" (4.5.21)¹ Ophelia speaks obliquely to King Claudius of impending transformation: "Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be" (4.5.43-44). Peter Milward notes the allusion: Ophelia "unwittingly parodies the account of heavenly bliss" in 1 John, "Dearly beloved, now we are the sons of God, but yet it doth not appear what we shall be; and we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (3.2).² However, the true prospect for Claudius may not be as happy as it sounds, inasmuch as Ophelia begins by offering him a strained and curious blessing, "Well, God dild you! They say the owl was a baker's daughter" (*Hamlet* 4.5.42-43), referring to folklore about a maiden punished with the form of an owl for begrudging a beggar some bread.³ The beggar, of course, is Christ in disguise. Ophelia ends on another curious blessing, "God be at your table" (4.5.44). Milward suggests that this table is meant to represent the "Lamb's supper" in Revelation 19.9, "when, as Christ tells his disciples in Luke 22.30, they will 'eat and drink *at my table in my kingdom*'" (Milward's italics).⁴

In truth, when we listen closely to her language, we find that Ophelia is less innocent, and, for that matter, less "Divided from herself and her fair judgment" (*Hamlet* 4.5.85), than Claudius may realize. Her language is insinuating. "God dild you!" is especially abrasive. She is taking advantage of a commonplace, "God'ield you." As a contraction, it compresses "God" and "yield," and stands for "May God reward." In *As You Like It* (3.3.74) and *Macbeth* (1.6.13), the expression is used without any trace of menace, "God'ild" and "God'ield" respectively.⁵ In *Hamlet*, "God" and "dild" are not truly contracted, and the effect is jarring and unpleasant. "God" and "dild" as separate and distinct sounds rob the expression of any sincerity or friendliness. "Dild," in fact, puts the audience in mind of "dildo," which, for the most part, had the same meaning for Elizabethans as it does for us.⁶

Significantly, Ophelia utters her caustic language (and implied imprecation) when Claudius intrudes upon the sad song she is singing for Gertrude and Horatio. Some lines prior, Horatio had wondered aloud if the young woman's ravings had the power to "strew / Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds" (*Hamlet* 4.5.14-15). Horatio is prescient in this regard, just as he was when he commented on the ghost of Hamlet's father, remarking that it "bodes some strange eruption to our state" (1.1.69) and "A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye" (112). Reflecting on the ghost, Marcellus suggests "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (4.89). Horatio responds, "Heaven will direct it" (90). Horatio is the forerunner of "antic" ministers, Gothic anti-types of those ministers whose message imparts life and hope. Perversely, the ministers in *Hamlet* teach a gospel of judgment and penalty. Horatio's astute intuition foreshadows the truth Shakespeare will allow to the ominous proposition of God's table. Claudius is borne irresistibly by his own relentless corruption towards a final judgment, an ironic and deadly metaphysics of cup as both sacred union and sacred redress. Claudius will live out his corruption to the very lip of the communion cup and sip his judgment from it,

because he is guilty and knows it. Ophelia is his accuser. Resuming her ballad, she subtly inserts "not" (4.5.39) where it depicts an interment strewn with "sweet flowers" (38), the dead fully and duly "bewept" (39) with "true-love showers" (40). Ophelia's beloved father, Polonius, did *not* receive such a burial, and with her "not," she lays the blame on Claudius. Claudius instantly knows her import: a "Conceit," he states, "upon her father" (45). Some lines later, he more fully concedes his error: "we have done but greenly," he admits, "In hugger-mugger to inter him" (83-84). In the same speech, he speaks fearfully of her brother, Laertes, who has arrived in a rage from France, and lacks "not buzzers to infect his ear / With pestilent speeches [...]" (90).

According to the messenger, the rage of Laertes is already "overpeering" (100) the embankment of guards: "The rabble," he reports, "call him lord," as if "the world were now but to begin, / Antiquity forgot, custom not known" (103-5). The world begins again, but its newness is swallowed up by its antithesis, destruction by a deluge, figurative torrents brimming over banks, and air made unfit to breathe by pestilent contagion. Ophelia's own metamorphosis is equally still-born and destructive. Hamlet's scornful appellation of "fishmonger" (2.2.174) for Polonius proves true, inasmuch as whom he pandered as a decoy to sound Hamlet's depths becomes a kind of fish. In Gertrude's words, Ophelia's slow and peaceful yielding to the willow pond seems to show her "mermaid-like" (4.7.176), a "creature native and indued / Unto that element" (179-80). The "long purples" (169), or "dead man's fingers" (171), that dangle from her garland hearken back perhaps to her perverse blessing on Claudius.

Ultimately, the gospel of Ophelia and Hamlet must be considered as suspect. The *euangelion*—or "good news"—of the New Testament pertains to transformation and new birth, as Christ announces in John's Revelation: "for ye first things are passed" (21.4); "Beholde, I make all things new" (5). The Pauline epistles make the same point. The original self of the believer has died with Christ and

awaits a new life in him when he will return in glory (Colossians 3.3-4). In Romans, "we knowe that euerie creature groneth with vs" in suspense (8.22), awaiting the coming of the "children of God" (8.16).⁷ Significantly, this engendering of new self and new cosmos is not only future-tense, but also occurring in the present: "Therefore if anie man be in Christ, let him be a new creature. Old things are passed away: beholde, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5.17). More to the point, there is a spiritual coming-of-age taking place even amid the death of one's original nature and body: "And if Christ be in you, the bodie is dead, because of sinne: but the Spirit is life for righteousnes sake" (Romans 8.10).

Conversely, the message of Hamlet's ministry is bad news, or what we might call *dis-angelion*. The stress is on a hollowed out world, on dying as an end unto itself, with little or no hope of regeneration. From this point of view, no being in Christ can generate a becoming of hopeful prospects. Indeed, the earth is a "sterile promontory" (*Hamlet* 2.2.299); the "majestical roof" of the cosmos, a "foul and pestilent congregation of vapors" (302-3). Hamlet sees himself "unpregnant of my cause" (568). Rather than delivering on his oath to his father's ghost, he remains a "whore," a "very drab," a "stallion" (585-87).⁸ None of these have legitimate progeny. On the subject of Ophelia, Hamlet is even more ominous: "Let her not walk i' th' sun," he advises Polonius. "Conception is a blessing, but as your daughter may conceive, friend, look to 't" (2.2.184-86). Procreation for Hamlet has been reduced to its homelier relative, *breeding*, a bestial thing that includes decomposition, "For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion" (181-82)—the implication is that the One, the Good Itself of Platonism (often represented as the Sun),⁹ emanates not good things out of its being, but is rather the author and founder of filth and decay. The kiss, so often represented in the Renaissance as the soul bobbing close to the lip, is now understood as a repugnant act, a transaction of unwelcome and hideous commingling.¹⁰ The hope of spring is

betrayed and taken over by an opportunistic parasite feeding on and displacing its host: a "vicious mole" (1.4.24)¹¹ that comes up under the castle of the mind, gradually breaking down the "pales and forts of reason" (28). The "general censure" (35) cannot overlook what comes of even a "dram" (36) of fault: "all the noble substance" (37) set to "scandal" (38). The flesh is "too too sallied" (1.2.129). Elsinore "grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature / Possess it merely" (136-37). Finally, graveside with the skull of Yorick, Hamlet seems finished with the whole project of awful becoming. Whatever the repugnance of a sick world, its end, like that of Alexander and Caesar, is only the transformation of the human into clay: once so "converted," asks Hamlet facetiously, "might they not stop a beer-barrel?" (211-12). Such is Hamlet's *disangelion*: our only prospect of transformation is into lime to plug a "bung-hole" (5.1.204). The gospel of Hamlet's ministry is perverse reductionism: "Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay, / Might stop a hole to keep the wind away" (213-14). The "bloody" (4.4.66) resolve of Act IV is thus easily given over to rueful ponderings on the ends of man. The world is already a perfect loop of retribution: it is peristalsis, and tyrants are brought low, not by direct intrusion of divine judgment, but by an inevitable cycle of futility implicit to a sick and decayed universe.¹² Indeed, in this manner, Christ, through nature, turns the tables, as it were, on the apostate. In John 6, he offers himself as food and drink to his disciples: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the liuing father hathe sent me, so liue I by the Father, and he that eateth me, euen he shal liue by me" (56-57). If, however, as Ophelia reminds us, Christ is the beggar we turned away, then Hamlet could be implying we owe Christ "variable service" (4.3.24). True, sometimes a "lean beggar" (23) is the dish; sometimes, the other way around: "a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar" (30-31). For his unfaithfulness, Claudius must be served, as Christ served himself.¹³

Ophelia's own ministerial status may be documented from when Hamlet observes her walking with her prayer book and he remarks playfully, "Nymph, in thy orisons / Be all my sins remembered" (3.1.88-89). He returns to this idea of her as minister throughout his interrogation, as when he seems to ask shrift from her: "I am very proud," he confesses, "revengeful, ambitious, with more offenses at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in" (123-26). No doubt Hamlet has cast himself here as Claudius, and suspects his eavesdropping: "I could accuse me of such things," he intones, "that it were better my mother had not borne me" (122-23). His role-playing is meant to sting those who put Ophelia up to this mimicry of piety, a "show" (44) of "devotion's visage" (46) her father admits beforehand is as hypocritical as any other "pious action" (47) that covers human perfidy, "We are oft to blame in this— / 'Tis too much prov'd" (45-46). But is Ophelia a mere show?

Irrespective of Hamlet's sarcasm and the deception of Claudius and her father, Ophelia warms to her role as minister, and gracefully carries it off with telling power of her own. "You should have not believed me," claims Hamlet, attempting to confuse his eavesdroppers and punish Ophelia, "for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it. I lov'd you not" (116-118). Hamlet's disclaimer, it should be noted, does not follow from his implied accusation that Ophelia is not "honest" (102). If, after all, Hamlet is able to speak of his old pre-virtuous nature¹⁴ as at best only a residuum, only a tantalizing memory of how sin used to taste, then he implies that he is, after all, a true convert to virtue's cause—indeed, to Ophelia's virtue—and all that's left of his wicked self is a lingering savor of it—a "relish of it." Indeed, he indicates that a virtue has been more than imputed,¹⁵ or counted, towards him. He is joined, engrafted, to new stock. The Prince has been, and remains, subject to a powerful and abiding indwelling, or infusion,¹⁶ of virtue, and it has grown up from within,

owning him through and through. At the very least, he speaks of two natures, his old (only in trace amounts he can taste, rather than be sure of), and a new and abiding kind that almost completely determines who he is and represents a perhaps unwelcome triumph of conversion.¹⁷ Ophelia is indomitable and cannot be written off. When he says "I did love you once" (114), she responds with no hesitation, "Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so" (115). On one level, Hamlet means to play a game implying she is just another conspirator, but her sincerity is evident even as she seems only to play a role foisted upon her by Claudius and her father. They are false, but she is true—because she believed. She believed in Hamlet and trusted in his word, and, to paraphrase Paul in Romans,¹⁸ it still suffices as her righteousness. He, in turn, was, and remains, possessed by her, hence the desperate necessity to take back his avowals. Indeed, he is being sidetracked from baiting his eavesdroppers. Such is the faithfulness of Ophelia's virtue, that he is caught up against his will in her ministry. He strains against the pricks, just as Paul did during his persecution of the Christians prior to conversion.¹⁹ He would rather that her shrift have no power to change or absolve him, but it already has—he feels her force, her virtue, in him, growing up and all but completing him, even if some old part of him still would enjoy, or "relish," pre-conversion sin. Perhaps on some level Hamlet merely reflects a Protestant discomfort with priestly confession. It is more likely, however, that Hamlet holds inside a virtue, or power, of Ophelia, and she seems to rely on it, given her persistent confidence throughout this present ordeal of his equivocating paradoxes and "antic" contradictions. Hamlet would rather that vengeance against the court intrigue that undid his father come to possess him. That kind of possession would be the old stock, a taste of which tantalizes him, especially since the swearing of himself to the cause of his father's ghost. However, Ophelia is wholly honest in her ministerial role, insofar as she can never be less than Hamlet's confessor, the one who is truly the

most concerned for his heart, mind, and soul. Finally, still not dissuaded even by his bitter spleen and words of malediction, she cries out with heartfelt and heart-breaking conviction: "O, help him, you sweet heavens!" (133) and "Heavenly powers, restore him!" (141).

In the fourth act, while seeming to rave and exceed even the most "antic" grotesques that Hamlet has devised, Ophelia still manages to fulfill her fate as a minister of God's justice against Claudius. Her seemingly flippant "God be at your table" invites and consecrates, and otherwise signals the impending significance of knowing where one stands in the divine economy. Claudius is both invited and cursed. In addition to the Lamb's supper, God's table stands for communion, where the elements of bread and wine are meant to serve as spiritual food and drink,²⁰ and to make all believers one body in Christ. One must be right with God to eat and drink worthily from this table, as Paul enjoins in 1 Corinthians 11: "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man therefore examine himself, and so let him eat of this bread, and drink of this cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh his own damnation, because he discerneth not ye Lord's body" (27-29). Paul adds that many among the Corinthians had been guilty of such unworthy partaking, and therefore had become "weake, and sicke," and "many slepe" (30). God's table, in this case, bodes ill for those who knowingly approach it without being right with God. Not unlike Hamlet's "Mousetrap" (*Hamlet* 3.2.237), Ophelia is aiming at the conscience of the king. If Claudius is innocent, he has nothing to fear from drinking the communion cup. Hamlet, of course, was "good as a chorus" (3.2.245) during the play within a play, sitting at Ophelia's feet, and remarking off-hand to Claudius, "we that have free souls, it touches us not" (241-42). She must have known the import of the King suddenly throwing over the play, yelling for light, and Hamlet exclaiming, "What, frightened with false fire?" (266).

In her putative madness, she nevertheless traces the etiology of her own father's murder to its correct and most guilty author, not Hamlet, her fellow minister, but the King. As we know, he will indeed drink his own judgment, Hamlet forcing it to the man's lips, fulfilling his self-appointment as both "scourge and minister" (3.4.175): "Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damned / Dane, Drink off this potion! Is thy *union* here? / Follow my mother!" (5.2.325-27, my italics). Union, of course, is that of incest with his former sister-in-law, but also pertains to that of spiritual union, the drinking of the cup that unites all believers and hence doles out punishment to those whose brother has "oght" (Matthew 5.23) against them, as certainly Hamlet's father has against Claudius. In this respect, the off-hand quip of Ophelia's father comes back to haunt the new King: "we do sugar o'er / the devil" (*Hamlet* 3.1.47-48) remarks Polonius. In this vein, Paul warns the Corinthians that "Ye can not be partakers of the Lords table and of the table of deuils" (1 Cor. 10.21), without also angering and tempting heaven—hence many "slepe."

Consequently, the table Ophelia speaks of, and wishes Claudius to join her at, is set for communion, and, by the same token, laced with divine retribution. As the king expires, Laertes remarks, "He is justly *served*" (*Hamlet* 4.2.327, my italics). He then hastily asks Hamlet to absolve him, "Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet. / Mine and my father's death come not upon thee, / Nor thine on me!" (329-31). These last words of Ophelia's brother echo Christ's injunction in the Sermon on the Mount: "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him, lest thine adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the sergeant, and thou be cast into prison" (Matthew 5.25). Both Laertes and Hamlet share the same trajectory; they are adjacent in their course, a way presided over by the "fell sergeant, Death" (*Hamlet* 5.2.336). Some lines before Hamlet had established his brotherhood with Laertes. "Free me," he asked, "so far in your generous thoughts, / That I have

shot my arrow o'er the house / And hurt my brother" (5.2.242-44). Laertes assents "in nature" (244). Significantly, the Christ of the Beatitudes instructs his disciples to be reconciled with one another before they approach the sharing of the sacrifice (Matthew 5.23-24). In the grip of the "fell sergeant," Hamlet hastens to comply with the gospel Christ: "Heaven make thee free of it! I follow thee" (*Hamlet* 5.2.332). We can reasonably assume Claudius is not free of such a fault, inasmuch as we know his efforts at sincere repentance were to no avail: "My words fly up," he admits, but "my thoughts remain below" (3.3.97). Moreover, when Laertes speaks impulsively of pursuing his revenge even in the church, the king remarks approvingly, "No place indeed should murder sanctuarize" (4.7.128). Indeed, God's table is sanctuary, the traditional place of altar and minister, and the King's conspiracy will extend even to the cup itself. To Laertes' credit, he seems to recognize his sister's ministry when he rebukes the more obvious priest who complains that her "doubtful" (5.1.227) death disqualifies her from Christian burial and puts her in danger of judgment at the "last trumpet" (230). The rejoinder of her brother is withering: "I tell thee, churlish priest, / A minist'ring angel shall my sister be / When thou liest howling" (5.1.240-42).²¹

At the same time, these two, Ophelia and Hamlet, are flawed ministers. Ophelia curses Claudius to his own downfall, but she passively lets herself become a victim of drowning. She floats only a little while, as if her faith could go so far, but not bear her up for long. As for Hamlet, his model should have been Christ who never departs from the will of the Father, but Hamlet seems hard pressed to stay focused on his father's will. He speaks of "bad dreams" (2.2.256) and rues his fate, "O cursed spite, / that ever I was born to set it right!" (1.5.188-89). If Hamlet's peace of mind in the final scene is so striking—that there is "special providence in the fall of a sparrow" (5.2.220)—it is because Shakespeare has allowed this Prince such tremendous latitude to sink into despair, and,

indeed, to become despair's minister. Hamlet, as minister, sees only one part of impending transformation. The natural man is sown in death, and indeed will stop up a bung-hole. He does not acknowledge the hope of the complete paradigm: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption: and this mortal must put on immortalitie" (1 Corinthians 15.53). Ophelia's blessing *cum* curse goes further than Hamlet's gospel,²² inasmuch she presumes continuity of Christ in the elements of the Lord's supper. Her curse and consecration presume the wider gospel of Christ living in his faithful. There is union at God's table, whether for reward or punishment. Hamlet is ripe for readiness, but Ophelia subtly alerts everyone, including Claudius, of impending judgment. She invites the primordial killer of brothers to God's table, and Claudius embarks on his own fateful trajectory, obliged to drink finally from the communion cup with offenses at his beck. Ophelia, in truth, is the most sinister of our anti-types of evangelist and minister: she is most conscious of union as retribution upon the killer of her father. Hamlet is really somewhere just behind her. His ministry is primarily with his own mortality. The freedom he sought in conscience with Laertes complements the readiness he offers to something larger himself, but that thing is as much death as providence: "Let it be" (5.2.337) he says at the end, complying with that "fell sergeant." It is almost incidental that he is the present and direct minister of the cup of union. All the time he was only trying to make peace with death and its corruption. And here, Horatio, that other minister we may not have reckoned with or recognized as such until now, offers the appropriate benediction: "And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!" (360).

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Notes

¹ All references to Shakespeare are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*. The word "distracted" is from the stage directions just prior to her question, "Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?" (4.5.22): "Enter Ophelia [distracted, with her hair down, playing on a lute]."

² Milward follows the Geneva Bible: "Dearly beloued, now are we the sonnes of God, but yet it doeth not appeare what we shalbe: and we knowe that when he shal appeare, we shalbe like him: for we shal se him as he is" (1 John 3.2); see also Naseeb Shaheen 558, where he notes the same allusion. All scripture cited in this paper reflects, or reproduces precisely, the language of the Geneva Bible (1560).

³ See Asimov 134: "There is an old English legend to the effect that Jesus, in the guise of a beggar, came to a baker's shop to ask for some food. The baker put some dough into the oven to make a loaf of bread for the supposed beggar, but the baker's daughter, overcome with niggardliness, decided that the gift was too great and cut the dough in half. She was promptly turned into an owl as punishment, a drastic example of one who knew what she was but did not know what she would become."

⁴ 48, following the Geneva: "Then he said vnto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called vnto the Lambes Supper" (Revelation 19.9); cf. also Milward 46 and Shaheen 556: if the Lamb's supper—the wedding feast in heaven—is the case, Hamlet's "At supper" / "In heaven" (4.3.17,33) language two scenes earlier (despite all the fish and worm convolution) may be seen to foreshadow Ophelia's allusion. For Hamlet's "at supper" discourse on Polonius, both Milward and Shaheen cite Luke 14.16, the parable of a certain householder who gave a "great supper, and bade manie" to come.

⁵ See C. T. Onions 119.

⁶ See Onions 74; also vol. 4 of Simpson and Weiner, *OED* 664, and vol. 1 of Brown's shorter *OED* 672. In addition to phallic connotations, Elizabethans might use "dildo" as a term of disparagement for a disgusting young man or as a nonsense word in ballad refrains.

⁷ Cf. Romans 8.19: "For the feruent desire of the creature waiteth when the sonnes of God shalbe reueiled." The "groneth" of verse 16 seems to underlie the spectacle of the wounded stag, languishing to its death on a river bank in *As You Like It*: "The wretched animal heav'd forth such groans" (2.1.36)—to the point that "big round tears / Cours'd one another down his innocent nose" (38-39). Observing the deer's ordeal, melancholy Jacques falls to his own tears, "weeping and commenting / Upon the sobbing deer" (65-66).

⁸ See Willard Farnham 110. "The word 'stallion' was applied in Shakespeare's time to a woman who was a prostitute or to either a man or a woman of generally lascivious life, and it was later, at least, given special application to a man who prostituted himself as a hired paramour." Dildo may have similar meaning. Sterility of a special kind haunts the world of *Hamlet*, a realm that can only be pregnant with rot and decay.

⁹ Marsilio Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Symposium* epitomizes the Renaissance view of the universe as beautiful and in motion out from and back towards God, according to principles of love and beauty. Sears Reynolds Jayne's translation is clear and telling, e.g., from the first oration: "God, the author of everything," is "the Good Itself" (126; ch. 3); also, from the second, "Dionysius is quite justified in comparing God to the sun" (134; ch. 2). According to Ficino, matter is attracted back to its origin via its self-offering to the world-soul, which in turn offers itself to Angelic mind, which in turns gazes back directly to the One, i.e., the Good Itself (cf. Jayne 129; first oration, ch. 4). The intermediary principle is the divine beauty of ideal forms, through which God draws his creation back to himself according to a dynamic of desire on the part of all creation for that ideal beauty. Specifically, the universe is drawn to reflect on its own original loveliness as envisioned by, and still residing within, the Good Itself: "This Divine Beauty creates in everything love, that is, desire for itself, because if God draws the world to Himself, and the world is drawn [from Him] there is one continuous attraction, beginning with God, going to the world and ending at last in God, an attraction which returns to the same place whence it began as though in a kind of circle" (133-34; second oration, ch. 2). Of course, in Gothic fashion, Hamlet repudiates Neoplatonic optimism in two respects. Regarding beauty, he counsels Yorick's skull to get itself "to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch

thick, to this favor she must come; maker her laugh at that" (5.1.192-95). Conversely, Nesca A. Robb summarizes Ficino's *Commentary* in this wise: "The Good is like the sun; beauty, like the sun's ray, penetrates through the four circles of being [Mind, Soul, Nature, Matter—God/Good at the center], and paints upon them the types of all things which are ideas in the Angelic mind, reasons (rationes) in the soul; seeds (semina) in nature, which is the generative virtue of the soul, and "forms" in matter. God, being the principle of Beauty, is the cause of all beautiful objects" (78). In respect of circular movement, Yasuhiro Ogawa, in his comprehensive "Grinning Death's-Head: *Hamlet* and the Vision of the Grotesque," dwells at length on Hamlet's description of a circular food chain, wherein we eat ourselves for the "emperor" (4.3.21) worm: "it goes on endlessly, forming something like a vicious circle. Note the uroboric shape the formula takes" (195). Human beings end by consuming the fish that consumed the worms that fed on human flesh: "human-eating worms will be eaten by fish that will conversely be eaten by human beings . . . Ad infinitum and ad nauseam" (196). The "conceit of this circular migration," this "anti-progress," amounts to "virtual cannibalism" (196); an "endless cyclical reciprocation of eating mobilized by death" (196, fn. 5). Conversely, Ficino's *Commentary* enthalls to the optimistic cycle described by Eusebius: "Love is a circle of good, revolving from good to good perpetually" (134; second oration, ch. 2). E. M. W. Tillyard points out that Elizabethans saw the macrocosm as perfect and complete, in accordance with the Neoplatonic doctrine of plenitude (32); at the same time, with Hamlet, they saw the human conundrum as a problem area: "Gertrude's sin," for instance, "is not against human decency alone but against the whole scale of being" (77).

¹⁰ Cf. a passage from the fourth book of Sir Thomas Hoby's 1588 Englishing of Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*: "And therefore hath a delite to joyne his mouth with the womans beloved with a kisse: not to stir him to any dishonest desire, but because hee feeleth that that bonde is the opening of an entrie to the soules, which drawne with a coveting the one of the other, poure them selves by turne the one into the others bodie, and be so mingled together, that each of them hath two soules" (315).

¹¹ Cf. Hamlet's tribute to his father's ghost, an intrepid "old mole" (1.5.102): "*Hic et ubique?*" (156), he asks incredulously. His father's ghost seems to be omnipresent, if only "in the cellarage" (151). He asks "canst work i' th' earth so fast? / A worthy pioner! [...]" (162-63). The "pioner" is that engineer who undermines a stronghold from underneath or by various earthworks (cf. Onions 201, e.g., *Henry V* 3.2.87). See also Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine, Part Two*, in which Tamburlaine's henchman Theridamus threatens the walls of a fortified city with "pioners" (3.3.20), who are able to "raise a hill / Of earth and faggots higher than thy fort" (21-22). In *Hamlet*, the "worth pioner," or "old mole," infests and ultimately brings down Elsinore. See esp. Stephen Greenblatt's recent (but already seminal) *Hamlet in Purgatory*. As Greenblatt observes, *hic et ubique* is part of a commonplace Latin invocation meant to be uttered by those entering a cemetery: "All hail, all faithful souls, whose bodies do here and everywhere rest in the dust [*Salvete vos omnes fideles animae, quarum corpora hic et ubique requiescat in pulvere*]" (16, trans. by Thomas Rogers in Greenblatt); cf. 205-57. Greenblatt demonstrates that the prayer is directed to those, like King Hamlet, who are currently undergoing the trials of purgatory (233-35). Due to human perfidy, this underworld will not hold its tongue and breaks in on the living. The Prince calls out to his father to "Rest, rest" (1.5.183), but the spirit cannot rest if the living continue

to neglect him, let his murderer go free, and otherwise violate his memory and legacy.

¹² Ogawa's point of departure (see "Grinning Death's Head" 194) is C. S. Lewis's "Hamlet: the Prince or the Poem," where Lewis observes that *Hamlet* goes further than most tragedies on the matter of death, inasmuch as we are caught up with the Prince in the very *being* of what it means to be dead: i.e., not dying, but "being dead" (Hooper 99). Picking up this thread, Ogawa remarks that the grotesque, as evidenced by numerous passages in *Hamlet*, is that figure which fastens on the import of death, with special emphasis on the "body's destiny" (194). See also Joyce Carol Oates, in the afterward to her short story collection *Haunted: Tales of the Grotesque*: "the grotesque always possesses a blunt *physicality* that no amount of epistemological exegesis can exorcise" (304). The figure of the grotesque implies and, in a sense, makes an argument for a spiritual universe, but not to any hopeful end. The metaphysics, as it were, are largely negative, even horrific, as when Horatio is reminded of those signs and wonders reported just before Julius Caesar was assassinated: "The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead / Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets" (1.1.115-16). There is no good news in these resurrections. St. Matthew reports that, at the time of Christ's resurrection, certain saints rose from their sleep and appeared to many in Jerusalem (27.50-53). However, no one wants to see a departed loved one return under the circumstances described by Horatio, that is, sheeted, witless, and gibbering. Perversely, the grotesque motif and Gothic subject make us dread the survival of the soul and the influence of a spiritual reality, insofar as we fear that transformation will not reflect someone's best self, but only the lower nature: i.e., the abysmal craving of animal appetite, rather than the higher self and best qualities of the human person. In general, the Gothic grotesque suspects that the refined self—the understanding—is evanescent and transitory, and perhaps inevitably borne down and given over to the unseemly and bestial, as Willard Farnham comments in *The Shakespearean Grotesque*: "Hamlet's basic vision of man is of a double-being, in one part godlike, or angelic, and 'noble in reason', in the other part ignoble and merely 'quintessence of dust', like the beast that perishes, the beast that 'wants discourse of reason'. Man in this vision is raised gratifyingly far above the beast, but with the reason he thus acquires he cannot escape seeing that his highness remains bound to an animal lowness and that this lowness, in relation to his highness, is grotesque" (106-7). Farnham's grotesque, like the title plate of his book (from a 12th century manuscript for the Vulgate Job), envisions the human soul struggling within the looping trceries of our corporeal existence, unable to escape its entwining tendrils. See Frye 125 for Zwingly's "between the hammer and the anvil, half beast and half angel" (fr. "Of the Education of Youth").

¹³ See Greenblatt 240-42. Greenblatt regards the worm and supper motif as typical of the derision Reformers leveled at the "crude materialism" (240) of Catholic transubstantiation, perhaps in this respect hinting at a Protestant-minded Prince bent on finding a hope of providence beyond the vanity, decay, and futility of the flesh.

¹⁴ Cf. the Archbishop's theological analogy for Prince Hal's thoroughgoing "reformation" (*Henry V* 1.1.33): that at the moment of his father's death, "yea, at that very moment, / Consideration like an angel came / And whipt th' offending Adam out of him" (29). Shaheen cites St. Paul and makes the point: "Compare Rom. 6.6; 2 Cor. 5.17; Eph. 4.22-24; and Col. 3.9-10 [...]. In these texts the Apostle Paul urges believers to cast off the 'olde man,' the offending Adam, and put on a new personality" (452). According to E. J. Bicknell's *A*

Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, the Anglican view of Original Sin (Tertullian's *vitium originis*) goes further than *privatio naturae* (only weakened, the view of some early Church Fathers), and agrees with Augustine's more fundamental *depravatio naturae* ("whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness"), but stops considerably short of Calvinistic *tota depravatio* (180-81). For a close comparison of Shakespeare and the theology of the Reformers (esp. Luther, Calvin, and Hooker), see Roland M. Frye's *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine*.

¹⁵ In Van Harvey, *imputation* is a Protestant term referring to the righteous status of the believer, imparted not by personal merit, but rather *imputed*, or counted, towards the believer by faith according to grace: "The Reformers held that man is declared to be righteous in God's sight not because of any righteousness of man's own but because God, on account of Christ's sacrifice, chooses to reckon man as righteous" (130); cf. Richard Hooker in the same vein, from sermon 2 "On Justification," in vol. 3 of *Keble's Works*, 488-91. Roman Catholic doctrine taught inherent grace, a dynamic power infused via the sacrament of baptism, resulting in a complete transformation of the recipient's nature; naturally, it was dissipated by the accruing of sins, but penance and absolution restored the believer to the baptismal state—a sanctifying grace the believer owns and uses towards spiritual merit and, ultimately, justification before God. Sanctification, from this point of view, is developmental, a being which is also becoming, and, by steps, attaining to eternal life. In Reform doctrine, sanctification, or the righteousness of works, is considered distinct from justification, which is categorically only by faith. Eternal life is not the consequence of sanctification, but rather a free gift. On behalf of Anglicanism, Hooker weighs in against *infusion* and *inherent*, advancing the freedom and liberty of the Reform doctrine of *imputed* grace. Rather than becoming *inherent* to the believer, such grace is only assigned or counted, because the believer's power remains wholly dependent at all times on Christ's meritorious sacrifice. As Hooker explains, there are two forms of righteousness: sanctification is by works, but it is not the means by which we enter heaven; that is only by justification, which is "by the faith of Abraham" (491). *Imputed* grace is the Protestant remedy for *imputed* sin, the original sin that damns all equally, and is counted against us not because of personal failure, but because of the Fall, as Jeremy Taylor observes in *The Doctrine and Practice of Repentance*, in vol. 7 of his *Works*: "Original sin is not our sin properly, not inherent in us, but is only imputed to us, so as to bring evil effects upon us" (309).

¹⁶ See Onions 142, "engraft"; also, Simpson 311, *inoculatio, ionis, f.* "an engrafting." The word "inoculate" does not lend itself to Protestant *imputation*, but rather to the more Roman Catholic *infusion*, inasmuch as the plant, through inoculation, acquires a wholly new character—literally, an *oculus* (Latin for eye, but also "bud") is grafted into different stock. Harvey defines infusion as the "process by which supernatural grace is given to (infused into) the soul. The term is generally rejected by Protestant theologians in so far as it implies that grace is regarded as a supernatural substance rather than the divine favor or graciousness of God" (130-31). Hamlet, for instance, tries to disavow a virtue in which he is saturated and which has become him—a virtue, or power, imparted by Ophelia. Frye, it should be noted, suggests that Shakespeare, in general, seems to side with Luther, who does not require a Christian society; Luther, in fact, warned that this "world ought not and cannot be ruled according to the Gospel and Christian love" (qtd. in Frye 100, fr. "On Trade and Usury"). Society may function well even if comprised mostly of "virtuous heathen" (99). However, in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare presents a nominally

Christian society that has compromised with hypocrisy, expediency, and secret sins. The fallen believer comes under special onus. The world seems to wait, or groan, in anticipation of an apocalyptic revelation: the true children of God. The gospel, in a sense, breaks in on Elsinore in the form of judgment upon the apostate—a gospel as harsh as anti-gospel and requiring harsh ministers.

¹⁷ Onions defines "relish" (3.1.116-17) as meaning to "Have a taste of (something), savour of, have a touch or trace of[...]" (226). The relish Hamlet finds in his "old stock" is a variation of a Pauline theme: the "war in our members": "But I see another law in my membres, rebelling against the law of my minde, and leading me captiue vnto the law of sinne, which is in my membres" (Romans 7.23). Perversely, Hamlet champions the savor of the old nature, the law of sin and death—it *tastes* good, he says diabolically. At the same time, his devilish nostalgia is inadequate. His language admits to deep down, if rueful, change. He may recall the old him, but he is new—new, it seems, in Ophelia. The question of "God's table" (versus altars) leads us towards Anglican Reform. The question of Hamlet's essential nature, however, is more subtle. The kind of virtue that occupies him seems more thoroughgoing, or *inherent* and *infused*, than only *imputed*. Perhaps, for that reason, the play maintains an abiding Catholic component any drama about being dead, or between worlds, ordinarily might imply; cf. Lewis's comment on "Purgatory, Hell, Heaven" in Hooper 99; also, Ogawa on "Catholic eschatology" 219 (fn. 48 on M. M. Mahood, *Shakespeare's Wordplay*); finally, "Remember Me," chap. 5 of Greenblatt's *Hamlet in Purgatory* is definitive. As it is, in Shakespeare, protagonists may own their virtue and be wholly determined by it, even against their own self-interest, as in the case of Orlando in *As You Like It*. Old Adam, ironically, explains what Orlando cannot see: "Know you not, master, to some men / Their graces serve them but as enemies? / No more do yours. Your virtues, gentle master, / Are sanctified and holy traitors to you" (2.3.10-13).

¹⁸ Romans 4.3: "For what faith the Scripture? Abraham beleued God, and it was counted to him for righteousnes" (Geneva). Bicknell affirms, that for Anglican Reformers, the doctrine of justification meant being accounted or treated as righteous, through faith in Christ, rather than the Roman Catholic (Council of Trent) conception of being made righteous (202).

¹⁹ Acts 9.5: "And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whome thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against prickes."

²⁰ Anglican Reform rejected transubstantiation but nonetheless maintained the real, or spiritual, presence of Christ in the communion meal. In his *True and Catholic Doctrine and Use of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, Thomas Cranmer categorically distinguished the Anglican eucharist from that of the Roman, his key tenets being "that Christ is present in 'force, grace, virtue, and benefit," and "really and effectually," but his glorified body remains in heaven (xiib-xiic). Moreover, Cranmer and other Anglican Divines argued that communion only occurred upon reception: i.e., upon being physically consumed by the believing communicant. According to the fifth book of Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, in vol. 2 of Keble's *Works*: "The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not therefore to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament"; (352; ch. 67). Jeremy Taylor makes the same point in his *The Real Presence and Spiritual of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament*, vol. 6 of *Works*, "Christ's body is eaten only sacramentally by the body, but really and effectively only by faith, which is the mouth of the soul" (74). At the same time, J. H. Blunt, in his *The Annotated Book of Common Prayer*, 344-68, categorizes Anglican

eucharist as a sacrifice, though with serious qualifications: "the natural bread and wine are not annihilated," and "There is no new immolation of the Body of Christ, but a re-presentation of that immolation once for all accomplished at Calvary" (353). Bicknell 410-12 makes the same difficult point, pointing out that Anglican Reform never meant to imply the eucharist was somehow not a sacrifice of Christ's body: "Thus, what the Church does in the Eucharist is on a level, not with what our Lord did once for all on Calvary, but with what He is now doing in Heaven. That death can never be repeated" (412-13). Significantly, in respect of Ophelia's "God's table," what we are left with, in Anglican terms, is a feast of the faithful upon a sacrifice. The table is not set for Christ suffering, all over again, a new "change or destruction," or a new "humiliation, a new self-emptying" (418); rather, the emphasis is on eating and drinking the body and blood already offered and sacrificed once and for all on Calvary. Esteemed Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth (d. 1688), in vol. 2 of his *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, sets forth a theology of the table versus that of an altar: "Not a sacrifice, but a feast upon sacrifice; or else, in other words, not *oblatio sacrificii*, but, as Tertullian excellently speaks, *participatio sacrificii*, not the offering of something up to God upon an altar, but the eating of something which comes from God's altar,—and is set upon our tables. Neither was it ever known amongst the Jews or heathens, that those tables upon which they did eat their sacrifices, should be called by the name of altars. St. Paul, speaking of the feasts upon the idol-sacrifices, calls the places upon which they were eaten, 'the table of devils,' because the devil's meat was eaten on them; not the altars of devils [...]" (532). In *Hamlet*, Guildenstern inadvertently sums up the *disangelion* of God's table as Ophelia envisions it, a feast upon the sacrifice of the King's person: "Most holy and religious fear it is / To keep those many many bodies safe / That live and feed upon your Majesty" (3.3.8-10).

²¹ See Greenblatt 246-47. Like King Hamlet, Ophelia is deprived of something the living owe her soul: notably, "the communal ritual assistance given to the dead by the living—that is, the requiem masses and other 'charitable prayers' designed to shorten the soul's purgatorial suffering and hasten its ascent to Heaven" (246). Accordingly, perhaps we are to infer that, like Hamlet's father, Ophelia also maintains a vengeful presence—and ministry—among the living. Greenblatt notes that, for her part, Ophelia had not neglected praying for mercy on her father's soul and that of others (246, citing 4.5.194-95).

²² Lisa Gim carefully documents the gospel nuances of *Hamlet*, and notes that Hamlet's paradoxical relationship to God's providence is not unlike Christ's own parables and hard sayings, moments when he seems to represent in himself an anti-type of the good news of the kingdom. In Matthew 10, the same chapter featuring the fallen sparrow, Christ is capable of upending the benevolence, as he does in verses 34-36: "The implications of Christ's words in Matthew X are surprising and disturbing. Christ here is not gentle and loving but destructive, bringing not peace but the sword and setting kin against kin" (60). Gim concludes that the gospel of the kingdom, as Christ speaks of it, is fraught with jarring turns, at one point merciful, the next condemning, and that Hamlet bears out this bi-directionality as well. At the same time, Shakespeare emphasizes the essential charity of the gospel (and anticipates Hamlet's speech on providence and sparrow) in *As You Like It*, where old Adam offers his lifetime savings to Orlando: "Take that, and He that doth the ravens feed, / Yea, providently caters for the sparrow, / Be comfort to my age!" (2.3.43-45).

Gender and Genre in Teaching The Winter's Tale

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The Winter's Tale is an especially vexing play both for students and directors because of the disjunction between acts 3 and 4 – we “leap o’er” not only 16 years but an almost unfathomable gap in tone, attitude and genre. The 18th Century solved this problem simply by lopping off the first three acts and adding a series of set speeches that described the missing action. As a teacher, however, I do not have that option. As I studied the play in preparation for introducing it to my students, I struggled with how to reconcile the two disparate pieces – not only for my students, but for myself as well. I was not satisfied with simply saying, “Oh, it’s a romance, so it’s okay.” As I studied the play, however, it began to occur to me that I could use its very disjointedness to my advantage. The play, after all, is not simply a comedy tacked onto a tragedy – it is also a romance, a pastoral and an epic, and each of these genres becomes a sign system in itself that points to a greater unity in both theme and attitude.

Once I began to see past the explicit generic divisions of tragedy and comedy to the play’s use of epic and romance, I decided to attempt an ambitious lesson plan. We had already examined the play on a relatively

fragmented level by pulling out specific scenes and working on the blocking of those scenes. Because of this, I had confidence in the students’ ability to read the text closely and critically. In order to gain a more unified perspective on the play, my next lesson plan had several goals:

1. To familiarize the students with the generic forms Shakespeare draws on within the play;
2. To prod the students into seeing that, despite the play’s explicit division into tragedy and pastoral/comedy, that the genres of epic and romance underpin both halves of the play;
3. To show the students that the genres of epic and romance serve to magnify the emotional impact of the play’s events;
4. To show that these references also heighten the impact of 2 important themes throughout the play: those of faith, and of the contradictory nature of women’s position within Renaissance culture.

The first objective was fairly straightforward. I supplied the students with some background information through lecture format. Drawing on standard sources, I provided the students with definitions of each genre – tragedy, comedy, pastoral, romance and epic.

We then shifted from lecture into a class discussion (either in small groups or as a whole class, depending on how talkative they were) to pick out the obvious and not-so-obvious ways which the play employs the plot devices of, or makes references to, each of these forms. This portion of the class is more or less successful depending on how well read the students are. The elements of tragedy and comedy are by far the easier for them to pick out. The first act comes as close to being a tragedy as one can without actually littering the stage with bodies. The principle characters are noble, the central character – Leontes – makes a fatal mistake and loses everything dear to him as a result, and he finally gains a recognition of

the error he has committed and what he has lost as a result. The tragedy can also be construed as extending to the Sicilian court at large, as the majority of Leontes's courtiers become complicit in his mistake, allowing their fear of Leontes to overcome their moral obligation to defend Hermione's innocence. The flaws that emerge both in Leontes and in the court at large include jealousy, pride, but also a profound lack of faith in others and an unwillingness to sacrifice one's self for another.

Students find it just as easy to identify the pastoral and comedic elements in the second half of the play. There is a pair of lovers thwarted by parents, and an imminent threat of disaster as Polixines threatens Perdita with arrest and disfigurement, and her surrogate father with hanging. The morality of the shepherds is contrasted with the relative cynicism of the court and Polixines's lingering bitterness at Leontes's treatment. The play also employs a kind of trickster figure in the form of Autolycus who introduces an element of chaos into a stagnant social order. Most importantly, though, the play ends with the promise of marriage and the hope for social renewal. This half of the play emphasizes the themes of forgiveness and faith in God, as opposed to faith in people.

At this point in the class discussion, I try to get the students to begin thinking about what holds these two halves together and suggest that part of what keeps the play from falling apart is first, a sense that we are witnessing events that have greater significance than just for the families involved – that somehow the implications of these events are on a grand, even cosmic scale – and secondly, a sense of wonder – the kind of wonder that people experience in their own lives but is almost impossible to capture in literature. Evil in real life is always devastating and demoralizing, but on stage can easily be made to appear interesting, and even intriguing, as Shakespeare discovered in *Richard III*. By the same token, good in real life is always exhilarating and magical, but on stage can easily appear boring. This is one of the major drawbacks of most morality plays – Satan always seems

to have much more fun than the wise counsellors the everyman figure is supposed to listen to. I argue to the students that *The Winter's Tale* is able to create a sense of importance and of wonder by drawing on the genres of epic and romance, and I ask the students to list the ways in which the play uses both of these forms.

The play draws strongly on epic conventions and references to epic and mythic events. The scope of the action is large – encompassing two nations and the ocean between, Shakespeare even supplies Bohemia with a seacoast that emphasizes this gulf. The epic hero undergoes a kind of quest, though it is more of an internal quest as Leontes embarks into the underworld of repentance for 16 years. We have a kind of muse or chorus figure in Time that breeches the gap between the two halves of the play. We witness what appears to be supernatural meddling through Apollo's oracle and the death of Mamillius, Leontes's son. Paulina serves as a wise mentor for Leontes both before and after his losses. Perdita is abandoned in the wasteland just as Oedipus, Romulus, and Remus were. Finally, one of the most direct references is Autolycus, whose name echoes that of Odysseus's grandfather. These borrowings and references serve to broaden the thematic sweep of the play – we get the sense that this is not a story just about these families, but about all of humanity, the play is not just a comedy, but its themes are of epic significance.

In addition, the play relies heavily on the magical coincidences of romance tales through the oracle, the timing of the storm that wrecks Antigonus's ship, Antigonus's death after he abandons Perdita, Florizel's chance meeting with Perdita when he chased his hawk across the shepherd's land, and the "re-animation" of Hermione's statue. It also relies on the courtly conventions of romance. Hermione and Perdita are both praised as incomparable beauties, while Camillo is a model of loyalty and morality. At the same time, Perdita is consistently praised for her "innate" nobility. Even before they have met her, Polixines and Camillo cite her reputation that "is

extended more than can be thought to begin from such a cottage" (4.2.37-38), and once he has seen her, Polixenes exclaims that "Nothing she does or seems / But smacks of something greater than herself, / Too noble for this place" (4.4.157-59). This last seems almost to recall fairy tale characters like the princess and the pea – yet instead of rejecting it as implausible we accept it as part of the romance formula. All of these elements have the strong effect of creating a sense of wonder in the audience, helping to recreate the excitement that comes with genuine goodness.

The themes, too, I try to impress on the class, become linked through the genres of epic and romance. In the play's tragedy, events revolve around those issues mentioned before: of a lack of faith in those closest to us – our friends and lovers, and around the themes of pride and jealousy. In its comedy, events revolve instead around faith in God and forgiveness.

Yet despite this disjunction, the epic scope of the play underscores the theme of faith in both halves of the play. Leontes's lack of faith is associated with many of the epic references. His ultimate act of faithlessness, his rejection of the oracle, is directly associated with divine intervention through the death of his son. Conversely, his journey into the underworld is his quest to maintain his faith in the oracle's prophecy. As a result, this theme becomes magnified to an epic level, and because of this, Paulina's words in the final act take on a strong symbolic significance: "It is required / You do awake your faith" (5.3.94-96). These words recall for us both the faithlessness that set the play in motion and the improbably stubborn faith that eventually makes the conclusion possible. Yet because of the epic scope of the play the audience feels as though the characters are not the only ones who need to awake their faith. These are words that should awaken humanity itself.

A second theme also emerges to unify the two halves of the play. In the tragedy, jealousy plays an enormously important role. Leontes's fury emerges with

stunning ferocity as early as the second scene, and by the time we come to the culminating courtroom scene, his opinion is firmly and stubbornly rooted, even though he has no evidence to support his allegations. Even he seems to subconsciously admit the irrationality of his obsession. When Hermione argues that "You speak a language that I understand not. / My life stands in the level of your dreams, / Which I'll lay down." He replies, "Your actions are my dreams. / You had a bastard by Polixenes / And I but dreamed it" (3.2.78-82). Even as he insists on his own sense of innocent betrayal – that he never dreamed her disloyalty was possible – he seems also to admit that the actions he accuses her of are nothing more than his fantasies – he but dreamed them. In the second half of the play, however, forgiveness supplants jealousy in importance. As the scene opens in Bohemia, we see clearly that Polixenes has not forgiven Leontes for his accusations and that this lingering bitterness colors his reactions to both toward his subjects and his son. When Camillo asks to return to his homeland, Polixenes immediately rejects his request insisting, "Of that fatal country Sicilia, prithee speak no more, whose very naming punishes me with remembrance of that penitent – as thou callest him – and reconciled King my brother" (4.2.16-19). Resolution in this half of the play is possible only with forgiveness, while we hear references to jealousy only as a distant memory and vague source of trouble.

In developing both of these themes, however, women play a pivotal role, and their importance is emphasized through the associations made with romances. In romance tales, women often perform contradictory, but significant roles. They appear either as sources of inspiration, as objects to be placed upon a pedestal because of their beauty and wisdom; or they are sources of anxiety, as evil temptresses or witches waiting to lead chivalrous knights astray. In *The Winter's Tale* the same woman becomes both. Hermione is both the source of Leontes's greatest anxiety and the source of his redemption. And in an interesting irony, in order for him to receive this

redemption, she is first literally placed upon a pedestal and admired as an object. Only when Leontes desires her as, and she then shows herself to be, a flesh and blood woman does she offer forgiveness. When Paulina tells her to "Descend. [and] Be stone no more" (5.3.99) our wonder, and Leontes's quest, is complete.

Shakespeare had dealt with this issue before in *Othello* where Desdemona represented for Othello not only his greatest hopes for himself, but also his greatest fears about himself. On the one hand, she represented for him the possibility of order and justice: "When I love her not," he says, "chaos is come again." But she also represents to him his greatest fears, the fear that he will never be accepted by Venetian society, the fear that underneath his noble exterior that he really is the savage that Venice believes him to be. This contradiction is a direct reflection of women's position in Renaissance society as a whole: legally they are property to be managed, spiritually they are individuals with wills of their own. "O curse of marriage," laments Othello, "That we can call these delicate creatures ours / And not their appetites" (3.3.272-74). In *Othello*, the focus on a single male character and the relative realism of tragedy preclude redemption. In *The Winter's Tale*, however, the genre of romance allows the play to foreground the women in the play and place more emphasis on them as a potential source of redemption.

In this sense, each genre within the play comes to function as a sign system. According to several theorists, the Renaissance was very interested in, as Ann Imbrie states it, "the relation of generic form to moral value" (Imbrie 55). Genres functioned at the level of epistemological systems and reflected "a way of seeing and interpreting the world and expressing that interpretation in a coherent way" (Imbrie 60). *The Winter's Tale* uses generic forms in this way to underscore both theme and a specific tone in relation to those themes. The play becomes not only a tragicomedy, but an epic romance. Its scope encompasses all of humanity and its

tone is one of magical wonder. When Paulina demands that we awake our faith we understand that she means this on more than a situational level. It means that our redemption depends on our awakening our faith on multiple levels and that redemption may in fact come from the one thing that may also be the source of our greatest anxiety, the vulnerability of opening our hearts.

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"Stir up the Athenian Youth": Sleepovers, Prom Nights, and Adolescent Experience in A Midsummer Night's Dream

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A. A Play about Adolescence?

Near the end of the first act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Hermia and Lysander have decided to elope, escaping "the sharp Athenian law" (1.1.162) that impedes their happiness, into the freedom of the woods, a new life, and marriage. At this stage in the play, we realize this choice is a bit beyond their level of maturity. Nonetheless, Hermia informs her life-long friend Helena of their decision and says goodbye:

And in the wood, where often you and I
Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie,
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,
There my Lysander and myself shall meet,
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes
To seek new friends and stranger companies.
Farewell, sweet playfellow. (1.1.214-20)

If we had more time, we could pair this passage with similar ones by other women in the play—Helena later invokes this same childhood intimacy, saying that they two grew "Like to a double cherry, seeming parted, / But yet an union in partition" (3.2.209-10), and Titania recalls a kind of edenic past with the mother of the child she and Oberon are feuding over (2.1.121-37). But this speech will have to stand for all of them.

What is remarkable about Hermia's speech is the way it limns her past, present, and future. What used to be a favorite spot for the intimate sleepover-style conversations between two preadolescent girls has now become a meeting place for lovers.¹ Thus this speech is transitional, and not just because it points us into the woods, for it connects the physical movement of the young couple with their developmental changes. As C. L. Barber has observed, the young lovers in the play "move from the loyalties of one stage of life to those of another" (130). With "Farewell, sweet playfellow," Hermia has moved into the boy-crazy world of adolescence and its "new friends and stranger companies," a phrase that does not just describe men but the adult world. She is growing up.

Her speech also connects those changes to the woods, preparing us to see the nocturnal activities of the young people there as representative of adolescence, that often bumpy transition from childhood to adulthood. Mary Pipher, a mid-western clinical psychologist and author of *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*, uses a metaphoric description of adolescents, which can help us here. She writes,

Adolescents are travelers, far from home with no native land, neither children nor adults. They are jet-setters who fly from one country to another with amazing speed. Sometimes they are four years old, an hour later they are twenty-five. They don't really fit anywhere. There's a yearning for place, a search for solid ground. (52)

This is not a bad description of what it feels like for the play's young people when we find them in the woods. Pipher's ideas of travel, movement, and yearning help us understand Hermia's impetus in the speech we are considering—like many teens, she's "just gotta get out a here"—as well as her deeper yearnings for stability.

Hermia's speech, then, helps us see that the play is in many ways about the adolescent transition from the innocent intimacy of childhood affection to the mature love of adult, married life, a theme consonant with the play's interest in "concord" (5.1.60), "constancy" (5.1.26), "amity" (4.1.86), and marriage.

Pipher writes, "Adolescence is a border between adulthood and childhood, and as such it has a richness and diversity unmatched by any other life stage" (52). It is just this sort of richness which informs the play. Indeed, this essay will bounce the actions, characters, and themes of the play off Pipher's informed and compassionate discussions of adolescence. This is not to argue for any strict continuity of adolescent experience between early modern England and the 21st century.² But in the same way that Pipher uses the image of Ophelia in her title to suggest the destruction of an adolescent girl who "loses herself" and is "torn apart by her efforts to please" (20), connecting the modern-day experience of adolescence with Shakespeare's play can be illuminating. This connection may be in part metaphorical, but that makes it more compelling, not less. Mostly, it suggests how modern readers and viewers can discover themselves in the play—and how that discovery can be productive, as the experience of the woods is for the young lovers in the play. The topics of this paper, then, should be of interest both to readers and viewers of the play and to teachers interested in engaging adolescent readers in it. Answers to problems young women experience growing up in America, which Pipher has called to our attention, cannot be found simply by engaging adolescents in a good play, but if literature has any value in allowing us to understand ourselves, or to imagine ourselves, reading the play alert to its adolescent resonances can be valuable.

B. "Why Do Fools Fall in Love?"

The context of Hermia's farewell to childlike love can help us understand its significance, for it comes near the end the first scene in the play—a scene which is organized as a comprehensive compendium of love. The question, "What is love?" (often an adolescent preoccupation), is answered in at least ten ways in the scene—albeit provisionally and inconclusively. While some of these versions of love are lightly critiqued in the scene, we are not allowed, at the beginning of the play, to decide which kind of love is right, proper, or true. Here they are in outline form:

Some of these definitions are clichés, as is the first one: opposites attract. When we meet Theseus and Hippolyta in the first lines of the play, they are very much in love, but they are utter opposites: Athenian/Amazonian, reason/emotion, impatience/patience.

Egeus offers the next two definitions of love—one wrong and one right, as he sees it. The first is that love is bewitchment: he tells Theseus that Lysander "hath bewitched the bosom of my child" (27). His next definition is based on parental prerogative, referring to Hermia's "obedience, which is due to me" (37). If this view of love sounds entirely wrong (just ask your students if parents should have a say in who they date—or marry), Theseus's version is more reasonable. A few lines later he invites Hermia to "question your desires, / Know of your youth, examine well your blood" (67-68)—good parental advice, especially when your daughter brings home a biker.³

Hermia's bold response to her father and to Theseus comes close to what we usually call romantic love; she says, "I know not by what power I am made bold" (1.1.59)—implying that love is a mysterious, overwhelming power (bewitchment, with a difference, I suppose). It takes precedence over every other commitment, and it cannot be mitigated, denied, or shifted.

Two versions of love do not get much play in this compendium, but the fact that they get mentioned at all suggests that the scene is designed to be encyclopedic:

every possible kind of love will get mentioned. The first is the love of religious devotion, offered by Theseus to Hermia as her only alternative to death if she goes against her father's wishes. Such love means

For aye to be in shady cloister mewed,
To live a barren sister all your life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
(71-73)

The second of these undeveloped versions of love comes a bit later (I'm taking this one out of order) and is contained in Lysander's jibe at Demetrius a few lines later: "You have her father's love, Demetrius; / Let me have Hermia's. Do you marry him" (93-94).⁴

Hermia and Theseus (without recognizing it!) share the next definition of love. Responding to the choice Theseus has given her to get herself to a nunnery, Hermia vows,

So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up
Unto his lordship, whose unwished yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty. (79-82)

Only when "lordship" and "sovereignty" on the man's part are balanced by the woman's active consent can love develop into an "everlasting bond of fellowship" (85), which is what Theseus calls it just three lines later. Such mutual assent was considered essential to marriage by Protestant reformers. Bucer, for instance, writes that "there is no true marriage without true assent of hearts between those who make the agreement," adding that "assent and love" are requisite to a good marriage (Pauck 325). If at this point in the play we could look ahead to the end, we would see that this definition of love is confirmed. Seen from the other side of the woods, the goal of the drama's action has been the definition,

discovery, and/or achievement of the kind of love that is worthy of marriage. But for the moment, this kind of love is only one of several in the air of the first scene of the play, and it is even undercut by the fact that Hermia and Theseus, who share this definition, do not understand each other. They don't get it.

This ideal love contrasts strongly with the next version (skipping over Lysander's quip to Egeus) which is represented by the character Helena. Defending his own claim to Hermia, Lysander reveals that Demetrius earlier wooed Helena so that "she, sweet lady, dotes / Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry / Upon this spotted and inconstant man" (108-10). Lysander's description helps to define doting love—it is akin to idolatry, it cannot choose its object, and, while the word is applied here to Demetrius and not his love, it is inherently unstable ("unconstant"). It is the mirror image of Hermia's "I know not by what power." This is gaga, drooling, puppy love.

For a portrait of this love and its effects, we need simply follow Helena into the woods where she goes to "enrich her pain" (1.1.250) by catching sight of Demetrius even though he spurns her. What happens when they meet is funny, sad, and illustrative of how disconcerting the adolescent experience of puppy love can be for everyone involved. Demetrius fancies himself madly in love with Hermia (and this without any love potion!), for he says he's "wood [i.e. "wode"] within this wood" (2.1.92), a pun which associates the deep, dark woods with madness. Thus he is revolted by Helena's fawning: "Do I entice you?" he asks, "Do I speak you fair? / Or rather do I not in plainest truth / Tell you I do not nor I cannot love you?" (199-201). Tough words, bred by his own disordered passions but also by his discomfort at being pursued. In the words of many a teenager, "Why won't she (or he) leave me alone?" Helena's response epitomizes doting love (note: these lines are to be read breathlessly and in utter desperation):

And even for that do I love you the more.
 I am your spaniel; and Demetrius,
 The more you beat me I will fawn on you.
 Use me as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
 Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
 Unworthy as I am, to follow you. (202-07)

Poor Helena. Only spaniel love can be worse than puppy love! In a disturbing response, but one that is understood too well by adolescents in today's American high schools, Demetrius expresses his disgust by threatening sexual violence.⁵ Little wonder that such feelings on her part and such treatment by others is destructive of Helena's self-esteem. In the next scene, she concludes, "No, no, I am as ugly as a bear" (2.2.100). This is probably the lowest point in the play for someone who is considering it in terms of adolescent experience. The play has told a brief parable of the destructive power of uninhibited, reckless doting love on the esteem of a young girl.

The ninth version of love is epitomized in that famously clichéd line, uttered by Hermia when she and Lysander are finally alone: "The course of true love never did run smooth" (134). This is the kind of thing you, or your children, have heard when you've been told that the test of true love is that it meets resistance—that adversity and trials will make your love stronger and even prove its worth. In the context of this play, we might call this kind of love "Romeo and Juliet syndrome," or "Pyramus and Thisbe blindness" or even "midsummer madness."

This brings us back to Hermia's recollection, as she takes leave of Helena, of an earlier, simpler kind of love suggested by "Farewell, sweet playfellow" (1.1.220).

As most readers of the play know, this scene culminates in Helena's soliloquy, in which she laments the vagaries of love. Her most resonant lines are these: "Things base and vile, holding no quantity, / Love can transpose to form and dignity" (232-33). But her insight, at least as stated in this context, does not immediately resolve the conflicts between the ten or so definitions of

love that the scene has played with. It does, of course, provide a thematic kernel that will be picked up at the beginning of the final act of the play, a kernel that links the power of the imagination with the power of love to transform our sight and our selves.

When I ask students whether it is a good or bad thing that love doesn't see straight—that it can transform "Things base and vile," they recognize that it is a trick question. Blind love can turn us into utter fools. But without the transforming power of love, who would love any of us, with our faults, our bulges, or our quirks—with all the things TV commercials urge us to shed? It is only love that can transform the one we love into the most important, most sacred, and most lovely person in the world. Thus Shakespeare presents us, in Helena's confused and bitter lament that has as its context a compendium of ways to understand love, with a double vision of love that foreshadows a "concord" out of all this "discord" (5.1.60).

C. Into the Woods

But we left Hermia, who is all too ready to abandon her childhood affections for the grownup world of men, love, and, well, the world. And so it is perhaps only we readers and viewers who are made slightly sad by her "Farewell, sweet playfellow" (220). We see, if she does not, that the transition from childhood to adulthood via adolescence involves some fracture as well as growth. This is why expectations are overturned when the action moves to the woods. To take the example nearest at hand, Hermia and Lysander believe they are escaping the oppression of the state, law, parental authority, and urban society for the freedom of pastoral retreat. But what they get is darkness, confusion, "brawls" (2.1.87), wandering (2.2.41), jealousy, insanity, doting, violence, disorder, and weariness. And what ties these features together, besides their being unexpected, is their extremity. What we see in the woods is an exaggerated, overheated version of the world outside of the woods. In love, the catalyst for this

extremity of emotion is the love potion, but there is enough of it in the night air of the woods without the juice's ministrations. This is clear in the person and pranks of Puck and in the long description at the beginning of Act 2 of the natural disorder which is a result of the marital spat between Oberon and Titania: "We are their parents and original," summarizes Titania (2.1.117).⁶ Apparently, love really does make the world go 'round.

I have already suggested that the woods in the play function as a representation of adolescent experience. Besides calling adolescence a "border" and a "new land," descriptions we can connect to the physical movement of the characters in the play, Pipher writes that "Early adolescence is a time of physical and psychological change, self-absorption, preoccupation with peer approval and identity formation" (23-24). Each of these features is reflected in the experience of the young people in the woods.⁷ They are lost and confused, as many adolescents are. Their emotions are volatile. They are confronting their own sexuality. They are violent. Most significantly, their selves are in flux and even in peril. We have already noticed Helena's crisis of self-esteem: When she concludes, "No, no, I am as ugly as a bear" (2.2.100), it is only after being spurned and threatened by Demetrius, which forces her to compare her physical features to Hermia's and find herself wanting. In her experience Shakespeare portrays for us what Pipher says about adolescent women, "Their appearance overdetermines their identity" (55), as well as how closely body image is related to self-esteem. Pipher comments, "Because self-esteem is based on the acceptance of all thoughts and feelings as one's own, girls lose confidence as they 'disown' themselves" (38). Thus near the end of their experience in the woods, Helena has a wretched, catty⁸ fight with Hermia, believing that she has been abandoned by her friend and belittled—teen fashion—by the two young men. Helena is in an adolescent nightmare.

Hermia's experience parallels Helena's. Having run off into the woods with Lysander, she is pressured to have

sex, which Lysander sees as the logical next step in their relationship. His urgings sound very grown up, even centered on commitment—"One turf shall serve as pillow for us both; / One heart, one bed, two bosoms and one troth" (2.2.47-48).⁹ But he has just admitted to being lost, suggesting he is not altogether trustworthy. For her part, Hermia recognizes his persuasion as a riddling threat to her identity. Referring to Lysander as her "gentle friend," she describes them as "a virtuous bachelor and a maid" (62, 65), implying that she is fighting for her image of herself (and him). Pipher's comments on adolescent girls are relevant:

With puberty, girls face enormous cultural pressure to split into false selves. The pressure comes from schools, magazines, music, television, advertisements and movies. It comes from peers. Girls can be true to themselves and risk abandonment by their peers, or they can reject their true selves and be socially acceptable. (38)

In this scene, Hermia faces sexual pressure to deny who she is. She ends their conversation with a complex wish: "So far be distant; and, good night, sweet friend. / Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end" (66-67). Don't get too close, but be true. It's an equivocal wish, but a bold, encouraging one for an adolescent, one by which Hermia seeks to maintain her integrity and her commitment to Lysander. Does she sense, though, that Lysander's love is liable to alter?

Her worries and wishes explain the frightful dream from which she awakens at the end of the same scene. Lysander, affected by Love Potion #9, has himself awakened to a new love for Helena and has run off to pursue her. Hermia's dream suggests she has subconsciously understood this:

Help me, Lysander, help me! Do thy best
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!

Ay me, for pity! What a dream was here!
 Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.
 Methought a serpent ate my heart away,
 And you sat smiling as his cruel prey. (2.2.151-56)

Her dream reflects her fears. In the lines which follow, Hermia gradually realizes that the reality of her abandonment by Lysander reflects her ugly dream image of his "smiling at his cruel prey." As so often is the case in the woods, awakening is to a nightmare.

Strikingly, Pipher describes just the sort of dream Hermia has as a common one for adolescent girls, where it points to their fear of losing themselves:

They dream of drowning, of being paralyzed and of being stuck in quicksand. A common dream is of being attacked and unable to scream or fight back in any way. The attackers can vary—men, schoolmates, insects or snakes. The important elements of the dream are the attack, the paralysis and the imminent destruction of the self. (38)

Hermia's dream, then, signals that the threats she confronts are not just to her affections but to herself.

These fears culminate in the fight we have already referred to, one which centers on Hermia and Helena but which involves the young men as well. Hermia, who cannot understand how Lysander's affections could have turned to hate, declares, "Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander? / I am as fair now as I was erewhile" (3.2.273-74). We notice here Hermia's identifying herself with her beauty but also that her confusion has led to a crisis of identity. Such statements are typical of comedies, where the complications and errors which confront characters leave them to doubt both the reality they are experiencing and their selves. But in the context of this play and through the lens of adolescent experience, Hermia's statement resonates with any teen, especially any teen woman, whose self-doubts are connected to her self-

image and her peers' perceptions. In this play, the woods, like adolescence, are the locale of a disturbing process.

Just before she becomes the last person who falls asleep, Hermia summarizes what it feels like to be in the woods:

Never so weary, never so in woe,
 Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers,
 I can no further crawl, no further go;
 My legs can keep no pace with my desire.
 Here will rest me till the break of day.
 Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray!
 [*She lies down and sleeps.*]

(3.2.442-47)

Her love for Lysander is remarkably stable, a fact which points to the play's resolution: her "I know not by what power" (59) from the play's first scene has been on target all along. But the most revealing feature of her speech is how she connects her physical circumstances in the woods—wet, scratched, weary—with her emotional state: "My legs can keep no pace with my desire." Desire is endless, exhausting, disconcerting, just as is the experience of adolescence.

So what is it like to be in the woods? Let me suggest an image. One night, as I drove home from the airport in Sioux Falls, I passed through a small Iowa town where I saw this: At an intersection, on the lot of the local mini-mart, looking somewhat incongruous in their tuxedos and spaghetti-strapped evening wear, was a large gathering of young people. They stood in animated groups, sipping sodas from straws and leaning on their hot-waxed Grand Prix or rented limos. What kind of strange ritual were they a part of? Obviously, it was prom night.

If you are like me, there are mixed emotions attached to a scene like this one. On the one hand, there is nostalgia, excitement, youthful optimism. On the other, worries about drunken after-school parties, sexual assaults, car crashes. "What a special night!" is pitted against "Will

they survive?" How like adolescence itself!

The young lovers' experience in the woods is like a very bad prom night. Everyone begins with wildly high, if vague expectations. If you want to fill out the scene, Theseus and Hippolyta—and their mirrors Oberon and Titania—are the prom's chaperones, intervening like the school principal in that famous first meeting dance in *West Side Story*. Puck is the post-high prankster who has never left town and resents the happiness of the current crop of teens. And Bottom is the harmless but clueless adult—somebody's uncle, let's say—who gets caught up in the festivities unawares (perhaps he didn't know the punch was spiked).

The teens, who are not quite up to it, are determined to stay out all night. But as often happens, everyone crashes at about 4:00 a.m. Also, dates have been set for weeks, but somewhere between the dance and the after-prom party, it becomes clear that Andy really wanted to ask Tessa, who came to the dance with Rob, who himself has an undisclosed crush on Susie. When all this becomes clear around 2:00 a.m., a car stops along a quiet street and passengers rearrange themselves. Ah, bliss!

But of course, someone gets left out, is left crying in a corner. Or threats are made, and the guys choose sides and determine to meet at the baseball field to settle scores. We only hope, these days, that they don't have access to guns. The girls are there too, hissing and name calling. Someone's dress is torn and there are more tears. Hopefully, things quiet down eventually, and if there's a big lake around and it's the right weekend in May, the smelt are running and everyone ends up on the pier for no good reason but to see what's happening and to be together. Someone finds some driftwood and lights a bonfire. And the sun comes up, bringing a new clarity to the whole night. Actually, it wasn't such a bad time. And they learned some things—about themselves, about each other, about their commitments. Can't wait until next year: that prom will be a killer!

Returning to the woods, we may ask whether all the disruption is merely destructive or whether it is also constructive, as the critic Northrop Frye (or the sunrise after prom night) might suggest. Pipher distinguishes between what we may see in an adolescent's behavior from what's really going on—calling the former "surface structure" and the latter "deep structure":

Surface structure is what is visible to the naked eye—awkwardness, energy, anger, moodiness and restlessness. Deep structure is the internal work—the struggle to find a self, / the attempt to integrate the past and present and to find a place in the larger culture. (53-54)

I would suggest that this distinction between the young people's surface activities—especially their overheated affections and their confusion—and the deeper process to which it points is something Shakespeare understood. In fact, this distinction is at issue in Theseus and Hippolyta's crucial discussion of the imagination at the beginning of Act 5. Theseus looks at the surface and sees madness and fantasy (like many parents reflecting on their daughter's latest piercing), while Hippolyta sees "something of great constancy," the goal of love but also the goal of maturing from adolescence into adulthood. If Theseus and Hippolyta suggest here something of parental roles, chalk one up for moms!

Such a reading jives with the goal of the play: to celebrate marriage, likely in the context of an actual marriage celebration. Shifting from prom night to a wedding, it is interesting to imagine Shakespeare telling, for the benefit of his private audience, the kind of story often told in skits or homemade videos at wedding receptions these days: essentially a story of how this happy couple grew from pre-adolescent innocence through the storms of adolescence to the maturity requisite for married love. And how their love has grown from child-like devotion through over-heated, confusing passion, to stable,

committed, mutual, exclusive love (from *philos*, to *eros* to *agape*, as the minister performing the ceremony might have put it).

What of Helena (and of Hermia, Titania, and even the men in the play)? What I have been suggesting is that Shakespeare melds the development of his characters with the development of their understanding/experience of love. He imagines them growing from preadolescent stability through the deep, dark woods of adolescence to a maturity, mysteriously wrought as it may be, that has brought them into the adult world and to the best it has to offer in terms of relationships—that “everlasting bond of fellowship” which is marriage. If these young people were lost, they are found by the end of the play, and what dominates their experience in the last acts, besides the fact of their marriage, is friendliness and “amity.” It seems that marriage has the potential to reorder their lives, something symbolized by the fairy dances in the last two acts of the play. Put simply, Helena and Hermia are friends again. And that friendship is part of a nexus of positive, stabilized relationships that seems to be the goal of the play’s action. At least in Shakespeare, adolescence has a happy ending.

This essay has deliberately placed Shakespeare’s play—its language, its characters, its themes and occasions—in a strange mix that includes Reformation writers on marriage, pop songs, post-modern criticism, Pipher’s insights and advice about adolescent girls, and images of prom night. Hopefully, two things have emerged from this eclectic approach. First, how many ways in the play offers for teachers, particularly teachers of adolescents. Reading portions of Pipher, playing love songs (whether nostalgic rock, Sinatra, or *Creed*), talking about dating and proms, or exploring (even out of context) lines in the play which evoke adolescent, or pre-adolescent, experience—can help students translate the play into more familiar terms. Secondly, how many ways Shakespeare comes at us. While understanding adolescent experience is not the central purpose or effect of the play, that

feature—or rather the complex interplay of that feature with its other themes and interests—makes the play a rich, engaging experience.

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Notes

¹A third, medial use of the same space is suggested a few lines earlier when Lysander describes the same meeting place as the one “Where I did meet thee once with Helena / To do observance to a morn of May” (166-67). It seems this particular spot in the woods, like a favorite hangout for young people, has also been used for what we would call “group dates.” Is this the same place which Titania favors? Oberon says, “I know a bank where the wild thyme blows . . . There sleeps Titania sometime of the night, / Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight” (2.1.249, 253-54). If so, this is the bower where she woos Bottom.

²The play certainly does suggest a concept of youth and a process of

maturation familiar to us as adolescence. Adolescence in early modern England is usually portrayed as brief and fairly smooth. But in *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England*, Ben-Amos argues, "the period of adolescence and youth was tremendously long rather than short, for if life expectancy was 35 or 40, most people spent nearly half of their lives in a position of 'youth', during which time they were barred from assumption of the primary role of adults; namely, household headship" (6). She observes that since marriage in England was typically deferred until the late twenties (27-29 for men, 26 for women), "the act of marriage itself" gained "an added significance": "marriage and the formation of a household were by far the single most important criterion of entry to adult life in early modern English society" (5-6). It makes sense, then, that Shakespeare would connect a play on marriage with the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Shakespeare clearly conceived of his characters as young, and he treated "youth" as an important idea in the play. In the first speech of the play, Theseus compares time's slow progress toward his marriage day to an old "stepdame or a dowager / Long withering out a *young man's* revenue" (1.1.5-6, my emphasis). A few lines later he asks Philostrate to "Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments" (12). Egeus claims Lysander's charms worked on his daughter because they are "strong prevailment in unhardened youth" (35), and Theseus advised Hermia to "Know of your youth" (68). These references, along with Hermia's lament for mismatched lovers ("Too old to be engaged to young" 138) all occur in the first scene of the play, where we expect an exposition of important themes and ideas. Later, Hippolyta's changeling boy is called "young" (2.1.131) as is Cupid (2.1.161)—and even "the green corn / Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard" (2.1.94-95). Puck and Oberon regularly refer to the couples in the woods as "youths" (2.1.261; 3.2.112). Lysander, suddenly in love with Helena, proclaims, "So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason" (2.2.124); Helena responds by calling him "young man" (131). Finally, Pyramus is described as "young" (5.1.56); Peter Quince, as Prologue, says, "Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall" (5.1.143). Altogether there are 14 references in the play to either "youth" or "young."

³Martin Bucer, in an extended exposition on marriage in his *De Regno Christi* (written in England in 1550 and addressed to Edward VI), writes "After God, certainly the greatest honor and reverence is due from children to their parents" and that children insult their parents "when they spurn their counsel" on marriage (Pauck 320). He points out, "Some parents . . . either restrain their children from marriage longer than is equitable or force on them unwanted marriages" (323), but he treats that case as an exception to be handled by relatives, friends, the church, and, if necessary, the magistrate (323). Bullinger, commenting on the *Genesis* instruction that a man should leave his parents and cleave to his wife, balances these two perspectives:

"there is noman (next unto God) dearer unto us by all reason/ then is oure father and mother. But whan they wyll make discord betwene married folkes God commaundeth a man in that behalfe to forsake father and mother/ and to kepe him to his wyfe. The loue therfore in mariage ought to be (next unto God) aboue all loues" (sig. A5v).
⁴These lines are the closest Garner can come to evidence for her assertion that homoerotic desires motivate the men in the play. My argument suggests that this joke—part of a bawdy context that surrounds much talk of love in both Shakespeare and high school hallways—is simply part of a comprehensive list of possible ways to look at love. For a comment on the incidental bawdy humor of Shakespeare's sonnets (which can be applied here) see Booth (548).
⁵The lines are:

You do impeach your modesty too much
 To leave the city and commit yourself
 Into the hands of one that loves you not,
 To trust the opportunity of night
 And the ill counsel of a desert place
 With the rich worth of your virginity. (2.1.214-19)

Pipher cites a report by the American Association of University Women that "70 percent of girls experience harassment and 50 percent experience unwanted sexual touching in their schools" (69). She comments that, compared to earlier generations, "The harassment that girls experience in the 1990s is much different in both quality and intensity. The remarks are more graphic and mean-spirited. Although the content is sexual, the intent is aggressive, to be rude and controlling" (69). These young men have nothing on Demetrius. "Asking who is at fault in this quarrel, Weiner answers, "They both are," citing Bullinger on "mutual love matrimonial" in which both parties should hold nothing so dear that they would not part with it for the sake of the other (339 n. 18).

⁷The most succinct place in the play to discover these connections is in Bottom the Weaver—assuming that his experience is thematically connected to that of others in the play. Bottom undergoes a radical physical transformation (he gets acne, we might say), he is delightfully self-absorbed (both in his childish desire to play all the parts of the drama and in being attended by fairies, "tender ass" that he is, at the beginning of Act 4). Like an insecure teen, he even worries that his peers are tricking him and later calls out, "Where are these lads? Where are these hearts?" (4.2.25), exhibiting his delight in camaraderie, if not his need for peer approval. And that his identity—man or ass—is a central concern, or that he has been changed by his experiences, are basic to understanding the play.⁸I would not use this stereotyped word without Pipher's endorsement. She says,

Girls do not learn to express anger directly. Unlike boys, they are not permitted to fight physically with their enemies. They express anger by cattiness and teasing. They punish by calling a girl on the phone to say that there's a party and she's not invited. They punish by walking up to girls with insults about their clothes or bodies. They punish by nicknames and derogatory labels. They punish by picking a certain girl, usually one who is relatively happy, and making her life miserable. (68)

It is amazing how well this passage compares with the details of the play. The young men in the play do express their anger by attempting to fight. The young women, though, call each other "puppet" and "painted maypole" (3.2.288, 296), among other epithets.⁹ Bullinger, commenting on mutual consent leading to matrimony, argues against "whorish/ carnall/ and affectionate will" (sig. C^v) as consent. He also argues strongly against what he calls a "papistical" idea that "the consent only of both the parties/ both fasten the matter/ and coupleth them together in mariage" (sig B^v). It seems that Lysander is making that argument here: i.e. by their consent they are already married. He says they are "Two bosoms interchained with an oath- / So then two bosoms and a single troth" (2.2.55-56).

Teaching Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" and Its Modern Progeny

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Reading through Patrick Cheney and Anne Lake Prescott's recent *Approaches to Teaching Shorter Elizabethan Poetry*, I was struck that neither the editors nor any of the other 36 scholars who contributed to the volume make any mention of teaching such works with reference to works from outside the period. The omission in large part undoubtedly reflects the nature of the courses which these teachers offer. Many are quite specialized, and others are survey courses in which there is never enough time to do everything one wants, much less wander far afield. I suspect, however, that in such pointed focus there is also a reflection of recent critical approaches to early modern literature. New Historicism in particular has taught us to look "sideways," to see the connections between literary works and other events happening at that time. As Douglas Bruster has recently argued, this "effectively excludes earlier and later texts related to the work in question" (4). What we need to remember, he argues, is that literature itself has a history (38). Writers

quote and allude to a variety of writers, events, and ideas from a variety of times, and they in turn are quoted and alluded to by later writers. Moreover, the texts that writers read may continue to influence them far longer than the oftentimes idiosyncratic topical events that New Historicism is apt to emphasize. This is not to deny that New Historicism has in many ways given us richer historical contexts than much previous criticism did, and certainly I hope that my students come to appreciate the rewards of seeing literature in such contexts as the circulation of power, market forces, and gender construction. However, seeing the interaction of texts with other texts also has its rewards. Bruster uses the term "quotation" broadly to denote the entire range of linkages to other texts, individuals, or events that might be suggested by such terms as "source," "borrowing," "allusion," "appropriation," "intertextuality," or "*bricolage*." However, he is not thinking of source hunting as the end in itself that it often seemed to become in older criticism. He is thinking about the ways in which texts respond to other texts:

...by definition, quotation links unlike things. For representation means partiality, and even the verbatim re-presentation of words from an earlier text can never reproduce their initial context. Every instance of borrowing can be said to foreground difference, and difference no less than similarities can offer valuable information about the cultural, historical, and political positions of literary texts. (38)

He goes on to suggest that "Perhaps the most familiar of these meaningful positions come when authors explicitly disagree with the texts they quote. We immediately recall such polemics because they are often joined as companion pieces in classrooms, anthologies, and histories, neatly answering our need to see the past as a struggle with identifiable sides" (38-9). One of his examples of such

polemical pairings is Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply" talking back to Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd."

This is one of my own favorite pairings, and I assume that teaching these poems along with Donne's "The Bait" is something that most teachers of early modern literature have done. I also like to incorporate several modern responses into the discussion. One can do this in various ways. In the Norton-anthology type of survey where I will be moving on from the lyric, I sometimes share some modern versions of "Come live with me" at the time that Marlowe and Raleigh are discussed. In Intro to Lit classes, I usually share a new "Come live with me" poem at the beginning of each of the next several classes after we have read the Marlowe-Raleigh pairing. Using this last approach in a Renaissance lit course, I once had a group of English majors who so enjoyed seeing the modern versions that they spontaneously decided to write their own "Come live with me" lyrics, which we then reproduced and shared with the class. In the remainder of this paper, I would like (1) to suggest sharing the textual history of "The Passionate Shepherd" with students, (2) to encourage close reading of the poem as a way to provide students with insight into early modern assumptions about literature, and (3) to make some suggestions concerning poems that "talk back" to Marlowe's poem.

To begin with, "The Passionate Shepherd" can provide a useful means of discussing the instability of early modern texts. The text that appears in one's Intro to Lit books will certainly be a modern-spelling version of "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love" as it appeared in *England's Helicon* in 1600. However, another version had already appeared in print the year before in *The Passionate Pilgrim*. This version of the poem is untitled, has only four stanzas, and contains a number of textual variations from the language of "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." The situation is akin to that of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*: two texts with substantial differences, neither printed until years after Marlowe's death. How should one account for the difference? Roma Gill included the 1599

version in the Oxford edition of *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe* on the chance that it might derive from an earlier draft of the poem by Marlowe himself. Fredson Bowers presented a more elaborate thesis in his edition of Marlowe's *Complete Works*, one reflecting the assumption that beneath the textual complexities posed by a *Doctor Faustus* or a *King Lear* there is a stable, authorial text. He provides a hypothetical reconstruction of the original four-stanza poem from which he suggests that both of the printed versions ultimately derive. A key point in his argument is that the six-stanza poem seems to be an expansion of a shorter poem and that the fifth and sixth stanzas rather clumsily repeat the culminating invitation. Complicating the textual tradition, of course, is that both Marlowe's poem and Raleigh's answer early on became extremely popular ballads, subject to the continual changes and augmentations that one expects in the ballad tradition. When Parson Evans alludes to "Come live with me" in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, for example, he is singing, and part of the humor lies in his conflation of that ballad with Psalm 137, leaping from the "shallow waters" of Marlowe's poem to the rivers of Babylon (Sternfeld). By this point students may not be surprised to learn that there are variations between the quarto and folio versions of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The ballad tradition is also seen in the well-known presentation of the Marlowe-Raleigh-Donne poems in Izaak Walton's *Complete Angler*, where a milkmaid sings Marlowe's song and her older and wiser mother sings Raleigh's answer, and Venator later recites Donne's poem, which he likes because it is about fishing (69-71, 155). Reflecting the changes typical of ballads, Walton's version of "The Passionate Shepherd" contains an additional verse which is answered by a corresponding addition to "The Nymph's Reply." All in all, then, the textual situation presented by Marlowe's poem is far more complicated and interesting than it might first appear to our students, and in some courses I think that students might enjoy being exposed to its complexities. Certainly it is one way

to introduce them to some of the current thinking about the nature of texts.

Turning from the nature of the text to reading it closely, one finds that students initially tend to see "The Passionate Shepherd" as relatively transparent, posing few problems for interpretation. They will then discover that it has some surprises for them. Indeed, Arthur Kinney suggests reading *Hero and Leander* before reading "The Passionate Shepherd," arguing that the lyric and the longer poem share many of the same discrepant tonalities and themes, but that in "The Passionate Shepherd" they are more subtle and deeper below the surface of the language (221). Unfortunately, I am often teaching "The Passionate Shepherd" in classes where we are not reading *Hero and Leander*. Like Kinney, however, I do find that students are apt to react positively to the imagery of the poem, and they are meant to. The force of the invitation to "come live with me" lies in the attractiveness of the pleasures of the countryside. With a little luck, though, someone may notice that birds do not sing madrigals. (Kinney says that his students always do so; mine may need a little guidance.) Discovering this tension opens up the poem, and the discovery leads in two important directions. First, the fact that madrigals are art while birds' songs are natural may suggest that nature is imperfect unless perfected by art. Is the speaker then looking for someone who will not only share his passion but his vision, who will have the same understanding of the relationship between art and nature as he does? Since modern students often tend to idealize nature, the idea that nature might be improved by art can be most challenging. Secondly, madrigals are courtly music, not the rural folk songs of shepherd swains. The student is thus led to consider Renaissance pastoral as a courtly genre and to realize that this poem may only figuratively depict the shepherd's life (Montrose 416). Reflecting on the utility of wearing golden buckles on the boots one wears to tend the sheep may also lead students to this understanding. The countryside of the poem can thus be seen as no more than a courtier's idyllic dream of

an alternative to the harsh realities of courtly life and politics. Moreover, as we learn in book 6 of *The Faerie Queene*, it is not a place to which one can escape and dwell there forever. Note that the four-stanza version of the poem does not even ask us to imagine the speaker as doing anything that real shepherds do. Rather, watching shepherds do their work is seen as one of the pleasures of country life. The title "The Passionate Shepherd" probably does insist that the speaker is a shepherd in some sense or another. "A gown made of the finest wool. / which from our pretty lambs we pull" may even suggest that the happy couple will shear their own sheep, though it may be that the "our" suggests ownership rather than actual labor. Aristocrats did not tend to stoop to actual labor, and it has been suggested that the reason shepherds figured so strongly in pastoral literature was that aristocrats thought that their work was easier than the jobs of other rural workers, that they really did get to sing and dance all day (Montrose 427-8).

Close reading may raise another question about Marlowe's "shepherd." James Knowles has recently suggested that there is no way to tell from the poem whether the person being addressed is male or female. Moreover, the idea that this could be a same-sex relationship certainly accords with the homoerotic elements in other of Marlowe's works. However, whatever Marlowe's intention may have been, this is not a reading shared by contemporary allusions to Marlowe's poem. As mentioned, there is the long-lived ballad tradition. Moreover, there are a huge number of poetic responses to the poem, either answers to it or imitations of one kind or another (Forsythe). So far as I can find, all of these other poems are unambiguously heterosexual. We would no longer unthinkingly accept Forsythe's conclusion that Virgil's "Eclogue 4" could not be a source for Marlowe because its invitation is addressed to a boy, but apparently none of Marlowe's contemporaries read the relationship in Marlowe's poem as anything but male-female.

Turning now to poems that "talk back" to

Marlowe's, by far the best of the early responses to "The Passionate Shepherd" are those by Raleigh and Donne. They are very different, and Raleigh's is arguably the most successful of the two. Read in conjunction with Marlowe's poem, it richly characterizes the woman being courted by the "shepherd." She is no bumpkin about to be swept off her feet by a gold buckle or two. Rather, she is aristocratic, witty, logical, and very much a realist. She knows that the conventions of the pastoral are not intended to be taken literally, yet she feels compelled to spell out the falseness of the vision. Moreover, if we imagine that the speaker of Marlowe's poem knew that he was speaking to such a woman, that text in turn becomes more complicated. Donne's "The Bait" presents a very different psychology of love. There both man and woman are simultaneously fisher and fish. As Low argues, the Petrarchan conventions are mocked, and the image of female sexuality which is depicted seems to repel the speaker as much as it attracts him (8). Other early lyric versions of "Come live with me" are less interesting, even by poets as good as Herrick ("To Phillis to love, and live with him"). By and large they merely tend to enlarge on the attractions of the country, making it a wondrous and even fairyland-like place. Reading Marlowe, Raleigh, and Donne in conjunction is certainly worthwhile. As Kinney argues, "all three poems yield even more benefits when read in conversation with one another. Anchored in the same period, addressing the same issues, aimed at similar audiences, they speak to one another and across one another, as testimonial, gloss, argument, and reply" (225).

In addition to early lyric allusions to the poem, the invitation to "Come live with me" is echoed frequently in early modern drama. This includes self-allusion by Marlowe, as in Tamburlaine's wooing of Zenocrate, Theridamas's wooing of Olympia, and Dido's nurse encouraging the disguised Cupid to go with her. However, a large number of other plays include scenes in which a woman is promised valuables of one kind or another for agreeing to live with the speaker. Analyzing such moments

in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, *Lust's Dominion*, *Volpone*, and *Alphonsus, King of Aragon*, Bruster has found that unlike the early poetic responses to Marlowe's poem, the early dramatic quotations of the poem almost invariably suggest that the threat of force lies behind the invitation "to come live with me." To get his way, the wealthy and powerful speaker of the invitation will offer wealth and pleasure, but it is an offer that one can't refuse. Bruster suggests that this aura of violence which the early modern dramatists perceived beneath the peaceful surface of this pastoral lyric is one which would not likely be revealed by either close reading of the poem itself or the synchronic comparisons favored by New Historicism.

We thus have another argument urging the benefits of reading texts as being in conversation with one another. However, where Kinney suggests that the benefit arises from the fact that the texts he teaches are all from the same period, Bruster urges the benefit of looking beyond the synchronous moment. His own exploration of "The Passionate Shepherd" does not actually go beyond the dramatic context just referred to, but it is easy to extend the comparison to works of our own time, as Bruster does in his discussion of the early twentieth-century rediscovery of Renaissance drama by novelists and film makers. I would conclude, then, with some suggestions for teaching Marlowe's poem comparatively with some modern versions of the poem. Ideas about love, marriage, class, and economics differ greatly between Marlowe's time and ours. Confronting those differences has a double benefit. It makes students better readers of past literature as they become more consciously aware that the assumptions of the past are not necessarily those of our own time. Moreover, articulating the difference in values forces them to consider what the cultural values of our own time actually are, enabling them to think critically about them. Although there are many other modern responses to "The Passionate Shepherd" from which to choose, I will suggest five parodies and a comic allusion that have worked well for me. Their effectiveness comes

in part because they are amusing, in part because the issues they raise are fairly straightforward, and in part because, as Bruster suggested, we enjoy seeing debates with identifiable sides (39).

Two of my selections explore modern aspirations for the luxuries which Marlowe's "shepherd" offers as an enticement to come and live with him. His "shepherd" speaks to, and for, an aristocratic class: dainties and golden buckles are affordable and can be worn on the family estate where one finds the streams and waterfalls. Raleigh's Nymph may question the underlying pastoral assumptions and have her doubts about what the passage of time will bring, but the "shepherd" can indeed buy her trunkfuls of embroidered kirtles. Similarly, the promises of the dramatic speakers that Bruster discusses may be the velvet glove worn over an iron fist, but the promises could be kept. In the second part of "Two Songs," C. Day Lewis gives us a speaker who is a member of the working class, a dockworker dependent upon "chance employment." He proposes marriage and would like to supply his wife with fine things, with the frocks she sees advertised in magazines. However, he knows realistically what rewards the modern economy has in store for him and his beloved: "not silken dress / But toil shall tire thy loveliness." Ogden Nash's "Love Under the Republicans (or Democrats)" makes much the same point. It was particularly fun to use this poem last fall when, for awhile, it wasn't clear which party it would actually be. Nash's point, of course, is that it makes no difference. The reality of our system is that we have some winners and many losers. Exploring all the pleasures "Of a marriage conducted with economy / In the Twentieth Century Anno Donomy," he goes beyond Lewis in suggesting that such economic inequities breed despair and violence: being able to promise only a lifetime of cheap housing, cheap food, cheap wine, and cheap clothing, the speaker realizes that "And one of these days not too remote / I'll probably up and cut your throat."

Peter De Vries's "Bacchanal" focuses on gender roles in marriage. Marlowe's age was moving in the direction of

companionate marriages, and the speaker in "The Passionate Shepherd" certainly stresses the joys of a shared life. The notion needs great qualification, though, when applied to the aristocracy, who far more than other classes tended not to consider happiness when thinking about marriage. Laurence Stone has suggested that between 1595 and 1620 roughly a third of the old nobility were estranged or separated from their wives (Stone 661). Of course, even within the Protestant ideal of the companionate marriage which may have been more influential at lower levels of society, there are strong assumptions about gender roles. Debates over such roles are also very much a part of our own time. The speaker in "Bacchanal" promises that in return for living with him and being his love, "There's no vine / We will not pluck the clusters of, / Or grape we will not turn into wine." However, students have little difficulty in seeing that bringing "home the festive purple fruit" may be more satisfying than being stuck in the kitchen canning "The stupid and abiding jelly."

Naomi Marks's "Come Live with Me" also focuses on gender issues. In her poem, the speaker is testifying against the shepherd, whom she has accused of rape. Miss X is perhaps less wise than Raleigh's Nymph, who knew that there was not always "truth in every shepherd's tongue." The Nymph, however, deconstructed the underlying premises of the pastoral vision. For Miss X, the problem is not that the promises were intrinsically unrealistic or undesirable, it is that they were not sincere. Much of the pleasure in Marks's poem lies in its wrenching of Marlowe's diction into modern newspaper diction and its abundance of sheep-related puns. Parodies often entertain through such verbal agility. Another example needing little discussion, but which students will enjoy, is Corrine Rockwell Swain's "The Passionate Paleontologist," which delightfully combines witty rhymes and a multisyllabic scientific vocabulary. In exchange for coming to living and loving together, the paleontologist promises such pleasures as these:

The trachodon and stegosaurus
Shall lay their secrets bare before us;
We'll learn, in farthest Karakorum,
About their bones, and how they wore 'em,
And muse on dark, Cretaceous dramas—
'Twill be the glyptodon's pajamas!

Finally, after studying the dire consequences depicted in many of these modern versions of the invitation to "come live with me," students may appreciate concluding with this warning by Garrison Keillor: "Some states have recognized Marlowe's 'Come live with me and be my love' as a legally binding contract, but be sure to check with local authorities about this, to avoid misunderstandings later" (165).

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George Jolly

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George Jolly is considered by some theatre historians to be one of England's last great strolling players. His talent as an actor and manager is highly regarded in Germany, where he is credited with introducing spectacular effects and the use of actresses to the stage, but ironically, his homeland gives him little if any space in the chronicles of Restoration drama. Overshadowed, and finally forced out of competition by Davenant and Killigrew, he remains an unacknowledged but important part of England's theatrical tradition.

Jolly's theatrical career began in the early 1640's when he was apprenticed to a member of an acting company called Prince Charles' Men working at the Fortune Theatre in London. Jolly gained experience in both the acting and managerial aspects of theatre work with this company, and in 1648 was ready to form his own repertoire group. England, ruled by the Puritan Commonwealth, had passed strict laws against theatres and actors at this time. A stage player could be fined or imprisoned for acting, and punished by public flogging for a second offense. Jolly, wishing to escape both this oppressive atmosphere and the threat of Civil War, went to Germany, and based his own acting company in Cologne. The group of fourteen actors traveled throughout Germany, concentrating on Cologne and Frankfurt. While their plays were delivered in German, Jolly billed the group as an English

company, realizing that the novelty of a foreign company would add to box office receipts. The group's first tour, lasting until 1649, was a great success, and even though some members were upset by Jolly's temper and left the company, they were easily replaced by German players, and the group was able to continue their performances.

However, in 1651, when Jolly's company arrived in Frankfort, they discovered that a new company led by two men named Hoffman and Schwartz had already installed themselves in the town's theatre. This company used movable scenery instead of just a painted backdrop, and carried special musicians with them. Jolly could not compete with the German troupe, and finding himself unable to pay the tax levied on theatres (euphemistically called a "generous donation to the poor") he was forced to pawn the company's costumes and props.

The financial failure was finally advantageous, however, for Jolly, learning from the German troupe's example, drastically changed his productions' styles. He became noted for lavish spectacles, and for the use of women on stage. He described his group in its handbills as:

A well-practiced company, not only by means of good instructive stories, but also with repeated changes of expensive costumes, and a theatre decorated in the Italian manner, with beautiful English music and skillful women.¹

Thus George Jolly, working in 1654, anticipated Davenant's use of women and lavish scenery in *The Siege of Rhodes* in 1656 by at least two years.

Jolly's fortunes continued to improve as the disposed English king Charles II and his entourage traveled to Germany incognito, and while in Frankfort, were entertained by Jolly. Charles was very impressed by Jolly's productions, and he and his followers spent each evening with the company during their stay, earning the actors the name "King's Servants." While Jolly's

productions might delight royalty, his personality did not. Never an easy man to work with, he was rough, unscrupulous, and a strict disciplinarian, known for physically attacking both his competitors and his actors. In 1655, one of his leading men was seriously wounded when he argued with his director over theatre policy. After Charles II left Frankfort, Jolly's temper caused several of his actors to leave the group, forming their own company. This company moved ahead of the "King's Servants," taking over the choice bookings and theatres in each town before the more established group could arrive. Jolly was forced to use smaller, second-class theatres which were physically unable to accommodate his special effects, and which could not even adequately display his lavish productions. He was forced in some towns to build temporary theatres out of scrap lumber, or to perform outdoors on carts. Needless to say, the tour was a failure. Jolly resorted to cutting his prices, printing uncomplimentary handbills about the other company, and finally fighting and brawling with the competition. The authorities in the Frankfort area finally stopped the disturbances by ordering both companies to leave town. The companies, working under this threat, patched up their differences for a while, forming one large company, but Jolly's temper again caused problems and the companies split up for good. Jolly, left with only eight actors, was forced to humble himself before his former associates, and joining their company as an actor, performed throughout Germany, even playing before Emperor Leopold at one time. However, in 1660, he once again caused trouble, and was expelled from Germany.

During this period, the monarchy had been reinstated in England, and Charles II had come to power. Theatres were reopened and the abusive laws against actors were no longer enforced in London. Two men, William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew, had approached the king and had been granted licenses for theatrical companies, which gave them a monopoly in London. Each formed his own company of actors, rented his own theatre,

and then prepared to force all other theatres out of business. Chief among these was a theatre run by Thomas Beeston at Salisbury Court. It was here that George Jolly started acting when he returned to England in August of 1660. Capitalizing on his acquaintance with Charles II, and promising to produce more of the operatic spectacles which the king had enjoyed in Frankfurt, Jolly petitioned for a license to form his own company. In December 1660, the grant was issued.

Whereas we have thought fitt to allow...publique Presentation of tragedies and Comedies...and being well informed of the art and skill of George Jolly Gentleman for the purpose aforesaid, do hereby grant...unto the said George Jolly full power and authority to erect one company...and to purchase, build, or hire...One House or Theatre with all convenient Roomes...and in regard of the extraordinary Licentiousness that has bin lately used in things of this nature. Our pleasure is that you do not at any time hereafter cause to be acted or represented any Play, Enterlude, or Opera containing any matter of profanation, scurrility, or obscenity and this our Grant and Authority made to the said George Jolly shall be effectual notwithstanding any former grant made by us to our trusty and well-beloved servant Thomas Killegrew, Esq. or Sir William Davenant K. or any other person or persons whatsoever to the contrary.²

Jolly formed his own company, renting the theatre at Salisbury court from Beeston until Davenant's troupe took it over. He moved to the Red Bull, and then to the Cockpit, two older theatres in London. Beeston sued Jolly as soon as Davenant had left Salisbury Court to build his own theatre, saying that Jolly was forced to use only Beeston's theatre through the terms of his license. Although Jolly disliked the Salisbury Court theatre's

physical plant, his company was finally restricted to only that theatre by the king, probably as a concession to Killegrew and Davenant, who were trying to get their competitor's license revoked. By 1663, although he was definitely an impediment to Davenant's and Killegrew's plans for a complete theatrical monopoly, his business was unsuccessful enough for him to agree to lease his license to his competitors. They were to form a third company of actors in London, while he took his original company on an extended tour of the more provincial areas of the country. The two men would pay Jolly four pounds a week for the privilege of using his license, and would return the license to Jolly whenever the new company stopped making a profit. In this way, Jolly thought that he would receive income from both companies. He left London, and began working much as the earlier strolling players had, moving from village to village, performing lesser known Elizabethan works. His repertoire included *Fair Maid of the West, or A Girl Worth Gold*, and *Gorboduc, or The Tragedy of Ferrex and Porrex*, a tragedy about a fanatical rivalry between two brothers, which throws their kingdom into chaos. *'Tis A Pity She's A Whore* by John Ford was also popular. These plays, classified as typical early works by the dramatists and theatre-goers of the age, were considered stale and dull, regarded as only fit for rustics.³ Presenting such productions, Jolly's touring company was no threat to theatres serving the London audience.

Unfortunately Jolly had underestimated his competition, for instead of forming a new theatrical company with Jolly's license, Davenant and Killegrew went to Charles II and told him that they had bought the grant outright. They demanded a new license be made up, removing Jolly's authority, and this time giving them a complete monopoly. Charging that "George Jolly had not made use of the grant," they argued that it should be given to someone who would use it. Being away from London, and oblivious to his partners' lies, Jolly was unable to defend himself and his claims. Charles II

believed the two men, and gave them the license they had requested. They then attempted to cover up their double-dealing by appointing Colonel William Legge, a groom in the king's bedchamber, as manager of the new theatre. Although the license was made out in Legge's name, he was a partner in name only, for the theatre and Legge were both completely under Davenant's and Killegrew's control. This new theatre was called the Nursery, and was to be used as a training ground for young actors in the men's other two companies.

When Jolly returned from his tour, unaware of Davenant's and Killegrew's skull-duggery, he naturally demanded the rent they owed him for the use of his license. They told him the venture had not been successful, and since they could not pay the rent, they would have to return the license to its original owner. Jolly raised another company, and once again using the Cockpit, began performing under what he believed was a valid license. Killegrew then went to the Lord Chamberlain, demanding a warrant to make Jolly stop his performances, stating that since Jolly's name was no longer on the license, the performances were illegal. Jolly threatened to go to the king and reveal the men's dishonesty, while at the same time being threatened himself with arrest for "acting plays without authority."⁴ The impasse was settled when Jolly was made manager of the Nursery, free to choose his own productions, but forced to give one-third of all receipts to the two companies licensed to Davenant and Killegrew. The remaining two-thirds of the box office receipts for each performance would be split between Jolly and his actors, once the cost of whatever new scenery and theatrical effects needed for the playhouse had been subtracted from the total.

Because the size and nature of the theatrical audience in London had changed drastically from the Elizabethan to the Restoration period, Davenant and Killegrew were able to exert such pressure over Jolly that he was forced to accept their unfair business offer.

In Restoration London, theatre-going was no longer the eclectic pastime of Shakespeare's day. The homogeneous audience was composed of Charles II and his fellow aristocrats, a group so small in number, that even if each member of the audience did visit the same play twice, a run of a week was about all that was possible for any play.⁵ With such a limited potential audience, Jolly realized he would have to cooperate with his powerful competitors or risk financial ruin.

The Nursery under Jolly's management became an institution in London society. The prologue to John Douer's tragedy *Roman Generalls*, written in 1667, states:

The poet had designed His Play should be
Bestow'd on Both the Houses Nursery.
His modest Judgment, deemed it most fit,
In Nurseries to plant Young Twiggs of Wit.
Thinking to shun a Publick Censure since
They count Ten Players There, an audience.⁶

Dryden, in his satirical poem *Mac Flecknoe* (1682), also mentions this theatre.

Near these a Nursery erects its head,
Where Queens are formed, and future Heroes bred;
Where unfledged Actors learn to laugh and cry,
Where infant Punks their tender voices try,
And little Maximins the Gods defy.⁷

However while the theatre did become famous, its artistic reputation was not a good one. Pepys, in his diary, alludes to performances there several times, and speaks mainly with contempt. One example is the entry of February 24, 1668, when he saw Jolly's production of *The Spanish Tragedy* by Kyd. He states:

The house is better and the musique better than
we looked for, and the acting not much worse,

because I expected as bad as could be: and I was not much mistaken, for it was so.⁸

He then says:

I saw them act a comedy, a pastoral "The Faythull Shepherd," having the curiosity to see whether they did a comedy better than a tragedy; but they do both alike, in the meanest manner.⁹

There is a valid excuse for this lack of quality in Jolly's productions, for more than likely the fault does not lie with his abilities as a director. His job was to train novice actors, but as soon as they demonstrated any real ability or knowledge of their profession, the actors were hired by Davenant or Killegrew, much like the modern "farm-club" system in professional baseball. Jolly was forced to work with only amateurs, and was thus hampered by his material. He also was expected to use the works of new playwrights, trying out the works for his competitors' companies. If the plays were well liked, Davenant and Killegrew snatched them up; if they were not, Jolly could perform them. Thus his repertoire could only include older Elizabethan works, usually held in contempt by the fashionable audience members, or unpopular plays of the period. He was never allowed to become competition for the established theatres.

To make matters worse, Davenant and Killegrew made the Nursery support their other theatres, so Jolly did not have enough money to work with. After paying the two owners their one-third, and his actors' salaries, there must have been very little money left to spend on the spectacular effects that Jolly enjoyed and was most successful in creating. Kept poor in both money and talent, George Jolly was forced to mount productions that could never be more than mediocre. This man, who had entertained and been friends with kings, was forced to end his life as an underling for the tyrannical Killegrew. This man, whose innovations as a director changed the

German and English theatres, was forced to undergo the frustrations of working with actors and equipment so limited that he could never achieve his artistic concepts for his productions. Although he made a formal complaint in 1673 against Killegrew, revealing how he had been swindled, no record of any restitution has been found. George Jolly, one of the Restoration's most colorful and inventive theatrical managers, apparently spent the rest of his life overshadowed by Killegrew and Davenant. Even now his contributions to the Restoration theatre are virtually ignored and unacknowledged.

Notes

¹Leslie Hotson, *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage*. Russell and Russell, Inc.: New York, 1962. page 171.

²Hotson, page 178.

³Montague Summers, *The Playhouse of Pepys*, page 132.

⁴Hotson, Page 183.

⁵Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama*, Vol I, page 26.

⁶Summers, page 118.

⁷John Dryden, *Poetical Works*, Page 135. Lines 74 - 78.

⁸Summers, page 118.

⁹Summers, page 119.

What Chaucer Really Did to Petrarch's Sonnet 132

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A third of the way through Book I of *Troilus and Criseyde* (I. 400-420), Chaucer does quite a remarkable thing. He includes, as an emotional utterance by his lover/hero Troilus, the first translation into English of one of Petrarch's sonnets. Critics have not known quite what to make of this translation: rather than maintain the sonnet form, Chaucer renders Petrarch's Sonnet 132 in three rime royal stanzas; and, further, he changes the sense of Petrarch's lines at several points.

These changes have led some to question whether Chaucer really understood the sonnet form at all. Piero Boitani calls the "Canticus Troili" "a simple case of missed opportunity for Chaucer as well as fourteenth-century English literature" and goes on to suggest that "as a literary form, the Petrarchan sonnet does not seem to have [had] any effect on Chaucer" (5).

Other critics have seen the translation as evidence that Chaucer did not really understand Italian very well. Ernest H. Wilkins believes that "Chaucer misunderstood his Italian text" and cites five instances of misunderstanding, three in Chaucer's first stanza (169). Much more recently, Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr., concurs with Wilkins' findings, stating that "If Chaucer's changes

in the text should be considered deliberate, all the changes could be expected to follow a fairly consistent pattern," but they do not—at least, according to Kaylor (223). Therefore Chaucer did not really understand fully the text he was translating.

The question of form is the more easily disputed. Although Patricia Thomson admits that Chaucer's rendering of the sonnet "might suggest a total failure to understand even the bare rudiments of its structure," she argues that "his distribution of the contents shows that the opposite is true" (320). Clearly, if he did not understand the sonnet form, Chaucer could and probably would have rendered the fourteen lines of Petrarch's poem as two seven-line stanzas of rime royal. Instead, Chaucer translates Petrarch's first quatrain in his first stanza, the second quatrain in his second stanza, and the sestet in his third stanza. He merely chooses to incorporate Petrarch's verse seamlessly into his own poem by using his own verse form.¹ This is his common practice in the *Troilus*. Lyric passages interrupt the plot of Chaucer's romance at every important development, as Robert Payne points out, forming what Payne calls "a kind of distillation of the emotional progress of the poem" (186). As such they develop, in a progressively more insightful way, the theme of worldly love vs. Divine Love from the point of view of characters involved in the action of the courtly romance. But the lyrics are all rendered in rime royal stanzas, not as separable lyrics with separable verse forms. In the *Parliament of Fowls*, for example, Chaucer had chosen to include the birds' song as a separate and recognizable lyric (a roundel) that stood apart from the rime royal narrative; in the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*, he interrupts the decasyllabic couplets of the narrative with a ballade of three rime royal stanzas. He clearly chose not to do something similar in the *Troilus*, where there are a number of lyrics but all written, like the narrative, in rime royal.

Chaucer wrote some twenty-odd lyric poems in which he experimented with a number of verse forms—

he seemed particularly fond of the roundel. In his narrative poetry he altered Boccaccio's *ottava rima* in order to utilize the rime royal stanza popular in French lyric poetry (Wimsatt 21), and he abandoned the octasyllabic couplet in favor of the decasyllabic, thus inventing the heroic couplet. To say that Chaucer didn't understand verse forms seems ludicrous: what seems clear is that Chaucer wanted consistent rime royal throughout the *Troilus*, and put all of his embedded lyrics into that form.²

While Robert Payne found ten lyrics in the poem (186), Charles Muscatine saw "some thirty-odd lyric monologues" in Troilus's mouth alone (135), and James I. Wimsatt cites 56 "identifiable lyric passages" (20), I believe there are six passages in *Troilus and Criseyde* that can beyond question be regarded as individual, separable lyric poems in their own right: in addition to the "Canticus Troili," these would include Antigone's song in Book II, the two aubades and Troilus's Boethian "Hymn to Love" in Book III, and the second "Canticus Troili" in Book V. All are in rime royal stanzas but only the first "Canticus Troili" and the "Hymn to Love" have clear sources elsewhere.³

In his lyrics, Chaucer had previously worked with translation with his *ABC* and *The Former Age*, and would do so again with *The Complaint of Venus*. The "Canticus Troili" is, however, a closer translation than these. Does this mean that Chaucer understood Deguileville and Granson, the French sources of the *ABC* and *Venus*, less well than he understood Italian? It would be foolish to argue so. Chaucer's changes from his sources are the deliberate and conscious decisions of a consummate literary artist and are not misunderstandings of the text. To argue that here, in the midst of his adaptation of Boccaccio's long romance of *Il Filostrato*, shortly after his adaptation of Boccaccio's epic *Teseide* in "The Knight's Tale," Chaucer mistranslates because he doesn't understand Italian seems equally foolish.

What is needed in examining this translation, then, is to ask what changes were made from the original and

why those changes were made. Because it is intended as a response to an emotional experience by one of the characters in a narrative, in this case one must also ask precisely what the translation of Petrarch's sonnet does for the narrative at this particular point. And the two questions can be answered simultaneously through an analysis of the poem.

Chaucer's alterations from Petrarch begin with the very first lines of the poem. For where Petrarch asks "S'amor non è, che dunque è quell ch' io sento?" ("If it is not love, what then is it that I feel?") (1. 1),⁴ Chaucer translates "If no love is, O God, what fele I so?" The difference is drastic, for where Petrarch is concentrating upon the analysis of the feelings of a particular, individual speaker, Chaucer is considering the more universal question of whether love itself exists *at all*. But remember that this lyric occurs in a narrative—the speaker is already particularized as Troilus, the former scoffer at lovers now turned lover himself.

Naylor sees verbal parallels between these lines in *Troilus* and Chaucer's translation of Boethius:

"Yif God is, whennes comen wikkide thyngis? And yif God ne is, whennes comen gode thyngis?" (*Boece*, Bk. I, pr. 4: 201)

Thus he thinks the change is simply part of the overall Boethian theme of the *Troilus*. Naylor goes so far as to suggest that Chaucer misread the first lines of Petrarch's poem as paralleling the Boethian passage, and that is why he included it in his poem. Other changes in the sonnet, since they are not consistent with the Boethian theme, were made because of similar misreadings, rather than from any conscious plan of Chaucer's (223-225). But this seems to me to be begging the question. If the changes are made not necessarily to emphasize the Boethian theme but are made consistently to better adapt the poem to the context of the larger *Troilus*, then there is no reason to suspect Chaucer of misunderstanding his source.

Certainly one reason for the change in the first two lines has already been mentioned: it is quite consistent with Troilus's character up to this point to begin the lyric "If no love is . . .," for his previous taunts at others' amorous misfortunes, his opinion of lovers as "veray fooles," and calling them "nyce and blynde" (Bk. I, 1. 202), are indications that Troilus had previously doubted the existence of love itself. Now, struck by Criseyde's beauty, and thus having proof in his own flesh of love's existence, Troilus still is confused as to the exact nature of love: "And if love is, what thing and which is he?" (Bk. I, 1. 401).

Further, this confusion as to the nature of love itself reflects an overall (and very Boethian) theme of the poem: the confusion of worldly love with universal love. The narrator has said, after Troilus is struck with love of Criseyde, that "Love is he that alle thing may bynde, / For may no man fardon the lawe of kynde" (Bk. I, 11. 237-38). This, of course, is somewhat ironic, for the narrator is thinking of Cupid, the God of Courtly Love, while that Boethian "lawe of kynde" that "alle thing may bynde" is rather that universal Divine Love. Troilus's confusion about the real nature of love here is consistent with the confusion apparent throughout the poem.

Patricia Thomson sees Chaucer's changes in the first stanza as consistent with Chaucer's hero: "Troilus," she says, "an all-too-recent scoffer, has first to readjust his ideas." One other change that Thompson points out is the addition, in Chaucer's line 406, of the detail of "For ay thurst I, the more that ich it drynke." This, Thomson shows, is consistent with two other additions that Chaucer made to Petrarch's Italian: the depiction of the speaker as not knowing "whi unwary that I feynt" (1. 410), and of love as a "wonder maladie" (1. 419). The three images work together to create a conventional courtly picture of love as a disease, causing the feverish lover to faint, and to languish in unquenchable thirst—a suggestion that Petrarch's poem, concentrating specifically on love's confusing paradoxes, does not make. Winthrop

Weatherbee notes that Chaucer's changes here "suggest a 'dark,' potentially malign element in the love he describes, the first of many instances in the story in which Troilus's love is associated with disease" (66).

But Thomson, though admitting that the images are consistent with each other and with the character of Troilus, tossing in anguish upon his bed, still considers these and other Chaucerian expansions as mere "padding" and considers Chaucer's poem in general as displaying a "loss of concentration" in comparison with the Petrarchan original (319). This may in part be true, but it must be said in Chaucer's defense that he was following the principle of amplification recommended by medieval rhetoricians like Geoffrey of Vinsauf, who advised expanding upon his basic material by embellishing it with further elaboration. In addition, Chaucer's embellishments, while not necessarily improving upon Petrarch, do have the virtue of adding to the characterization of Troilus, and so of contributing to Chaucer's greater purpose.

Chaucer devotes the remainder of the first of his three stanzas to a fairly close rendering of the rest of Petrarch's initial quatrain. If love is good, he contends, then where does all his woe come from? If love is bad, then why are his pains so sweet? The rhetorical figure is *contentio*, as Payne and others have pointed out: "the balancing of these clauses against each other in paired oppositions" (198). That figure is significant to the theme of the poem, according to Payne, for the effect is to "align the two sets of suggestions [i.e., the 'subjection of the individual will to love' and the 'order of natural harmony larger and more remote than individual will or human love'] in nearly paralyzing ironies" (202). The opposing clauses, in effect, reflect the opposing forms of love. Payne is probably correct, but it should be added that Chaucer's use of *contentio* is less marked than Petrarch's, as the second stanza shows.

Chaucer's second stanza follows Petrarch's second quatrain fairly closely. As Thomson points out, Chaucer

is here, like Petrarch, now concentrating upon the suffering individual (318). If the burning comes from the speaker's own will, then why the lamenting? Line 409 is a deviation from Petrarch, though: the Italian had continued the *contentio* with the line "If against my will, what does lamenting avail?" Chaucer, however, renders this "If harm agree me, wherto pleyne I thenne?" Or in other words, if these pains *agree* with me, why then should I complain at all? The line is more an amplification of the idea of the previous lines, rather than a *contentio*.⁵

What the change does here is completely eliminate the suggestion that this love could be something *against the will* of the lover. But medieval scholastic thought did not admit the possibility of such a love. Aquinas, for example, had said that the will is by nature inclined to the Good. If one *loved* something, his will was directed toward it. That love may be *misdirected*, and so the will may have gone wrong, but that is the fault of the lover. Chaucer would have remembered that Virgil says much the same thing to the Pilgrim Dante in Canto 17 of the *Purgatorio*, and Chaucer reiterates part of the sentiment at the beginning of Book III of the *Troilus*:

God loveth, and to love wol nought werne
And in this world no lyves creature
Withouten love is worth, or may endure.
(ll. 12-14)

We all must love. But we are responsible for what we love.

In the remainder of the second stanza of the "Canticus Troili," Chaucer continues to emphasize Troilus's own responsibility: Troilus says that he burns "at myn owen lust" (l. 407), and as the stanza ends, he retains Petrarch's suggestion that the lover must consent to the love (l. 413). An alteration of Petrarch that follows this same pattern occurs in line 412, for where Petrarch says of love "come puoi tanto in me" ("how can you have such power over me") (l. 8), Chaucer writes "How may of the in me swich quantite." The direction seems clear: Chaucer

is doing his best to emphasize Troilus's complicity in his own plight. Not that Troilus realizes the full implications of what he says here—he will always try to pin the responsibility for his actions on someone else, most notably in his famous "predestination" soliloquy in Book IV. Love does "bind alle thinge," but (as Boethius made clear) one has the power to turn from love of the Highest Good to love of lesser goods, as Troilus has done. Another Chaucerian addition to Petrarch, "O swete harm so queynte" (l. 411), reinforces this idea by playing on the double meaning of *queynte*, suggesting that Troilus's will has turned from love of the Highest Good to complete immersion in the "queynte" love of Criseyde.

The final stanza of Troilus's song is closest of all to Petrarch's original, rendering Petrarch's sestet in seven lines. Like Petrarch, Troilus begins by saying that if he consents to the love, then it is wrong to complain. This is followed by the metaphor of the lover as a rudderless ship, confusedly tossed about by conflicting winds, and by the depiction of the disoriented lover shivering in summer and burning in winter. Chaucer's only changes are the already noted addition of love as a "wondre malady," and the *omission* of one of Petrarch's lines—line twelve. This is a particularly curious alteration: if Chaucer is rendering Petrarch's fourteen lines of Italian in twenty-one of English, why would he deliberately omit an entire Petrarchan line? I submit that it is *not* because he didn't understand it.

In Petrarch's twelfth line, the speaker depicts his metaphorical rudderless boat as floundering without its ballast of *wisdom*, and being, instead, laden with *error*. Thomson thought that, because this line implied a "moral judgement" of the speaker, it was "too solemn" for Chaucer's poem (318). But considering Chaucer's other deliberate changes, which emphasize Troilus's moral responsibility, his *free choice* of Criseyde's "queynte" love, there would be no reason for the poet to shrink from any "moral judgement" at this point. It seems more likely that Chaucer eliminated the line because it may have suggested

a self knowledge of which his speaker, Troilus, is as yet incapable at this point in Book I. Weatherbee says that the omission of this line "eliminates even the tentative moral perspective of Petrarch's lover" (66). In Petrarch, the *wisdom* may have implied certainty, the *error* confusion, and the line may simply have reflected the speaker's attitude about the conflicting emotions within him. In *Troilus*, however, the *error* may have suggested Troilus's awareness of his error in choosing Criseyde's love over universal love—an awareness for which Troilus would not be ready until his ascent to the eighth sphere at the end of Book V.

That "error" may be suggested ironically, though, by the image of the rudderless boat. The early Irish *peregrinus*, for example, and Constance in the *Man of Law's Tale*, illustrate the religious significance of the rudderless boat in the Middle Ages: trusting in God, these saints allowed God's love to direct the course of their boats, and were, like Constance, brought to safety. But trusting in Criseyde's love, Troilus is tossed between conflicting winds, and has no harbor in sight. Clare Regan Kinney notes that "the lyric reaches no reassuring resolution; the song ends with the same kind of questioning, and the same rueful surrender to oxymora with which it started" (275).

Chaucer's alterations of Petrarch's Italian, then, have done three things: first, Chaucer's poem is now concerned, more generally than Petrarch's, with the universal nature of love. Secondly, Chaucer sees the nature of love as a disease when directed, as in the case of Troilus, toward some partial good in place of the Highest Good. And third, that love is directed freely by the human will, and therefore Troilus, and all of us, are accountable for what we love. The changes from Petrarch have been consistent and purposeful, and, like the change in verse form, have chiefly served to make the lyric an organic part of Chaucer's overall plan for his narrative and his protagonist. Chaucer misunderstood neither the form of the sonnet nor the Italian language. What he understood

clearly, far more clearly than contemporary literary critics, was the making of poetry, and *Troilus and Criseyde* is his most finished example of that.

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Notes

¹ James I. Wimsatt notes that the typical French ballade had three stanzas, and that most commonly it was written in rime royal stanzas (21), which may explain Chaucer's choice of the three stanzas here. Wimsatt goes on to say that "it is striking how many of the lyric units in *Troilus and Criseyde* conform

to the three-stanza length of the French ballade" (21). In his own lyric poetry, Chaucer wrote "Truth," "Gentillesse," "Lak of Stedfastnesse," "The Complaint to His Purse," and probably "To Rosemounde," all as three-stanza ballades, though it should be noted that each of those has a refrain and the "Canticus Troili" does not. Nor do most of what I have identified as lyric passages in *Troilus* conform to the three-stanza model (Antigone's song, Troilus' Hymn to Love, and the last "Canticus Troili" do not). Certainly Wimsatt is correct in identifying the *dits amoureux*, especially Machaut's *Remede de Fortune*, as important models for the structure of Chaucer's *Troilus*. But Chaucer's direct debt to that tradition in the case of this poem may be exaggerated.

² Thomas C. Stillinger points out, rightly, that the "Canticus Troili" is framed very deliberately to stand out as a lyric and as coming from a different source than the rest of the *Troilus* (from Troilus himself rather than Lollius) (182-83). But the verse forms suggest Chaucer wanted the lyrics to be part and parcel of the whole poem, not to stand apart on their own like the lyrics in the *dits amoureux*.

³ Stillinger suggests that Chaucer in fact used Petrarch's sonnet 189 as a source for his second "Canticus Troili," in Book V, but that is far from certain (174-79).

⁴ Citations of Petrarch's sonnet 132 are to Durling. Line numbers are parenthetically cited.

⁵ Robert K. Root speculated, though without any evidence, that Chaucer was working with a defective manuscript of Petrarch (419). This assumes that there is no conscious artistic motive behind the alterations, but it is my contention that there is.

A Marriage Made in Blood and Love: Modern S/M Theories Connect with Medieval Anchoritic Thought

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I.

In late medieval devotion, Christ was increasingly thought of as *Qui dilexit nos et lavit nos in sanguine suo*.¹ The mixing of the two central ideas—love and blood—quickly became a central part of Christianity. In devotional literature, Christ's suffering was lovingly described and his wounds were celebrated. Medieval Christian asceticism built upon the painful traditions of his life to refine suffering as an art. From the more reasonable desert traditions of fasting, hair shirts, and isolation sprang more extreme ascetic practices such as:

thrusting nettles into one's breasts, binding one's flesh tightly with twisted ropes, enduring extreme sleep and food deprivation, performing thousands of genuflections, praying barefoot in winter, rolling in broken glass,² jumping into ovens, hanging oneself from a gibbet,³ and

praying while standing on one's head.⁴ (Bynum 132)

Further, the Martyrologies are filled with boiling pitch, half-completed beheadings, severed breasts, and mutilated genitalia, all of which the saints patiently suffered, we are told, as an imitation of Christ's life. This reoccurring theme of *imitatio Christi* has led the majority of medieval scholars to posit that the role of suffering in Christianity is a key issue now facing historians of religion. Moreover, the critical role played by bodily experiences of pain in devotional life affirms that Christianity did not seek a divine remedy for suffering, but rather recognized a divine use for suffering.

I am not in any way downplaying the role of asceticism itself in the development of Christianity; rather, it is the intersection of asceticism and mysticism that interests me. In anchoritic literature, this trope of the beautiful, suffering Christ became extended into something called the "Marriage of Blood." This marriage relied upon the covenant between Christ and the anchoress (lover and beloved), and although it was not exclusive to the anchoritic life, it was strongest within that devotion. Whereas most mystic descriptions of union with Christ involve only sexual metaphors or courtly love tropes, the anchoresses combined these images with that of the suffering Christ, helping them to achieve their desire, union with the Heavenly Spouse, by means of the "marriage of blood" on the cross. Strikingly, in anchoritic texts like *The Wooing of Our Lord* (WL) and *Ancrene Wisse* (AW), all the characteristics of a worthy spouse—beauty, wealth, generosity, wisdom, strength, nobility, gentleness, and kin-ties—are etched in terms of Christ's suffering, illustrating that overall his meek endurance is what ultimately proves his worth to his Bride, the anchoress.

Mystic marriage between Christ and worthy woman was the most common trope in women's devotions, as Bynum points out: "no religious woman failed to experience Christ as wounded, bleeding, dying. . .

Women's efforts to imitate Christ involved. . . *fusing with the body on the cross*" (131).⁵ Sublimation with Christ was common; however, anchoritic literature emphasized the connection between this fusion with the wounded lord and the consummation of the mystical marriage. That anchoresses combined these images with that of the suffering Christ, "help[ed] them to achieve their desire, by means of the 'marriage of blood' on the cross" (Flanagan 119).⁶ Hildegard wrote of this special marriage in her *Symphonia Virginum*:

6. Now we call on you, husband and consoler,
who redeemed us on the cross.
We are joined to you in a marriage of your blood
rejecting men
and choosing you, Son of God. (in Flanagan 118;
my emphasis)

Hildegard describes the special relationship of an anchoress with her God, for one of the anchoritic duties, as described by the various rules and manuals, was to contemplate the crucified Lord and ponder union with him. This connection seems less tenuous when we remember that Hildegard herself began life as an unofficial anchoress.⁷ It is further important to note that in contemplating the marriage of blood, the anchoress actively chooses Jesus as hers ("rejecting men and choosing you") instead of waiting passively for Christ to seek out her soul. She instigates the marriage as much as he does.

Moreover, in seeking the marriage of blood, the anchoress was compelled to consider the body of Christ, and what that body could do. This idea is readily apparent in *The Wooing of our Lord*. In true love-letter fashion, the anchoress gently reminds her lover that his kisses would be welcome: "Sweeter is the memory of thee than honey in the mouth" (WL, ll. 3-5). Then she focuses on the primary reason for human attraction—sexual appeal. "Who could not love thy lovely face?" (WL, ll. 5-6), she

asks, but soon the attention turns from his face as she goes on to define beauty as "fairness and a loveable countenance, [along with] white flesh under clothes" (WL, ll. 13-15). The message is certainly sexual, as Jesus' body is not only lissome, but deliberately described as "under clothing." Clearly, any anchoress who reads this devotion is expected to imagine Christ's lovely body naked. Further, the connection between pleasure and pain is established and extended. The anchoress is reminded that even the condemned would prefer to "boil evermore in woe and gaze upon thy pleasant face forever than to be in complete bliss and forego the sight of thee" (WL, ll. 45-9). Joining with Christ, or even desiring such a union, requires pain.

In *The Wooing* as the text-producer continues to guide the anchoress-reader(s) through the seduction of Christ, the marriage in blood remains a constant theme.⁸ As each characteristic of a worthy lover is detailed, it is linked with the pleasure/pain principle. Each subsequent description of Christ as suitor ends with an impassioned, "Ah Jesus, sweet Jesus, grant that the love of thee be all my delight." Yet, when declaring to Jesus that she could love him for his rich possessions, the anchoress reminds him "Yet, so that I should not lose all, thou gave thyself to release me from pain" (WL, ll. 87-9). In strength and bravery, too, there is no match for Christ, as even through the haze of his excruciating pain, love for his lover will drive him on for her pleasure. Indeed, the text-producer wants the reader-anchoress to realize this, for after summing up the vital characteristics Christ displays, the anchoress is directed to remind Christ that "Over all the other things that make thee love-worthy to me are the hard, cruel hurts, those shameful evils that thou endured for me. Thy bitter pain & passion, thy deplorable death on the cross, reckon foremost in all my love, challenging my heart" (WL, ll. 262-70). Ultimately, what makes Christ worthy of the anchoress's love is his ability to suffer for her pleasure. Then when the anchoress determines that Jesus is worthy, she moves towards a mystical union with

him. The profusion of blood cements the union between them, for as his body bleeds, so does hers. Jesus is stripped of his clothes as the anchoress was stripped of her worldly trappings. Jesus is bound fast and scourged, as she is bound within her cell and whipped by temptation. Christ bore his cross upon his shoulders for the world, as she endures solitude for the salvation of others. The entire scene is awash in blood, from the first scourging, to the tight binding which caused Jesus' fingernails to drip blood, to the crowning with thorns. Christ's passion culminates in his crucifixion: "Ah, how they now drive iron nails through thy fair hands into the hard cross, through thy splendid feet. Ah, now from those hands and from those feet so lovely streams the blood so piteously" (WL, ll. 511-17). Similarly, the anchoress's passion climaxes with her joining her lover in his pain in order to share in his pleasure. Crying, "thou did defend me with thy body, and made of me, a wretch, thy lover & spouse" (WL, ll. 569-71), the anchoress seals her fate. In this ultimate union, however, she reverts to a passive role, although the marriage is one of blood:

Thou has brought me from the world to the bower
of thy birth, and bound me fast in thy chamber.
There I may sweetly kiss thee and embrace thee,
and in thy love find spiritual delight. Ah, sweet
Jesus, my life's love, with thy blood thou has
bought me. (WL, ll. 572-9)

Although she has pursued Christ relentlessly throughout the prayer, at the peak, she becomes his possession. She has been bought by his blood, and will now take her place beside him, even on the cross: "My body hangs with thy body, nailed upon the cross. . . Ah, Jesus, so sweet it is to hang with thee" (WL, ll. 590-1; 598-9). Immediately after the consummation, though, she reassumes control, informing her new lover "Thou art best worth my love who died for my love" (WL, ll. 623-4), since he was willing to suffer for it.

The Marriage of Blood theme is evident in other anchoritic pieces as well. For instance, the minor *Wooing Group* pieces, instead of utilizing seductive language focus more pointedly on Christ's body, and more specifically on its fragmentation, flowing blood, wounds, and agony.⁹ *Holy Maidenhood* contains horrific details of earthly marriage, describing it as lust-slaking filth, full of separation, death, deprivation, anxiety, starvation, childbirth, and pain. The "blessed maidens" are therefore entreated to "abandon all such sorrow" for a blissful heavenly reward, which ironically is also depicted as brutal: "if he [the enemy, Satan] keeps afflicting your flesh. . . your Lord God suffers it, and allows him, to increase your reward" (Savage and Watson 243). Though the worthy woman presumably escapes the torment of a fleshly marriage by wedding Christ, she has, in fact, still opted for pain. The martyrologies connected with the anchoritic texts reify this connection of marriage and blood. In *St. Katherine*, the heroine defiantly tells her torturers, "The more sorrow and pain you cause me on account of my new lover [Christ], in whom I believe with love, the more you do my will and pleasure" (Savage and Watson 280). Not only are the pain and blood tying her closer to Christ, but also she is an active seeker of the pleasure that this pain will bring her. St. Juliana echoes this sadomasochistic element, when she informs her father African, "I'll be so much the dearer to him [Christ] the more bitter the things I suffer for his love. Do whatever you want!" (Savage and Watson 308). Both saints invite and welcome the blood and the pain since it strengthens their marriage to Christ, and brings them closer to the consummation of this mystical marriage (death).¹⁰

It may appear that I am positing the existence of a medieval "s/m"¹¹ culture, though that is not precisely the case. The label s/m is in and of itself anachronistic,¹² but the term can and should apply to the situation of these texts which focus on the spiritual(?) pleasure derived from observing, and to a certain extent imitating, the suffering of Christ.

The difficulty in using s/m as an exploratory trope lies within the tendency of psychoanalysis to pathologize it as a perversion or other such deviant practice such as a compulsion disorder, which is politically disruptive.¹³ However, as unusual as it may seem to focus on s/m as a trope, this procedure is not completely out of line. The major stumbling block seems to be a tendency for the general public to cringe inwardly at the thought of a pleasure-pain "perversion" without giving credit to the phenomenon of sadomasochism as being representative of a dynamic. Lynn S. Chancer suggests that this dynamic would have as a characteristic, "a hierarchical arrangement coming to exist between sadist and masochist that simultaneously accords with the promulgation of a superior as opposed to an inferior, a primary as opposed to a secondary party: the sadist takes pains to render the masochist not only unequal but also demeaned" (129). In this definition, despite the use of the terms "sadist" and "masochist," the primary focus is neither sex nor even pleasure; instead, the emphasis is on power.

In the s/m dynamic, as in any other sexually-charged situation, there are at least two variables. These elements can be the instigator and the pursued, the desiring subject and the desired object, or, in traditional s/m terms, the sadist and the masochist. Generally, the sadist is dubbed the "top," and the masochist the "bottom," and these terms can be both revealing and concealing.¹⁴ In revealing the s/m dynamic, they can illustrate what Lynda Hart calls "performativity *within* performance," (5) and a link with spectatorship. In concealing, they more firmly entrench the relationship with patriarchy, and the identification pairs of male-sadist, female-masochist. Foucault addresses both the power structure and the pleasure-pain dimension in his examination of what he calls Sade's "*analytics of sexuality*," indicating that Sade combined sex with sovereignty, endowing both with blood: "the latter [blood] flowed through the whole dimension of pleasure—the blood of torture and absolute power, the blood . . . [that] was made to flow in the major

rituals. . . the blood of the people, which was shed unreservedly" (*History I*, 148-9). These final points regarding spectatorship, sovereignty, and blood are what allow use of s/m as a tool of access for medieval anchoritic devotional practice.

II.

Against this complicated background, the world of the medieval anchoress takes on new meaning. If we explore the question of who the anchoress was, one possible answer might be, according to patriarchy, a masochist. Indeed, she was willing to suffer, to submit, and to punish herself. However, the dynamic of the anchoress cannot be that simple. As Elizabeth A. Clark points out, anchoresses were powerful in their own right:

Removed from the category of "womanhood" and its attendant complications by ascetic devotion, females would learn that asceticism [and withdrawal] offered them unprecedented freedom: freedom from the domestic problems occasioned by slaves, money, in-laws, sick children, marital suspicion and jealousy, not to speak of the verbal abuse and physical blows to which the church writers attest many wives were subjected. (46)¹⁵

The above passage outlines several of the ironies inherent in looking at anchoritism within an s/m dynamic. First of all, asceticism involves bodily punishment, generally self-inflicted. So in this case, the body is the masochist (requires "punishment"), and the spirit (the "punisher") is the sadist, but this struggle is happening within a woman, who by strict psychoanalytic definition must be a masochist. This masochist is breaking the dynamic, and seeking her own desire(s), which she finds in Christ. Most significantly, the anchoress gains a freedom denied to other medieval women, including the majority of nuns. Only anchoresses and extreme ascetics

held the distinction of being "free," that is being primarily in control of their own bodies, and often not being contained by a specific rule. Unfortunately, in gaining this freedom, these women often lost their sexuality entirely, and/or gained a sense of maleness.¹⁶ This assumed masculinity could then represent a disruption of the traditional patriarchal system.

Besides these complexities, another question remains—is Christ a sadist or a masochist? He holds ultimate power, which he imposes on his servants, yet submits to humiliation at the hands of others' servants. He demands much from his devotees, but suffers much on their behalf. He is both masculine, and feminine, or even to some extent genderless.¹⁷ Overall, though, it is the emphasis on corporeality that allows for the use of s/m as a tool for accessing the performance roles of the participants in Christ's suffering. The anchoress cannot become like Christ without going through a passion. As his wounds were inflicted, his identity was forged. Sadism becomes a rite of passage preceding salvation. It is thus necessary for the anchoress to focus on Christ's agony, but more importantly, for her to concentrate on his body and the rigors it underwent.

As an object of devotion and fantasy, the body of Christ assumes a central place in the anchoress's cell, and the Christ who is on display as object of devotion and of desire is a fully adult, beautifully naked, and exquisitely suffering, male form. It is precisely Christ's beauty that makes him worthy of being a spectacle. There are hints of his soft shoulder, gentle hands, and beautiful face, each of which is immediately coupled with pain: the soft shoulder is torn, the gentle hands are pierced, and the beautiful face is blood streaked. The male body is on display as a fragmented work of art. In this, Christ is the opposite of the tortured virgin martyrs whose bodies defied division. This is where the anchoress's imitation of Christ must be cautiously executed, for the male body is ripped apart and displayed to the common gaze, while the female body remains whole and "unbreached,"

unpenetrated, and hidden from all but a select gaze. Even the dramatic ascetic practices described by Bynum, such as rolling in nettles, hanging from a gibbet, lying unclothed on a stone floor, or drinking pus, do not shatter the wholeness that must exist in order for a woman to experience the highest form of holiness. The anchoress was expected to remain in intact solitary splendor while imagining the brutality of being sundered. She obediently begs Christ to "heal me," as her body should not sport any openings, unlike Christ's body, who had to be opened in order to close hers:

Through thy five wounds opened on the cross—
entirely pierced through with nails—and
sorrowfully filled up, heal me, who am seriously
wounded through my five senses with deadly
sins, and open them [five senses], Heavenly King,
towards heavenly things. (LLO, ll. 47-53)

Christ's flesh substitutes for the anchoress's. To keep her body from being penetrated, Christ must allow his body to be pierced instead. In an extended sexual metaphor, the senses are enticed, causing Christ, as "stand-in," to be penetrated, "pierced through," by nails. In a conscious echo of sexual relations, the thrusting nails both open and close the body; Christ is both penetrated and filled. In s/m terms, he has assumed the role of masochist, although since he ultimately retains the power in the relationship, he is still, in traditional terms, the sadist. The anchoress cannot afford to allow her body to be penetrated by anything—a gaze, a nail, or a penis. Once opened, her body is prey to sin and can no longer be considered holy. She cannot, in the s/m dynamic, allow herself to literally become the masochist, though she cannot, in her own political climate, become the sadist. Christ's body, which was both male and female, both sexual and virginal, both open and closed, was the ideal alternative. In illustrating this exchange, the iconographical focus of medieval art on the mouth, blood,

and wounds of Christ reveals "an eroticised, gender-bending and penetratable [*sic*] body open to flows and fluid desires, that signalled danger in other lesser bodies" (Camille 77). As a multivalent, permeable site, Christ's body is able to be both sacred and profane. In him, the conflation of humanity and divinity is enacted without danger to its purity; therefore it is "safe" for him to assume the place of the sinner, in this case, the anchoress.

In producing a "passion," torture leaves marks on its site, the body of the victim. Similarly, the body of an s/m participant displays marks of his/her passion. In these anchoritic pieces, the marks borne by Christ and by the anchoress are marks of spiritual authority. Their bodies, or rather literally Christ's body and figuratively the anchoress's body, are the sites of identity inscription. The embellishment of the torture scenes are thus scenes for the instruction of the audience, resulting in a socially constructed self for the anchoress, and an anchoritic constructed self for Christ. The point of convergence is Christ's flowing blood, and the result of this convergence is a union—a marriage—made in love, but secured by blood.

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Notes

¹He who has loved us and washed us in his blood," as written by St. John in *Revelation* (1:5). All translations from Latin and Middle English are my own, except where noted as being the work of Savage and Watson. *Wooing Group* translations are available in my book *The Wooing Group and A Discussion of the Love of God: Translated from Middle English with Introduction, Notes, and Interpretive Essay*. Forthcoming Boydell & Brewer, 2002.

²Mechtild of Hackeborn.

³Christina.

⁴Lukardis of Oberweimar.

⁵I chose to use the phrase "worthy woman" rather than "virgin" because a chaste widow could become an anchoress, and avoid "saint" because few anchoresses were canonized.

⁶More commonly the marriage of blood trope applied to the marriage of the Church as a whole (female) entity (*Ecclesia*) to the crucified Christ. Of course technically then everyone who was a member of the Church would be joined in a marriage of blood to Christ. However, the specific theme of an individual virgin's marriage to Christ through his *suffering yet beautiful* body seems to be a peculiarly anchoritic leaning.

⁷After the child's first vision at age five, Hildegard's parents chose to enclose the young girl in a recluse's cell attached to the Benedictine monastery in Disibodenberg instead of entering her into a convent. There she remained for several years with Jutta, an anchoress who "undertook to instruct Hildegard in the recitation of the psalter, the major part of the anchoress's day, and no doubt in other womanly

occupations" (Flanagan 3). The two women and their servant attracted so many followers because of their pious devotion that the original tiny cell eventually became expanded in to a mini-convent; thus ended Hildegard's life as an anchoress, but she retained the knowledge of all the anchoritic duties and obligations.

⁸I use the term "text-producer" as the debate regarding the gender of the anonymous author has not yet been settled.

⁹The minor pieces include: *On Uriesun of ure Lourede* (UL), *On Lofsong of ure Lourede* (LLO), and *On Lofsong of ure Lefdi* (LLe). These are my own abbreviations.

¹⁰*Holy Maidenhood* (HM), *Saint Juliana* (SJ), *Saint Katherine* (SK), *Saint Margaret* (SM), *Soul's Ward* (SW) are all a part of the *Katherine Group* (KG). They, like the *Wooing Group*, are connected to *Ancrene Wisse*, and thus to anchoritism, by MS tradition, source texts, language, literary dialect, and thematic parallels.

¹¹"Sadomasochistic," popularly known as s&m. The abbreviation s&m has fallen from favor because it sets up a linguistic hierarchy in which the "sadism" portion of the practice is endorsed at the expense of the "masochism" portion.

¹²The term *sadomasochism* derives from the names of Donatien Alphonse Marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. See *History of Sex: From Don Juan to Victoria*. © 1999 A&E Television Networks. VHS Documentary (Cat. No. AAE-42594), narrated by Peter Coyote, for a popularized view.

¹³This is similar to how psychoanalysis used to describe lesbianism, gay male activity, oral sex between heterosexuals, etc., and is the phrasing that has a tendency to persist in academe.

¹⁴In non-s/m relationships, "top" may refer to the dominant partner, or the initiator, and "bottom" may be used to indicate the passive partner, or the receiver. This is common terminology.

¹⁵Refer particularly to Augustine, *Confessions* (IX, 9) and John Chrysostom, *On Virginity* (40).

¹⁶See Jerome on "becoming male," and Clement of Alexandria on "asexuality." Paul addresses the issue in *Galatians* 3:28, where he discusses the concept that all Christians are one in Christ.

¹⁷The idea of the maternal Jesus, most rapturously embraced by Julian of Norwich, is explored most fully in Caroline Walker Bynum's *Jesus as Mother* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1982).

God within the Shadow: The Biblical Framework of Shakespearian Theater

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Doing original scholarly work in my field (ancient Greece) is extraordinarily difficult. Ph.D. candidates have a terrible time finding dissertation topics because just about all the "good" themes are long-since taken. As a result, an awful lot of what we do is trivia. One example is a book I'm supposed to be reviewing right now, a book called *The Politics of Plunder*. It's about the Aetolian league, a confederation of Greek city-states that combined democracy and piracy in an unusual way. An interesting topic, yes?

Well, no. There just isn't enough evidence for a decent book on the Aetolian league, and the author's attempt to weave a complete book out of straw is so tedious that I can't bring myself to do more than skim the book. Unfortunately, that's typical of ancient history. We're so desperate for material that one Ph.D. candidate actually wrote his dissertation on the use of the word "de" in Euripides. "De," by the way, is the Greek word for "and." Time to put in a special order, yes? You're no doubt dying to know how Euripides used the word "and" and how his usage of "and" differs from that of other playwrights.

No? Well, stay out of ancient history then: it occasionally gets better than this, but not much better. But, then, what do you expect from people who find broken pots a fascinating topic of conversation?

Now one would think that Shakespearian scholars would have much the same problem as we ancient historians in terms of finding original research topics. Shakespeare's plays and poems have been analyzed and analyzed and analyzed again, picked over already by thousands of experts.

The apostle John said that if all the things Jesus said and did were recorded, there wouldn't be room on earth to hold the books that would be written. Well, with Shakespeare I think it's at least gotten to the point where the average community library isn't big enough to hold the books and articles that have been written.

However, one of the curious things about Shakespeare scholarship is that, despite the volumes that have been written, much of it is still pretty interesting, even for the non-specialist. I am sure that there are Ph.D. candidates working on the equivalent of the use of the word "and" in Shakespeare, but many of them are also still able to deal with larger, more universally applicable, themes.

Of course, one reason that Shakespearian experts can continue to deal with interesting themes is that they have avoided what might have been a fatal mistake. As far as the major issues of Shakespearian interpretation go, the scholars never seem to reach a general consensus—or, at least, not for very long. Final, definitive answers are few and far between when it comes to Shakespeare.

But why is this? Why is there no "one" standard interpretation of the individual plays or of the Shakespearian corpus as a whole?

Part of it is that there is simply too much there. We are very much in the position of the proverbial blind men with the elephant, and we do have a tendency to take hold of an ear or a tail and confuse it with the whole thing.

Particularly, I think this is true in the area of Shakespeare's religious beliefs. There has been an awful lot written about Shakespearian religion and on the Biblical background of Shakespearean theater. And yet none of the theories on Shakespearian religion (or, rather, none of the theories I've encountered in my amateur's survey of the literature) seems to me totally satisfactory.

One of the most striking things about the literature on Shakespearian religion is the radically different points-of-view of the different scholars. The 19th century tended to regard Shakespeare as a secular poet, not much interested in religion at all, and many 20th century writers have shared this opinion.

Georges Santayana's "On the Absence of Religion in Shakespeare" is an excellent (if somewhat extreme) example of modern attempts to secularize totally Shakespeare. Santayana argues that the religious choice for Shakespeare was between Christianity and nothing and insists that Shakespeare chose the nothing.

On the other hand, there are plenty of critics who find Shakespeare primarily theological, suggesting that his works are often well-constructed defenses of different Christian ideas.

Somewhere in between are authors like Roland Frye whose *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) concedes that Shakespeare is concerned primarily with mirroring events in this world, but insists that Shakespeare's picture of this world is informed by a "masterful and theologically appropriate use of Christian doctrine" (Frye, p. 272).

And then there are books like Michael Evans's *Signifying Nothing: Truth's True Contents in Shakespeare's Texts* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), a deconstructive look at Shakespeare that I can't make head nor tail of but he seems to be saying that, when Shakespeare talks of religion, he means anything you want him to mean—unless, of course, what you want him to mean is in some way supported by traditional scholarship. Everything you know is wrong, don't forget.

So why the radically different viewpoints here? Why the lack of consensus on Shakespearian religion?

Part of our difficulty is that Shakespeare was constrained by censorship. In 1568, Elizabeth banned religious plays in England. With Spanish playwrights like Lope de Vega or Pedro Ernesto Philipppo Calderon della Barca, one can get at the playwright's religious ideas through his specifically religious plays, the *autos sacramentales*. Shakespeare didn't write *autos*, nor did any of the other Elizabethans. By the time of King James, the situation was worse. Shakespeare couldn't even name "God" directly in his plays, and had to substitute "heaven" whenever he wanted to make reference to the deity.

Another difficulty, of course, is our lack of extensive biographical information on Shakespeare himself. Was he a regular church-goer? Did his circle of intimates include strong Christians? Did he spend much time in Bible study? How much religious and Biblical instruction did Shakespeare get at school? Were there regular devotions in his home, and did he grow up hearing retellings of the Biblical stories from his father and mother? We simply don't know.

So what we're left trying to do is guess at Shakespeare's religious beliefs from his texts.

At first, this might not seem a greatly difficult task. Simply collate all the Biblical and theological references in the Shakespearian corpus and—*voilà!* Shakespeare's religion!

Only it doesn't work. In his *Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge and Use of the Book of Common Prayer, as Exemplified in the Plays of the First Folio* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970), Richmond Noble puts together an impressive list of Biblical quotes and allusions in Shakespeare, but concludes, "We have no adequate means of gauging the extent of his [Shakespeare's] Biblical knowledge" (p. 98). Yes, there are references of one sort or another to passages in 42 different Biblical books, and Shakespeare does seem to be careful about accuracy in his citations, but nothing in any of the Biblical references

seems to require any specially deep knowledge of the scripture. Further, the use of a Biblical reference or theological idea by one of Shakespeare's characters can't be assumed to reflect Shakespeare's own point of view:

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps in this petty pace from day to day to the last syllable of recorded time. And all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death. Out, out brief candle. Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. (*Macbeth* 5.5).

Does *Macbeth* speak for Shakespeare, or is Shakespeare simply brilliantly recreating the despair of a lost man? Georges Santayana thought that *Macbeth* was in fact speaking for Shakespeare. I would think the latter, but who can say for certain?

And, assuming for the second, that Shakespeare did have a strong attachment to religion, what religion was it? Daniel Wright, author of *The Anglican Shakespeare: Elizabethan Orthodoxy in the Great Histories* (Vancouver: Pacific-Columbia Books, 1993), insists that Shakespeare's constant echoes of the Geneva Bible, the 1559 Book of Prayer, and other distinctively Anglican source materials show him to be an ardent defender of Anglican orthodoxy. On the other hand, books and articles like Peter Milward's *The Catholicism of Shakespeare's Plays* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Austin's Press, 1997), offer equally persuasive evidence of Catholic sympathies, noting, for instance, the obvious references to purgatory in Act I, scene 5 of *Hamlet*.

But arguing over individual citations and allusions may be simply to miss the forest by arguing over the classification of the trees. Surely an analysis of the overall structure of some of the individual plays would provide a

better guide to Shakespearian philosophy and theology than any collection of not-always-in-context citations.

Steven Marx's *Shakespeare and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) is an impressive attempt to show that Shakespeare was not simply familiar with the Bible, but understood its literary structure and organized his own plays in part on Biblical models. *The Tempest* echoes the narrative techniques of Genesis—and also of Revelation. Shakespeare's handling of *Henry V* is influenced by the stories of Moses and David. *King Lear*? That's the Book of Job, of course. *Measure for Measure*? The Gospel of Matthew. *Merchant of Venice*? Romans.

Well, it's an impressive book and the literary and thematic parallels Marx points to are there. And certainly what Marx has to say can greatly help our understanding of Shakespeare.

What amazes me most about the book, however, is Marx's own amazement at the parallels he finds.

Marx's first chapter explains how he came to be interested in Biblical/Shakespearian parallels. A few years ago, he tells us, his own Biblical knowledge was extremely limited: a Hebrew school study of the first three chapters of Genesis and some assigned undergraduate readings in Genesis and Matthew. That was all—despite the fact that he was a professor of Renaissance literature!

Aware of what he came to view as a major gap in his education, Marx decided to teach a course on the Bible as literature. Nothing like teaching a subject to make you learn it, I suppose. Anyway, in doing the preparation, he found that, all of a sudden, he could understand Spenser, Milton, and Blake a lot better. And a lot of puzzling Shakespearean passages became clear (Marx, p. 3).

Well, surprise, surprise, surprise. Reading the book that has had more influence on Western civilization than any other just might help a professor of literature. A little bit of Biblical literacy just might help if you're trying to understand Milton, or Spenser, or Blake, or Dostoyevsky,

or Tolstoy, or Joyce, or Pascal, or Hobbes, or Voltaire, or Racine, or Calderon, or Pope, or Samuel Beckett.

And understanding the Bible just might help a bit in understanding Shakespeare.

However, while Marx is certainly right in his use of the Bible to help explain Shakespearean themes, I am not sure the parallels are quite as deliberate as Marx suggests. Understanding the Bible helps us better understand the Elizabethan worldview in general, and Shakespeare could not have avoided scriptural influences if he tried.

But literary and thematic parallels are tricky. It's easy, for instance, to find amazing parallels between Greek literature and the Bible. First and Second Samuel parallel Sophocles's tragedies in terms of literary structure and character development. Hesiod's *Theogony* has some striking parallels to Genesis. Euripides echoes Jeremiah as a weeping prophet, and Socrates's martyrdom foreshadows that of Christ.

The parallels between Greek literature and the Torah are so striking that some early Christians were convinced that many Greeks had plagiarized from Moses. Eusebius of Caesarea's *Demonstration of the Gospel* is filled with parallels between pagan writers and the Scriptures, parallels so impressive that one would at first think there had to be a direct connection.

And consider this passage from the *Upanishads*:

Some sages speak of the nature of things as the cause of the world, and others, in their delusion, speak of time. But is by the glory of God that the Wheel of Brahman revolves in the universe. The whole universe is ever in his power. He is pure consciousness, the creator of time: all-powerful, all-knowing. . . God ended his work and he rested and he made a bond of love between his soul and the soul of all things. . . May we know the Lord of lords, the King of kings, the god of god: God, the God of love, the Lord of all. (Svetasvatara

Upanishad 6 in Juan Mascaro, trans., *The Upanishads*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1965)

Strangely familiar, yes? But it's hard to say exactly what the Biblical/Hindu parallels show, and it would be dangerous to assume any direct literary connection.

With Shakespeare, too, it's dangerous to try to make too much of the Biblical allusions and citations—and even of his direct parallels to Biblical themes. The problem is that Shakespeare was a typical Renaissance writer: he drew on lots of sources, and everything he found tasty went into the stew.

Note, for instance, that Shakespeare is filled with classical allusions too: a gold mine for Ph.D. candidates searching for dissertation topics. Indeed, the books and articles on Shakespeare and the classics may even outnumber those on Shakespeare and religion.

So how do we untangle all of this? How do we uncook the stew? And what do we ultimately make of Shakespeare? Was he an atheist? A Catholic? An Anglican? A neo-pagan?

An elephant, I suppose.

But also... well, he was an actor.

And that, I think, may be our key to understanding Shakespearian religion and the Shakespearian worldview in general. Eleanor Prosser, my undergraduate advisor, taught us to watch out for purely literary analysis. Think performance. How do things look from the point of view of an actor with a live audience to deal with?

And all of a sudden, we're on fairly easy ground. Almost.

What is Shakespeare's view of the world? Probably close to that of Jacques, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players: they have their entrances and their exits" (*As You Like It* 2.7.139-140).

But what kind of stage does Shakespeare have in mind, and where are the exits? Is Shakespeare's world stage, by any chance, the medieval stage? Does the acting area, like the medieval mansions and platea, represent our earthly life? Does Heaven's Gate still open stage right, and is Hell Mouth still gaping stage left? And are the actions in the playing area no more than the preparation for an exit one way or another?

For writers like Marlowe, one would have to say yes: while Heaven's Gate and Hell Mouth aren't visibly represented, they are still there. And the central question (at least in *Dr. Faustus*) still concerns that final exit.

Well, what about Shakespeare? The action in the playing area is very much the same. The characters face the same kinds of moral dilemmas. Sin, evil, repentance, and restoration are all still major themes. But what about the exits?

No exit, says Macbeth. And Jacques doesn't seem much more optimistic.

...Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.
(2.7.164-167)

But what exactly are we to make of this? Is Jacques's speech proclaiming the ultimate futility of human existence, or is it only a view of things from the worldly perspective, forcing us to see that the only real hope is in the next life? Hard to say.

There are some clues that even the most skeptical of Shakespeare's characters think of their lives as scenes played out between Heaven's Gate and Hell Mouth. Hamlet won't kill Claudius at prayer because he doesn't want to send him to heaven (*Hamlet* 3.3). And even Macbeth recognizes the traditional exits "Hear it not Duncan. It is a knell that summons thee to heaven or to hell" (*Macbeth* 2.1.62-64).

But even if Shakespeare's ultimate exits are those of the medieval stage, the exits are curiously disguised and—apparently—deliberately so. Notice the difference between Shakespeare's *King John* and the anonymous *Troublesome Raigne of King John* in terms of John's final exit.

In the *Troublesome Raigne*, the final scene has John lamenting his inevitable damnation:

Methinks I see a catalogue of sinne,
Wrote by a fiend in marble characters,
The least enough to loose my part in heaven.
Methinkes the divell whispers in mine eares,
And tells me, tis in vaine to hope for grace,
I must be damn'd for Arthur's sodaine death,
I see I see a thousand thousand men
Come to accuse me for my wrong on earth,
And there is none so mercifull a God
That will forgive the number of my sinnes.

The Bastard interrupts with a one-sentence salvation message:

Forgive the world and all your earthly foes,
And call on Christ, who is your latest friend.

And, all of a sudden, John's saved! He repents of his submission to the Pope (which seems to this author by far the worst of John's evil deeds), and, with one last curse at Catholicism, says,

In the faith of Jesu John doth die.

Shakespeare, of course, eliminates all of this, focusing on the temporal fate of England rather than on the eternal fate of John.

And so, where does John exit when he dies? For that matter, where do any of Shakespeare's characters go

when they die? Ophelia? Falstaff? Desdemona? Lear? Very hard to say, isn't it? But why?

Well, I have a tentative guess. Aristotle felt that supernatural intervention ruined tragedy, and I think that Shakespeare felt the same way. The medieval stage put characters in the midst of a tug-of-war: angelic and demonic forces competed to pull the characters stage right or stage left. Decent drama, perhaps, but easy to improve. Keep a strong sense of cosmic good and evil, but push the supernatural characters almost completely offstage, and what happens? Individual human choices become far more important.

One sees this technique in James Russell Lowell's "Once to Every Man and Nation." Human choices are made within a great cosmic struggle between good and evil:

Once to every man and nation,
Comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of truth with falsehood,
For the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new messiah,
Offering each the bloom or blight,
And the choice goes by forever,
'Twixt that darkness and that light.

But notice how Lowell heightens the importance of human choice.

Though the cause of evil prosper,
Yet 'tis truth alone is strong;
Though her portion be the scaffold,
And upon the throne be wrong;
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above His own.

It seems to me that Shakespeare anticipates Lowell. His God stands within the shadow, and behind the dim unknown.

Which, interestingly enough, is where God seems to stand in much of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament. As Richard Elliot Freedman notes in *The Hidden Face of God* (San Francisco: Harper, 1997), one of the most intriguing and astounding features of the Bible is that, very quickly, God seems to disappear. "I shall hide my face from them. I shall see what their end will be," says the Lord in Deuteronomy 32:20.

Deutero-Isaiah too points to the seeming disappearance of God "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isaiah 45:14).

Further, the destination of most Biblical characters after their "final exit" is unclear at best. The scripture is so unclear on the ultimate destiny of Adam that arguments over the salvation of the "first father" troubled the church for centuries. I and II Samuel and I and II Kings focus far more on the temporal fate of Israel than on the eternal fate of any of the characters (except, of course, Elijah).

Could it be, then, that in giving us a hidden God and in masking the final exits of his characters, Shakespeare is simply matching what he perceives to be the tone and spirit of the scriptures and particularly the narrative portions of the Old Testament? Is it possible that the religion of the plays has nothing to do with doctrine but everything to do with Shakespeare's extraordinary ear for language and his mastery of literary form?

Shakespeare's Comic Refusers

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Early modern dialogues about love or about courtesy frequently include a character that does not share the general view of the participants. In Baldassare Castiglione's *The Courtier* that character was Gaspare Pallavicino, who persistently attacked the honesty and the abilities of women. In Edmund Tilney's treatment of marriage the character is Master Gualter, again a misogynist and an irreconcilable opponent of the general direction of the dialogue. In George Whetstone's exploration of marriage, *An Heptameron of Civil Discourses*, again there is such a person, this time named Doctor Mossenigo who is full of stories about the ill behavior of men and women and the unlikelihood of marriages ever being happy.¹ The role of these interlopers seems to be both to add liveliness to the discussions by introducing an alternative view which can be attacked and to clarify the position being presented by contrasting it with other less acceptable views. These characters are threatened with exclusion from the group; they have to pay penalties, sometimes of enforced silence and sometimes of enforced support of a view contrary to the one they have presented. Doctor Mossenigo comes to

the brink of being challenged to a duel until cooler heads prevail. Each of these characters is the dissenting member of the group, the bit of grit in the social machine, the one who will not accept the dominant mood or attitude. Thus, they have similar functions to those characters in comedy that Northrop Frye calls "Refusers of Festivity."²

They are the characters who, when all around them are joining in dancing, feasting, and marriage, for one reason or another, opt out. They decide not to participate or they are denied entrance based on their previous attitudes and actions. Thus at the end of *Every Man in His Humor*, Justice Clement invites all to join in the wedding festivities and banquet, except the false soldier Bobadil and the false poet Matthew. Stephen, the would-be gentleman, has an intermediate position; he may eat but must do so in the kitchen. Thus, all the characters who are released from their humors are included in the feast; those who persist in their humors, their foolishness or their falseness, are excluded.³

In Shakespeare these characters who are excluded by their own actions and choices occur in every comedy, but are highly diverse, ranging from the likeable Jaques in *As You Like It*, who is encouraged to join in the fun, to the unrepentant villain, Don John in *Much Ado About Nothing*, who is threatened with "brave punishments." Sometimes they get the final word as does Don Armado in *Love's Labor's Lost*, or they leave early as does Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* who is tried and found guilty and thus excluded for the entire fifth act (at least in many performances). In some of the comedies there is uncertainty about them. Egeus, the father of Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is like Shylock in demanding the law, this time to prevent the lovers from marrying, but he is overruled by Theseus. Does Egeus then disappear for the fifth act or does he become the master of the revels in the final scenes as the First Folio indicates? Is it possible for the refuser to be right in rejecting the society that dominates or has emerged as dominant? Can the refuser become the voice of reason commenting on the

corruption or at least the foolishness or hypocrisy of the society which is merely celebrating its own inadequacies? Does Lucio in *Measure for Measure* have a sharper insight into the society than the Duke? Does Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida* speak for the author or perhaps for the audience in railing against the darker side of all the characters and all the actions? Can the refuser be outside the play like Christopher Sly in *The Taming of the Shrew*, or outside humanity like Caliban and Ariel in *The Tempest*? The range in the roles is immense, but in each case the characters seem to capture important qualities of the play, to give a particular shape or tone to the issues that are explored. Their exclusion whether by choice or by force offers us a useful way to define the issues or themes of the play. The characters provide a way to know the particular comic spirit of the piece by their explicit refusal to participate in that spirit; they are the comic refusers.

On this occasion I will consider only three plays in some detail: *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. They have a number of points in common in addition to being probably written within a five-year period. They all include a heroine who dresses like a man to control, further, or unravel the plot. The plays all end in happy marriages, but with some variety of relationships. The plays use, but again to varying degrees, contrasting environments: the court of Duke Frederick opposed to the green world of Arden where Duke Senior resides in *As You Like It*, the upstairs/ downstairs social contrast between the court life of Orsino and Olivia and the buttery life of Sir Toby and his crowd in *Twelfth Night*, and the commercial scene of Venice in contrast to the gracious world of Belmont in *The Merchant of Venice*. And in each play there is a character who one way or another chooses not to participate in the final resolution and reconciliation, who rejects the self-awareness, understanding, and acceptance of family, humanity, forgiveness, harmony, true religion, social position in the

hierarchy, or joyfulness of life; that is, rejects the comic spirit in whatever form it takes in that play.

Jaques in *As You Like It* is the most controlled, dispassionate, and rational of these characters. His rejection of the comic spirit is not spiteful or mean-spirited. He does not seek self-aggrandizement or revenge, but he will not join in the dance. He remains apart, secluded, uninvolved, a spectator not a participant in life. He will not dirty his hands; he will not integrate the earthly into his world; it must remain for him cerebral, fastidious, detached, and protected.⁴ He is prophylactic in a land of fertility. The events in his world will remain opportunities for a song or a speech. When viewing the wounded deer, he moralizes the spectacle as Duke Senior says. When a deer is killed, he calls for a procession and a song. He takes the superior position of a satirist that his own foibles (he has been a libertine) do not hinder him from criticism of others. For Jaques all the world is a stage and all the parts are laughable; none is to be taken seriously.

The comedy opens in this playful vein with Rosalind and Celia offering to play at falling in love, and the disguise in Arden continues the game as Rosalind plays at being Rosalind and at loving Orlando. Orlando performs his role as lover following every artificial convention from initial speechlessness to his tree carving and poem posting. To fulfill the comic spirit of the piece they must outgrow the reserve of Jaques and involve themselves with their true physical and emotional natures. Love becomes real when Orlando says, "I can live no longer by thinking" (5.2.48). Touchstone carries involvement to comic lengths by marrying Audrey, the unwashed goatherd, but Touchstone is a fool who invites our laughter. Orlando carries involvement to almost tragic lengths by fighting a lioness in the woods to protect his brother who has done him nothing but evil, but Orlando is a hero who invites our admiration. Jaques' refusal to join in the dance and festivities is explicitly a rejection of the enjoyment of life. He will go seek Duke Frederick, now a hermit in a

cave. He says in parting: "So to your pleasures,/ I am for other, than for dancing measures" (5.4.).

Malvolio's refusal to accept the spirit of comedy is petulant. He insists at the end of the play as he has throughout on more than his due. He has failed to know his place in the hierarchy of society and deludes himself into believing he can be more than his position allows. Thus, he defines as clearly as Jaques what the play is about, what the particular comic spirit is: that is, acceptance of who you are, where you are, and what you are. Orsino would be all love, Olivia would be all mourning, Sir Toby would be all cakes and ale. Each would have more than his or her share. They wish to ignore the limits of their nature and indulge beyond their proper sphere or capacity.⁵ Olivia is most quickly drawn from her self-indulgence in sorrow by falling in love. Her spirit rises; her costume and her demeanor change. She comes back to life and its demands and opportunities. Orsino is more reluctant to part with his illusion. He is drawn from it angrily, threatening violence and injustice. He is in some danger of being linked too closely with Malvolio in terms of persistent self-indulgence and self-deception. He emerges from his cocoon only when Viola is uncased from her disguise as Cesario by the appearance of her double, her brother Sebastian. There must be two of Cesario/Viola, not only because we need a man for Olivia and a woman for Orsino, but also because Viola must divide her two roles and settle for herself in one. She cannot be both beloved by Olivia and in love with Orsino, she cannot be both the messenger of love and the victim of love, but most of all she cannot have both the freedom of manhood and the character of womanhood. She has played a dual role, feeling like a woman and acting like a man, and she has enjoyed the duality (at least until "duality" becomes a pun and she is threatened with a duel), but she has not been deceived by her roles into thinking they are hers by nature as Malvolio believes his pretences are truly himself. The arrival and actions of her brother Sebastian free Viola to be a woman, free Olivia to love a man, free Orsino

from his conflicted feelings for Cesario, free Sir Andrew Aguecheek both from Sir Toby's dominance and from his own foolish persistence in believing himself to be an elegant knight likely to win the hand of Olivia, free Sir Toby from his illusion of irresponsibility for his actions, and of course free Antonio from his capturers. Sebastian has, however, no contact with Malvolio. Perhaps the contact would not make a difference. Malvolio is persistent in the very flaws the others have outgrown. He is so deeply into his self-deception that all the efforts of Maria, Sir Toby, Feste, and Fabian to show him how uncertain our assumed characters are, are not enough to bring him to a true understanding of who he is and what his real opportunities are. Jaques refuses the festival still believing that life should be merely a spectator sport; Malvolio refuses the festival still believing that he deserves better than he has received.

We can get a sharper definition of the spirit of the play by seeing how a changed emphasis will shift the focus. Productions of *As You Like It* which believe in philosophy over sweating labor, the intellectual over the physical life, may make Jaques into the nobler spirit of the piece and suggest that he seeks a higher goal than the rest, satisfied as they are with their lechery which they call love, all of them no better than Touchstone although they call their passion by a different name. Such a production will emphasize the artificiality of Duke Senior's life in Arden, the simple-mindedness of the rustic inhabitants of Arden, and the conventionality or absurdity of the love relationships. Similarly, productions of *Twelfth Night* can diminish the validity of class distinctions that underlie Malvolio's treatment and make his illusions seem more innocent and his punishments harsher, so that he evokes some sympathy along the way and has some justification for his angry departure at the end. Such a view not only rejects cakes and ale; it questions the possibility of happiness in Sir Toby's marriage to Maria. Such a production will stress the uncertainties of fortune that place people in power without regard to their moral value

or responsibility. Orsino's anger at the end will be presented as extreme and every bit as self-indulgent as his languishing in love at the beginning. It will emphasize the chances that characterize the dominant society, the conventions that rule their falling in love and finding partners; it will question the justice of their actions, making the decisions seem more arbitrary than thoughtful or principled.

Northrop Frye pointed out in 1957 that a similar change can be made in *The Merchant of Venice*; it is possible to tip the balance of the play toward a tragic portrayal of Shylock, and there is indeed a long tradition of doing so. Frye says: "*The Merchant of Venice* seems almost an experiment in coming as close as possible to upsetting the comic balance. If the dramatic role of Shylock is ever so slightly exaggerated, as it generally is when the leading actor of the company takes the part, it is upset, and the play becomes the tragedy of the Jew of Venice with a comic epilogue" (165). It is a wholly understandable way to deal with the play. Mahood points out that there are two periods of particular revision of the play. First, a tradition grew in the 18th century of developing the tragic potential of Shylock. Consequently the "comic epilogue" of which Frye spoke, that is the fifth act in Belmont reuniting the lovers, was omitted in many productions.⁶ Again, after the Second World War and the persecution of the Jews by the Nazi regime, the treatment of Shylock and the other characters has been given particular directions. Shylock does appear in the fifth act in some productions. It has recently become a fairly standard addition to the play to have the figure of Shylock appear above, either in person or electronically, and chant a prayer of his own religion during the fifth act. In one production, Shylock dies in the trial scene but the body stays on stage as a constant reminder throughout the fifth act. The scenes in Venice place emphasis on the spurning of Shylock and on the monetary motives for Bassanio's marriage as well as Lorenzo's. The scenes in Belmont get

a harsher, more materialistic tone or a more fantastic and exaggerated quality.

The greatest difficulty in portraying Shylock has been and is the issue of his religion. It has been argued (based in part on Maria's calling him "a kind of puritan" [2.3.119]) that much of Malvolio's character and his refusal of the comic spirit is connected to his Puritanism which would have been fully recognizable by a contemporary audience.⁷ However, it is possible to present Malvolio without any clear linkage to his religious beliefs, and it is not possible to do the same for Shylock. Shylock's religion is more insistently built into his character, his language, and his actions.

It is fair then to ask not only what particular comic spirit Shylock refuses, but to what degree the play presents his religion as significant in that refusal. What Shylock refuses is very clear in the literal sense. He refuses to release Antonio from his bond. Several characters plead, threaten, or reason with Shylock, urging him to take money instead of flesh, to save a life rather than spill blood, and to show mercy rather than invoke the rigor of the law. It is, of course, that final issue that raises the question of religion. Christianity was and still is seen by its adherents as fulfilling the expectations of the Jewish Scriptures or the Old Testament as the Christians call it. The standard contrast was between the law of the Old Testament and the love of the New Testament, between the punishment required by the strict justice of the law and redemption offered by the sacrifice of the Son of God to save humankind. The play, the character of Shylock, and the trial scene in particular have as their necessary and understood background this contrast between two religious traditions.⁸ And the further assumption of the play and its contemporary audience was that the Christian tradition was superior. One cannot get past the issue of religion with Shylock as one can with Malvolio; it cannot be sidestepped, for it is thematically significant. If we have any doubts about the significance of religion, we need only remember that part of Shylock's

punishment is his conversion to Christianity. In real life the punishment won't always fit the crime, but in Shakespeare it does. Why is Malvolio treated as if he were mad? Because he is mad; he does not know who he is. And he is released from his punishment, not by the concern of his tormentors but by a letter, just as he has been put into this condition by a letter.

The connection between the fourth and the fifth acts of *The Merchant of Venice* can be explored in this light. Mercy and relief from the letter of the law continue in the fifth act as the play extends the exploration of keeping and breaking bonds, words given and words broken. The term, bond, is used 39 times in *The Merchant of Venice*; it is used 31 times in all the rest of Shakespeare's plays together. The word, however, departs the play along with Shylock at the end of the fourth act. In the fifth act the promises made are referred to as oaths. Bassanio and Gratiano have given their promise to keep the rings given to them by their spouses. They have broken that promise; should the strict letter of the agreement be enforced? Portia and Nerissa will pretend to some rigor and will use their superior knowledge to make statements the audience understands but their husbands do not. But all will end happily not only because this is comedy, but also because Portia understands forgiveness and the importance of love beyond law.

However we might wish that Shakespeare had a higher regard for philosophy and abstract thought, that he had less regard for distinctions between classes and genders, or that he had a more equitable view of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism, the plays suggest that his view of the world is not ours or at least, like Phoebe's beauty in *As You Like It*, is not for all markets. The fact that good actors can make Jaques delightful or even profound, make Malvolio sympathetic, and make Shylock deeply human may increase our respect for a playwright who has such large dimensions to his characters. The ability of directors to adjust the plays to deal with more recently developed judgments about

gender roles, class, and religion may increase our enjoyment or at least lessen our unease. But we should be wary of taking the position of the comic refuser who finally will accept the ending only on his own terms.

Notes

¹Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*. Trans. Sir Thomas Hoby. [1561] Ed. Virginia Cox. Everyman's Library. New York: Charles E. Tuttle, 1994. Edmund Tilney, *The Flower of Friendship: A Renaissance Dialogue Contesting Marriage*. [1568] Ed. Valerie Wayne. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992. George Whetstone, *An Heptameron of Civill Discourses. Containing: The Christmasse Exercise of sundrie well Courted Gentlemen and Gentlewomen*. London: Richard Jones, 1582. Facsimile reprint, 1980 by Gerstenberg English Reprints.

²"We find churls in the miserly, snobbish, or priggish characters whose role is that of the refuser of festivity, the killjoy who tries to stop the fun, or like Malvolio, locks up the food and drink instead of dispensing it. The melancholy Jaques of *As You Like It*, who walks out on the final festivities, is closely related." Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism. Four Essays*. London: Penguin, 1990, p. 176. First published by Princeton UP, 1957.

³Brainworm, the tricky servant in *Every Man in His Humor*, has been responsible for the plot convolutions that occur, but it is Justice Clement who gets the responsibility of sorting it all out and distributing the rewards and punishments as the characters deserve. Bobadil and Matthew will be excluded from the feast, Stephen will be assigned to the kitchen for his meal, Brainworm will be forgiven for all his clever deceptions, and the married couple will be feasted, setting a new or renewed standard of marital harmony to which Kately and his wife and Cob and his wife are invited." Douglas A. Northrop, "Jonson's Comedy of Manners," *Proceedings of the Seventh Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature*. Ed. Jay Ruud. Aberdeen, SD: Northern State UP, 1999.

⁴Allan Brissenden notes this quality of Jaques in contrast to Touchstone: "While Jaques and Touchstone differ in so many ways, they are also alike. Both criticize society, both ridicule romantic love, putting themselves outside it. Jaques derides it from his assumed intellectual loftiness, Touchstone from the lower regions of the flesh." William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*. Allan Brissenden, Ed. The Oxford Shakespeare. Oxford: Clarendon, 1993, 34.

⁵Elizabeth Donno distinguishes between the conscious and unconscious departure from nature: "The dissembling of one's true nature (conscious with Viola and Feste, unconscious with Orsino and Olivia) is highlighted in the figure of the steward Malvolio." William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night: or What You Will*. Elizabeth Story Donno, Ed. *The New Cambridge Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985, 12.

⁶During the next century-and-a-half [1750-1900] it was to lead to grosser [distortions] as not only were characters irrelevant to the portrayal of Shylock dropped, but whole scenes, notably Act 5, were on occasion left out of the play." William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*. Ed. M. M. Mahood. The *New Cambridge Shakespeare* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987.

⁷ Leslie Hotson, *The First Night of "Twelfth Night."* New York, 1954, makes the most extensive case for the importance of Malvolio's religion, see esp. pp. 100-14.

⁸ Barbara Lewalski provides an extended analysis of the trial scene and its contrast of the two religious perspectives, "Biblical Allusion and Allegory in *The Merchant of Venice*" *SQ* (1962): 327-43. More recently Paul Franssen has reviewed the material and reached similar conclusions about the contrast of the two religions in the play: "With all my Heart": The Pound of Flesh and the Execution of Justice," *Critical Self-Fashionings: Stephen Greenblatt and the New Historicism*. Frankfurt: Lang, 1999, 87-103.

Love and Death in Romeo and Juliet

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Romeo and Juliet is arguably Shakespeare's best known play. The story of the "star cross'd lovers" who settle an ages old family feud by double suicide has been taught to and read by generations of high school students. The play has gone through numerous stage performances, two notable film versions (Franco Zeffereilli's and Baz Luhrmann's), Leonard Bernstein's adaptation as the musical *West Side Story*, and has made it into popular culture in such songs as "Don't Fear the Reaper" by Blue Oyster Cult.

But despite its popularity this play is not without its controversy. Although Shakespeare is known for not following Aristotle's *Poetics* when constructing his plays, many critics have nonetheless measured the value of *Romeo and Juliet* by Aristotle's dicta - and they have found the play lacking.

To Aristotle, plot is the most important consideration for any tragedian; character takes second place. Plots are to be constructed in such a way that their resolution grows naturally from the play's action; characters (especially the tragic "hero") are to fall because of an inherent defect in their characters, the so-called

"tragic flaw," and plots are never to be unraveled by the *deus ex machina*. But consider *Romeo and Juliet*. The denouement is directly caused by happenstance: Friar John, the messenger who is to deliver the news of Juliet's "fake" death to Romeo, is waylaid and quarantined in a case of mistaken identity. Rather than being allowed to continue to Mantua Friar John is forced to return to Verona and to report his failure to Friar Laurence. Romeo, despite the quarantine that stopped Friar John, has somehow managed to hear of Juliet's death and resolves to commit suicide in Juliet's tomb. Denouement arises from accident and the "tragic flaw" in this play would seem to be with the plot.

As a general rule, one could argue that plot is not Shakespeare's strong suit, at least not in his tragedies. The audience sometimes has the plot "given away" in the first act: Richard III announces his villainy in the play's opening speech; the witches prophesy the rise and fall of Macbeth; King Hamlet's ghost tells his son of Claudius's treachery. Some plots are unnecessarily complex, such as the Edmund / Edgar / Gloucester plot in *King Lear*, and a few "plots" could have been resolved with the application of a little common sense: "Desdemona, have you ever slept with Cassio?" Similarly, common sense might have saved *Romeo and Juliet*: if Verona's laws did not extend to Mantua, why didn't Juliet "escape" from the Capulet mansion and fly to Mantua, rather than risk her life by taking an untested potion?

So if, for the purposes of this paper, we could "admit" that Shakespeare's plots are not the source of his tragic greatness, we might well ask, "what is? What makes Shakespeare so great?" One answer would be character and theme. We read his plays to see the workings of immortal themes such as ambition, greed, jealousy or pure evil "work" on mortal human beings. We tremble to watch Macbeth, thane of Glamis, murder his king in order to become king; to watch the noble Othello metamorphose from doting husband to jealous murderer; or to watch Richard, Duke of Gloucester, personify evil as he cold

bloodedly murders his way to the crown and commits evil on top of evil in order to keep it. And similarly, we watch the young, idealistic Romeo fall in love with his Juliet, revenge the death of his friend, Mercutio, and die in the tomb of his beloved.

Ah, young love.

But if *Romeo and Juliet* shows us immortal themes acting on mortal humans, just what is the theme of *Romeo and Juliet*? Is it love? And if love is the theme, we might also ask "what is love?" Or at least, what is love in this play?

The opening of *Romeo and Juliet* is somewhat "odd": following the opening sonnet by the Chorus which gives away the plot, Sampson and Gregory, servants of the house of Capulet, exchange a series of bawdy jokes which reduce "love" to sex and extend the sexual metaphor to the quarrel between the Capulets and the Montagues.

Sam. Ay, the heads of the maids, or their maidenheads, take it in what sense thou wilt.

Gre. They must take it [in] sense that feel it.

Sam. Me they shall feel while I am able to stand, and 'tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh.

Gre. 'Tis well thou are not fish; if thou hadst, thou hadst been poor-John. Draw thy *tool*, here comes [two] of the house of Montagues.

Enter two other servingmen [Abram and Balthasar].

Sam. My *naked tool* is out. . . ." (*RJ*: I.i.25-34; our emphasis)

Sex and sexual innuendo run throughout the early acts of *Romeo and Juliet*: from Mercutio's attempts to "conjure" Romeo by Rosaline's "fine foot, straight leg, and quivering thigh. And the demesnes that there adjacent lie" (II.i.19-20) to Mercutio's conversation with Juliet's Nurse (II.iv.103-141). Indeed, undergraduates are often amazed to see how many of Shakespeare's lines have double meaning and how many of his words (aided by the *Riverside Shakespeare's* trusty footnotes) are sexual puns:

broad, bable, hare, stale, meat, hoar, etc., etc., etc.

All of these references to sex culminate in Act III, scenes iv and v: while old Capulet and Paris negotiate the upcoming wedding between Juliet and Paris, Romeo and Juliet are upstairs consummating their marriage. What Shakespeare hints at, Zefferelli, Lurhmann, et al. have made obvious.

But then the play changes direction: Act III contains both the death of Tybalt (the cause of Romeo's banishment) and Romeo and Juliet's wedding night, uniting love and death in the space of about 450 lines. Indeed, from this point on, "love" becomes less and less a topic of conversation, while "death" becomes more and more prominent.

In the summer, 1994, issue of *Text Technology*, Eric Johnson remarked, "It is almost impossible to imagine a kind of research about Jane Austen or Samuel Taylor Coleridge that could not be assisted by employing electronic (machine-readable) versions of their works" (93). We would like to assert that Dr. Johnson's remarks about Austen and Coleridge could be extended to apply to the works of virtually any writer. Using text analysis programs written by Dr. Johnson and applying some rudimentary text markup to the *Oxford Electronic Text Library of the Works of William Shakespeare*, we have reached some interesting conclusions about the text of *Romeo and Juliet*. Although the aforementioned change in theme from love to death is perhaps the most striking, we found a wealth of information about "love" and the way that love is understood by Romeo and by Juliet.

Before considering these data, let's take a moment to reflect upon what love is. The *OED* defines loves as, "That state or feeling with regard to a person which arises from recognition of attractive qualities, from sympathy or from natural ties, and manifests itself in warm affection and attachment." When considering the idea of non maternal love of another the sought after effect is the creation of a new directness in the one who loves that

produces a reduction in concentration on the self. Love is an "us" and "we" matter, not a "me" or an "I" endeavor. With that idea established, we can continue with the notions of love as presented in *Romeo and Juliet*.

First, let us consider the uses of "love" and its forms (loved, loves, love's, lovers, lovers', loving) and "death" and its forms (dead, die, dies, died).¹ As you can see from the following table,

Word Form	Acts I and II	Act III	Acts IV and V
love	88	29	20
loved	2	1	0
loves	4	0	0
love's	7	0	4
lovers	2	1	0
lovers'	5	0	0
loving	4	1	1
"love words"	112	32	25
death	10	24	36
dead	5	15	28
die	5	8	10
dies	2	1	4
died	0	0	1
"death words"	22	48	78

occurrences of "love words" almost mirror occurrences of "death words" in Acts I and II versus Acts IV and V; both groups of words are used often in Act III, with 19% of the uses of "love words" occurring in Act III, while 32% of the uses of "death words" occur in Act III. Thus the theme of the play seems to shift from love to death in Act III, where love and death coexist.

The movement of the play from love to death should seem to be fairly obvious to even the casual reader; after all, Tybalt's death leaves neither Romeo nor Juliet much time for love and the innocence of the famous balcony scene in Act II gives way to Romeo's banishment

and Friar Laurence's plan which ends in Romeo's and Juliet's deaths. But why must this play end tragically? If, after all, the play's denouement depends on an accident or if a little "common sense" would have Romeo and Juliet elope to Mantua, why does Shakespeare bypass the "happy ending"? The answer may lie in the nature of the "love" between the two main characters.

In his introductory essay to the *Riverside Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*, Frank Kermode presents the old argument that the denouement of the play arises from an accident and not from the play's action nor the characters' actions:

It has been objected that the play lacks tragic necessity - that the story becomes tragic only by a trick. Bradley answered this long ago when he called it a rule, from which he did not except *Romeo and Juliet*, that in Shakespearean tragedy "almost all the prominent accidents occur when the action is well advanced and the impression of the causal sequence is too firmly fixed to be impaired." This is true of *Romeo and Juliet*. The *completeness and self-surrender* of the love between Romeo and Juliet is beautifully rendered, but there is hardly a moment when we are allowed to think that permanence or happiness is part of its nature. (1102-03; our emphasis)

We would like to suggest that the "completeness and self-surrender of the love between Romeo and Juliet" is the issue, and that their "love" is neither complete nor self-surrendering.

How does anyone tell the difference between love and infatuation? Between infatuation and lust? How does anyone know whether or not love will last? We think that most lovers, young and old, would agree that a successful relationship depends on compromise and that compromise involves putting the needs of your "significant other" before your own. When the concentration on one's self is

also coupled with the goal of promoting the other individual's interests, love is present. As we stated above, love is an "us" and "we" matter, not a "me" or an "I" endeavor.

This approach would suggest that someone truly in love would talk about his beloved and, maybe, not talk about himself as much. And since compromise should be a 50-50 proposition, both lovers should have the needs of the "other" foremost in their minds, hearts, and dialogue. But is that the case? In the following table, we have compared Romeo's and Juliet's use of pronouns; we have divided these pronouns into "me" groups (I, I'll, me, mine, my) and "you" groups (thee, thine, thou, thy, you and your). Also, for the sake of comparison, we have included the number of times each character mentions the other by name.

Word Usage	Romeo	Juliet
"I" words	318	295
"You" words	167	146
Other's name	16	49
"We" words (our, us, we)	20	5
Percent ("You" / "You" + "I")	34%	33%

This analysis is not as complete as we would like: without the time to fully analyze the context for each of these pronoun's usage, we cannot tell automatically who is being addressed when either Romeo or Juliet uses words such as "thee" or "you." According to the *OED*, the use of "thee" in particular was in linguistic flux during Shakespeare's lifetime. The word was sometimes used to refer to superiors, e.g. when Juliet would speak to her father, or Romeo would speak to Friar Laurence, but it was also used in the same way that modern speakers would use "you." Romeo uses both "you" and "thee" to address Juliet:

Rom. I will omit no opportunity
That may convey my greetings, love, to thee
(III.v.49-50)
Rom. And trust me, love, in my eye so do you;
Dry sorrow drinks our blood. (III.v.58-59)

Juliet, similarly, uses both pronouns to refer to Romeo:

Jul. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for thy name, which is no part of thee
(II.ii.47-48)
Jul. Good pilgrim you do wrong your hand too
much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this:
(I.v.97-98)

But both Romeo and Juliet also use these pronouns to refer to other characters, including Friar Laurence, Juliet's Nurse, Mercutio, Juliet's father, etc. Had we the time to further analyze the usage of the "you" words and isolate only those times when the second person pronouns were used to refer only to either Romeo or Juliet, the percentages noted above (already "low" at only 33-34 percent) would be even lower.

The use of the first person pronoun is less ambiguous: whenever either Romeo or Juliet, or any other character, for that matter, uses "I" or "me" that character is clearly referring to himself and to his immediate concerns. Of course a drama, much like a first-person prose narrative, will tend to employ a high percentage of the first person pronoun. But it is interesting to compare the relative occurrence of "I" versus "you" in another Shakespearean play, *Hamlet*. In *Hamlet*, "You" words occur 963 times, as opposed to 1397 "I" words, giving a "You" percentage of 41%. And although *Hamlet* deals with royalty (hence a high likelihood of "we" and "our" being used to refer to the king), there are 248 uses of "we" words. As a linguistic "footnote," we noted that the word "I" occurs in *Hamlet* 533 times; "you" occurs 520 times.

Perhaps even more telling than the use of "I" words versus "you" words is the relative paucity of "we" words: Romeo uses forms of "we" twenty times; Juliet uses "our" and "us" only five times. In this paper "we" have already used "we" more often than Juliet. Perhaps linguistically Shakespeare makes it clear that there is no future for these young lovers.

Thus in the final analysis we agree with Bradley and Kermode that the denouement does not depend wholly on the accidental detention of Friar John, that the play would have ended tragically whether or not Friar Laurence's letter would have gotten through. But we disagree that Romeo and Juliet's "love" is a model of self surrender and sacrifice. Quite the opposite. We suggest that the love of Romeo and Juliet is doomed at least in part by their devotion to "self" and their lack of faith in their future as a couple.

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Data Gleaned from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

Table I: Forms of "love" versus forms of "death"

Word Form	Acts I and II	Act III	Acts IV and V
love	88	29	20
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death	10	24	36
dead	5	15	28
die	5	8	10
dies	2	1	4
died	0	0	1
"death words"	22	48	78

Table II: Use of "I" words versus "you" words

Word Usage	Romeo	Juliet
"I" words	318	295
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Other's name	16	49
"We" words (our, us, we)	20	5
Percent ("You" / "You" + "I")	34%	33%

Notes

¹Neither "lov'd" nor "dying" appear in the *Oxford Electronic Shakespeare*.