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SHAKESPEARE, PROSE AND VERSE:  
UNREADABLE FORMS

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation explores the distribution of verse and prose in Shakespeare's plays. The introduction situates the project within formalisms past and present and surveys the conventional views of prose and verse distribution (high/verse and low/prose, etc) in Shakespeare studies. The first chapter examines Shakespeare as a poet very much of his time, examining how the socio-historical nature of literature pervades Shakespeare's conception of prosody. To do this, I construct a context for Shakespeare's use of a commonplace metaphor that collapses distinctions between verse feet and physical feet. Set in this context, Shakespeare's meter seems less an autonomous art than a ludic engagement in the period's discussion of prosody. The second chapter explores how characters fall into verse. Looking at characters with virtually no verse, these characters' brief moves into verse share a common motivation—their move into verse registers not a stepping up in dignity, but a fall into a trap or lie. I close read these formal movements back into each play's larger thematic structures. The third chapter examines Brutus's choice of a prose funeral oration in *Julius Caesar* as one

among many mistakes the character makes. His choice depends on the assumption that rationality best fits prose, but this choice privileges form's relationship to content at the expense of context. The fourth chapter examines the dictum that prose represents an abnormal state of mind. Through brief close readings of *Titus Andronicus* and *King Lear*, I come to *Hamlet* where prose and verse is used by Hamlet indiscriminately, blurring the boundaries of both. Hamlet's vacillation between forms, I argue, mimics his and our vacillations and uncertainties as spectators. The fifth chapter turns to Caliban's verse and considers its conflicting origins as well as the editorial problems surrounding lineation. My conclusion reflects on the dissertation's evolution and the power of Shakespeare's language to resist conclusions.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	ii
Introduction. Unreadable Forms	1
Chapter One. Shakespeare's Feet	30
Chapter Two. Falling Into Verse	90
Chapter Three. The Oddes Is Very Great: Form and Context in <i>Julius Caesar</i>	147
Chapter Four. Form and Madness in <i>Hamlet</i>	186
Chapter Five. Learning to Curse in Iambs: Nature Vers(e)s Culture in <i>The Tempest</i>	232
Chapter Six. Inconclusion: Exitless	277
Bibliography	296

## PREFACE

... the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

—"Little Gidding," T.S. Eliot

In the course of its career, this dissertation has changed many times, and in this final change, as Shakespeare writes in sonnet 105, is my invention spent. Luckily, I arrive where I started—I entered graduate school intent on studying Shakespeare's meter. Over the years, I have taken several by-paths and indirect crooked ways, some productive, some not. In the end, I have returned to Shakespeare, but more importantly for me, I have returned to literariness for the first time as well—Shakespeare's and my own. "Literariness"—an uncomfortable mouthful that barely expresses what it means. What I mean is a return to Shakespeare's forms in all their complication with a new sense of criticism's potential as a literary art itself.

This return is timely, it appears. Russ McDonald, as he wrote in the most recent *Shakespeare Quarterly*, was as surprised as I was to hear Marjorie Garber at the 2002 meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America say that

while history is unfailingly interesting and helpful to the literary critic, our proper work is the analysis of literature, the study of how a poem or play works and why it is the way it is. Her larger



contention—that early modern studies are, like most kinds of criticism, inevitably cyclical, and that we are now entering upon a new phase of formal analysis—is one among several indicators that design has again become a respectable object of scrutiny.

(472)

Having just arrived in a very, very cold Minneapolis, Garber's was the first lecture I attended at the meeting. For several months, I thought the cold had muffled my eardrums: I was not sure I had heard what I thought I heard. That lecture and the confusion surrounding it—is form okay now?—stands as one bookend to this project. The other bookend is Geoffrey Hartman's *Beyond Formalism*.

Several months ago, after reading Hartman's works—first his essay on *Twelfth Night* and then his critiques of critical methods inoculated against the texts they study—the painful stiffness in my prose's joints began to flare. In large part, the critics I have read and emulated are, as Hartman writes, "Suspicious of their love for literature," if they have or had any such love, and they are, "even more suspicious of the literary element in themselves. They are sober people who shield themselves from contamination by the hygiene of their practice" (Hartman, "Tea" 5). I have tried dropping my shield in these chapters, but often I have found dropping the shield harder than holding it up. Finding Hartman meant learning a new relation of criticism to literature and unlearning bad stylistic habits that I have hardly thrown off here for good. With Hartman's close reading of criticism,

as in *Criticism in the Wilderness*, comes the prescription, the challenge rather, that criticism itself should be able to withstand close reading.

In *The Fate of Reading*, Hartman asks: "is criticism a yea yea, nay nay affair, best conducted in as dry a prose as possible? This admirable ideal has its shortcomings. It establishes too often a schizoid rather than a useful distance between art and criticism" (268-69). To avoid this split he recommends the critic adopt a literary style, an impure style; the critical essay should be a literary essay, both "creative and receptive, a part of literature as well as about literature" (270). Following this imperative, the chapters I have gathered here are first—and awkward—attempts at what Hartman terms "intellectual poems." Borrowing the phrase Georg Lukacs borrowed from Schlegel to describe Hemsterhuis' essays, the essay as an intellectual poem "delimits its own position in the life of the intellect but meanwhile incorporates so much living thought that its narrower function of *Gericht* expands into the form of a *Gedicht*" (195-96). In so doing, I have also followed Hartman's view of criticism as an act of making "the text a little harder to understand and the visible a little harder to see" (197). Critical essays, if they do their job well, will "increase rather than lighten the burden of tradition, in an anti-evangelical and depressing manner" (197). Yet, I have followed Hartman slavishly in not following anyone too slavishly and I have called on Hartman too often, wearing thin my welcome—the best Ciceronian, the one who most accurately emulates Cicero, Gabriel Harvey wrote, does not imitate Cicero.

Last, but not least, I want to end my preface with words from the draft preface John Berryman composed for his planned Shakespeare biography. He wrote to his readers:

Some familiarity with Shakespeare's work is desirable ... but it would be desirable if the reader will look on Shakespeare, at the outset of this book, simply as the author of most of forty plays (some 70,000 lines of verse, and 30,000 of prose) & certain poems—freeing his mind as far as possible of received conceptions about Shakespeare's thought. His most familiar pronouncements, it will be remembered, in context are *ironic*. (qtd. in Haffenden lvii).

In what I have written here, I have tried to be Berryman's reader, but I must also ask my readers to let their imaginary forces work and piece out the many imperfections with their thoughts.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While much of this dissertation has been written and rewritten in the past three years, the idea for this project is much older: for nearly 14 years I've been thinking, reading and writing—off and on, at long and short stretches—on Shakespeare's meter. I discovered prosody as an undergraduate, one in over his head, in Amittai Aviram's poetic theory class at the University of South Carolina in 1992. I have Amittai, a dear friend, brilliant scholar and unmatched teacher, foremost to thank. Under him I learned about meter and how to compose poetry in meter. During a year abroad at the University of Warwick, Coventry, England my interest in prosody collided with a new love for Shakespeare, one kindled and brought to a roaring flame by Stratford's RSC. Just three years after watching Robert Stephens as Lear in 1993's *King Lear* directed by Adrian Noble, I entered graduate school determined to study Shakespeare's meter.

On entering UW, Charles Frey deepened and expanded my interests, nudging me into an awareness of literature as a complex interaction between reader and text. After Charlie, Marshall Brown's generosity—as a reader, as an editor, as a mentor—has been unparalleled. I credit his close readings of even the most garbled of my drafts with whatever moments of clarity readers find. His demanding standards deserve the sincerest gratitude; I aspire to Marshall's perceptiveness as well as his diamond-sharp prose—discovering Marshall was discovering the possibilities of a criticism as dense and moving as any literature. My readers—John Coldewey and John Webster—have been patient and encouraging throughout.

I owe thanks to various libraries and their staff members. The University of Washington's libraries were always valuable, yet the libraries and interlibrary loan services at Lewis and Clark College, Mt. Hood Community College and Oregon State University did more than their fair share of the heavy lifting. Multnomah County's Hollywood Library in Portland, Oregon became a home away from home.

Friends and family, unfortunately, have watched me pursue this degree from afar—most all of them wondering rightly: what's taking so long? There are friends between whom communication has broken down, but not memories: Seema Barker, Brent Boling, Patrick Grady and Tripp Muldrow. My mother, father and brother have tolerated my absence, happy no doubt to have me out of their hair; if they were sad I left, I hope it was never as deep as my sadness on leaving. My mother and father, stumped why I chose this penniless profession over a law degree, can blame the countless books they read to me, our weekly library trips, and their own deep love of reading, a love they imparted to me.

The family I gained in the Northwest—Linda and Paul, Tom and Jane—have helped me feel at home despite always feeling uprooted. The friends I gained here, too, were like family. Cody Walker's humor, poetry, and his humorous poetry, his friendship and interest, his attempts to teach me tennis and basketball—all these I cherish. Hell is *not* other people. Hell is life without other

people like Cody. I owe laughs and dinners to the families of Conseula Francis and Frances and Brian McCann and Rob, Terri, Julian and Sam Weller; they will forever be as welcome in my home as I was always in theirs.

The graduate students who deserve thanks include Heather Easterling, Gary Ettari, Hillary Fogerty, Bret Keeling, and Charles Fischer. The UW professors who deserve thanks include Carolyn Allen, Joanna Altieri, Tim Dean, George Dillon, Alan Fisher *requiescat in pace*, Alain Gowing, Gary Handwerk, Gail Stygall, and Sara Van den Berg. The English Department's main office staff—Annee Fisher, Cheryl Mathisen, Martha Metsl, and Susan Williams—became good friends, and Kathy Mork was an ever-fixed mark, the star to my wandering bark throughout the process: from entering to M.A., from M.A. to Ph.D. Outside UW, Terence Hawkes, Bruce Smith, and countless other colleagues have withstood nagging emails, and Steve Willett has tolerated my all too infrequent correspondence.

*Early Modern Literary Studies* published a much earlier version of "Shakespeare's Feet" as "Numme Feet: Meter in Early Modern England" in 2001. I have presented eleven papers and lectures on meter and theories of meter in colleagues' classrooms and conferences in the US and Canada. These papers and lectures, and moreover their audiences, have played roles great and small in this project.

Last, I have the love of Lisa, Emma, and Abby to thank. To say they supported me trivializes their contribution. Had I not met Lisa in Padelford A407, where would I be today? Not, I believe, at this keyboard, in this house, smiling as I type these words of thanks.

## DEDICATION

To my parents.

## INTRODUCTION

### UNREADABLE FORMS

Oh my god! Shakespeare. That multiform & encyclopedic bastard.

— John Berryman, 1952

I believe Shakespeare's 'blank verse' runs from ten to seventeen syllables, but have no intention of trying to count it again, or make a census.

— Ezra Pound, 1934

We don't all dig Shakespeare uniformly, or even Little Red Riding Hood. The understanding of art depends finally upon one's willingness to extend one's humanity and one's knowledge of human life.

— Ralph Ellison, 1955

This dissertation explores the following problem: Shakespeare's most evil and most base characters speak a blank verse not essentially different from his most noble characters—those as noble in rank as in spirit.<sup>1</sup> Consider Banquo's two murderers and their later accomplice, the mysterious third, in *Macbeth*, villains deemed as much men as "demi-wolves are clept ... by the name of dogs" (3.1.95-6),<sup>2</sup> yet they speak a verse as capable and earnest as any character's:

— / — / — — — / — /

The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day.

Now spurs the lated traveler apace

To gain the timely inn, and near approaches

The subject of our watch. (3.3.4-7)

Compare the murderer's twilight to the lover's dawn in *Romeo and Juliet*:

— / — / — / — — — /

It was the lark, the herald of the morn,

No nightingale: look, love, what envious streaks

Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east (*RJ* 3.5.6-8)

Scansion detects similarities: each passage possesses possible pyrrhic feet and each has lines that could begin with spondees ("Now spurs" and "No nightingale"), an uncommon opening.<sup>3</sup> Both passages have near-couplets—not quite rhyme, more aural echo, e.g., *day-apace* and *streaks-east*—and clear alliteration: "The weSt yet gliMMerS with SoMe StreakS of day" and "No NightiNGaLe: Look Love, what eNviouS StreakS." As for metrical differences, the murderer's extra-syllabic ending, "approaches," hints he is "reckless" what he does "to spite the world" (3.1.111-12), but it could, as a feminine ending, foreshadow the impossibility of closure for Macbeth, the closure Banquo and son's murders should but will not bring. Romeo's masculine endings stand firm against Juliet's sunset/sunrise equivocation, but his cling to tightly-closed lines might anticipate Romeo's cling to death: "Come, death, and welcome!" (3.5.24).



In both instances, the lines have comparable metrical contours, yet the situation, characters and content compare as Hyperion to a satyr. And in both cases, attention to form creates as many problems as it could resolve.

Banquo's murderers hardly rank high among Shakespeare's evil characters and Romeo's nobility defines but does not delimit him—and the above example juxtaposes and decontextualizes inconsequential lines. Nevertheless, the comparison underlines form's ambivalence. For example, does verse—considered a form more noble than prose—in the mouths of murderers obtain for them a modicum of decency? Or consider the poles of Keats's pair, Iago and Imogen, or as she is known by the Oxford editors, Innogen.<sup>4</sup> Does Imogen's unwavering verse—the character for which Schlegel said "no one feature of female excellence is omitted" (297)—suggest fear of prose's power to stain all it touches, or does her verse argue an ultimate stainlessness, untouched by the accused "stain, as big as hell can hold" (2.4.143)? On the other hand in 2.1 of *Othello*, "the sweetest innocent / That e'er did lift up eye" (5.2.206), Desdemona, a woman not unlike Imogen, can confront Iago's sarcastic couplets with prose. A daring move that may to Iago—himself no amateur at compelling prose—signal a challenge. Yet, Desdemona's prose may spotlight a chink in her armor, an unsounded baseness.

These and other examples are enough to give a critic pause when considering how literary form informs our understanding of characters and the plays they inhabit.<sup>5</sup> However noble or innocent the character, the pentameter of murderers, fat men, tyrants and clowns buffets their verse and however base the

speaker and his prose, it shares company with the prose wit and wisdom of kings. The familiar enamel Shakespeareans have applied over this verse/prose problem is a formula: as Suzanne Woods puts it, "Noble characters speak in blank verse; low born characters speak in prose" (241). More broadly, iambic pentameter's presence or absence in a character's speech indicates social rank, i.e. noble or high-born characters speak verse and lower class characters speak prose.<sup>6</sup> For example, building on Milton Crane's work in *Shakespeare's Prose* and Elisabeth Tschopp's *Zur Verteilung von Vers und Prosa in Shakespeares Dramen*, Brian Vickers associates prose with the lower classes and verse with nobility. Characters, Vickers maintains, are best understood by their shifts, or lack of shifts, between the two forms. These shifts, Vickers writes, actuate the play's social hierarchy, a process he allegorizes as a rite of passage. When characters traverse these sociolinguistic boundaries, the move symbolizes a character's moral disintegration, e.g. when a high-born person speaks prose, or enlightenment, e.g. when lower-class person rises to verse ("Rites" 21-40).

Ralph Berry's comments in *Shakespeare and Social Class* exemplify this position. "Class identification," he writes, "is confirmed through language" (xv). He continues:

Shakespearean drama is grounded in prose and blank verse (with a small quantity of rhyme). This convention offers multiple effects, one of which is to distinguish between the classes. As a general rule, blank verse is the natural medium of gentry, as with nobility

and royalty. It is the language of passion, dignity, and moral elevation, hence is equated with social elevation. (xvi).

But, as Berry recognizes, this "indispensable generalization ... is broken all the time" (xvi), but the breaks are never clean—the vertical model always prevails. The upper class, he writes, "condescend" to prose for "informality" (xvi). Orsino, for example, speaks prose with Feste, "realizing that it would never do to stand on his dignity with the Clown" (xvi). By contrast, Clarence's murderers in *Richard III* speak verse and "take on the dignity of judges" (xvi). While tone shifts may account for the changes from verse to prose and vice versa, "the basis of the convention is social" (xvi), and after scrutiny and despite anomalies, "the ruling generalization holds: kings speak verse and commoners speak prose" (xvi).

In general, this formula works, and the exceptions that muddy the formula do not dissolve it completely—yet the exceptions form drops of unassimilable oil disturbing the mix. It is just such a slippery mixture that defines, for Geoffrey Hartman, what he calls, via Keats, Shakespeare's poetical character: "It is this instant possibility of moving either way, or simultaneously both ways, which defines the Shakespearean dramatic and poetical character" ("Shakespeare's" 43). Shakespeare's art is, as Keats said and Hartman agrees, "every thing and nothing" (Keats 199). Shakespeare's prosody, I argue, is no different; to read its shifts from verse to prose and back again requires us, as I.A. Richards wrote, "to shift with an at present indescribable adroitness and celerity from one mode to another" (qtd. in

Hartman, "Shakespeare's" 42). In short, we have to keep up with Shakespeare, if we can.

To keep up with Shakespeare critics have replaced the social boundaries of prose and verse that existed for Vickers with more permeable psychological barriers. For example, to George T. Wright, "Shakespeare by no means adheres consistently to this neat division of labor" (*Shakespeare's* 109) that the social model implies. Wright allows that early in his career Shakespeare made "the distinction between prose and verse mainly on the basis of class or formal occasion," but later "characters from the upper plot" speak prose. This fact has led Wright and other critics to abandon the social model altogether for a psychological one aiming at characters' and readers' psyches. Wright claims, "Shifts in style (from verse to prose, for example) are normally a signal of some shift in the stance or feeling of a character or in the pace or mood of scene" (255). Similarly, G. R. Hibbard maintains that the interplay of verse and prose is occasionally "the old familiar device for emphasizing differences in rank" but more often, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the verse-prose distinction "serves to bring out the contrast between different modes of thought, feeling, and being" (147-48). Most recently Russ McDonald claims that the change from verse to prose

signals an alteration of mood, a relaxation of tension, a tonal variation that influences the audience wither or not they are conscious of the shift. Prose can also signal reversals in character,

indicating for example the onset of madness or a loss of control.

(*Shakespeare* 116)<sup>7</sup>

Meter is now considered less socially distinctive than emotionally and tonally revealing.

Neither model alone accommodates Shakespeare's practice; as Mark Womack claims, "no single patterning system dominates" Shakespeare's verse (12). Jonas Barish has too noted that "Shakespeare remains less bound to any formula than to his own freedom" ("Hal" 268). Instead, Shakespeare's practice is marked, McDonald states, by "the productive breaking of rules, particularly the introduction of prose in unexpected places" (*Shakespeare* 127). Moreover, McDonald's "unexpected places" hints at another problem, one of expectation: readers expect to find forms in certain places, yet Shakespeare's practice, as I said above, is every thing or nothing, or to put it spatially: it is *hic et ubique*, here and everywhere.<sup>8</sup> The prescriptive convention that certain forms appear in certain contexts creates the sense that Shakespeare's forms appear everywhere, anywhere indiscriminately: yet verse should be *hic*, where nobles speak, and prose should be *ibi*, where lower characters speak. This dissertation seeks to dissolve those prescriptive expectations to make room for a more descriptive account of Shakespeare's prosody. This is not to say Shakespeare's meter has not been described—it has been, and well.

That Shakespeare possessed an idiosyncratic metrical art, George T. Wright's widely read *Shakespeare's Metrical Art* supplies the proof. And despite

its intimidating statistics, Marina Tarlinskaja's *Shakespeare's Verse: Iambic Pentameter and the Poet's Idiosyncrasies* helps confirm and define this uniqueness with even more precision, as does Russ McDonald's recent work comparing Shakespeare's language and Jonson's. Arguing Shakespeare's uniqueness in the wake of these studies adds too much fuel to the fire and the risk of redundancy outweighs the risk of irrelevance at a historical moment when the pressures of history seem most keenly felt, a time when the majority of Shakespeareans would argue something like Marx's position: "The exclusive concentration of artistic talent in particular individuals, and its suppression in the broad mass which is bound up with this, is a consequence of division of labour" (417). Yet, even Marx was susceptible to Shakespeare, declaiming speeches while leading his family up to Hampstead Heath for Sunday picnics and writing with undisguised pride in an 1856 letter to Engels that, "The children are constantly reading Shakespeare" (Wheen 19). Somewhere in between is something closer to the truth: Shakespeare's meter results as much from individual talent as social circumstance; as Ben Jonson put it, "*a good Poet's made, as well as borne*" ("To the memory").

This project, however, does not demonstrate Shakespeare's style as much as demonstrate how his style participated in the period's collective discourse on prosody. To do so, I track in these chapters the moves Shakespeare's characters, minor and major, make from one literary form to another. In particular, I explore disruptive formal shifts, large and small—those that disrupt the play, an act, a

scene, a speech, and those that depart from convention. I was first drawn to these shifts precisely because of convention, to which I owe a debt: without some stable viewing platform, the rifts remain unseen. Therefore, the starting point of this dissertation is a familiar one: iambic pentameter's presence or absence in a character's speech indicates social rank, i.e. noble or high-born characters speak verse and lower class characters speak prose. Yet disruptions to the formula, where high-born characters speak prose and low-born characters speak verse, reward attention as they evince the permeability of socio-linguistic registers but also they evince the variability of Shakespeare's practice.

In his *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language*, Russ McDonald has surveyed a handful of moments where prose intrudes on verse. In what follows, I do the opposite—survey moments where both verse and prose intrude on each other. Given that verse dominates the Shakespearean corpus, that it could ever be an intruder in its own house seems ridiculous. However, there are several notable shifts into verse that link intricately with the play's major action. Looking at the minute movements of literary devices can lead into meditations on larger problems, "going on the one hand, to the microstructures of literature, entities studied by linguists, and on the other hand to the macrostructures studied by us all" (Hartman, *Beyond* 341). As John Berryman writes after analyzing a couplet in *Macbeth*: "it need not seem surprising that the analysis of a couplet in a play takes us into complex problems of characterization and theme" (321).

Berryman's assertion that such analysis should not surprise betrays the fact it often does; this type of close attention to the literary has always felt marginalized, no matter how popular it has been. In his 1589 treatise on poetics, *The Arte of English Poesie*, George Puttenham protested that perhaps "in this iron and malicious age of ours, Princes are lesse delighted in [verse], being ouer earnestly bent and affected to the affaires of Empire & ambition" (sig. D4<sup>r</sup>).

Puttenham's complaint is far more relevant today—a time when one can mock Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's speeches by mining transcripts for found poetry—than in a time when monarchs routinely composed poetry. Yet, *mutatis mutandis*, skip forward more than 400 years, substitute "critics" for "Princes," and you have a similar assessment of the "current critical climate," where, as Heather Dubrow notes, "many scholars are far more comfortable detailing their sexual histories in print than confessing to an interest in literary form" (59). That basic Renaissance definitions of verse sound obsolete to current critical practices partly explains meter's neglect, at least in Renaissance studies.<sup>9</sup> Witness George Puttenham's and Sir Philip Sidney's characterizations of verse as, "a skill to speake & write harmonically ... a kind of Musicall vtterance, by reason of a certaine congruitie in sounds pleasing the eare" (Puttenham sig. K1<sup>r</sup>), and "words set in delightful proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for, the well-enchanting skill of music" (Sidney 124). Few scholars admit "a certaine congruitie" today and perhaps the most often overlooked congruity is meter, a neglect for which Coburn Freer indicts early modern studies: "As far as the bulk



of published criticism on English Renaissance drama is concerned, including criticism of Shakespeare, the plays might as well have been written in prose—highly figurative prose, but prose nonetheless" (1-2). Interestingly, Freer's comment assumes prose's transparency—avoiding form means treating verse as prose, but prose can present as many problems of opacity as verse. Both forms, however, prose and verse, deserve more and better treatment.

In 1954 Muriel C. Bradbrook conjectured that Shakespeareans avoid stylistic studies because "It is too vast and intimidating; critics evade it for topics of characterization, theatrical conditions, philosophic implications; or they nibble at a corner—imagery, punctuation, Euphuism" ("Fifty" 1). 50 years later, Shakespeareans still largely avoid stylistic studies, but most would argue because it is not vast enough. Vilified as a preoccupation with "untranslatable formal perfection" (Greenblatt, *Shakespearean* 4), critics avoid it as anachronistic attention to unimportant details. As a result, compared to the sea-change that has rocked literary study at large in the past decades, prosody has stayed placid, even stagnated. For instance, contemporary literary criticism no longer considers prosody a viable object of study, if standard reference works like *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin's *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, and Irena Makaryk's *The Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms* can be considered indices of the profession.

Following suit, Greenblatt's recent Norton edition of Shakespeare's complete works includes no discussion of prosody, meter, blank verse, or iambic pentameter in the introductory texts, bibliographic materials or the otherwise comprehensive glossary. As Bernice W. Kliman graciously remarks, the Norton Shakespeare anthology is good for "instructors who want a theoretically grounded apparatus" (8)—theory minus theories of prosody, of course.<sup>10</sup> Amittai F. Aviram contends that modern scholars consider meter an unambiguous sign of "bourgeois conformism, and musicality is always, oddly, discovered in sounds that are repeated but have no regularity" (192). For example, take Bruce Smith's *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, a study with much to offer our sense of how language reverberated within Shakespeare's wooden O. While excavating the aural texture of human voices that once pervaded early modern theatres, Smith qualifies, is a nearly unattainable illusion, some features of the early modern voice may be retrieved, such as "volume, pitch, and rhythm ... three quantitative reference points for plotting the repertory of voice sounds that scripts for the public stage imply" (223). Smith's inquiry anatomizes vocal volume and pitch, yet rhythm receives scant attention and scrutiny of poetic meter is absent save for a glance at meter in Campion's 1601 songbook, *A Booke of Ayres* (296-7). However, prosody's absence from these texts obscures formalism's persistence in various guises.

The formalism proposed, for example, in Mark David Rasmussen's recent *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements* works through "the

theoretical developments of recent years, rather than bypassing them out of a nostalgia for formalisms past" (3).<sup>11</sup> Such a formalism would either go two directions, according to Rasmussen, either "inflected toward the historical/cultural or toward the literary/aesthetic" (3). If this dissertation can be said to tend one way or the other on Rasmussen's spectrum, it leans toward the historical/cultural, working within a brand of formalism, but not the "close-grained formalism" that Stephen Greenblatt chided for its attention to "the text itself" (*Shakespearean* 3). Instead, the formalism practiced here tweaks Greenblatt's terminology, performing a cultural poetics of poetics, or more specifically, a cultural poetics of prosody.<sup>12</sup> Along these lines, Richard Strier writes that "The results of a formalist analysis ... may themselves be *data* for historical understanding" (210). As he reframes the assertion: "The 'literary' nuances of the poem 'itself' may help us understand its historical moment, just as, in turn, detailed knowledge of the historical moment may ... help us understand the nuances of a poem" (210). Strier recommends that literary scholars might reconsider how "formal features of a text, matters of style, can be indices to large intellectual and cultural matters" (211). Supplementing Strier's work, this dissertation shifts his emphasis: formal features themselves, I contest, are not only indices to large intellectual and cultural matters but they are large intellectual and cultural matters themselves. As Raymond Williams writes:

The hearing of certain traditional arrangements of words; the recognition and activation of certain rhythms; the perception, often

through already shared themes, of certain basic flows and relations and in this deep sense real compositions, real performances: all these are parts of some of our most profound cultural experiences.

(*Marxism* 188)

Although regaining attention—a fact to which Rasmussen's and other books attest—the work to bring these profound cultural experiences forward remains.

This dissertation, then, is formalist, but as Geoffrey Hartman defines it: formalism is a method "of revealing the human content of art by a study of its formal properties" (*Beyond* 42). The definition's simplicity almost obscures itself:

This definition does not say that form and content are separable; nor does it infer that the human and the formal could not be caught and expositied as one thing by a great interpreter. It does suggest that the literary scholar establishes a priority which has procedural significance and which engages him mediately and dialectically with the formal properties of the work of art. (42)

Following this lead, each chapter looks at a movement between prose and verse and then applies a methodology Hartman advocates for literary study: "a hundred percent of formalism and a hundred percent of critical intuition" (*Beyond* 56).

Though each chapter centers around particular characters, each chapter weaves in and out of various plays, pointing more often to correspondences in the play and across plays rather than to context or critics. As for methodology, Ben Jonson in *Timber* writes, crediting St. Albans, "For to many things a man should owe but a

temporary belief, and a suspension of his own Judgement, not an absolute resignation of himself, or a perpetual captivity" (sig. Q3<sup>r</sup>). I have tried to convert the dissertation into a perpetual motion machine, never investing in any one theory or critical method at another's expense; as I state in my conclusion, I shuttle between the archive and analysis, between a form of historicism and close, but not cloistered reading.

Reading for these correspondences disjunctions emerge—where form matches form, but content resists the match, or where content matches content, yet form refuses the match—and to these moments I give the closest attention. In other words, I close read, tracing the text's contours inside and out, not to understand it alone, but to watch how outside forces, other texts and contexts, knock against it, sculpting it. Gilles Deleuze calls this "The intensive way of reading, in contact with what's outside the book, as a flow meeting other flows ... getting [the book] to interact with other things, absolutely anything ... is reading with love" (8-9). This closeness of attention, however, should not suggest a protected role for prosody. The first half of this dissertation's title, *Shakespeare, Prose and Verse: Unreadable Forms* is intended to clarify the public, social, even communal side to prosody. In short, this project examines Shakespeare, prose and verse, not Shakespeare's prose and verse.

Wright's *Shakespeare's Metrical Art* is the most widely cited title on Shakespeare's verse and Vickers' *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose* remains the most thorough study to date of Shakespeare's prose. Both works have contributed

invaluable, foundational work to the scholarship explaining what makes Shakespeare's literary forms Shakespearean. Hoping to complement this scholarship, the present study approaches Shakespeare's relation to verse, for example, not as one of individual possession—meter as an object one owns. Instead, I treat Shakespeare's relation to verse as one person's participation in a communally defined and shared set of social practices. In Raymond Williams' words, I am interested not in how verse came to be Shakespeare's property but in how poetic form in early modern England was "common property, to be sure with differences of degree, of writers and audiences or readers" (187-88).<sup>13</sup> This study's goal therefore is not so much an understanding of prosody *qua* prosody, or a particular poetic form as *aesthetic* form (at least as aesthetic is traditionally defined), but an understanding of prosody as a *social* form.

Composing language in a literary form, whether verse or prose, is—as all writing is—a social act, even when done in private.<sup>14</sup> Versification, as a rule-governed cultural practice, affiliates the poet with other metricians, a distinct social group of writers. Acknowledgement of the writer's situation as participatory begins the act of reading, as Jacques Derrida suggests in *Of Grammatology*:

We should begin by taking rigorous account of this *being held* ... :  
the writer writes *in* a language and *in* a logic whose proper system,  
laws, and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate  
absolutely. He uses them only by letting himself, after a fashion  
and up to a point, be governed by the system. And the reading

must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of language that he uses. (158)

Therefore, I investigate not what makes particular verse lines Shakespearean, but how Shakespeare's metrical practices participated in, borrowed from and even anticipated, the period's various and conflicting discourses clustered around meter. As Clark Hulse put it, the goal is "to describe how a culture theorizes itself to itself" (37). Such an account, "proceeds not as a linear progression toward classical or Italianate perfection but as a series of dialogues and interplays of discourses, whether they be dialogues between roosters and foxes or between English diplomats and Italian horsemen" (37). The subject and range of these discourses, however, extends beyond traditional aesthetic concerns; meter was a literary device, of course, but it was also a potent and unevenly distributed social marker, for both poem and poet.<sup>15</sup> This dissertation examines these inequalities: each chapter asks, to a differing degree and with differing answers, who gets verse and who does not—and what implication does this have? And by what standards or under what socio-historical conditions determines the distribution of verse and prose? Within and without what bounds did Shakespeare make his decisions regarding who spoke verse and who spoke prose?<sup>16</sup>

Verse form was common property, to use Williams's phrase, but heavily guarded nonetheless—not all versifiers could be poets.<sup>17</sup> Although poets guarded entry into their ranks, they did not conceive of themselves as outside the bustle

and commotion of the world but as important shapers of it. For Shakespeare and his contemporaries, the aesthetic has not yet been cordoned off as distinct realm of human experience: the poetic and the social were not so much coterminous as codependent.<sup>18</sup> The early modern conception of literature anticipated Raymond Williams's: "a concept of literature that is incommensurable with the concept of 'literature' as it has traditionally functioned within the discourses of literary criticism" (Bennett 15). The shift is away from thinking of literature as, Tony Bennett writes,

a privileged set of texts which exemplify a universal and eternal aesthetic form of cognition but to a *specific practice of writing*, bound, circumscribed and conditioned by the historical, material and ideological conditions of its production. Although such texts may exhibit properties different from those displayed by other forms of writing, they are distinguished from them not aesthetically *but as one practice of writing amongst others*. (sic, 15)

This, then, broadens the conception of literature's influence out of aesthetics alone and gives it "a social and historical, not an aesthetic nature" (16). Therefore, as literature possesses social and historical nature, so too do its literary devices, prosody included.

In studying prosody, I do nothing new, but this study differs from most in its focus on how form affects our views of characters. Past studies have tended to



concentrate on Shakespeare's verse—not Hamlet's, not Caliban's, not Beatrice's. This has been the case especially when form and character seem disjointed, when, for example, the murderers in *Macbeth* speak verse. Instead these chapters read verse into the play more than the poet. In doing so, I am guilty—often very guilty—of what John Drakakis accuses A.C. Bradley: a kind of character study that "presupposes the autonomy of each individual character" (6) and indulges in "speculation about the extra-dramatic lives of Shakespeare's characters" (7). No Maurice Morgann or Washington Irving (who made a pilgrimage to Eastcheap seeking the Boar's Head), I do come near an "empiricist-romantic view of Shakespeare" (4). Drakakis describes this critical stance as veneration where Shakespeare becomes "a chameleon figure whose work resists in its very essence any dogged questions that would tie it to time and place" (5). I hardly kneel at Shakespeare's altar, yet I would contend Shakespeare's works severely test the resilience of any rope hoping to tie them to time and place.<sup>19</sup> In the end, I concede Shakespeare was of an age and for all time.

The first chapter examines Shakespeare as a poet very much of his time, examining how the socio-historical nature of literature shines through Shakespeare's conception of prosody. To do this, I construct a context for Shakespeare's use of a commonplace metaphor that collapses distinctions between verse feet and physical feet. Set in this context, Shakespeare's meter seems less an art than a ludic engagement in the period's discussion of prosody. In short, this chapter is a semiological study that considers how literary form works with and

against social interactions and shows how literary form is used to categorize poems, poets and people. The second chapter explores how characters fall into verse. I look at three characters who have nearly no verse, but are tricked into speaking it: Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Christopher Sly in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and Falstaff in *1 and 2 Henry IV*. Usually prose speakers, these characters' brief moves into verse share a common motivation—their move into verse registers not a stepping up in dignity, but a fall into a trap or lie. I close read these formal movements back into each play's larger thematic structures.

The third chapter examines Brutus's choice of a prose funeral oration in *Julius Caesar* as one among many mistakes the character makes. His choice depends on the assumption that rationality best fits prose, but this choice privileges form's relationship to content at the expense of context. Brutus errs by choosing to speak prose in a situation where everyone else speaks verse. This poor formal choice is then set beside the range of errors pervading the play. The fourth chapter looks at the dictum that prose represents an abnormal state of mind. Through brief close readings of *Titus Andronicus* and *King Lear*, I come to *Hamlet* where prose and verse is used by Hamlet indiscriminately, blurring the boundaries of both. Hamlet's vacillation between forms, I argue, mimics his and our vacillations and uncertainties as spectators. The fifth chapter turns to Caliban's verse and considers its possible and conflicting origins as well as editorial problems surrounding lineation. Caliban, a low character, should speak prose, and I explore how his verse has (and has not) troubled scholars, critics and

editors for centuries. Leaning on W.H. Auden's commentary, "The Sea and the Mirror," my reading views Caliban's verse as one more way the play complicates his identity and interrogates duality. Close reading Caliban, distinctions between verse and prose breakdown as do the myriad other dualities the play tests: nature and art, earth and imagination, flesh and spirit, and so on.

In the end, I agree with Geoffrey Hartman that "An emphasis on words is discriminatory as well as discriminating unless it guides us to larger structures of the imagination: to forms like drama and epic, but also to what Northrop Frye calls 'archetypes' and Lévi-Strauss 'mythèmes'" (Hartman, *Beyond* xii). It is necessary here to at least note what this dissertation has curiously little of: scansion. In fact, as will become apparent, I often turn away from meter to better understand the historical conditions in which it operated—by indirections to find direction out. For determining the movement of individual lines, scansion proves a useful device, but such prosody often uses scansion to read through the line and "reveal the purely ideal and disembodied structure which is said to underlie and produce it" (71). Pierre Macherey argues that "to explain a literary text this way is to deny its real complexity by reducing it to the level of a mere resemblance of the structure which is thus said to be contained within it" (71). Many methods of metrical scansion elides language's concreteness language, disembodiment and idealizing it. Plus, attentive analysis of metrical intricacies often obscures the fact that meter is a "constant presence" and not something "called upon only in moments of expressive need" (Attridge, *Rhythms* 306). This method of

abstraction, though, has invaluable uses (as the work of Peter Groves and Marina Tarlinskaja evinces) and a more thorough study might assess the rise and fall of different scansion methods against the backdrop of history.

Given the above, I often swerve away from form, sometimes inexcusably far. No great exegete myself, I can at least pretend: "Great exegetes ... have always, at some point, swerved from the literal sense of the text" (Hartman, *Beyond* xiii). Criticism, then, becomes a kind hermeneutics, close reading collides with interpretation. This method of reading sets out with different aims: in every chapter I ask questions in order to open up form to still more questions. Hartman describes the process:

Criticism as a kind of hermeneutics is disconcerting; like logic, but without the latter's motive of absolute internal consistency, it reveals contradictions and equivocations, and so makes fiction interpretable by making it less readable. The fluency of the reader is affected by a kind of stutter: the critic's response becomes deliberately hesitant. (*Criticism* 32)

Hence the dissertation's subtitle: prose and verse contributes to Shakespearean indeterminacy in ways this project has not thought to explore; but in the pages to come, I maintain prose and verse are, in no uncertain terms, unreadable forms.

## INTRODUCTION NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* looks specifically at the evolution of the moral term "noble" in relation to its class usage. Nietzsche found that linguistic symbols for goodness or good

all led back to *the same evolution of the same idea*—that everywhere 'aristocrat,' 'noble' (in the social sense), is the root idea, out of which have necessarily developed 'good,' in the sense of 'with aristocratic soul'—a development which invariably runs parallel with that other evolution by which 'vulgar,' 'plebian,' 'low' are made to change finally into 'bad.' (27-28)

<sup>2</sup> Unless noted otherwise, quotations of Shakespeare follow Bevingtons's *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*.

<sup>3</sup> See Attridge on iambic verse, *Rhythms* 186-193.

<sup>4</sup> Marjorie Garber objects to "Innogen" in *Shakespeare After All* (815).

<sup>5</sup> Michael Best's student-oriented site asks an excellent question along these lines: "what are we to make of a play like *The Merchant of Venice*, in which the prosaic, business-obsessed characters of Venice usually speak in verse and the poetic, imaginative characters of Belmont often speak in prose?" (5).

<sup>6</sup> Two recent Shakespeare reference books for general readers recite this formula: "In general, serious characters discussing important issues speak in verse, while comic characters are less likely to do so, particularly the lowborn"

(Riley and McAllister 137). "Shakespeare's verse was usually reserved for noble speakers, his prose for common or comical parts. Some characters, such as Prince Hal, alternate between verse and prose, depending on the context; whether, for instance, at court or in a tavern" (Dunton-Downer and Riding 44).

<sup>7</sup> Russ McDonald earlier wrote that: "When the verse gets rocky, then Prospero or Posthumus or Leontes is said to be under stress and probably raving. If stylistic criticism can't do better than that, then it deserves the neglect to which the critical establishment of the last two decades has cheerfully consigned it" (qtd. in Womack 6). How or why his position on the matter changed is unclear.

<sup>8</sup> James Russell Lowell wrote: "How is it with Shakespeare? did he have no style? I think I find the proof that he had it, and that of the very highest and subtlest kind, in the fact that I can nowhere put my finger on it, and say it is here or there" (91).

<sup>9</sup> I use the term "verse" instead of "poetry" throughout given that poetry for the early modern period was a term with far broader connotations deriving from its Greek etymology. "Poem," "poetry," "poet," etc. all derive from ancient Greek words that meant "to make." ποιειν (poiein) to make, to do; το ποιημα (to poiema) anything made or done, a work, a poem. Poetry meant something closer to fiction, specifically fiction on an appropriate subject that educated the reader. In Sidney's words, "it is not rhyming and versing that maketh poesy" (154). I also follow Paz and other critics in asserting that, "Meter and rhythm are not the same

thing" (58). "Meter is method, manner; rhythm, concrete temporality" (59). And I am more interested here in meter as manner rather than concrete temporality. Meter as a manner of doing language: "Meters are historical, while rhythm is confused with language itself" (61). On the difficulty of making even such a seemingly simple distinction, Northrop Frye's words are better than my own. Frye imagines page two of an elementary textbook for literary criticism: "Page two would be the place to explain what seems the most far-reaching of literary facts, the distinction in rhythm between verse and prose. But it appears that a distinction which anyone can make in practice cannot be made as yet by any critic in theory" (*Anatomy* 13). After page two? "We continue to riffle through the blank pages" (13). One can hardly resist rehearsing Edgar Allan Poe's comment:

There is, perhaps, no topic in polite literature which has been more pertinaciously discussed, and there is certainly not one about which so much inaccuracy, confusion, misconception, misrepresentation, mystification, and downright ignorance on all sides, can be fairly said to exist. (1386)

<sup>10</sup> Greenblatt's extensive General Bibliography omits George T. Wright's *Shakespeare's Metrical Art*.

<sup>11</sup> The word "formalism" now stands on occasion, oddly, as a byword for new scholarship, one that returns to the text. Carol Thomas Neely writes, for example:

I think of this book as formalist as well as historicist—because it examines how the formal properties of all texts contribute to historical change. If one accepts the commonplace formulations of the 'textuality of history' and the 'historicity of texts' (Montrose, *Purpose* 5), it follows that all texts must be read not just closely, but formally, with attention to their structure, metaphors, and inherited conventions that articulate the debates they encapsulate, the stories they circulate, the contradictions they wrestle with, and the imperfect resolutions they propose. (7)

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of these terms as they are used in early modern studies, see Greenblatt's "Towards a Poetics of Culture" and Louis A. Montrose's "Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture."

<sup>13</sup> This notion is echoed in Greenblatt's assertion that Shakespeare's dramatic works were "products of extended borrowings, collective exchanges, and mutual enchantments" (*Shakespearean* 7). Indeed, the entire project of *Shakespearean Negotiations* is to argue that, "No individual, not even the most brilliant, [is] complete unto himself" (2), shifting literature away from autonomous to communal creation.

<sup>14</sup> As Hartman puts it, the language exchange has a radically social nature.

<sup>15</sup> With "traditional aesthetic concerns" I include the notion that literariness is defined by self-reflexive language; poetic expression forms a closed



loop that explores expression itself. Jan Mukarovsky offers an interesting take on the problem of literariness as self-reflexivity: "The fact that poetic discourse has expression itself as its aim does not deprive poetic language of practical import" (6). It is precisely because of this self-orientation, as he terms it, that "poetic language is more suited than other functional languages for constantly reviving man's attitude toward language and the relation of language to reality" (6). Poetic language returns focus to language as language, that is, a mediator of human relations. The literary—because it is language—is social. Complicating this notion, Bennett writes that "it is not the text's origins or its purely formal properties which determine its literariness but its mode of functioning within a society's culture as determined by its contingent, and therefore historical and changing relations with other cultural forms" (60). Jonathan Culler notes that "the fact that a text is a poem is not the necessary result of its linguistic properties, and attempts to base a theory of poetry on an account of the special properties of the language of poems seem doomed to failure" (*Structuralist* 162). "In reading poetry," Culler writes,

we are disposed not only to recognize formal patterns but to make them something more than ornament attached to communicative utterances; and thus, as Genette says, the essence of poetry lies not in verbal artifice itself, though that serves as catalyst, but more

simply and profoundly in the type of reading (*attitude de lecture*) which the poem imposes on its readers. (164).

<sup>16</sup> Regarding the contingency of such decisions, Greenblatt writes:

though in many of his materials [Shakespeare] worked within fairly well-defined boundaries—he could not, for example, have Prince Hal lose the battle of Agincourt—Shakespeare actually had at every point a surprising range of movement. The choices he made were not purely subjective or individual or disinterested, but they were choices. (*Shakespearean* 16-17)

<sup>17</sup> As Theodor Adorno has argued, the poetic subjectivity lyric forms enable and manifest "is itself indebted to privilege," and he adds: "the pressures of the struggle for survival allow only a few human beings to grasp the universal through immersion in the self or to develop as autonomous subjects capable of freely expressing themselves" (45).

<sup>18</sup> Greenblatt writes, "Despite the wooden walls and official regulations, the boundaries between the theater and the world were not fixed" (*Shakespearean* 14). See also Eagleton's *Ideology of the Aesthetic* for an overview of the aesthetic sphere's socio-historical development.

<sup>19</sup> I do not believe, however, despite my affection for Shakespeare and his meter, that he invented blank verse. In his 1694 collection of quotations, *De Re Poetica: Or, Remarks Upon Poetry*, Sir Thomas Blount had several pages

"*Concerning Rhyme, and Blank Verse*" (Blount 102-106). This section, relying heavily on John Dryden and Lord Roscommon, reiterates Dryden's theory of blank verse's origin as told in the dedicatory epistle to Roger, Earl of Orrery for the 1664 edition of *The Rival Ladies*. In Blount, it reads:

*Shakespear* (who with some Errors not to be avoided in that Age, had, undoubtedly, a larger Soul of *Poesie* than ever any of our Nation) was the first, who, to shun the pains of continual *Rhyming*, invented that kind of Writing, which we call *Blank Verse*, but the *French* more properly *Prose Mesurée*; into which the *English Tongue* so naturally slides, that in Writing *Prose* 'tis hardly to be avoided. (Blount 103-104)<sup>19</sup>

From 1664 to 1694, plus or minus a few years, it was believed Shakespeare invented blank verse. Dryden, it turns out, was well aware of Norton and Sackville's *Gorbuduc*, but apparently never read the blank-verse original. In defense of "*writing Scenes in Verse*," Dryden notes that he is not starting an new fashion but dusting off an old one: "*'tis not so much a New way amongst us, as an Old way new reviv'd: For many Years before Shakespears Plays, was the Tragedy of Queen Gorbuduc in English Verse*" ("Rival" sig. A4<sup>v</sup>). Most commentators leave Dryden's mistake unremarked: "It is hardly necessary to point out that Dryden is completely mistaken, and that blank verse had been used in the drama by Shakespeare's predecessors" (Summers 441).

## CHAPTER ONE

### SHAKESPEARE'S FEET

#### I. The False Gallop

In act 3 of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, after Rosalind enters reading Orlando's poetry aloud, Touchstone turns critic: "I'll rhyme you so eight years together, dinners and suppers and sleeping hours excepted. It is the right butter-women's rank to market" (3.2.94-96).<sup>1</sup> After Touchstone teases Rosalind with his own improvised verses, he mocks Orlando's poem with a joke that changes the butter-women's trotting feet into horse's hooves: "This is the very false gallop of verses. Why do you infect yourself with them?" (3.2.111-12). Shortly thereafter, Rosalind and Celia join in:

CELIA. Didst thou hear these verses?

ROSALIND. O, yes, I heard them all, and more too, for some of them had in them more feet than the verses would bear.

CELIA. That's no matter. The feet might bear the verses.

ROSALIND. Ay, but the feet were lame and could not bear themselves without the verse and therefore stood lamely in the verse. (3.2.161-68)

This punning conflation of verse feet with human or animal feet is not unique to *As You Like It* or to Shakespeare.<sup>2</sup> In fact, it pervades English Renaissance

discussions of prosody to such an extent it becomes an unelaborated commonplace.

In what follows, I construct a context for Shakespeare's use of this metaphor across his plays and poems by surveying where Shakespeare and others metaphorize metrical feet. Within this context, Shakespeare's metrical practice appears less an autonomous, idiosyncratic literary art than a vigorous, sometimes ludic engagement in the period's intellectual discourse on prosody. What also emerges is an image of how early modern prosody, for Shakespeare and others, informed and was informed by social concerns; in some examples, for instance, bodily etiquette and metrical aesthetics occupy the same discursive spaces with no remarked incongruities. The discourses' incompatibility strikes modern readers: using a scansion rule to describe how a dinner party will proceed would hardly go over well today. But one period's incongruity is another's congruity. Proceeding this way, one might call this tentatively a semiological study of form, using Suassure's meaning of "semiology," that is, a study of signs within social interactions.<sup>3</sup> In sum, I explore how literary form shapes and is shaped by social interaction and in so doing, I have found that the metaphor works to mark significant social distinctions between poems, poets and people.

## II. A Pretty Fable

In a letter to Edmund Spenser, published in 1580 as the second half of *Two Other very commendable Letters*, Gabriel Harvey tells a "pretty Fable"—a

mnemonic device to fulfill "the office of the Arte Memoratiue"—to help Edmund Spenser remember a trochee's proper positions in different verse lines. By "Abstemio the Italian" (or Lorenzo Astemio, also known as Laurentius Abstemius, the fifteenth-century fabulist), Harvey's story is brief:

A certaine lame man, beyng inuited to a solempne Nuptiall Feaste, made no more adoe, but sate me hym roundlye downe foremoste at the hyghest ende of the Table. The Master of the feast, suddainly spying his presumption, and hansomely remoouing him from thence, placed me this haulting Gentleman belowe at the nether end of the bourd; alledging for his defence the common verse *Sedes nulla datur praeterquam sexta Trochaeo*, and pleasantly alluding to this foote, which standing vppon two syllables, the one long, the other short, (much like, of a like, his guesstes feete) is alwayes thrust downe to the last place in a true Hexameter, and quite thrust out of doores in a pure, and iust *Senarie*. (sigs. H4<sup>f</sup>-H4<sup>v</sup>)<sup>4</sup>

The one story contains two lessons, one social and one poetic, that resist untangling.

First, like a trochee, a man cannot sit wherever he pleases: the lame man's social status as only "Gentleman" does not warrant sitting "foremoste at the hyghest ende of the Table." The host, then, turns the lame man's presumption against him in *ad hominem* fashion by jeering not at the man's presumption, but

his lameness. An accident, the man's lame foot, is turned into an essence that determines the man's place at the table. Via the quoted verse, "*Sedes nulla datur praeterquam sexta Trochaeo*" (no seat but the sixth is given to a trochee), the host absolves himself of guilt and the guest's lameness becomes the reason for his displacement "belowe at the nether end" of the table, a well-placed pun on the fundament that highlights the guest's fundamental mistake.<sup>5</sup> The nether end, or ass, of the table, is appropriate, in the host's mind, as the guest, by sitting at the head, made an ass of himself.<sup>6</sup> And in another context, at another feast or in another poem, the man might have been "thrust out of doores," a jocular but firm warning that the man is lucky not to have been removed all together.<sup>7</sup> The joke, in the end, however, is serious.

Second, like people, trochees cannot sit wherever they like. Placing your trochee wherever you please is akin to a guest presuming to sit wherever he pleases. Part of what will make the story memorable, Harvey believes, is its obviousness: it was a well-known social fact (or so the description of the man's behavior suggests) that feasts had prescribed seating patterns.<sup>8</sup> A well-known social custom should help Spenser remember a poetic custom: foot placement. As you do at dinner, so you do in a poem. Misplacing a trochee, in Harvey's story, is like a social *faux pas*, one likely to result in public humiliation: no one enters a dinner party and sits at the table's head without inflicting scorn upon himself. Likewise, no one misplaces a trochee without precipitating similar scorn.

In Harvey's "pretty fable," then, the social and the poetic lessons double back on one another. Poetry, and specifically prosody, recalls one's place in the social order, and the social order has much to teach prosody. The overarching lesson is order: in all instances, at social feasts and with verse feet, hierarchy matters. Given the emphasis on order, the fact that a social affair seems a fine time for poetic license should give pause. While for modern readers, the joke on metrical feet seems to intrude on an otherwise non-poetic occasion, for the host, Abstemio, and Harvey, no order has been broken: the social is an occasion for the poetic, and the poetic an occasion for the social. The host brings in prosody while Harvey, the prosodist, brings in society. The two orders do not interrelate so much as they are one and the same: a socio-poetic order.<sup>9</sup>

And at the core of Harvey and Abstemio's tale is a metaphoric comparison that goes unelaborated yet enables the lesson Harvey hopes to teach Spenser—without it, the tale collapses. Here as elsewhere, the comparison acts as a multipurpose conceptual tool that translates prosody's intricacies into the more familiar vocabulary of the body. Using the shared language of physical mobility situates it within a larger discourse of clear social, hierarchical relations. Harvey's move from the prosodic to the podiatric borrows a biological fact to reify prosody's inferiority—feet are low—and to affirm the inferiority of prosodically unsound poems—deformed feet are even lower.

This translation of poetic feet into physical feet was intended to stabilize discussion of prosody, an increasingly unsteady system of rules under pressure



from above, below and sideways: Latin and Greek quantitative prosodies weighed heavily on educated practice, native accentual meters were used indiscriminately by the lower classes, and imported and invented verse forms were transforming the poetic landscape. It is these pressures that animate Harvey's choice of "pretty Fable"—a rule from Latin prosody is enforced on a disabled but disrespectful gentleman in an Italian story. Etiquette and aesthetic collide at the intersection of historical, social, and national concerns to make this a representative example insofar as it touches on all the major anxieties troubling English prosodists at the time. Simultaneously, and perhaps most importantly, the pun helps Spenser avoid and allows Harvey to deride the phenomenon—seemingly ahistorical because so widespread—that plagues every period of poetic production: bad poetry.

### III. Poetry Versus Verse

A foundational formula of early modern poetics, borrowed from Aristotle, ran as follows: verse could be poetry, but not all poetry was verse.<sup>10</sup> Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* satirizes this view in the pedantic figure of Holofernes. The deuterocanonical story of Holofernes was a late Medieval and Renaissance favorite, retold in sculpture by Donatello and in paint by Lucas Cranach the Elder, Andrea Mantegna, Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Artemisia Gentileschi, and others. Though also the name also of Gargantua's tutor in Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Holofernes for most of Shakespeare's audience would have recalled the tyrant decapitated by Judith for Jerusalem's sake. A pedant heady with

education whose name refers to headlessness—the joke was hard to miss. A joke easy for modern readers to miss is Holofernes's evaluation of Berowne's prosody. Jaquenetta, anxious to have read to her the poem supposed from Don Armado, has Nathaniel read it aloud. In the BBC's 1984 production, John Wells' Holofernes carefully scans the poem's meter with his fingers as Nathaniel reads. Then, with a firm shake of his head, Holofernes criticizes both the reading and the poem: "You find not the apostrophus, and so miss the accent. Let me supervise the canzonet. Here are only numbers ratified; but, for the elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy—*caret*" (4.2.118-122). The numbers, the meter, is approved, but that is all—and decent verse alone does not a poem make.

Verse, for many poets, was not only a secondary concern, but a minor one.<sup>11</sup> As Sidney put it, "every understanding knoweth the skill of each artificer standeth in that Idea or foreconceit of the work, and not in the work itself" (108). Though an excellent foreconceit must manifest itself in an equally excellent delivery, nothing can recuperate a poorly conceived foreconceit. Given these priorities, versification becomes "an ornament and no cause to poetry" (111). Poetry was more than verse—in fact poetry, as Sidney defined it, had nothing to do with versification at all: it was "an art of imitation ... with this end, to teach and delight" (109-110). Indeed, one of the few points Sir Philip Sidney overtly reiterates in *The Defence of Poesy* is on prosody. Early in the *Defence*, Sidney claims that, "it is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet, no more than a long gown maketh an advocate, who though he pleaded in armor should be an advocate

and no soldier" (112). Midway through the treatise, he reminds the reader: "It is already said (and, as I think, truly said) it is not rhyming and versing that maketh poesy. One may be a poet without versing, and a versifier without poetry" (134).<sup>12</sup> For Sidney, poetry was not equivalent with verse: a bad idea in iambic pentameter was still a bad idea—and the idea, good or bad, is what mattered most.<sup>13</sup>

For George Puttenham, poetry was less about content and more about form, yet content still took precedence. Puttenham clarified that poetry was "an art not only of making, but also of imitation" (sig. C1<sup>r</sup>). Yet, unlike Sidney, he qualified that "th'art of Poesie be but a skill appertaining to vtterance" (sig. C2<sup>r</sup>). Puttenham devotes far more time than Sidney to prosody, yet prosody was not alone sufficient to make a poem a poem. For instance, one who translated a poem "may well be sayd a versifier, but not a Poet" (sig. C1<sup>r</sup>). The subject matter (or the foreconceit) was the standard against which one could judge whether a text was simply a versed text or an authentic poem. Translation was a light offense, however. Puttenham claimed that poetry "ought not to be abased and imployed vpon any vnworthy matter and subiect, nor vsed to vaine purposes, which neuerthelesse is dayly seene, and that is to vtter conceits infamous and vious or ridiculous and foolish, or of no good example and doctrine" (sig. E1<sup>v</sup>). Yet here, and again unlike Sidney, Puttenham begins to waffle: though Poetry's subject matter should be delimited, there were exceptions: "Albeit in merry matters (not vn honest) being vsed for mans solace and recreation it may be well allowed" (sig.

E1<sup>v</sup>). This allowance, that poetry can be used for solace and recreation, as a pastime and not as an educational tool, is not a concession Sidney makes.

Puttenham does not always support the allowance as firmly as he might. Later he rails against "ordinarie rimers" (sig. K4<sup>r</sup>) and "common rimers" (sig. L4<sup>v</sup>) who incorrectly use rhyme "both in the end and middle of a verse" (sig. L4<sup>v</sup>). Such prosodic indiscretions are intolerable,

vnlesse it be in small and popular Musickes song by these  
Cantabanqui vpon benches and barrells heads where they haue none  
other audience then boys or countrey fellowes that passe by them  
in the streete, or blind harpers or such like tauerne minstrels that  
giue a fit of mirth for a groat. (sig. M1<sup>r</sup>)

The scene is too vividly described to not have been experienced first-hand. Puttenham is both attracted and repulsed—one shouldn't use rhyme that way, unless context approves the usage.

Odds are slim Puttenham and Sidney saw and heard the same blind musician, but Sidney too must "confess [his] own barbarousness" at having his "heart moved more than with a trumpet" in a moment of almost endearing weakness, upon hearing "the old song of Percy and Douglas ... sung by some blind crowder" (130).<sup>14</sup> Where Puttenham suffers the blind to sing, Sidney imagines how much better it might have been: "what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar?" (130). The question is rhetorical: the song would move more people, and move more people properly if not "so evil

appareled in the dust and cobwebs of that uncivil age," that is the Middle Ages, that all-purpose period used to represent all the present was not. Poetry is but appareled in verse, Sidney would say, yet he would follow along with Polonius: that apparel oft proclaims the man. Sidney, in the face of his own and another's barbarousness, maintains his civility: where Puttenham bows, Sidney stands firm.

It is telling of a concern troubling early modern poetics that disparate texts converge on the same image: the blind harper or crowder represents a lower-class vision of poetics where versification was necessary *and* sufficient. Nearly anyone can versify, they observed, but not just anyone should. This lower-class vision, figured in the insensitive image of the blind man, neglected what Puttenham, Sidney and others would agree was the truth: a poem requires more than verse.<sup>15</sup> The assertion seems, on the face of it, agreeable and harmless enough to any modern reader, but in an age where successful poetry paved the way to patronage—a better social existence—the assertion of this position was vital. Poets at the top of the social ladder formulated rules, prosodic rules among them, to secure their position, allowing only a select few the privilege of climbing up. In short, there will be good poets and bad poets, but, from the perspective of the good, there are always many more bad.

Sidney noted, with undisguised disapprobation, that "now swarm many versifiers that need never answer to the name of poets" (111).<sup>16</sup> The same swarm also annoyed Richard Stanyhurst who protested, "Good God, what frye of such *wooden rythmours* dooth swarme in stacioners shops" (sig. A4<sup>v</sup>). Likewise,

Campion complained that "The facilitie and popularitie of Rime creates as many Poets as a hot sommer flies" (sig. A7<sup>v</sup>). These swarming versifiers were also imaged by Thomas Nashe as "Bussards" writing "ragged Rimes" (sig. B4<sup>v</sup>). One characteristic of these buzzards, Nashe notes, is that they "thinke knowledge a burthen, tapping it before they have half tunde it" (sig. B4<sup>v</sup>). Nashe's jibe makes timing secondary. Knowledge, the foreconceit, is more than a "burthen," more than a refrain and more than an unwieldy weight; knowledge should be a poem's *raison d'etre*.

William Webbe also criticized the "uncountable rabble of ryming Ballet makers and compylers of senceless sonets, who be most busy to stuffe every stall full of grosse devises and unlearned Pamphlets" (sig. D1<sup>r</sup>). He continues: "we shall shortly haue whole swarmes of Poets: and euery one that can frame a Booke in Ryme, though for want of matter, it be but in commendations of Copper noses or Bottle Ale, wyll carch at the Garlande due to Poets" (sig. D1<sup>r</sup>). Nashe further expressed indignation over the "baling Ballets, and our new found Songs & Sonets, which every rednose Fidler hath at his fingers end, and euery ignorant Ale Knight will breath foorth ouer the pottle, as soone as his braine waxeth hote" (sig. B4<sup>r</sup>). Webbe and Nashe both use an emphatic "every" to affirm their indignation at versification's popularity, and they make clear it is unlearned versification that is popular, not learned poetry, and the result: "It makes the learned sort to be silent, when as they see vnlearned sots so insolent" (sig. B4<sup>v</sup>).

The prosody of the masses, however identical in linguistic use and origin, was inferior because of inferior subject matter.

In sum, widespread versification resulted in a sort of widespread panic that manifested itself in attempts to delimit the nature of poetry and what it meant to be a poet: "*wooden rythmours*" and mere versifiers were "vnlearned sots," and not poets. While subject matter was the supreme standard by which a poem could become poetry, another primary way was, despite being of secondary importance, versification, or to use the early modern vocabulary: how a poem moved was an indicator of the poet's social mobility. As numerous writers made clear, versification alone does not make one a poet, but poor versification can undo one. Setting them in context, this chapter surveys stern admonishments and insensitive in-jokes, ridicule and over-extended metaphors, cataloging moments of aesthetic interpellation whereby poems and poets are called down as less than poetry, less than poets.

#### IV. Ill at Numbers

Not one of Shakespeare's characters is proud of his verse: young Hamlet in *Hamlet*, Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Longueville in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Henry in *Henry V* and Orlando in *As You Like It*—they tell us or we're told—are all bad versifiers.<sup>17</sup> When Polonius confronts Claudius and Gertrude regarding Hamlet's madness, he brings along and reads aloud a letter of Hamlet's to Ophelia. The letter's verses evince Hamlet's love-sickness:

Doubt thou the stars are fire,  
 Doubt that the sun doth move,  
 Doubt truth to be a liar,  
 But never doubt I love. (2.2.116-119)

Brief as the lines are, Hamlet's unhappy with them: "O dear Ophelia," he concludes the letter, "I am ill at these numbers" (2.2.120). Similarly, in 4.3 of *Love's Labor's Lost*, Longueville enters holding a sonnet that he dislikes.

Overheard by Biron and the King, he bemoans:

I fear these stubborn lines lack power to move.  
 O sweet Maria, empress of my love,  
 These numbers will I tear, and write in prose. (4.3.51-3)

Longueville is worried that his "lines" will not move Maria, and he toys with the idea of tearing the numbers—the sonnet form—and composing instead in prose, presumably the easier medium. The sonnet, when he does read it aloud, is not so bad as he thought, but our interest lies in his assumption that verse will render it ungainly, perhaps as ungainly as Benedick's verse. In *Much Ado About Nothing* Benedick is not confident about his versification, specifically his rhymes. While there are plenty of past poets "whose names yet run smoothly in the even road of a blank verse," they were never so head-over-heels in love as he. In fact, Benedick is so deep in love, "Marry, I cannot show it in rhyme. I have tried" (5.2.35-6). Grieving, he blames his poetic inability on destiny: "I was not born under a rhyming planet" (5.2.39-40).<sup>18</sup> Later Claudio—a name deriving from the Latin



*claudere*, "to limp"—teases Benedict's "halting sonnet" (5.4.86). Perhaps embarrassed by his verse, he switches and ends the play, like Beatrice (also guilty of composing sonnets), in prose.

While Benedick is publicly embarrassed into speaking prose, Shakespeare's Henry V—in prose—admits that poor versification is potentially embarrassing: "Marry if you would put me to verses or to dance for your sake Kate, why, you undid me. For the one I have neither words nor measure, and for the other I have no strength in measure, yet a reasonable measure in strength" (5.2.134-8). A slightly better dancer than versifier, he hopes he does not have to do either. Besides, he says, "these fellows of infinite tongue, that can rhyme themselves into ladies' favours, they do always reason themselves out again" (5.2.160). Rhyme and verse are not always reasonable choices for self-expression.

Verses moving with such a galloping sentiment, Touchstone implies, could never be true. A truer sentiment, he assumes, should produce a smoother rhythm. Sidney's poetic persona has a problem not unlike Orlando's but mocked in similar terms as Benedick's halting sonnet. The speaker of *Astrophil and Stella*, who sought for "words to paint the blackest face of woe," laments that "words came halting forth, wanting Inventions stay" (*Poems* 165). Invention only bears forth lame words that fail to fall into any discernible form. Compare this to Francisco's proclamation in John Webster's *The White Devil*:

I am in love,  
 In love with Corombona, and my suit  
 Thus halts to her in verse. (4.1.120-2)<sup>19</sup>

His love, no doubt a love-sickness, produces halting verse and provides little more than an opportunity for a cheap joke conflating human and verse feet. That this is a joke should not be taken lightly, even if the joke is lightly used, for to be a laughingstock is no laughing matter.

Laughter for Sidney is always laughter *at* something; it always stands in a hierarchical relationship to something or someone else. As he sees it, "Laughter hath only a scornful tickling" (150). He follows with examples: "We laugh at deformed creatures," he writes, and "we laugh at mischances" (151). Further, we laugh "to find a matter quite mistaken and go down the hill against the bias, in the mouth of some such men," at whom we "cannot choose but laugh" (151).

Laughter, he concedes, and delight "may goe well together," as in the case of Hercules "painted with his great beard and furious countenance, in woman's attire, spinning at Omphale's commandment" (151).<sup>20</sup> Sidney anticipates Henri Bergson who claimed laughter, "demands something like a momentary anesthesia of the heart" (11). Laughter is often laughter at pain, at a pain with which one perhaps should sympathize. As Sidney says, people will often laugh at things or people "which are rather to be pitied then scorned" (151). And all this bespeaks volumes of what Sidney thought of poetry having "fallen to be the laughing stock of

children" (103). This, of course, does not mean that all objects of laughter deserve pity; it does, however, suggest caution in choosing with whom we laugh.

For example, in *Henry IV, Part One*, Hotspur ridicules Glendower's musical education in which he "framèd to the harp / Many an English ditty lovely well" (3.1.120-1). Grouping Glendower with "meter balladmongers" (3.1.126), Hotspur adopts the comparison of verse feet with animal feet:

I had rather hear a brazen can'stick turned  
Or a dry wheel grate on the axletree,  
And that would set my teeth nothing on edge,  
Nothing so much as mincing poetry.

'Tis like the forced gait of a shuffling nag. (3.1.127-131).

The aural imagery of a "brazen can'stick turned" and a "dry wheel" evoke ear-grating noises that are more bearable for Hotspur than "the forced gait of a shuffling nag."<sup>21</sup> Linking Glendower with the mincing poetry of balladmongers is an obvious form of derision, yet the force of the derision is heightened when we keep in mind the less obvious class implications: balladmongering, an occupation overrunning England—or so some poets thought—is hardly an occupation fit for Welsh royalty. The image Hotspur intends to conjure against Glendower's claim to conjuring undercuts his social status via versification. And for an image of a balladmonger we need look no further than *A Winter's Tale*: Hotspur is making Glendower into Autolycus.

In another similar yet less obvious moment in *Troilus and Cressida*, we hear of Patroclus and Achilles having a laugh at his fellow Greeks. In a longish speech Ulysses reports that "the great Achilles" has grown "dainty of his worth," lounging about his tent with Patroclus "mocking [their] designs" (1.3.142-146). Patroclus in particular, he claims, "pageants us" (1.3.150). He explains to Agamemnon that sometimes

Thy topless deputation he puts on,  
 And like a strutting Player, whose conceit  
 Lies in his hamstring and doth think it rich  
 To hear the wooden dialogue and sound  
 'Twixt his stretched footing and the scaffoldage,  
 Such to-be-pitied and o're-rested seeming,  
 He acts thy greatness in. And when he speaks  
 'Tis like a chime a mending, with terms unsquared,  
 Which from the tongue of roaring Tiphon dropped  
 Would seem hyperboles. At this fusty stuff  
 The large Achilles on his pressed bed lolling  
 From his deep chest laughs out aloud applause,  
 Cries 'Excellent!' 'Tis Agamemnon just. (1.3.152-164)

Patroclus' mockery is two-fold: in mimicking a risible acting style, the Greek commander is given all the bad habits of a bad actor who struts and enjoys the sound of his own wooden voice between "his stretched footing and the

scaffoldage." This stretched footing is not strictly the same as the "stretchèd metre of an antique song" (12) mentioned in sonnet 17, but an early modern audience would likely have heard that implication in the description's itinerary from hamstrings to dialogue and back to feet, so prevalent as these comparisons were. Patroclus's satire of Agamemnon is meant to be harsh, at least as Ulysses tells it (how and when he saw this enactment he never reveals). Even if the metrical sense of stretched footing is oblique, it is unequivocally meant to insult.

## V. Circulation

Foregrounding metrical inadequacies via puns on feet was not unique to Shakespeare or to early modern England. The opening poem of Ovid's *Amores* may claim the pun's first occurrence:

Arma graui numero uiolentaque bella parabam

edere, materia conueniente modis.

par erat inferior uersus: risisse Cupido

dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem. (Ovid 40)

[I was preparing to bear arms in solemn numbers, with subject-matter appropriate to the measure. The subsequent line was well-matched: Cupid is said to have laughed and stolen one foot.]

By stealing a foot from the hexameter, the epic meter, Cupid morphed the poem into elegiac meter, changing a war poem to a love poem. Ovid's speaker then reprimands Cupid for flouting the Muse's authority. Cupid's arrow responds to the

accusation and inflames the speaker's heart. Resigned, the speaker decides to go on:

sex mihi surgat opus numeris, in quinque residat;

ferrea cum uestris bella ualete modis. (Ovid 42)

[Let my work march in six numbers, and fall in five; farewell iron wars with your measures.]

The verb "surgat" (from *surgo*, *surgere*) denotes "to rise, to stand up," but also connotes "to march" in martial contexts, as in this poem's mock-military tone. Since the speaker started to compose an heroic poem, the translation "Let my work march in six numbers" is a better fit than the more abstract "rise in six numbers" favored by translators.

Early modern writers were not explicitly alluding to Ovid in every case of the metrical foot metaphor, but Ovid was such an intimate part of period education it is no surprise to find his imagery throughout the period's literature. J. C. McKeown has noted there is "no precedent for this conceit" of the stolen foot (13), but there is another pedestrian moment in Ovid's verse.<sup>22</sup> Lines 11-12 of book three's first poem in the *Tristia* read:

clauda quod alterno subsidunt carmina uersu,

uel pedis hoc ratio, uel via longa facit.

[that these limping poems are sinking in every other verse,

either the manner of these feet or the long way causes.]<sup>23</sup>

Ovid's *Tristia*, his exile poems written in Tomis, did indeed travel a long way back to his readers in Rome, and this distance is figured to cause poems' deformed formal structure.

How feet came to be the standard unit of classical poetry, both Greek and Latin, is unclear.<sup>24</sup> W. Sidney Allen concurs with A. M. Dale's assessment that "the term is taken from 'the movements of the human foot in its simplest form of progress'" (122).<sup>25</sup> As Dale writes, "some ghostly reflection" of dance may lurk "in the traditional terminology, if 'arsis' and 'thesis' echo the lift and fall of the dancers' feet" (2). Allen, like Dale, notes that the connection between metrical feet and human feet is more metaphoric than metonymic. The "progressive raising and lowering (cf. Aristotle, *Prob.* v 885b ...)" was then "applied to a minimal binary cycle of contrast in the sphere of language or music" (122). However, Allen notes, the terms describing two segments of a foot, thesis and arsis, "would also be appropriate in connexion with the practice of 'beating time'" (122). Linguistic prosodists debate whether feet exist, and some debate whether feet existed for English Renaissance poets, either in composition or analysis. Sidney speaks of verse only as organized according to syllable "with some regard of the accent" and does not mention feet, T.VF. Brogan notes in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetics* (417). Brogan claims that most Renaissance critics "speak of verse as being organized by syllable count" (417). With near unanimity, early modern writers see and hear verse as using feet, but whether poems were composed with feet in mind is another matter.<sup>26</sup> Wherever feet originated and however they were

used, early modern English poets and critics consistently imaged poems as standing, going or running on feet, for better or worse.

Puttenham's theory of prosody, for instance, is wholly reliant on the correlation of verse feet with feet. The purpose of form, for Puttenham, is "to satisfie & delight th'eare onely by a goodly outwarde shew set vpon the matter with wordes and speaches smothly and tunably running" (sig. R2<sup>r</sup>). However, an uncomplicated and familiar representation, the image of a poem meter's running along smoothly, becomes rich and strange in Puttenham's usage. In short, what was an incidental image for Touchstone's joke is a fundamental image for Puttenham's description of native English prosody. Puttenham begins book two of *The Arte of English Poesie* by describing verse feet in terms of human feet.<sup>27</sup> He first defines feet:

a foote by his sence naturall is a member of office and function,  
and serueth to three purposes, that is to say, to go, to runne, & to  
stand still; so as he sometimes must be swift, sometimes slow,  
sometime unegally marching or peradventure steddly. (sigs. K2<sup>r</sup>-  
K2<sup>v</sup>)

Puttenham continues with an analogy:

nothing can better shew the qualitie [of meter] then these runners  
at common games, who setting forth from the first goale, one  
giueth the start speedely & perhaps before he come half way to  
th'other goale, decayeth his pace, as a man weary & fainting:



another is slow at the start, but by amending his pace keepes euen with his fellow or perchance gets before him; another one while gets ground, another while loseth it again, either in the beginning or middle of his race, and so proceedes unegally, sometimes swift sometimes slow, as his breath or forces serue him: another sort there be that plod on, & will never change their pace, whether they win or lose the game. (sig. K3<sup>r</sup>)

Puttenham's work does not epitomize the period's prosody, but the extent to which Puttenham assimilated the foot image goes far to show just how central to early modern prosodic the image could be.

Also, when Puttenham compares meter's movement to "runners at common games," he hints at disapproval. Later, Puttenham switches from prescriptive poetics into a short disquisition on courtly manners, specifically concerning movement. He advised that,

in a Prince it is decent to goe slowly, and to march with leysure, and with a certaine granditie rather than grautie: as our soueraine Lady and mistresse, the very image of maiestie and magnificence, is accustomed to doe generally, vnlesse it be when she walketh apace for her pleasure, or to catch her a heate in the colde mornings. (sig. Kk2<sup>v</sup>)

Unhurried movement was expected of nobility, unless one was exercising.

Walking apace was acceptable, so long as there was sufficient reason, but running was intolerable. As an example he tells of Emperor Ferdinand of Spain,

a most noble minded man, yet so careless and forgetfull of himself  
in that behalfe, as I haue seene him runne vp a paire of staires so  
swift and nimble a pace, as almost had not become a very meane  
man. (sig. Kk2<sup>v</sup>)

Puttenham's advice mirrors sterner instruction given later by Richard Brathwaite in his 1631 etiquette book *The English Gentlewoman*:

It is no hard thing to gather the *disposition* of our *heart*, by the  
*dimension* of our *gate*. What a circular gesture wee shall obserue  
some vse in their pace, as if they were troubled with the *vertigo*!  
Others make a tinkling with their feet, and make discouery of their  
light thoughts, by their wanton *gate*. Others with a jetting and  
strutting *pace*, publish their hauty and selfe-conceited minde. Thus  
doe our *Wantons* (as if they had transparant bodies) display their  
folly, and subiect themselues to the censure of leuity. This cannot  
*Decency* endure. (sig. M1<sup>v</sup>)

This same bodily etiquette—that one's inner mind can be read via one's outer body—underpins Cleopatra's spying into Octavia's behavior in *Antony and Cleopatra*, but with a social inflection. She asks a messenger, "What majesty is in her gait? Remember, / If e'er thou lookedst on majesty" (3.3.20-21). The

messenger's reply, intended to assuage Cleopatra's jealousy more than accurately report on Octavia, is that "She creeps" (3.3.21). The messenger adds: "Her motion and her station are as one" (3.3.22).<sup>28</sup> For Cleopatra, Octavia's creeping—her motion—is evidence of her status, one happily lower than Cleopatra's own: "There's nothing in her yet" (3.3.27). Puttenham and Brathwaite, if they had witnessed Octavia creep, would have no doubt concurred: slow but surely not creeping.

Advice for nobles on walking and Cleopatra's investment in the correspondence of majesty and gait, both demonstrate an early modern concern with bodily discipline as a reflection of social status: inner self-fashioning through outward body-fashioning.<sup>29</sup> This same notion of fashioning interiority is what motivates the attention poets gave to their poem's feet, even if most often negative attention. The earliest instance in early modern English of the derisive comparison between verse feet and feet may occur in Abrahm Flemming's 1576 compendium *A Panoplie of Epistles, or, A Looking Glasse for the Vnlearned* containing a series of epistles useful for student imitation. A letter titled from C. Hegendorphinus to Laur. Czccho. presents an axiom:

whiche wordes of mine to be true, that usuall verse, althoughe it  
hault in one syllable, manifestly affirmeth, saying:

Galene giues richesse and substance good store:

Iustinian giues honours and titles of gloire. (sig. Dd2<sup>v</sup>)

Hegendorphinus is the Latin name for the German humanist Christoph Hegendorph who lived from 1500-1540 and whose epistles, *Methodus Conscribendis Epistolas*, were widely available and reprinted numerous times. Flemming's may be the earliest instance of metaphor in early modern English, but that he pulls the pun from Germany evinces how widely the metaphor was circulating.

Back in England, Samuel Daniel disliked the way in which Latin poets took license with modifiers, claiming that they were too often "disioyning such as naturally should be married & march together" (sig. F6<sup>v</sup>). Like so many others, Daniel adopted the imagery of human mobility, specifically "running" (sig. F8<sup>f</sup>): English trochaic verse "runs" similar to ancient verse (sig. H2<sup>f</sup>), no verses "runne" (sig. H6<sup>f</sup>) free from disgrace if they are "idle," and some "bare numbers," he claimed, that are forced to "runne" in "our slow language" will never be popular (sig. F2<sup>v</sup>). Nashe also had reservations concerning Latin prosody that he articulated using similar images. Latin "Hexamiter," he proclaimed, is the meter which "goes twitching and hopping in our language like a man running vpon quagmiers, vp the hill in one Syllable, and down the dale in another, retaining no part of that stately smooth gate" (*Foure* sig. G3<sup>f</sup>). Nashe's representation of meter as clumsy ambling does not have quite the same derogatory force as the more disquieting images of the halting or limping poem, images likening metrical defects to human physical disabilities.

Similarly, Thomas Campion, disparaging native English rhyming, described nonsensical ballads, which one cannot read "without blushing," as "lame halting rhymes" (sig. A3<sup>v</sup>), and John Gower's attempt in Shakespeare's *Pericles* to "carry wingèd Time / Post on the lame feet of my rhyme" (4.47-48) prefigures John Milton's headnote on verse to *Paradise Lost* that flouts the "wretched matter and lame Meeter" (352) of most rhyming poetry. In 1570, the educator Roger Ascham chided Cicero who "in his verse doth halt a little" (sig. S2<sup>r</sup>) and criticized two verse translators: the "noble Lord *Th. Earle of Surrey*, first of all English men in translating the fourth booke of *Virgill*, and *Gonsaluo Periz*, that excellent learned man, and Secretarie to kyng *Philip of Spaine*, in translating the *Vlisses* of *Homer* out of *Greke* into *Spanish*." While Ascham commended them for avoiding "the fault of Ryming," he nevertheless argued that their lines were not "perfite and trew versifying" (sigs. S1<sup>r</sup>-S1<sup>v</sup>). Rather he considered their meter to be as "numme feete" that

turne and runne roundly withall as feete of brasse or wood be  
vnweeldie to go well withall. And as a foote of wood is a plaine  
shew of a manifest maime, euen so feete in our English versifying  
without quantitie and ioyntes be sure signes that the verse is verie  
vnseemlie ... (sig. S1<sup>v</sup>)

While prosthetic body parts were not the most common early modern representation of metrically unsound feet, Ascham is in ample company when it comes to equating lame verse with human lameness.<sup>30</sup>

Badly written poetry was frequently imaged as a physical disability. The comparisons drew upon assumptions, such as Francis Bacon's, whereby "Deformed persons," were "(as the Scripture saith) devoid of natural affection" (426). Deformity, he argued, was not a symptom but a cause of poor behavior, a cause that "seldom faileth of the effect" (426). Bacon's words are harsh considering they were published during the reign of a king reknown for physical disability, James I: "his legs were very weake, having had (as was thought) some foul play in his youth, or rather before he was born, that he was not able to stand at seven years of age, that weaknesse made him ever leaning on other mens shoulders" (Weldon sigs. N1<sup>v</sup>-N2<sup>r</sup>).<sup>31</sup> Accusation of metrical deformity intensifies by way of human infirmity, yet both people and animals were targets. Consider Harvey's published correspondence with Spenser on prosody, noting that good quantitative verse in English is like "A good horse, that trippeth not once in a iourney" (sig. H4<sup>v</sup>). Spenser replied by shifting the equestrian focus to other lame animals. The "chiefest hardnesse," he writes, in composing English quantitative hexameters is:

in the Accente ... and sometime the measure of the Number, as in *Carpenter*, the middle sillable, being vsed shorte in speache, when it shall be read long in Verse, seemeth like *a lame Gosling that draweth one legge after hir*: and *Heauen*, beeing vsed shorte as one sillable, when it is in Verse stretched out with a *Diastole*, is like *a lame Dogge that holdes vp one legge*. (sig. A3<sup>v</sup>)

The prosodic commentary Shakespeare's characters and early modern critics dispense is insensitive. Nevertheless, by referencing physical lameness—a phenomenon nearly everyone would have witnessed first-hand in an era of limited medical technique—the abstract phenomenon of meter, often figured out through fingering and not in performance connected with feet, is given a local habitation and name.<sup>32</sup>

A similar but relatively tame usage of which occurs in *Hamlet*. Advising the players before they've even arrived, Hamlet worries that "the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for't" (2.2.325-326). Later, when talking on "the purpose of playing," Hamlet asks that the player speak his speech "trippingly on the tongue," in other words, using a tripping-like tongue motion.<sup>33</sup> He then recalls players "that, neither having th' accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed" (3.2.30-32). Conflating speech with physical movement, Hamlet mirrors accent with gait and strutting with bellowing. That the lady's blank verse might halt, or be lamed in the performance, recalls Touchstone, Rosalind and Celia's teasing of Orlando, but also foregrounds that walking and talking are frequently linked in Shakespearean imagery. Halting and lameness alone, though, is never positive in Shakespeare.<sup>34</sup>

Halting, of course, does not always have a metrical or linguistic sense, but forms of the verb "to halt" are frequently used by Shakespeare to describe limping. Shakespeare's Richard III limps, or as he puts it, he walks in such a way "That dogs bark at me as I halt by them" (1.1.23). In *2 Henry IV*, Falstaff claims if

he lost his big toe from gout, it would be "no matter if I do halt" (1.2.245) because he can blame it on military service. The forsaken Timon issues a curse on his home of Athens, the city that has forsaken him. The list of curses is long and climaxes with perhaps the worst:

Thou cold sciatica,  
Cripple our senators, that their limbs may halt  
As lamely as their manners! (4.1.23-25)

The lame manners of the senators are meant to be reflected in the senators lame and halting limbs. In *Coriolanus*, 4.7, Aufidius worries to his lieutenant that Coriolanus is dimming his star among the troops, something that, if he acts to correct, would "lame the foot / Of our design" to attack Rome (4.7.7-8). In *King Henry VIII* 1.3, Sandys comments on the new mannerisms of the Englishmen in France:

They have all new legs, and lame ones. One would take it,  
That never saw 'em pace before, the spavin  
Or springhalt reigned among 'em. (1.3.11-13).

The new but lame legs are shorthand for adopted customs, customs that Sandys compares to a horse's spavin.<sup>35</sup> Pointing out lameness, time and again, in both poetry and people, was a form of scorn.

Inversely, its absence praises. In 2.1 of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio's assessment of Kate culminates with a conflation of walking and talking not unlike Hamlet's above. Petruchio has heard Kate was "rough, and coy,



and sullen" but he finds her "slow in speech ... / Nor hast thou pleasure to be cross in talk." Instead, "with mildness" she entertains "wooers." To this end, Petruchio asks the rhetorical question: "Why does the world report that Kate doth limp?" Finally he commands, "Oh, let me see thee walk. Thou dost not halt" (2.1.240-253). Here, Kate's (supposed) mild language with wooers and her inability to be cross in talk leads into him to refute the world's report. Language, in this case and in many others, often leads Shakespeare to considerations of walking, and in many cases, limping.

In sonnet 89, Shakespeare again references halting in relation to speech. Like Hamlet's and Petruchio's conflation, this sonnet uses verbs of speech, "say" (89.1), "comment" (89.2), "speak" (89.3) that lead directly into "lameness" and "halt" in the same line (89.3). The speaker is referencing the beloved's power to shape reality with speech; if the addressee says the speaker is lame, the speaker will gladly limp or, if necessary, the speaker will absent himself from the addressee's "walks" (89.9). Again, walking in line 9 conducts the speaker immediately to his "tongue" (89.9), where the addressee will no longer dwell if he so wishes it. Halting here is not mentioned for metrical commentary, but that meaning does shadow the poem. In such cases, the metrical sense of the metaphor remains latent, but its prevalence elsewhere does cause it to tip-toe in from the wings. As in *The Tempest*, when Prospero chides Ferdinand for smiling at his fatherly boasts concerning Miranda's beauty:

... O Ferdinand,

Do not smile at me that I boast her off,

For thou shalt find she will outstrip all praise

And make it halt behind her. (4.1.8-11)

The praise halting behind Miranda is not specifically versed, yet poorly written lines, like those Orlando composed for Rosalind, could well be on Prospero's mind.

In defending poetry, Thomas Lodge claimed that

*David* was a poete, and that his vayne was in imitating (as S. Ierom witnesseth) *Horace*, *Flaccus*, and *Pindarus*; somtimes his verse runneth in an *Iambus* foote, anone he hath recourse to a *Saphier* vaine, and *aliquando*, *semipede ingreditur*. (sig. A6<sup>v</sup>)

The quoted Latin line, "*aliquando, semipede ingreditur*" [sometimes he goes forth on half-feet], is from St. Jerome's preface to his translation of Eusebius's *Chronica*. Arguing that the Bible used all the rhetorical and poetic devices of classical authors, Jerome wrote of David's poetry, "In morem Flacci et Pindari nunc iambo currit, nunc alcaico personat, nunc sapphico tumet, nunc semipede ingreditur." Further, Lodge writes that poetry—here the pun may be unintended—and poets were "the very fot-paths to knowledge and vnderstanding" (sig. B2<sup>r</sup>).

Lodge's reference to David's poetic feet gives poems a positive biblical spin, and David's feet helps prove that poetry is a viable footpath to knowledge. But Lodge is stretching the typical usage of the foot metaphor: in most cases, as a review of

the above instances show, with Puttenham as the lone exception, referencing a poem's feet is a way to put the poem or poet in its proper place.

Feet in Shakespeare and his contemporary early modern texts are the instruments of subordination and when verse feet are mentioned, it is most often to subordinate a poem or poet. As Peter Stallybrass has argued about feet generally, "In early modern Europe, power is marked not by the absence of feet but by their presence," and as a prime example, "Marlowe's Tamburlaine makes his enemies his footstool; he puts his feet upon them" (314). Similarly, in *King Lear*, Gloucester's downfall is emphasized by Cornwall's threat, "Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot" (3.7.71). Caliban in *The Tempest*, vows twice to kiss Stephano's foot (2.2.147 and 2.2.150) and finally does, as Stephano's command that Caliban "Come, kiss" indicates (2.2.155). Foot-kissing is an iconographic image of biblical origin that weaves its way throughout early modern Europe, according to Stallybrass.

Feet, then, even a poem's feet, are never simply feet: being under foot means being under control, as when Petruchio steps on Kate's cap, commanding her to "Throw it underfoot" (5.2.126). Kate herself then argues to the surrounding "headstrong women" (5.2.134) that they should "place [their] hands below your husband's foot" (5.2.181).<sup>36</sup> Stallybrass notes that in such images feet are "the active instruments of subordination" (315). Though feet and hands count among the "superfluous things" that Margreta de Grazia explores, she notes that "the main function of superfluous things is to mark not ontological distinctions but

social ones" (23).<sup>37</sup> Limping metrical feet mark just such a social distinction; marking poems as lamely footed fixes them at the bottom of poetry's social hierarchy.

To the early modern English mind, hands and fingers distinguished humanity far more than feet.<sup>38</sup> Helkiah Crooke explains in *Mikrokosmographia* Crooke that man alone

had the Hand giuen him by God, an Organ or Instrument before all organs, and indeede in stead of all. Now, if the figure of man had been made with his face downward, that Diuine Creature should haue gone groueling vpon his handes, as well as vpon his feete, and those worthy and noble actions of his Hand, had been forfeited; or at least disparaged. (5)

For Crooke, hands stand higher than feet, but not just anatomically; they are a gift from God who gave man

three seuerall muniments, which hee hath denyed to other liuing Creatures; Reason to invent, Speech to call for assistance, and Hands to bring his will to acte and perfection. Reason, is the hand of the vnderstanding, Speech the hand of Reason, and the Hand it selfe, is the hand of Speech. (9)

Crooke continues comparing reason and hands, by which two things man is "secured from all dumbe creatures" (10). The importance of hands for Crooke cannot be understated.

At one point, Crooke pauses to disprove feet's importance, that "Mane alone is two-footed" or as Plato put it "*Animal bipes implume*." Crooke writes that Diogenes "worthily derided this definition" when "hee flung a Cocke whose feathers he had pluckt off, into the Schoole, and cried out, *Behold Platoes Man*" (12). Feet are literally the bottom, the basest part, even in anatomy. In dissection of the human body, Crooke notes that, "The order of Dignity requireth, that we shold begin with the brain, as with the most noble part" (19). Conversely, a disorderly dissection, would do the hands and the feet—a gross misstep. As a warning Crooke cites Galen who is said to have "written all things confusedly, & without Method ... First he treats of the hand, then of the legges and feete" (22). This dissection order mimics the order in which poets composed: first the foreconceit (or brain) then on to the form (or feet).

Ben Jonson best represents this compositional method.<sup>39</sup> In a section headed "His opinion of Verses," Jonson told Drummond, "That he wrott all his first in prose, for so his Master, Cambden, had learned him" (Drummond 33). From Camden, Jonson's master at Westminster School and a humanist scholar esteemed across the Continent, the young poet learned "the techniques of poetry-making that remained his constant literary practice for the rest of his life" (Miles 4). Jonson's technique, however, is not simply a prizing of prose over verse, as earlier in the conversation Jonson tells Drummond that "the translations of Homer and Virgill in long Alexandrines were but prose" (Drummond 4). That the translations "were but prose" tells us they were not considered proper poetry: the

jibe being that the Alexandrines have lines too long to function as verse. But given Jonson's technique, he would have averred, like Sidney no doubt would, that any good poem must first exist as good prose first. For many early modern English poets, this was indeed the case: poems existed as prose prior to verse.<sup>40</sup>

The same that held for respectable poets—meaning first meter later—held for musicians. Thomas Morley's character Master, a music instructor, goes on at some length concerning how to "dispose your musicke according to the nature of the words which you are therein to expresse, as whatsoeuer matter it be which you haue in hand, such a kind of musike must you frame to it" (177).<sup>41</sup> Occasionally, however, one's foot, to use Prospero's words, could become one's tutor; poem's meter, if not policed, could prevail over meaning:

Now there can not be in a maker a fowler fault, then to falsifie his  
accent to serue his cadence, or by vntrue orthographie to wrench  
his words to helpe his rime, for it is a signe that such a maker [is]  
not copious in his owne language, or (as they are wont to say) not  
halfe his crafts maister. (Puttenham sig. L4<sup>r</sup>)<sup>42</sup>

George Gascoigne warns that the budding writer, for the sake of rhyme, should not "willingly alter the meanyng of your Inuention" (sig. T4<sup>v</sup>). Campion concurred that meter and rhyme were little more than an ornament to the poem's matter, and even worse, "Rime," that "foolish figuratiue repetition," could even cause "a man oftentimes to abiure his matter" (sigs. A2<sup>v</sup>, A3<sup>v</sup>).<sup>43</sup> Time and again, readers are reminded: matter before meter. These prescriptions together form a

version of Robert Frost's dictum: the poem begins and ends in wisdom, and never begins or ends in delight.

## VI. Shakespeare's Feet

One would be remiss to discuss feet in Shakespeare without devoting at least a fraction of space to Shakespeare's feet—Shakespeare's physical feet. Biographical inquisitiveness often extends below the waist, but rarely below the knees. That Shakespeare's feet generate even a handful of sentences says much about the indiscriminate interest Shakespeare endures, from head to toe. In 1883 A.E. Brae, enthused over C. M. Ingleby's pamphlet, *Shakespeare's Bones. The Proposal to Disinter Them, Considered in Relation to Their Possible Bearing on His Portraiture: Illustrated by Instances of Visits of the Living to the Dead*, wrote Ingleby about the exhumation, expressing what Samuel Schoenbaum called "touching antiquarian optimism" (341).<sup>44</sup> Brae hoped "it might be possible to measure Shakespeare's leg bone, and decide once and for all the question of his lameness" (qtd. in Schoenbaum 341). No modern biography of Shakespeare—Stephen Greenblatt's *Will in the World*, Park Honan's *Shakespeare: A Life*, and Katherine Duncan-Jones's *Ungentle Shakespeare* included—considers lameness a question. Further, John Aubrey's seventeenth-century notes, the earliest reliable account of Shakespeare's appearance, describes "a handsome well shap't man" (qtd. in Honan 253), not a lame one. Whence Brae's lameness? The sonnets.

The sonnets, long held as riddling receptacles of Shakespeare's biography, twice mention podiatric problems. Sonnet 37 first:

As a decrepit father takes delight  
 To see his active child do deeds of youth,  
 So I, made lame by Fortune's dearest spite,  
 Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth.

.....

So then I am not lame, poor, nor despised, (37.1-4, 9)

Later in the sequence, the speaker returns, briefly, to lameness:

Say that thou didst forsake me for some fault,  
 And I will comment upon that offense;  
 Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt,  
 Against thy reasons making no defense. (89.1-4)

Edward Capell in his 1774 *Notes and Various Readings to Shakespeare* was first to link this figurative lameness with a literal physical disability, one that Capell supposes curbed Shakespeare's acting range. Capell claimed Shakespeare likely played Adam in *As You Like It* because

he was no extraordinary actor, and therefore took no parts upon him but such as this: for which he might also be peculiarly fitted by an accidental lameness, which, —as he him-self tells us twice in his "*Sonnets*," v. 37, and 89—befell him in some part of life;



without saying how, or when, of what sort, or in what degree; but his expressions seem to indicate—latterly. (60)

Capell refers Shakespeare's inadequate acting to a "constant tradition," but Capell invents the notion that lameness played a part in Shakespeare's playing parts.

Though Capell admits the lameness's origin eludes him, over one hundred years later in 1899 in *Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered, and in Part Rearranged*, Samuel Butler conjectured an origin at the intersection of the podiatric and pederastic.<sup>45</sup> Butler's narrative begins innocently enough. Glossing line 3 of sonnet 37, he writes

Malone argues that the lameness spoken of here, and again in line 9, is metaphorical, as also the poverty and despised state alluded to in line 9. I accept the lameness, poverty, and contempt as literally true for this period of Shakespeare's life. It does not follow that he had been lame long, nor yet that he remained so. He may have been 'made lame' by some accident—possibly in a recent scuffle. Line 3 of Sonnet 109 ... indicates that though Shakespeare did not consider himself lame a year or so later, when we may suppose sonnet 109 (Q, 89) to have been written, his friends could still see that he limped occasionally. (159)

About sonnet 109 Butler wrote that line 3 "seems to imply that the lameness of which Shakespeare spoke in sonnet 37 had not entirely left him. It suggests, 'I am no longer lame, but if you choose to say that I still go more or less halt [sic], I will

halt at once.' Probably he still halted a little sometimes" (231). In his introduction, however, Butler suggested some form of debauchery caused the lameness: "there had been treachery and blackguardism on the part of both Mr W.H. and his confederates, so gross and infamous that nothing viler can be well conceived" (72). Butler's circumlocution rivets:

Between sonnets 32, therefore, and 33Q, I suppose that there has been a catastrophe, a trap was laid for Shakespeare, a cruel and most disgusting practical joke, devised by Mr W.H. in concert with others, but certainly never intended, much less permitted, to go beyond the raising of coarse laughter against Shakespeare. (70)

He continues:

I cannot, however, doubt that Shakespeare was, to use his own words, made to "travel forth without" that "cloak," which, if he had not been lured, we may be sure that he would not have discarded. Hardly had he laid the cloak aside before he was surprised according to a pre-concerted scheme, and very probably roughly handled, for we find him lame soon afterwards (sonnet 37, lines 3 and 9) and apparently not fully recovered a twelve-month later. Cf.109 (89, Q) line 3. (70)

Fortunately, Schoenbaum translates the confused trajectory of events:

Sonnet 23, with its reference (in Butler's misreading) to Shakespeare's desire for the 'perfect ceremony of love's rite',

testifies to the poet's readiness to fall victim to 'a cruel and most disgusting practical joke'. At this point the story becomes murky because of Butler's prissy reticences ... Apparently Shakespeare is enticed to a rendezvous with the sailor boy, and a pederastic interlude takes place. (326)

As Schoenbaum re-summarizes Butler's story, "In the course of the Greek ceremonies, W.H.'s confederates burst in by prearrangement, catch the poet *in flagrante delicto*, beat and temporarily lame him ('Speak of my lameness and I straight will halt'), and force him to flee—leaving his cloak behind" (326).

Schoenbaum concludes that "An element of literalism in these readings of Sonnet 34 is difficult to deny" (326). It is also difficult to deny that reading what past critics make of the sonnets' lame feet is good fun. If criticism is the only civilized form of autobiography, as Oscar Wilde wrote, what we learn about the critics above, or what remains to be learned about me, is fortunately obscure. In the section following, I want to exchange biography for prosody: the lame feet of Shakespeare's sonnets may not be Shakespeare's feet but verse feet.

To return where we started, in sonnet 89, for example, the lameness is not overtly poetic, but the sheer preponderance of lame poetic feet in Shakespeare and others lends prosodic implications to any mention of lameness. Prosodically, this sonnet is sound, yet when the third line mentions lameness, we are tempted to find it. And we can. The third line is, in its way, lame when compared to the preceding and ensuing lines:

/ — — / — — — / — /

Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt (89.3)

A trochee, an iamb, a pyrrhic foot, and two iambs is a barely allowable line, one that stutters along—it moves, but halts. At the local level, the prosody is as compliant as the speaker imagines he will be when subjected to fault-finding. Mention lameness, and lameness will appear. In laming the line, the speaker is one step ahead, as he says he will be:

Thou canst not (love) disgrace me half so ill,

To set a form upon desired change,

As I'll my self disgrace ... (89.5-7)

Thrust into the position of fault-finder by the second-person pronoun ("Say that *thou*...", "Thou canst...", "thy" and "thee"), we're told we cannot find any fault that the speaker hasn't found doubly. Indeed, the lame line was there before we were given the imperative to "Mention" it.

The lameness of sonnet 37 is equally ghostlike, appearing to disappear at the reader's command. The speaker, old and "made lame by Fortune's dearest spite" takes comfort in the addressee's youthful worth and truth. This comfort abolishes lameness: the speaker is no longer poor, but blessed with the youth's abundance—so much so that sonnet 38 wonders how his muse could ever lack subject to invent. The lameness here is even less likely prosodic than in 89: lameness is lowness. Montaigne describes the ultimate disdain for lameness

Everie man hath heard the tale of the Piccard, who being on the ladder ready to be throwen downe, there was a wench presented vnto him, with this offer (as in some cases our law doth sometimes tolerate) that if hee would marry her, said hastily, *Away, away, good hang-man, make an end of thy busines, she limps.* (sig. M4<sup>v</sup>)

Lameness that outcasts—a lameness that causes others to prefer being outcast, even executed, themselves—this is what the speaker of 37 has in mind, not limping verse feet.<sup>46</sup> Yet, troubled versification can be, as sonnet 37 claims, wherever we find it. Speak of malformed poetic feet, and they straight away will halt: setting out to find them, one inevitably finds them.

## VII. Conclusion

A significant problem facing discussion of this metaphor from the outset is, to some, its sheer obviousness. I have been asked: what can this teach us beyond the obvious fact that Renaissance writers were aware of the obvious flow of lines and larger structures? A useful question: writers were more than aware of this flow, writers used the metrical assessments this metaphor enabled to appraise poems and poets, to organize and ostracize. Yet we might pause here to notice that flow itself is a metaphor, a complicated one unpacked by Emile Benveniste's essay on "The Notion of 'Rhythm' in its Linguistic Expression." Benveniste explores the "linguistic conditions from which the notion of 'rhythm' was disengaged" (287) and discovers that rhythm as metaphor does not derive from

sea-wave motion, as etymologists have suggested, but directly from the motions of human dance. He writes,

it was not in contemplating the play of waves on the shore that the primitive Hellene discovered "rhythm"; it is, on the contrary, we who are making metaphors today when we speak of the rhythm of the waves. It required a long consideration of the structure of things, then a theory of measure applied to the figures of dance and to the modulations of song, in order for the principle of cadenced movement to be recognized and given a name. (287).

Benveniste, then, reveals rhythm not as a material or even biological given, but a result of complex linguistic conditions. And the linguistic for Benveniste, as it was for Saussure, social: language is, he wrote, "the point of interaction between the mental and the cultural life of man" ("Recent" 14). Feet, like flow, are metaphors that seem so obvious, so familiar—so self-evidently true—that they demand defamiliarizing. As Hegel writes in the preface to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*:

Quite generally, the familiar, just because it is familiar, is not cognitively understood. The commonest way we deceive either ourselves or others about understanding is by assuming something as familiar, and accepting it on that account; with all its pros and cons, such knowing never gets anywhere, and it knows not why.

(18)

Another way to conceive what I have done above is as an attempt to do for the metaphor of poetic feet as physical feet what Benveniste accomplished for flow; I have tried to help readers notice feet, poetic and physical, to help readers stutter and stumble over them—so often forgotten and ignored because below.

In the end, I hope readers can glimpse how much of the period's received prosodic thought Shakespeare channeled through feet: real, metaphoric and prosodic. Following these feet—how they walk, run, and stand still, but moreover how the feet and their various senses stumble over and inform one another in Shakespeare's and his contemporaries work—can help complicate our sense of how Shakespeare participated in early modern conceptions, for example, of poetic hierarchies and the hierarchized body. This work can help deepen our sense of how Shakespeare shaped and was shaped by Renaissance poetics, but also renew our relation to something as small in size but as large in significance as feet.

## CHAPTER ONE NOTES

<sup>1</sup> David Bevington glosses this line as follows: "the rhymes, all alike follow each other precisely like a line of butter-women or dairy women jogging along to market" (*Complete* 307). Three essays in the 1980's—by Holdsworth, Parsons, and Taylor—explore the reference to "butter-women" in a rank on their way to market and Alan Brissenden's commentary in the Oxford edition of *As You Like It* provides helpful context for Touchstone's puns. Such puns, generally thought of as "the lowest form of verbal joke" (Freud 50), often pass unremarked. The term "pun" entered the English language around 1650, and since that time puns have been considered less than imitable rhetorical devices, and even something to accuse someone of: Dryden faulted Shakespeare with deigning to employ "clenches," or puns. There is a sizeable amount of recent scholarly work on puns, however. Derrida discusses them in "White Mythology." Puns, like metaphors, Derrida argues, were originally "sensory and material" (211). Abstraction, especially philosophical abstraction and other forms of "interminably explicative discourse" (213), elides the traces of this "primitive meaning" and has in its course "erased piles of physical discourse" (212). Also, Jonathan Culler's essay collection *On Puns* is informative.

<sup>2</sup> The likeliest precedent for Touchstone's false gallop is Nashe's 1592 *Strange Newes*, an attack on Harvey better known by its running title *Foure*



*Letters Confuted*. In a section titled "A Dash through the dudgen Sonnet against Greene" Nashe writes out a quatrain only to stop and claim:

I would trot a false gallop through the rest of his ragged Verses,  
but that if I should retort his rime dogrell aright, I must make my  
verses (as he doth his) run hobling like a Brewers Cart vpon the  
stones, and obserue no length in their feete which were *absurdum*  
*per absurdius*, to infect my vaine with his imitation. (sig. D1<sup>v</sup>)

Shakespeare may or may not have had Nash's words in mind, but the similarity is too close for mere coincidence.

<sup>3</sup> "It is therefore possible to conceive of a science *which studies the rule of signs as part of social life*. It would form part of social psychology, and hence of general psychology. We shall call it *semiology* (from the Greek *semeîon*)" (Saussure 33). Saussure maintained that "the sign must be studied as a social phenomenon" (34). He continued: "For the sign always to some extent eludes control by the will whether of the individual or of society: that is its essential nature, even though it may be by no means obvious at first sight" (34). Above I have followed the convention whereby page references for Saussure are to the pagination of the French 1922 edition.

<sup>4</sup> A *senarie*, or *senarius*, or more fully iambic *senarius*, is a Greek or Latin verse of six iambic feet, against the more familiar hexameter, or dactylic

hexameter, that consisted of five dactyls and a trochee, or in Latin poets more commonly a spondee.

<sup>5</sup> Although Harvey claims the Latin line is a "common verse," I have been unable to find its source.

<sup>6</sup> In *The Comedy of Errors*, Antipholus asks Dromio about "the kitchen wench" (3.2.96) who claims she is betrothed to Dromio. Comparing her rotundity to the earth, Dromio sets up Antipholus, his straightman, to ask: "Where stood Belgia, the Netherlands?" on her body, Dromio responds: "O, sir, I did not look so low" (3.2.144).

<sup>7</sup> Greenblatt calls "the dinner party," a perfect "emblem of human society both in its foolish vanity and in its precious moments of communion" (*Renaissance* 12). This story highlights the foolish vanity portion of the emblem.

<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the later private theatres had determined seating patterns. See Alvin Kernan's discussion in *Shakespeare, The King's Playwright* (18-21) as well as Gurr's evidence in *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (1-73). The order in which food was served was also prescribed in the 1577 *Boke of Nurture* by Hugh Rhodes he notes that "if you haue mo messes then one at your maisters table, consider what degree they be of, and thereafter ye may serue them" (sig. A8<sup>r</sup>). An interesting note is that seats in the early modern theatre were also known as "degrees" (Gurr 15). One sits according to one's social degree in the theatre of society.

<sup>9</sup> Feasting and poetry have a long association, going back at least to Catullus's famous dinner invitation. Feasting and prosody have not as often gone hand in hand.

<sup>10</sup> See Aristotle's *Poetics* 1447b15. The division may date to before Aristotle.

<sup>11</sup> I hesitate making this assertion given the enormous energy many period poets expended attempting quantitative verse in English. Meter is a poetic device that can push poetry toward rhythmic music, but the easily appreciated accentual rhythm of English meter, more easy for untrained English ears to hear than the academically favored Latin quantitative meters, is what many early modern humanist versifiers wanted to escape. Poets and literary commentators trained in Latin prosody desired to impart to English poetry the same level of intellectual difficulty needed for metrical appreciation as the classical models they were rediscovering. Thus, enjoying meter's physical pleasures became less acceptable as new forms of poetic appreciation emerged from a humanist print culture that viewed meter as an object of intellectual concentration and private reflection. Attridge's *Well-Weighed Syllables* remains the indispensable study of this topic.

<sup>12</sup> He does claim here that "it seemeth Scaliger judgeth" that poetry and verse "were inseperable" (134).

<sup>13</sup> This notion is not new with Sidney. In the *Poetics* Aristotle notes that

Even if a theory of medicine or physical philosophy be put forth in a metrical form, it is usual to describe the writer [as a poet]; Homer and Empedocles, however, have really nothing in common apart from their metre; so that, if the one is to be called a poet, the other should be termed a physicist rather than a poet" (1447b15-20).

This persists to Ralph Waldo Emerson and beyond: "For it is not metres, but a metre-making argument, that makes a poem" (220).

<sup>14</sup> Jean Howard notes that "Sidney ... indicts some forms of popular art with being indecorous, crude, unmannerly; in short, of being lower-class, misshapen parodies of elite productions" (*Stage* 42). Sidney's tract registers an "aristocrat's uneasiness about the class affiliations of those practicing their craft in and attending the public theater" (43).

<sup>15</sup> Francis Bacon would later assert that poetry is "nothing else but feigned history, which may be styled as well in prose as in verse" (Bacon 183), and Coleridge too would claim, "The writings of Plato and Bishop Taylor, and the *Theoria Sacra* of Burnet, furnish undeniable proofs that poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre" (318).

<sup>16</sup> The lower class population was often referred to as a swarm. See 2.6.9 of *3 Henry VI*: "The common people swarm like summer flies."

<sup>17</sup> Characters who are proud of their verse are often ridiculed: consider the Dauphin's verses to his horse in *Henry V*.

<sup>18</sup> That a planet's presiding over his birth resulted in bad verse is far-fetched, but the music instructor Thomas Morley claimed individuals had with tendencies to certain rhythms and not to others: "And I dare boldly affirme, that looke which is hee who thinketh himselfe the best descanner of all his neighbors, eioyne him to make but a scottish Iygge, he will grossely erre in the true nature and qualitie of it" (182).

<sup>19</sup> Although law suits are now frequently said to be "halted" when stopped, this is not a specifically legal use of the term. In Stanza 129 of *The Rape of Lucrece* another suit is linked with halting, but not so closely linked as in Webster:

When wilt thou be the humble suppliant's friend,  
And bring him where his suit may be obtained?  
When wilt thou sort an hour great strifes to end?  
Or free that soul which wretchedness hath chained?  
Give physic to the sick, ease to the pained?  
The poor, lame, blind, halt, creep, cry out for thee;  
But they ne'er meet with Opportunity. (897-903)

<sup>20</sup> Jonson quotes this passage in *Timber*. The painting to which Sidney refers is Hans Cranach's 1537 piece "Hercules and Omphale" now in Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

<sup>21</sup> Images, despite the visual connotations of the word, do appeal to senses other than sight. Norman Friedman has written:

Psychologists have identified seven kinds of mental images: visual (sight, then brightness, clarity, color, and motion), auditory (hearing), olfactory (smell), gustatory (taste), tactile (touch, then temperature, texture), organic (awareness of heartbeat, pulse, breathing, digestion), and kinesthetic (awareness of muscle tension and movement). (560)

<sup>22</sup> Not long before Ovid, Horace may have been punning on feet in book one, ode 37:

Nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero  
pulsanda tellus...

[Now is a time for drinking, now by loose feet  
the ground is beaten ...]

Though not strictly a metrical reference, Horace may be alluding to metrics—but not his own strict prosody here. Nisbet and Hubbard claim the loose feet refer "to the nimbleness of the dance and to Rome's freedom from Cleopatra's chains" (411).

<sup>23</sup> L.R. Lind translates the lines:

The fact that my poem is limping and sinks with alternate verses  
Is due to the feet of its metrics or to the long journey it makes. (11-  
12)

<sup>24</sup> To complicate matters, Helkiah Crooke notes that "All that by the  
ancients is called the Foote which reacheth from the hip ioynt euen to the end of  
the Toes" (734).

<sup>25</sup> Allen cites Dale page 211. Bede claimed: "Pes est syllabaram et  
temporum certa dinumeratio. Dictus inde »pes,« quod hoc quasi pedali regula ad  
versum utimur mensurandum" (92); or "A metrical foot is a fixed measure of  
syllables and of morae. It is so called, because we use it like a footrule to measure  
a verse" (93).

<sup>26</sup> Brogan's entry on "Feet" concludes: "... one can maintain that the  
concept of intralinear metrical segmentation [a foot] holds a natural and necessary  
position in the hierarchy of forms that constitutes verse structure" (418). But that  
scansion proves feet exist does not also prove that a given poet set out to compose  
in feet. As Brogan puts it, "The fact that a verse can be scanned in feet proves that  
feet are one component of the verse-structure but says nothing about whether the  
poet composed, or the performer should recite, in feet" (419). Several surveys on  
meter provide an overview of debates concerning verse feet and their usefulness  
both in composition and analysis, two in particular are Harvey Gross's and George  
Hemphill's.

<sup>27</sup> The *OED* confirms that the prosodic "foot" (a translation of Latin *pes*) is ordinarily thought to refer to the motion of the foot in beating time.

<sup>28</sup> Many editors gloss this line as reference to a statue-like stillness, anticipating the words to follow: "She shows a body rather than a life, / A statue than a breather" (3.3.23-24). Instead, the messenger's meaning of station may point back rather than forward, towards the majesty Cleopatra hopes is absent rather than the messenger's breathless statue.

<sup>29</sup> Proscriptions for walking participate in what Jorge Ardití calls "the pragmatics of grace" (105). Grace is, to oversimplify Ardití's argument, a "specific technology of the body" by which "the aristocracy constructed and embodied itself within the confines of monarchical power" (102-105). Also, Michael Schoenfeldt's *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* similarly examines physiological, not physical, restraint as a positive form of self-fashioning.

<sup>30</sup> I have been unable to find evidence to confirm how common prosthetic limbs were. In Nathan Field's 1607 play *A Woman is a Weather-cocke*, published in 1612, the aptly named character Captaine Powts describes his piteous self: "Godamercy, zoones methinkes I see my selfe in Moore-fields, vpon a wodden leg, begging three pence" (sig. G4<sup>r</sup>). In Margaret Cavendish's 1662 play *The Publique Wooing* a character called the "Strange Wooer" is described in the stage directions as "*a man that had a wooden Leg, a patch on his Eye, and Crook-*



*back'd, unhandsome snarled Hair, and plain poor Cloaths on"* (Ggggg1r). This character's outward deformity is, at first, taken as a sign of inward depravity. Later stage directions have him "limping with his Wooden Leg" (Kkkkk1r). In a predictable twist, the leg and all the man's other deformities are faked. As the character Fondly says: "Well, he is a goodly man, and whether he is a man that is good, I cannot tell: But howsoever I will never trust the outside more, I will never believe a patch'd eye is blind, nor a bunch'd back is crooked, nor a wooden leg lame, as long as I live" (sig. Mmmmm1<sup>r</sup>). The maskers then dance the moral:

*His wooden Leg is thrown away,*  
*The black Patch for the blind,*  
*The Bunch on's back asswag'd to day,*  
*As handsome as his Mind.* (sig. Mmmmm2<sup>r</sup>).

In Abraham Cowley's *The Guardian*, the character Dogrel sings a short ballad to which the character Blade responds: "Why this right Ballad, and they hobble like the fellow with the wooden leg that sings them" (sig. A3<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>31</sup> This work was published posthumously as Weldon is believed to have died in 1649. The title page declares that he was an "*eye, and eare witnesse*" to James.

<sup>32</sup> We know that at least some poets scanned their poems with the help of fingers or hands. Thomas Campion avers that to show how "Latine verses of six feete ... are in nature all the same length of sound with our English verse of five

feete," the reader should "time these verses with his hand" (sig. B1<sup>v</sup>). Following this Campion juxtaposes select Latin verses with English verses so that they may be "tim'd with the hand" (sig. B1<sup>v</sup>). Likewise, in a letter to Spenser, Harvey said in passing that he counted meter through the "curious scanning, and fingering of euery foote" (sig. H4<sup>v</sup>). Just what he finds "curious" about this method is never stated. William Bathe, a music instructor, insisted that rhythmic time is "schewed to learners, By stricking the hand or foote" (6) and the Master in Thomas Morley's *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* likewise instructed his student Philomathes that a musical stroke is a "successive motion of the hand" (9). The hand, despite Bathe's suggestion, was most often recommended. The practice of timing with hands and fingers goes as far back as Horace who argued that critics need the ability to detect "true rhythm by the ear and the finger" (72). I would argue that counting beats with the hand or fingers was as common in the early modern period as it is now, were it not for Harvey's calling it "curious." Tapping fingers to a metrical beat is considered now a relatively harmless exercise, but it had its appropriate place in the early modern period, which, if ignored, could ensure scorn. Nashe declared that some "Bussards" writing "ragged Rimes ... thinke knowledge a burthen, tapping it before they have half tunde it" (sig. B4<sup>v</sup>) and William Webbe referred to native English meter as a "base kind of fingering" (sig. A4<sup>v</sup>). Fingering was, at least Nashe and Webbe thought, an inferior exercise.

<sup>33</sup> The kinds of tongue movements Hamlet may mean are suggested in Ben Jonson's *English Grammar*. For nearly every letter of the alphabet, Jonson gives an account of the necessary tongue motion. When pronouncing 'a' before the letter 'l' it is uttered with "the tongue bent back from the teeth" (sig. E2<sup>v</sup>). The sound of 'e' is made with "the tongue turn'd to the inner rooffe of the palate, and softly striking the upper great teeth" (sig. E2<sup>v</sup>), and 'i' is formed by "a lesse opening of the mouth; the tongue brought backe to the palate, and striking the teeth next the cheeke-teeth" (sig. E2<sup>v</sup>). "O, Is pronounced with a round mouth, the tongue drawne back to the root" (sig. E3<sup>r</sup>) and 'u' is sounded with "some depression of the middle of the tongue" (sig. E4<sup>v</sup>). Jonson also gives an interesting account of 'r' which is "the *Dogs* Letter, and hurreth in the sound; the tongue striking the inner palate, with a trembling about the teeth" (sig. F4<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>34</sup> Lameness was not in all cases negative. Montaigne's essay "Of The Lame or Crippel" considers how disability marks a person as desirable: "It is a common Proverbe in *Italie*, that *He knowes not the perfect pleasure of Venus, that hath not laine with a limping Woman*." Further, the Queen of the Amazons was supposed to have said that "*The crooked man doth it best*." Then, discussing the supposed Amazon practice of intentionally maiming men in their infancy, Montaigne turns the tables:

I would have saide, that the loose or disjoynted motion of a  
limping or crooke-backt Woman, might adde some new kinde of

pleasure unto that businesse or sweet sinne, and some un-assaid  
 sensuall sweetnesse, to such as make a triall of it: but I have lately  
 learnt, that even ancient Philosophy hath decided the matter: Who  
 saith, that the legs and thighs of the crooked-backt or halting-lame,  
 by reason of their imperfection, not receiving the nourishment, due  
 unto them, it followeth that their Genitall parts, that are above  
 them, are more full, better nourished and more vigorous. Or else,  
 that such a defect hindring other exercise ... do lesse waste their  
 strength and consume their vertue, and so much the stronger and  
 fuller, they come to *Venus* sports. (sig. Fff3<sup>v</sup>)

The notion that disability would be useful as a sexual aide is, to a modern sensitivity, reprehensible. Montaigne's discussion, in context, is meant to show how ideas are "diverse and double." Lameness, usually considered a hindrance, can be, at least in the sexual situation Montaigne imagines, a help. Nothing is either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.

<sup>35</sup> A spavin is a tumor commonly found where a horse's splint-bone and shank meet in the leg, and a springhalt, a variant of stringhalt, spasmodic muscle contractions in a horse's hind legs.

<sup>36</sup> Foot here could also refer to genitalia. See Rubinstein's entry on "foot" (103-4). The specific sexual references entailed in lame feet and impotence have not been touched on above.

<sup>37</sup> Bataille on the foot writes that the "Human life entails, in fact, the rage of seeing oneself as a back and forth movement from refuse to the ideal, and from the ideal to refuse—a rage that is easily directed against an organ as *base* as the foot" (20-21). Bataille's brief essay describes the social transformation of the foot from basis into baseness.

<sup>38</sup> I would like here to at least mention Peter Stallybrass's engrossing essay "The Mystery of Walking." Stallybrass explores walking as a particularly mysterious and human experience, one that separates man from beast.

<sup>39</sup> Jonson rarely stoops to use the metaphoric pun I have been tracking here. One notable exception is Act 1, scene 3 of *A Tale of a Tub* (1640) which begins:

*Tur.* What's that, makes you all so merry, and lowd, Sirs, ha?

I could ha' heard you to my privie walke.

*Cle.* A Contervarsie, 'twixt your two learn'd men here:

Annibal Puppy sayes, that Law and Poetry

Are both flat cheating; All's but writing and reading,

He sayes, be't verse or prose.

*Tur.* I thinke in conziencie,

He do' zay true: Who is't doe thwart 'un, ha?

*Med.* Why my friend Scriben , and't please your worship.

*Tur.* Who D'oge? My D'ogenes? a great Writer, marry!

Hee'll vace me down, mee my selfe sometimes,

That verse goes upon veete, as you and I doe:

But I can gi' 'un the hearing; zit me downe,

And laugh at 'un, and to my selfe conclude,

The greatest Clarkes, are not the wisest men

Ever. Here they'are both! What Sirs, disputin,

And holdin Arguments of verse, and prose? (J4v)

<sup>40</sup> Compare this with T.S. Eliot in "The Music of Poetry": "The poem comes before the form, in the sense that a form grows out of the attempt of somebody to say something" (31).

<sup>41</sup> Antony Easthope usefully points to John Stevens's discussion of the relation between song and music in the Renaissance:

... in the fourteenth century 'the natural and necessary union of music and poetry finally broke up' [Stevens 53]. Each achieved the status of autonomous arts, and the autonomy became the basis for a new relationship between them. From now on in song words and meaning dominate music. The music is treated as a kind of ornament or addition to the 'subject matter' of the words, being made to resemble or imitate meaning in various ways. (Easthope 96).

<sup>42</sup> This sentence is repeated almost verbatim by Robert Hillyer. When it comes to rhyme, "Not only must we not allow rhyme to falsify our idea; we must not allow it to wrench our words out of their natural order" (27-28).

<sup>43</sup> Against such a notion, Friedrich Nietzsche proposed that poetry has its origin in music. Lyric poetry, he says, is "the imitative fulguration of music in images and concepts" (*Birth* 55). Poetry for him was words set to music, not music set to words.

<sup>44</sup> Ingleby also thought Shakespeare had back problems: "It has been reserved for me to inform the world that Shakspeare was *crook-backed* ... By Fortune's spite, then, he was a hunch-back, and by Fortune's dearest spite, he was a limper!" (qtd. in Rollins 106).

<sup>45</sup> A.C. Swinburne in *A Study of Shakespeare* (1879) claims that at a Newest Shakespeare Society meeting, a Mr. E. proved "the injured and interesting limb was the left" (qtd. in Rollins 106).

<sup>46</sup> The lack from lameness that 37 claims to have achieved seems to prompt sonnet 38 to consider the potential power of versification: the addressee will be a tenth muse, worth ten times more than any muse "rhymers invoke" and will inspire any writer to "Eternal numbers."

## CHAPTER TWO

### FALLING INTO VERSE

#### I. The Way Up and the Way Down

The way up and down is one and the same. (DK22b60)

—Heraclitus

This chapter explores the verse of characters who have little of it: Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Christopher Sly in *Taming of the Shrew*, and Sir John Falstaff in *1* and *2 Henry IV*.<sup>1</sup> Each of these characters, most often prose speakers, if only for brief moments, shifts into verse. These movements, though minor, link with larger themes; empirical criticism at the line level balances with interpretation at—in Seamus Heaney's pun—the spirit level; criticism-as-fission, close not cloistered reading. Still, moving from handfuls of verse to the landscapes of love and lying, as I will do here, can seem a stretch. Examining minute moments—one to eight lines at a time—one runs the risk of becoming, as Johnson warned, "like the pedant in *Hierocles*, who, when he offered his house to sale, carried a brick in his pocket as a specimen" (12). I border on being such a pedant, but I hope to build little, though not always pretty, rooms from the bricks.

Before turning to these characters' movements from prose to verse, I want to hesitate over the vocabulary critics have applied to formal shifts. In 1623,



Henry Cockeram's *The English dictionarie, or an interpreter of hard English Words* defined hesitate as "to doubt" (sig. F1<sup>r</sup>)—that is, to be in *aporia*; Thomas Thomas's 1587 *Dictionarium Linguae Latinae et Anglicanae* defines: "Aporia, æ, f. g. *Doubt, perplexitie: neede, want of counsell*" (sig. E2<sup>r</sup>). The doubt is over the descriptive power of vertical metaphors to describe characters rising to verse or falling into prose. Qualitative valuations end up attending these actions, literal and figurative, of rising and falling—our grand parents, Milton wrote, fell off from their creator, and, as the angel proclaims in the *Quem Quaeritis* trope: surrexit. Sacred overtones hardly dominate every up and down, but when, as Stevens writes, the casual flocks of pigeons sink, downward to darkness, the old connotations are inescapable. More often than not, as Moloc lectures, "descent and fall / To us is adverse," (2.76-77).

Verses, most often, rise up while prose remains below: Sidney cursed those earth-creeping minds unable to see the sky of poetry and it is impossible to imagine scanning that sky to see Keats' viewless wings unversed. When considering Shakespeare's shifts between the forms, critics since—and no doubt before—David Laurance Chambers in 1903, often maintain that "the introduction of verse in a prose-scene always marks a rise to a *higher* dramatic pitch, a *higher* emotional plane, verse being the natural language of emotion" (emphasis added, 7). Critics have maintained these metaphors with little change. Brian Vickers writes that when Hal changes to Henry, changing from prose to verse, he is "stepping *up* to verse," and "a change of medium which always corresponds to his

reclamation of dignity" (emphasis added, 99). Characters step up as does language. George Wright claims if an actor's "metrical work is done well, the audience will sense on every level (including the metrical) that the language of the play has taken a turn toward *higher* passion, more resonant feeling, or profounder resolution" (emphasis added, *Shakespeare's* 286). In sum, the actor's metrical work helps the audience hear how verse "works to achieve intensity, compactness, and *elevation* in the language of dramatic characters" (emphasis added, 255). A turn to verse may signal a heightening, but not invariably. Some turns are falls: a character's turn to verse may signal, not achievement, but entrapment. That a rise to verse could mean a fall should not surprise if we keep in mind, as Hericlitus wrote, that "The way up and down is one and the same" (DK22b60).

## II. Beatrice, Lined

Russ McDonald notes that the constant shifts in *Much Ado About Nothing* between verse and prose are bewildering: "The highest ranking characters, Don Pedro, Don John, and Claudio, speak both verse and prose; the division sometimes corresponds to amatory scenes and sometimes not" (*Shakespeare* 128). McDonald argues that from scene to scene Shakespeare adopts prose or verse "according to the tone he seeks to achieve" (*Shakespeare* 128). Yet I argue, trying to determine a system of verse/prose division relying on tone complicates matters further, not less. Tone, in this play especially, eludes: actors have played Beatrice

and Benedick's merry war as both a *merry* war and a merry *war*—both to equal affect. Take Josephine Waters Bennett's remarks, for example, in her introduction for Harbage's Pelican Shakespeare. In *Much Ado*, she writes,

prose is the language of wit and reason, poetry the language of emotion, sentiment, and rhetoric. The wedding scene begins in prose but rises quickly into verse as feeling mounts. However, Beatrice keeps her wits about her and speaks to her cousin in prose. When the Friar takes the situation in hand, he begins in what is printed as prose in the quarto, and reads like prose, but in the fourth line emotion and poetry take over. Indeed, prose and poetry are so subtly mingled that what is spoken seems perfectly fitted to the speaker and the occasion. (276)

Bennett's admiration for the play matches my own, but I quibble on details. The Friar's speech begins lineated as prose in both the quarto and Folio (see Appendix B). Most editors, including Bennett, amend the prose to verse as follows:

Hear me a little,  
For I have only been silent so long  
And given way unto this course of fortune,  
By noting of the lady. I have marked  
A thousand blushing apparitions  
To start into her face a thousand innocent shames

In angel whiteness beat away those blushes

And in her eye there hath appeared a fire (4.1.164)

Returning to Bennett, she equates prose with reason and having one's wits about one, whereas verse signals mounting feeling and general lack of reason. Yet, Beatrice speaks in verse:

Why, how now, cousin, wherefore sink you down? (4.1.110)

O, on my soul, my cousin is belied. (4.1.147)

She later changes to prose with Benedick. As for the Friar, if we grant he does switch from prose to verse, the shift is not from reason to emotional un-reason; the Friar, of everyone, keeps his wits about him, orchestrating the plan to feign Hero's death—the Friar keeps his wits if you believe pretending to be dead is reasonable (sometimes in Shakespeare it works, sometimes it does not). Though I cavil on the ninth part of hair with Bennett, noticing the way prose and verse intermix does expand our understanding of speakers and the occasion. One occasion in particular is Beatrice's shift to verse in 3.1.

Beatrice enters the scene running, like a lapwing "Close by the ground, to hear our conference" (3.1.25) to overhear more of what Margaret claims she overheard. Margaret was told by Hero to tell Beatrice that she and Ursula

Walk in the orchard, and our whole discourse

Is all of her. Say that thou overheard'st us;

And bid her steal into the pleachéd bower,

Where honeysuckles, ripened by the sun,

Forbid the sun to enter—like favorites,  
 Made proud by princes, that advance their pride  
 Against the power that bred it. There will she hide her  
 To listen our purpose. (3.1.4-12)

Hero's metaphor—overgrown honeysuckles forbid sunlight from entering like courtiers who puff up beyond the princes who puffed them—prefaces Beatrice's entrance but equally serves to preface Beatrice's love for Benedick: so overgrown, it forbids Benedick entrance.

Seeing Beatrice wing into the "woodbine coverture," Hero proposes she and Ursula go nearer so Beatrice can hear all "the false sweet bait" laid for her (3.1.29, 32). The false sweet bait, begins, ironically: "No, truly" (3.1.33). As Tzvetan Todorov has noticed of the *Odyssey*, "Invocation of the truth is a sign of lying" (61), and it is here. Five more times the interlocutors invoke truth, honesty, and certainty. When Ursula, playing her part, recommends they not tell Beatrice of Bendick's love, Hero responds: "Why, you speak truth" (3.1.59) and she adds that Beatrice "never gives to truth and virtue" (3.1.69) their deserved respect. Hero lays it on thickly: "And truly I'll devise some honest slanders" (3.1.84) that will lessen Beatrice's appeal to the love-stricken Benedick. Ursula, helping to solidify the trick, exclaims: "She cannot be so much without true judgment" (3.1.88) to refuse Benedick. Hero also mentions her "new-trothèd lord," troth meaning pledged to truth (troth and truth having the same source), while Ursula repeats the word "sure" as both certain and certainly four times (3.1.36, 56, 71).

And how does Beatrice first respond? "Can this be true?" (3.1.107). Convinced, Beatrice shifts into verse, a stylistic change that underlines her new outlook but complicates the scene's tone.<sup>2</sup>

Beatrice, by shifting into rhyme, proves, as Ursula says, that she is limed.<sup>3</sup> Verse here signals an unembarrassed sincerity and conviction, the kind that leads one into trouble. And love is nothing but trouble, at least to Sir Francis Bacon who wrote that "in life it doth much mischief; sometimes like a syren, sometimes like a fury" (358). Quoting Erasmus quoting Publius, Bacon added, quoting "it is impossible to love and be wise" (358). In Richard Taverner's 1539 English translation of Erasmus, an adage reads: "Amare et sapere vix deo concedit. To be in loue & to be wyse is scase graunted to god. It is not one mans propertie bothe to loue and also to be of a sounde mynde" (sig. I5<sup>r</sup>). That Bacon echoes this sentiment surprises little: he thought "The world's a bubble." But when love's conviction enters, wisdom often abdicates. Marlowe explains in a parenthetical aside to *Hero and Leander*:

(Loue is too full of faith, too credulous,

With follie and false hope deluding vs) (sig. E1<sup>r</sup>)

To register this folly, Beatrice breaks from her typically fast-paced prose into a soliloquy shaped as a mini-Shakespearean sonnet—two ABAB quatrains closed by a couplet. In full:

What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?

Stand I condemned for pride and scorn so much?

Contempt, farewell, and maiden pride, adieu!  
 No glory lives behind the back of such.  
 And Benedick, love on; I will requite thee,  
 Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand.  
 If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee  
 To bind our loves up in a holy band;  
 For others say thou dost deserve, and I  
 Believe it better than reportingly. (3.1.107-16)<sup>4</sup>

Her sincerity manifest, Beatrice believes Benedick loves her and lovers,  
 Shakespeare and others believed, could not help but versify.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when Theseus explains to Hippolyta that,

The lunatic, the lover and the poet  
 Are of imagination all compact (5.1.7-8)

prosody could not be further from his mind. Yet lovers and poets, Robert Burton tells, are of versification compact as well. Discussing love's symptoms in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, he describes its chief indications: "But above all the other symptoms of lovers, this is not lightly to be overpassed, that likely of what condition soever, if once they be in love, they turn to their ability, rhymers, ballet-makers, and poets" (179).<sup>5</sup> High and low, young and old, lovers strive, as Hamlet put it, to reckon their groans: kings and queens have "odes, epigrams and elegies, etc.," Burton wrote, while the rest have "their ballads, country tunes ... ditties and songs;" no matter their social station or generation, "they must write likewise and

indite all in rhyme" (179). Just as Burton describes, lovers compose verses throughout Shakespeare's plays: nearly every male character in *Love's Labor's Lost*, like Don Armado, turns sonnet; both gentlemen of Verona write lines, Proteus to Julia, Valentine to Sylvia; Suffolk in *1 Henry VI* claims Margaret's beauty could prompt a "volume of enticing lines, / Able to ravish any dull conceit" (5.5.14-15); Henry V fears Katherine will put him to verses; Hamlet sends vile phrases to most beautified Ophelia; Orlando of *As You Like It* pins his poems to trees (verses on trees is a sub-symptom Burton also treats) and speaks spontaneously in blank verse; in love, Master Fenton of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* capers and writes verses; in *The Winter's Tale* Paulina paraphrases an anonymous gentleman's verse on Hermione: "She had not been, / Nor was not to be equall'd" (5.1.100-101). Where there is love, verse follows not far behind. As Katherine Duncan-Jones remarks, sonneteering for Shakespeare seems "a sign of the mentally debilitating effect of love" (45).<sup>6</sup>

But what to make of the fact Beatrice founds her versified conviction on overhearing? And is what Beatrice overhears false? The style shift from a forward/froward and dexterous prose to an equally but differently elaborate verse re-emphasizes the elaborate deceptions leading to this moment. Beatrice and Benedick's love is "one of Hercules' labors," the outcome of a game so that "the time shall not go dully by" (2.1.346-48) as Don Pedro, Hero, Claudio, Leonato, et al. await the Monday wedding. To Claudio, time "goes on crutches" (2.1.317) until the marriage ceremony, even when he mistakenly believes it happens in



twenty-four hours; for Beatrice love overcomes her with a lightening-speed flash of verses. Love enforces time's relativity, stretching and compacting, bending time but also, in this play, troths and truth. In the scene before, Balthasar sang: "Men were deceivers ever" and that "The fraud of men was ever so" (2.3.60, 70); so too were women, at least Hero and Ursula: but is the bait they lay for Beatrice truly false sweet?

No detail they utter is false: mostly their exchange consists of praising Benedick, who "Goes foremost in report through Italy" (3.1.97) and describing the disdain and scorn that ride sparkling in Beatrice's eyes. Whether Benedick's excellence was earned before he had it, as Ursula says, we cannot confirm, but there is little reason to doubt: he had, as the Messenger first told us of him, done good service in the wars and Don Pedro claims "he is of a noble strain, of approved valor and confirmed honesty" (2.1.360-61). And to further clear them of responsibility, Hero does not claim to have heard of Benedick's love from Benedick; instead, against Ursula's question of surety Hero passes off responsibility for truth: "So says the Prince and my-new trothèd lord." We have not heard Don Pedro and Claudio say Benedick loves Beatrice, but we know they believe he does. Your bait of falsehood, as Polonius says, takes this carp of truth, but the truth too can catch the carp.

Yet before carp were introduced into English ponds carp meant cavil. And few cavil as well as Beatrice and Benedick do in their merry war. Her strenuous objections to men, like Benedick's to women, become much to be wondered at: "I

do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviours to love, will, after he hath laugh'd at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by falling in love" (2.3.8-12). Such a man is Benedick and such a woman is Beatrice; laughing at shallow follies falsifies lovers hopes—their own. Few, I think, credit her after supper and before the revels that for lack of husband she says prayers of thanks "upon my knees every morning and evening." For Beatrice and Benedick on both sides is simple truth—their love for one another—suppressed.

Sonnet 138's playful cynicism is likely far removed from the sonnets produced in the play's final scene. Claudio presents

a paper written in [Benedick's] hand,  
A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,  
Fashioned to Beatrice. (5.4.86-88)

Hero complements the evidence:

And here's another,  
Writ in my counsin's hand, stol'n from her pocket,  
Containing her affection unto Benedick.

Benedick, switching back to prose, exclaims: "A miracle! —"Here's our own hands against our hearts" (5.4.91-2). These sonnets act as indisputable tokens of love because composed, presumably, in private moments. This notion—that truth happens behind our backs, not before us—animates all the plays mis-notings.<sup>7</sup>

Characters hear other characters, not knowing the simple truth: lies proliferate before us and behind our backs.

Yet, in Messina, outright lies can be trusted and the most open and honest are most evil and false.<sup>8</sup> Don John confesses an inability to feign: "I cannot hide what I am" (1.3.13); he is a "plain-dealing villain" (1.3.32). Bernard Shaw called him "a true natural villain: that is to say, a malevolent person" (157). Conversely, the play's truest characters deal in dishonesty, dissembling to a fault, always hiding what they are. Beatrice and Benedick lie about their affections for one another. At the revels, Don Pedro "in some disguise" (1.1.321) as Claudio reveals Claudio's love for Hero, Claudio claims to be Benedick, the otherwise absent Antonio denies to Ursula who he is. But other lies abound, if we believe, as Adrienne Rich writes, "Lying is done with words, and also with silence" (186): Leonato never tells that a man of Antonio's overheard (wrongly) Don Pedro plan to woo Hero for himself (not Claudio); when called to Don Pedro at the revels' end, Claudio first resists explaining why he speaks, as Benedick says, "like an honest drovier" (2.1.175). The most troubling silence of all to critics has been Margaret's in 4.1: though not specified in extant stage directions, her wedding attendance is virtually mandatory. Margaret, silent, holds the play's resolution: it was she in Hero's garments with Borachio. With closed silences, secret plans, and open lies, then *Much Ado's* mistruths multiply ad infinitum.<sup>9</sup>

Ultimately, trusting in lies wins out. In the play's closing scene Beatrice and Benedick lie about their affections, trading jabs over their discovered sonnets.

Benedick lies in saying he takes Beatrice "for pity" and Beatrice agrees to the match to save Benedick's life, for she was told he was "in a consumption" (5.4.95). Despite all these honest slanders, the handwriting is not against their hearts; the sonnets we never see or hear, express, we trust, words written on their hearts. Yet, if the spontaneous verses Beatrice spoke in 3.1 also speak her heart, they equivocate; sonneteering and sincerity rarely mix. Lovers' verses, as Burton wrote, evince love's lunacy, not its constancy. And yet, not marble nor the gilded monuments have outlived Beatrice's rhyme: we have it here ourselves, and we do believe her better than reportingly, though we know she lies.

### III. Sly, Limed

Beatrice endures a well-intentioned deception and turns to verses when convinced, conveying both the height her love reaches but also how deeply into the trap she has fallen.<sup>10</sup> Christopher Sly of *The Taming of the Shrew's* Induction also turns to verse when most convinced by a trick, but where Beatrice's conversion to verse was gently masterminded by her friends and family, Sly has no such luck. Strangers play him for a fool by putting on a play for him—but to become the butt of their jokes, they first make him head of a household, a sort of lord-of-misrule inversion that we never see un-inverted. In its play on social life as playacting, the induction differs little from the main play, churning with characters playing and mistaking other characters. A short list: Lucentio and Tranio exchange clothes and social status, the master becoming servant to the

servant-turned-master. Like Lucentio's Tranio, each of Bianca's wooers masquerade as tutor. Characters even force other characters into acting parts: Kate, for example, calls the elderly gentleman Vincentio a "Young budding virgin, fair, and fresh, and sweet" (4.5.36). Not recognized even by Biondello, a servant who takes this real Vincentio, his master, for a madman and imposter: "I never saw you before in all my life" (5.1.48), imposing an illusion. Further, these various illusions constellate around Petruchio's taming of Katherine, a taming that involves playing, a pretending to see the not-seen: for example, if Petruchio as play director were to call the sun "a rush candle" she vows "it shall be so for me" (4.5.14-15). Padua swirls with playacting and playmaking, all of which blurs the boundary between play and not-play—if such a boundary exists.

At the play's beginning moment one clear boundary has been crossed—an alehouse's threshold—and a line, or lineage rather, insulted. *The Taming* begins with Sly's slew of nearly impenetrable semi-Spanish curses woven round a questionable genealogical claim: "Y'are a baggage," Sly yells at the alehouse matron, "the Slys are no rogues. Look in the chronicles: we came in with Richard Conqueror. Therefore *pocas palabras*, let the world slide. Sessa!" (Ind. 1.3-5). Old and new Pelican editors, Harbage and Orgel, edit the Folio's slant-Latin—" *Paucas pallabris*"—into the clear Spanish above. Searching for a language to prove his worth, grasping at jumbled Latin straws make more sense than straight Spanish ones. And "Sessa," an interjection editors hesitatingly attribute to Spanish, is likely Sly's version of "cessa," an active Latin imperative meaning

"leave off." The tattered Latin also tallies with Sly's lineal lie, likely one lived for years.

From the exchanged curses and threats we learn Sly is a tinker leaving—or being removed from—a public house. Early modern English alehouses were widely reputed resorts for tinkers, those itinerant laborers who go "crying vp & downe the countrie all blacke as a cole, who hath any candle-stickes, dishes, kettels or pans to mend" (Garzoni 79).<sup>11</sup> In William Hornby's 1612 *The Scourge of Drunkenness*, the newly clean and sober author—who ends the piece resolved "No more to be by folly so misled"—lists drunkenness's various vices and warns his readers to steer wide of the alehouse, that "harbor for iniquity" (sig. C1<sup>r</sup>). He writes,

'Tis great impeachment to a generous mind,

A base and paltry Ale-house to frequent,

It best befits a Tinker in his kinde

Then any man of vertues eminent, (sig. C1<sup>r</sup>)

The alehouse is, he continues in the following stanza,

... the receptacle of all vices,

Where Tinkers and their Tibs do oft repaire (sig. C1<sup>r</sup>)<sup>12</sup>

Twice in consecutive stanzas tinkers epitomize the lowest of the low: the alehouse patron. Not only Hornby's bane, much early modern opprobrium, no matter the vice, targeted tinkers.<sup>13</sup> Even the infamous Robert Greene, never one to decline a drink, framed the stereotypical tinker as "a drowsie, bawdy, drunken companion,

that walkes vp & down with a trug after him" (sig. F1<sup>r</sup>).<sup>14</sup> For many writers, Shakespeare included, tinkers, with or without Tibs or trugs, embodied the lowest of lower-class behaviors.<sup>15</sup>

Embodying some of the highest of higher-class behaviors, a lord and his servants returning from the hunt find the lowly Sly asleep. Rejected by an alehouse—the place most likely to accept his kind—Sly, the Lord says, lies like a swine. Thinking him dead at first, they realize he only sleeps; the lord then decides he "will practice on this drunken man" (Ind. 1.35). The practice is play: they remove Sly to the lord's "fairest chamber," bathe him in "warm distilled waters," decorate the walls with Ovidian "wanton pictures," "burn sweet wood" to perfume the air, and ready music for when he awakes, all in the effort to convince Sly that "he is nothing but a mighty lord" (Ind. 1.45-64). Whatever he remembers otherwise the attendants will dismiss as a dream, standing ready with "a silver basin" filled with rosewater, "a costly suit" and stories of his hounds and horse (Ind. 1.54-60). As Marianne Novy writes, "The lord makes a game of costuming Christopher Sly for his rise in social hierarchy" (Novy 18). Yes, but children play at games, bowls and pins, etc.; the lord plays at nothing less than a resplendent theatrical spectacle for all five senses.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, Sly awakes unconvinced. He insists, "Call not me 'Honor' nor 'Lordship'," and, to confirm his status, he exclaims: "I ne'er drank sack in my life" (Ind. 2.5-6). But the lord and servants persist, and Sly begins to question what he knows: "Am not I Christopher Sly, old Sly's son of Burton-Heath, by

birth a peddler, by education a cardmaker, by transmutation a bearherd, and now by present profession a tinker?" (Ind. 2.17-20). For verification, he commands the servants to ask "Marian Hacket, the fat alewife of Wincot" (Ind. 2.21).<sup>17</sup> The lord and servants continue their ruse with a success measured in iambic measures.

Once convinced of his royalty, Sly changes from prose to blank verse:

Am I a lord? And have I such a lady?  
 Or do I dream? Or have I dreamed till now?  
 I do not sleep: I see, I hear, I speak,  
 I smell sweet savors, and I feel soft things.  
 Upon my life, I am a lord indeed,  
 And not a tinker nor Christopher Sly. (Ind. 2.68-73)

His claim of descent from Richard Conqueror comes true; he and his language rise to the occasion and Sly was well prepared to play the part. Having lived his own lineal lie, he entered the lord's lie with ease. In R.M.'s 1629 *Micrologia*, we hear that a player is "much like the Compters in Arithmeticke, and may stand one while for a King, another while a Beggar, many times as a Mute or Cypher" (sig. B3<sup>r</sup>). And beggars, like players, also stand one while for a lord.

Yet, Sly rises to verse and into nobility at the moment he falls into the Lord's trick. His rise to nobility, then, is a descent into social illusion, one that reverberates with the play.<sup>18</sup> As Coppelia Kahn notes, the induction's superficial change in Sly early on "suggests that Kate's switch from independence to subjection may also be deceptive and prepares us for the irony of the



denouement" (Kahn 41). Not only preparing us for potential irony in Kate's taming, Sly's blank-verse taming problematizes the early modern social order itself: if a tinker can become a lord, so quickly and for however brief a time, cannot anyone?

The induction's suggestion that changing one's speech register changes status borrows its power from the fundamental theatricality of all social life. While *The Taming*'s main plot implies people assume and shed social illusions with a relative amount of individual ease—all identities return to normal, that is, their usual masks—the induction's incompleteness proposes the opposite: while Padua and the audience members (presumably) return to a world of stable identities, Sly never does. His character never has an exit; his fate is unknown. When Sly told his imagined wife they would "let the world slip," who knew how far it would? Sly's uncertain, open-ended ending opens more questions than I can answer. In a forceful way, the intimation that social life stipulates open-ended illusion confronts the audience; realizing Sly the spectator has slipped from view, we realize the play may be watching us. Our world too may slip.

Though Sly falls into verse, he also rises out; just as he remembers his tinker's life—"I would be loath to fall into my dreams again" (Ind. 2.123)—prose overcomes his closing words in the induction and his final words in 1.1. Though the verse cannot hold him, that it ever did amazes and just how it did deserves attention. Shakespeare scholars ranging from M.C. Bradbrook to Jean Howard maintain that "Assigning and taking roles is in fact the basis of social as distinct

from inward life" (Bradbrook, *Muriel* 58). Using different metaphors, Jean Howard also argues for an understanding of "the theatricality at the center of culture" (140). Sly's scene spotlights a crucial aspect of this cultural theatricality: to play a role properly requires props. The scene suggests access to blank verse requires certain material preconditions—the lord and his servants must re-arrange the room for Sly's transformation from prose tinker to blank-verse noble. The chamber, its paintings, even the perfumed air, provide the necessary material grounding, the requisite capital, for blank verse. Without these preconditions one can hardly imagine the shift to verse happening.

While Elizabethans did not worry over tinkers speaking blank verse, they did worry about the lower classes desiring and acquiring capital that marked nobles as noble. The worry manifested itself in proclamations forbidding the lower classes to accumulate the upper's capital. One such proclamation verges on sumptuary law, one forbidding certain accessorizing: carrying guns. In *A proclamation prohibiting the vse and cariage of Dagges, Birding pieces, and other Gunnes, contrary to the Law* dated 1600, Elizabeth I expressed concern that gun overuse created wasted precious game spoilage, game which "should serue for the delight of her Maiesty, the Nobility, and other men of quality." Instead, however,

so many peeple of all degrees now carry guns and hunt whereby  
is growen not onely such an undecent and disorderly confusion  
among all sorts and degrees of men (euery meane and base person

taking to himselfe that which belongeth to men of the best sort and condition) as is very unseemely and unmeet in a well gouerned State.

In this version of the problem, the lower class desires what marks the upper class as upper: hunting guns. But with Sly, something very different happens. The lord, himself returning from the hunt, creates a scenario whereby Sly, the epitome of Elizabeth's "meane and base person," takes what "men of the best sort and condition" have, namely blank verse. The vastly divergent texts converge on the same problem, but with different morals. Elizabeth locates the "disorderly confusion" below: the lower class wants what they can not have. Shakespeare's induction, however, locates it above: the upper class causes the problem. The lord creates Sly's waking dream of nobility yet Sly, even when convinced of his new rank and despite his bogus claims to royal descent, only wants "a pot o'th' smallest ale" (Ind. 2.75). You can take the man out of the social class, but you cannot take the social class out of the man. Shakespeare diagnoses a double-edged dilemma: those above create the class instability they bemoan and those below can never appreciate the view from above.<sup>19</sup>

Not only were guns endangered, but titles were as well. Phillip Stubbes worried that the lower classes stole titles not rightly theirs. He writes:

to such outrage is it growne that now adayes euery Butcher,  
Shooemaker, Tailer, Cobler, Husband-man, and other, yea euery  
Tinker, pedler and swinherd, euery Artificer and other, *gregarii*

*ordinis*, of the vilest sorte of Men that be, must be called by the  
vain name of Maisters at euery word. (sig. R4<sup>v</sup>)

Stubbes disdains a level field: the name "master" should be reserved for those who have "some speciall vertue inherent, either els in respect of their birth, or calling due to them" (sig. R4<sup>v</sup>). If readers miss the point, the printed marginalia emphasizes: "Euery Begger almost is called Maister at euery word" (sig. R4<sup>v</sup>). The real anxiety lies even deeper: not only were beggars called master, beggars were mastering the language. As Hamlet laments: "the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe" (5.1.139-141). No one, it seems, acts their rank—but they do act.

The lord's practice upon Sly stages Elizabeth's and Stubbes's anxieties as admonishment: lower-classes, be careful what you ask for—you just may receive it. But as a warning, it equivocates. Indeed, the Lord-of-Misrule formula contains Sly's rise to verse neatly and the fact the verse fails to hold could confirm his innate low-born status. To last, verse needs, it would seem, "some speciall vertue inherent." Yet, the lord of the house disappears, the servants continue serving Sly, and the play goes on for us and Sly. His dream obtained, he nods watching the play, falling into an open-ended sleep that rounds his little life. Consider Sly's future: friendless, wandering. So well limed by the lord's trick, we let him sleep.

IV. 'Oh ye friends, there is no perfect friend.'

Not one of them was capable of lying,  
 There was not one which knew that it was dying  
 Or could have with a rhythm or a rhyme  
 Assumed responsibility for time.  
 —"Their Lonely Betters," W.H. Auden, 1950<sup>20</sup>

Early modern audiences, no doubt, found Sly laughable. We can as well, with Bergsonian hearts anesthetized to how social conditions shape us, not we them. Yet sympathizing with Sly requires effort: one strains to make him more than vagabond, into pitiable victim of early modern social conditions. With little lovable about him—and if his scene makes a production's cuts, and it rarely does—audiences barely remember that the playwright forgets him. Memorable or not, Sly's friendless and loveless life, and Beatrice tricked by friends into love, these lives intersect on a question: can one lie to oneself? Or consider how Jacques Derrida expands the question: "Is it possible to lie to oneself, and does every kind of self-deception, every ruse with oneself, deserve to be called a lie?" ("History" 31) Whether Sly lied to himself remains unclear: his lie to alehouse hostess may not have been a lie to himself, yet if it were, it helps explain the speed of his formal and social shift. With Beatrice, her role as Lady Disdain appears a watertight self-deception.<sup>21</sup> She would, I think, much rather hear a man say he loves her than her dog bark at a crow. Yet, the disdain, if an act, weathers well, so well that her unwitnessed—only the audience overhears—versed

soliloquy announces she will renounce contempt, maiden pride and her wild heart, not their semblances. Her role as Lady Disdain convinced no one, it seems, but herself.<sup>22</sup>

But, back to Derrida's question, an important one: was Beatrice lying to herself? Yes and no, we might answer: "not all fiction or fable amounts to lying" (31). Derrida's history of *the* lie, as we expect with Derrida, becomes a history of *lies*. The frank description of a lie, which he admits, runs: a lie requires intent to present information other than what one knows to be true. This definition, however, covers a small section of the lies that run rampant through and run our everyday lives. One of these lies irreducible to the frank description is what Sartre called *mauvaise foi*, or bad faith: "the one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth. Bad faith then has in appearance the structure of falsehood. Only what changes everything is the fact that in bad faith it is from myself that I am hiding the truth" (89). If Beatrice lies to herself, why? Most often, *mauvaise foi* hides something horrible—or potentially horrible—from everyday awareness, a traumatic memory, for example. Beatrice, however, hides something potentially wonderful: love. Why hide this? Again, the answer: love, specifically the Renaissance conception of love as paradoxical force, a fever, as in sonnet 147, "longing still / For that which longer nurseth the disease" (147.1-2).<sup>23</sup> Love makes one's thoughts, as the sonnet continues, "as madman's are / At random from the truth vainly expressed" (147.11-12). Lying to herself, her eyes have no correspondence with true sight, as

in sonnet 148. Beatrice's condition mirrors the sonnet speaker's, but in a fun-house mirror: for she has sworn him black, and thought him dark, who art as fair as heaven and bright as day.

Falstaff's shifts from prose to verse borrow disparate elements from Sly's and Beatrice's. When Falstaff shifts from prose to verse he is either self-serving, self-revealing, or self-deceived, and sometimes all three at once. And Falstaff's formal movements cut across problems of lying: Falstaff lies, is lied to, and lies to himself. Falstaff, like Sly and Beatrice, lives a lie, but uneasily—Falstaff at first sees his friendship with Hal stretching into an uncertain future. But as that future approaches, Falstaff questions less and less the horizon's outline and deceives himself into believing that he and Hal would be lifelong friends. As the future's true darkness approaches and outlines blur, Falstaff mistakes repressed fear with confidence. When first seen together in *1 Henry IV*, Falstaff is suggesting how Hal might conduct royal affairs when installed as King. Of course, this involves tolerating thieves, or rather glossing them as "Diana's foresters;" Falstaff suggests an early form of doublespeak. Falstaff imagines a future where Hal is king, but that future requires definition. Later, however, certainty prevails: in *2 Henry IV*, Falstaff jokes he "cannot rid [his] hands of him" (1.2.201-2) and believes he is "fortune's steward" (5.3.128-9). Falstaff's continual joking blocks any clear view of his conception of their friendship, but in moments we glimpse affection for the Prince that seems true.

Hal's view of the friendship remains clear from the first scene. Whenever Falstaff attempts to probe into Hal's feelings or to engage in serious talk, Hal would rather joke. In 1.2 throughout their initial conversation, Hal rebuffs Falstaff's seriousness: when he tells Hal about how an "old lord of the council" rated him in the street about the Prince, we glimpse Falstaff's concern. Yet Hal latches fast to Falstaff's digression on grace and refocuses the conversation with success. In a later scene, a more insistent Falstaff questions an even more impassive Hal. Coming in 2.4, the comic tavern performance of Falstaff and Hal as father and son, son and father, often eclipses this exchange and so deserves quoting in full. Just before this exchange, when "a nobleman of the court at door would speak" with Hal, Falstaff, without hesitation, helps Hal: "What doth Gravity out of his bed at midnight? Shall I give him his answer?" (291-92). While Falstaff sends the nobleman away, Hal continues ribbing Bardolph and Peto to find out how Falstaff's sword is "so hacked" (2.4.301) and when Falstaff returns, Hal's unconcern seems staged. The first question Hal asks redirects, or tries to deflect interest from the nobleman who's called: "How now, my sweet creature of bombast? How long is't ago, Jack, since thou sawest thine own knee?" (323-25). Falstaff humors Hal with a quip, but quickly turns to what he has learned:

FAL. ... There's villainous news abroad. Here was Sir John Bracy from your father. You must to the court in the morning. That same mad fellow of the North, Percy, and he of Wales that gave Amamon the bastinado, and made Lucifer cuckold and



swore the devil his true liegeman upon the cross of a Welsh  
hook—what a plague call you him?

POINS. Owen Glendower.

FAL. Owen, Owen, the same; and his son-in-law Mortimer, and  
old Northumberland, and that sprightly Scot of Scots, Douglas,  
that runs a-horseback up a hill perpendicular—

PRINCE. He that rides at high speed and with his pistol kills a  
sparrow flying.

FAL. You have hit it.

PRINCE. So did he never the sparrow.

FAL. Well, that rascal hath good metal in him; he will not run.

PRINCE. Why, what a rascal art thou then, to praise him so for  
running!

FAL. A-horseback, ye cuckoo; but afoot he will not budge a foot.

PRINCE. Yes, Jack, upon instinct.

FAL. I grant ye, upon instinct. Well, he is there too, and one  
Mordake, and a thousand bluecaps more. Worcester is stolen  
away tonight. Thy father's beard is turned white with the news.  
You may buy land now as cheap as stinking mackerel.

PRINCE. Why then, it is like, if there come a hot June and this  
civil buffeting hold, we shall buy maidenheads as they buy  
hobnails, by the hundreds.

FAL. By the mass, lad, thou sayest true; it is like we shall have  
 good trading that way. But tell me, Hal, art not thou horrible  
 afeard? Thou being heir apparent, could the world pick thee out  
 three such enemies again as that fiend Douglas, that spirit  
 Percy, and that devil Glendower? Art thou not horribly afraid?  
 Doth not thy blood thrill at it?

PRINCE. Not a whit, i' faith. I lack some of thy instinct.

FAL. Well, thou wilt be horribly chid to-morrow when thou  
 comest to thy father. If thou love file, practice an answer.

PRINCE. Do thou stand for my father, and examine me upon the  
 particulars of my life.

FAL. Shall I? Content. ... (2.4.330-374)

Falstaff tries to engage Hal but Hal redirects the conversation at least six times: twice joking about Douglas and sparrows, thrice joking on Falstaff's cowardice, and once joking on virginity as a war spoil. Reluctant to answer with any sincerity, Hal prefers insulting Falstaff to unlocking his heart—a heart Falstaff nevertheless describes as made of gold (5.3.263). But for Falstaff's heart, he is a "Pitiful-hearted Titan" (2.4.119).

With the above in mind, I want to ask: why does Falstaff credit Hal—someone unwilling to recognize when another cares? Hal's view of their friendship fits well with what Aristotle said friendship is not in *The Nichomachean Ethics*: an animal-like companionship based on the fact you eat in

the same place. Renaissance discourses on male friendship, borrowing heavily from the classics (Cicero *De Amicitia*, Aristotle's *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Plato's *Lysis*), located individual friendships somewhere between the opposed poles of sincere *amicitia* and flattering *adulatio*. But also Aristotle distinguished between friendships, something Hal and Falstaff both do. Hal's friendship to Falstaff is as Falstaff's to Bardolph, we might say. And it is this disparity that renders Falstaff's rejection all the more painful. Falstaff does not see it coming, believing as he does in Hal's golden heart. Being a friend is being vulnerable. Take Montaigne's advice: unfortunately, there are true and false friendships. Montaigne's essay on friendship reflects his deep attachment to Etienne de la Boétie, one so deep that some biographers attribute his writing to an attempt to fill the void left by La Boétie's 1563 death by dysentery. Yet, the short lived friendship proved indelible for Montaigne; the friendship was "of the perfectest of their kind." Yet he warns: "wil I not perswade any man to confound their rules, for so a man might be deceived." In other friendships a man "must march with the bridle of wisdom and precaution in his hand." In most friendships, he adds, "a man must employ the saying *Aristotle* was wont so often repeat, '*Oh ye friends, there is no perfect friend.*'"<sup>24</sup> Falstaff, however, hazarded all in Hal, and lost all, including his life.

As Hal breaks Falstaff's heart the pain is palpable. In the closing scene of *2 Henry IV*, as Hal now Henry, passes by Falstaff et al. in his coronation procession, Falstaff addresses Hal with perhaps the saddest single lines of regular

iambic pentameter in all of Shakespeare, lines whose prosody deepen their sadness. As the King approaches, Falstaff exclaims:

/ / — / / / — / — /

God save thy grace, King Hal, my royal Hal! (5.5.41)<sup>25</sup>

Pistol follows with a hexameter line:

The heavens thee guard and keep, most royal imp of fame! (5.5.42)

The Chief Justice intervenes and admonishes them both, but Falstaff persists:

— / — / — / — / — /

My King! My Jove! I speak to thee, my heart! (2H4 5.5.46)

Uttering these words, Falstaff does not know he speaks his last words to Hal—no longer Hal or Harry but King Henry V, and he does not know this last break from prose will break his heart. This final exertion of iambic pentameter I read as a genuine effort to achieve by verse the knighthood he possesses in name: to rise by prosody from Sir John Sack and Sugar and become Sir John Falstaff with all of Europe. Falstaff's iambic pentameter may also parody Hal's assumed nobility as a theatrical role, thus harkening to a time when they together parodied the court world. I want to turn now to that earlier moment as it illuminates Falstaff's verse in this final scene.

#### V. Cambyzes Vein

In 1966 Harold Goddard asked: "Who at this late date can hope to say a fresh word about Falstaff?" (175). Nearly forty years later, I dare the impossible:

to say a fresh word about Falstaff; little if any serious attention has been given to Falstaff's verse. The reason? His verse, rare as it is—a handful of roughly iambic pentameter lines span the *Henry IV* plays—is rarely serious. Plus, Falstaff's prose has long defined him: according to Harold Bloom echoing centuries of criticism, Falstaff "speaks what is still the best and most vital prose in the English language" (275), and Brian Vickers argues that Falstaff's "very existence depends on prose" (4). True enough: I am not anxious to disagree with Bloom or Vickers. More generally, other facets of Falstaff have dominated critical discussion: his changing critical reception from John Dryden to Maurice Morgann to J. Dover Wilson, his relation to the Medieval drama's Vice or the Plautine *miles gloriosus*, his likeness (or unlikeness) to Henry Brooke's ancestral Oldcastle, his psychological-psychoanalytic status as maternal-paternal figure, or his role as a Lord of Misrule. In what follows, I hesitate over the few moments of Falstaff's verse, treating them as minor but productive, even generative and sometimes generous, entrances to larger and entangled problems of friendship, sincerity, and theatricality in the *Henry IV* plays. Yet Robert G. Hunter expresses a trepidation I share when it comes to writing on Falstaff: "it makes me uneasy to claim that anything about Falstaff is serious" (Hunter 351). To borrow a phrase from a friend, Falstaff's verse is often serious but not sober, fun but not a joke. His verse, like him, straddles two worlds.

"Nowhere in Shakespeare," Milton Crane wrote, "are the boundaries of two worlds so clearly delimited by the use of prose and verse as in the *Henry IV*

plays" (83). This, more or less, is correct. With few exceptions—Hotspur's letter and subsequent monologue—the court world speaks blank verse while the tavern world and Falstaff speak prose. Since at least T.S. Eliot, critics have read the prose-tavern scenes as commentary on the verse-court scenes. In his published lecture on *Poetry and Drama*, T.S. Eliot wrote that

the alternation of scenes in prose with scenes in verse in *Henry IV* points an ironic contrast between the world of high politics and the world of common life. The audience probably thought they were getting their accustomed chronicle play garnished with amusing scenes of low life; yet the prose scenes in both Part I and Part II provide a sardonic comment on the bustling ambitions of the chiefs of the parties in the insurrection of the Percys. (14)

The sardonic commentary intensifies when the barrier between forms, the barrier between the two worlds, fails. These failures can have incapacitating pathos—Falstaff's final words to Hal—or satiric serration—Falstaff's parody of Cambyases vein.

In *An account of the English dramatick poets*, a 1691 text, Gerard Langbaine gives a brief account of Thomas Preston, whom he calls "A very ancient Author, who writ a Play in old fashion'd Metre; which he calls *A Lamentable Tragedy*, mixed full of pleasant Mirth; containing the Life of *Cambises King of Persia*" (408). Langbaine excerpts "the beginning of this Play," not so much to give readers a taste of Preston's poetry, "but because I believe it

was this Play *Shakespear* meant, when he brought in Sir *John Falstaff*, speaking in K. *Cambyses* Vein" (408). On Langbaine's mind is 2.4 of *I Henry IV* where Falstaff convinces Hal he should "practise an answer" (2.5.341) before the next day's meeting with his father the King.<sup>26</sup> To practice, they perform "a play extempore" (2.4.276-77): Falstaff stands in for Hal's father and examines him "upon the particulars" of his life (2.5.343). To prepare for his part, Falstaff calls for "a cup of sack to make my eyes look red, that it may be thought I have wept; for I must speak in passion, and I will do it in King Cambyses' vein" (2.5.350-52). Falstaff's wine-shot eyes will fool the audience but so too will his manner of speaking.

For a model, Falstaff chooses, as Langbaine and editors and critics since agree, Preston's 1569 play. Though Falstaff recalls the play, he does not recall what Langbaine called "old fashion'd Metre;" his first of three declaimed lines, "Weep not, sweet Queen, for trickling tears are vain" (2.4.323), is regular blank verse and a far cry from Preston's rhyming heptameter couplets:

QUEENE. These words to heare makes stilling teares issue from  
christall eyes.

KING. What, doost thou meane, my spouse? to weep for losse of  
any prise?<sup>27</sup>

Falstaff remembers a past play in a present meter. Despite this gaff, Mistress Quickly applauds Falstaff's personation: "O the father, how he holds his countenance!" (2.4.324). Falstaff continues:

For God's sake, lords, convey my tristful Queen,

For tears do stop the floodgates of her eyes. (2.4.325-26)

Thrilled even before Falstaff began his speech ("O Jesu, this is excellent sport, i'faith" [2.4.322]), the hostess deems his performance "as like one of these harlotry players as ever I see!" (2.4.327-28). At this last outburst, Falstaff breaks character to quiet the hostess—"Peace, good pint-pot, peace, good tickle-brain" (2.4.329)—and remains in prose for the rest of the scene.<sup>28</sup>

Falstaff's move from prose to a blank verse to prose is not a move from everyday naturalness to mock artificiality and back but a shift from one Falstaffian mask to another.<sup>29</sup> Falstaff's examination of Hal matches Cambyse's vein, rhetoric for rhetoric, artifice for artifice.<sup>30</sup> While the prose exchange parodies Lyly's *Euphues*, as many commentators note, Falstaff's parody of Preston's early Elizabethan drama has received less comment.<sup>31</sup> At this moment, light-hearted Falstaff brings a heavy-handed text to bear, one that parodies kingship generally rather than a specific parody of King Henry IV. By subtracting Preston's meter, Falstaff imitates King Cambyse's *vein* not *King Cambyse's* vein, evoking an out-of-fashion and over-the-top theatrical version of royalty, not the specifics of Preston's prosody. This mocks royal rhetoric as in essence theatrical: He plays someone playing a king—as all king's do: "he testifies to the primacy of the play world and thus to the unreality of the political" (Gottschalk 345). The humor, however, can obscure the critique when not highlighting it. Yet Falstaff likely has his own good in mind. As Northrop Frye notes, "Falstaff clings to a



self-serving rationality and a prose rhythm, while all the noblemen bumbling in blank verse are, if equally self-serving, better at disguising the fact" (Frye 75). When Falstaff imagines kingship, he imagines not a real king but a gruesome theatrical one that is a self-serving tale: the story of Cambyses acts as negative model, the kind of king not to be.<sup>32</sup>

However, the play, like Falstaff here, *Cambyses* itself points two ways—towards the humorous and the tragic. Its title page has been fancied as the source of the players' description of their art in *Hamlet*:

A lamentable tragedy mixedfull of pleasant mirth, conteyning the  
life of Cambises, king of Percia, from the beginning of his  
kingdome unto his death, his one good deed of execution, after that  
many wicked deeds and tirannous murders, committed by and  
through him, and last of all, his odious death by Gods Justice  
appointed. Doon in such order as foloweth. (sig. A1<sup>r</sup>)

This genre-splicing title page anticipates the turn the play extempore takes from the humorous to the humorless prediction of Falstaff's rejection: "I do, I will." As Gottschalk puts it "in acting out his role of King, he comes to realize it is time for the change he had predicted in his soliloquy of I.ii and thus time at last to reject Falstaff" (Gottschalk 337). But Falstaff of all characters cannot see that far into the future. In the present, speaking as Cambyses one becomes a Lord of Misrule, or rather a Lord who Rules Poorly—an unpredictable, profane and murderous tyrant destined to die childless.

Herodotus in his histories does not mince words when it comes to Cambyses: "Everything goes to make me certain that Cambyses was completely mad" (185).<sup>33</sup> Cambyses was, simply put, evil: he once "found twelve of the highest-ranking Persians guilty of a paltry misdemeanour and buried them alive up to their necks in the ground" (184). Though stories like this abound, Herodotus admonishes that these are only "a few examples of his behavior towards the Persians and his allies" (185). In one final example Cambyses murders his Queen, a woman who is also his sister. Two "alternative accounts of her death" exist (182), one Egyptian involving lettuce, another Greek involving puppies.<sup>34</sup> The Greek version Herodotus recounts is Preston's source and worth quoting in full:

Cambyses pitted a lion cub against a young dog, and that this wife of his was one of the spectators at the fight. The puppy was losing, but its brother broke its leash and came to its defence, and then the two of them defeated the lion cub. Cambyses thought it had been a good show, but his wife sat there and cried. When Cambyses noticed, he asked her why she was crying, and she replied that the sight of the puppy helping its brother had moved her to tears because it reminded her of Smerdis [his brother] and she realized there was now no one to come to Cambyses' defence. It was because of this reply of hers, according to the Greeks, that she was killed by Cambyses. (182)

In Preston's version, instead of the audience watching Cambises and his Queen view the lion-dog fight, Cambises recalls having seen it without the Queen. And he has a pleasant laugh at the moral. The Queen, however, cries and is killed for her sympathy. This exchange between the King and Queen in Preston's *Cambises* comes at the point often cited as Falstaff's direct source: "These words to heare makes stilling teares issue from christall eyes."<sup>35</sup> Falstaff may have these lines in mind and the scene's murderous action. The crying Queen is at this moment conveyed to her death.<sup>36</sup>

Upon hearing the Queen's protestation that "faithfull love was more in Dog, then it was in your grace" (sig. D4<sup>r</sup>), Cambises has her removed:

By Cruels sword and Murder fel even thou shalt lose thy breth.

Ambidexter, see with speed, to Crueltie ye go;

Cause him hither to approche, Murder with him also. (sig. D4<sup>v</sup>)

Cruelty and Murder enter ready to do the King's will:

CRUELTY. Come, Murder, come; let us goe forth with might.

Once againe the kings commaundement we must fulfill.

MURDER. I am contented to doo it with a good wil.

KING. Murder and Crueltie, for both of you I sent:

With all festination, your offices to frequent.

Lay holde on the Queene, take her to your power:

And make her away within this houre.

Spare for no feare I doo you full permit ... (sigs. F1<sup>r</sup>-F1<sup>v</sup>)

The Queen, then, as Falstaff says, is conveyed away, and Falstaff's word choice echoes the earlier conveying of Richard II to the Tower. Less caught up in the performance, Quickly might have responded:

Oh, good! "Convey"? Conveyers are you all,  
That rise thus nimbly by a true [queen's] fall. (*Richard II*, 4.1.318-19)

Falstaff at this moment becomes as creative as audiences expect: He alludes to what's come before, Preston's play and Richard II's conveyance, but also forges genuinely new verse lines from the melted metal of the old.

Falstaff's switch into verse, then, engages with Preston's older, risible dramatic style (risible because older), but in significant ways highlights the potential theatricality of any character's verse in a way characteristic of the *Henriad*. As Jean Howard writes in *The Stage and Social Struggle*, what distinguishes the *Henriad* from the first tetralogy is

their knowingness about their own status as dramas enacted in a particular cultural setting, and part of their modernity of their representations of kingship stems from the implicit connection they forge between the base trade of commercial playing and the exalted arts of statecraft. (140)

In short, "these plays reveal the theatricality at the center of culture" (140) and "In indirect but important ways the tavern resembles the contemporary London theatre" (142).<sup>37</sup> It is little accident that at the Boar's Head, "Hal has his primary

contact with the consummate role player, Falstaff, and it is in the tavern that he explicitly plays, with his friend, at being king" (142). That Quickly joys at Falstaff's acting is small complement. "This is urban culture accustomed to consuming theatrical fare, and accustomed to seeing any social role, even that of king, turned into the matter for a harlotry player to imitate" (143). This scene clarifies, Howard writes, "the theatrical pleasure the miming of greatness affords, the existence of a variety of stage languages for its enactment, and the existence of audiences accustomed to judging—with varying degrees of sophistication—such performances" (143). Attention to how characters shift into and out of verse evinces a reading of how these plays interrogate the theatrical basis of culture, showing how "Hal's seductive stagecraft is integral to his successful statecraft" (Howard 144). And it is this revealing of successful statecraft as seductive stagecraft that prompts one to wonder: "If Bolingbroke is a false king, a lie, and Falstaff a burlesque king, a metaphor, where does true kingship reside?" (Calderwood 46). The scene finally suggests that any king is as much a pretender as Falstaff.

The weight of the scene intensifies the more pressure we apply. But I want to again stress that alluding to Cambyes acts as a reminder: Falstaff subtly inserts the image of how one should not rule. This may be making too much of a minor moment, yet given Falstaff's previous unsuccessful attempts to engage the Prince on these matters, a minor moment is Falstaff's last option. The allusion, too, serves an end for Falstaff, providing an image to Hal of how he should not treat

those around him. Do not become a tyrant, the tale instructs. While these verses were self-serving, two later lines of verse uttered in *2 Henry IV* are self-revealing.

In Shallow's orchard after supper, where they have all, no doubt, "drunk too much sack" (5.3.13-14), Silence treats them all to his alter-ego: Noise. Unable to stop singing, Silence surprises even Falstaff: "I had not thought Master Silence had been of this mettle" (37-8). Pistol's abrupt entrance interrupts the languorous scene, bringing "lucky joys" as well as "golden times and happy news of price" (5.3.93-4). After more of Pistol's versed bombast, Falstaff figures the only way to beat him is to join him. Falstaff enjoins him with a fustian pair of verses:

O bass Assyrian knight, what is thy news?

Let King Cophetua know the truth thereof. (5.3.99-100)

Assyrian knights, heathens though they were, were renowned as tireless fighters. The story of King Cophetua, however, brings a complex of meanings to bear that tells us much about Falstaff's state of mind awaiting the news he knows Pistol brings: Henry IV is dead, Henry V is king—"the laws of England," Falstaff proclaims, "are at my commandment" (5.3.139-40). Yet exiting 5.3 with an allusion asking "Where is the life that late I led?," Pistol foreshadows the rejection. The poem, whose full title is "Dame Beauties replie to the Louer late at libertie: and now complaineth himselfe to be her captiue, Intituled: Where is the life that late I led," satirizes a lover who blames Love for his captivity, not himself. The poet-speaker asks the lover bluntly: who is to blame but yourself? And audiences might ask the same of Falstaff.

The story on Falstaff's mind concerns King Cophetua, a story recounted in Don Armado's intercepted letter to Jacquenetta in *Love's Labor's Lost*:

The magnanimous and most illustrate King Cophetua set eye upon the pernicious and indubitate beggar Zenelophon; and he it was that might rightly say, '*Veni, vidi, vici*'; which to annothanize in the vulgar!—O base and obscure vulgar!— videlicet, 'He came, saw, and overcame.' He came, one; saw, two; overcame, three. Who came?—the King. Why did he come?—to see. Why did he see?—to overcome. To whom came he?—to the beggar. What saw he?—the beggar. Who overcame he?—the beggar. The conclusion is victory; on whose side?—the King's. The captive is enrich'd. On whose side?—the beggar's. The catastrophe is a nuptial; on whose side?—the King's. No, on both in one, or one in both. I am the King, for so stands the comparison; thou the beggar, for so witnesseth thy lowliness. (4.1.65-80)<sup>38</sup>

The story—love can transcend social status—hints at the European Cinder Maid folk tale: male noble deigns to love low female. In Falstaff's case, the moral fits, at least from his perspective. He hopes to rise in status with Hal's ascension. Of this he has no doubts. Consider his plans just before the rejection:

I will devise matter enough out of this Shallow to keep Prince Harry in continual laughter the wearing out of six fashions, which is four terms, or two actions, and 'a shall laugh without

intervallums. ... Oh, you shall see him laugh till his face be like a  
wet cloak ill laid up. (5.1.75-83)

Falstaff plans to measure Hal's laughter not by volume, sincerity, or strength but duration.<sup>39</sup> The future to Falstaff looks certain: Hal, he believes in his heart, will become a King Cophetua of sorts, a king kind to those below him—a king to whom no one is beneath.

Falstaff's image, of course, is not realized. Instead, watching Hal pass as Henry—a passing that prompts his passing away—Falstaff stands beside Shallow when his heart sinks; Falstaff has been what Prince John accuses Hastings of being: "too shallow / To sound the bottom of the after-times" (4.1.275). Yet critics are divided over Hal's rejection of Falstaff. J.A.R Marriott wrote in 1918 that "The King could not have done otherwise" (149), maintaining that "It would be incongruous if Falstaff were permitted to intrude upon such company, and no man had a nicer sense of the congruities than Shakespeare" (152). Mark van Doren calls the rejection "priggish" (99) and casts disapproval on "how conscious Shakespeare's princes always are of their careers" (99). Derek Traversi, however, sums it up best: "the cleavage between Falstaff and Hal is a projection of one between unbridled impulse, which degenerates into swollen disease, and the cold spirit of successful control, which inevitably becomes inhuman" (163).<sup>40</sup> Neither Falstaff or nor Hal at this moment wins our pure pity. Hal has done what we have known all along he would. Falstaff, as I have argued above, deceived himself concerning their friendship, despite evidence to the contrary.



## VI. Conclusion

Sir John Falstaff enters *2 Henry IV* irritated by the contrastive image he cuts alongside his "giant"—his new undersized servant: "I do here walk before thee like a sow that hath overwhelmed all her litter but one. If the Prince put thee into my service for any other reason than to set me off, why then I have no judgment" (2H4 1.2.12-14). Like John Wood's design of a plain street leading to Bath's Royal Crescent, the Prince's choice of minute page amplifies a sense of Falstaff's massive rotundity. This too is Shakespeare's method: constant comparison of "contrasts so extreme as to seem irreconcilable" (Rossiter 46). A.P. Rossiter has called this Shakespearean ambivalence, a process whereby oppositions "are held and included in a 'two-eyed' view" (51), an ambivalence not to be confused with indifference. Seeing both at once, the little and the big, amplifies our sense of both. So much in Shakespeare can be seen, Rossiter writes, "as serious and farcical: as pathetic and absurd: as abominable and laughable" (54). Having this comparative method in mind helps understand the effect of Falstaff's death: so large and so funny for so long, the contrast when Falstaff is made small and sad cannot but be affecting; friends for so long, Falstaff's rejection cannot but kill him.

Francis Bacon wrote: "I have given the rule, where a man cannot fitly play his own part: if he have not a friend, he may quit the stage" (Bacon 396). This, sadly, explains Falstaff's final exit; in *Henry V* we hear his heart is fractured

and corroborate, as Pistol puts it. At the risk of standing over Falstaff's death like an indifferent Hal, I want to borrow Pistol's malapropism to close. When reading pressures the text's forms, as I have done above, indeterminacy increases. I have tried pressing at points where a character's usual form was fractured, where verse fractured prose. In doing so, I think the text is corroborate. Mapping of these particular hair-line fractures spotlights problems rather than provides solutions. In each case—Sly's, Beatrice's and Falstaff's—their verse registers a fall into deception, not a rise into an idealized nobility of class or spirit. This, at least, I have shown. And the more critics catalogue such resistances to systemization, the more we know how Shakespeare's formal practice resists totalizing gestures, the more we know about not just Shakespeare's language but language itself: how language, when fractured, is corroborate.

## CHAPTER TWO NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ralph Berry claims Clarence's murderers in *Richard III* shift into verse when they face Clarence, signals a rise to the dignity of judges. But, these characters speak a firm verse earlier with Richard with far less dignity. If anything, their prose seems a doubtful step out of character before committing the crime.

<sup>2</sup> Some past critics argue no change *per se* takes place. Hiram Corson argued in 1889 against the change as transformation, "only a barrier has been removed which the two have co-operated to place between themselves by their sharp-wit skirmishes" (qtd. in Furness 146). As Corson notes, "their mutual misnoting, along with their mutual love, is what constitutes the comedy of the situation" (146). This mutual love existed all along. Lady Martin in 1891 called this moment Beatrice's "awakening."

<sup>3</sup> Benedick too is limed but does not change forms. A more subtle analysis than my own could explore the gender implications of this.

<sup>4</sup> Most editors indent the quatrain's even lines; they are not indented in the quarto or the Folio.

<sup>5</sup> Burton adds: "they that being maids took so much pains to sing, play, and dance, with such cost and charge to their parents to get those graceful qualities, now being married will scarce touch an instrument, they care not for it" (177).

<sup>6</sup> Regarding the sonnet form in particular, Katherine Duncan-Jones asks in her introduction to the sonnets,

How do we reconcile Shakespeare's consistently scornful allusions to sonnets and sonneteering in his plays with the fact of his having composed one of the longest sonnet sequences of the period?

Sonnet-writing, in the early comedies, is presented as a trite and cynical aid to wooing. (45)

If sonneteering can stand for versifying at large, what should we make of the fact that "A taste for reading collections of sonnets ... is associated by Shakespeare with feeble-mindedness" (46)? Duncan-Jones claims that. "In the theatre, it seems, Shakespeare almost invariably presents the writing of love poetry in general, and sonnets in particular, as ridiculous" (46).

<sup>7</sup> And the plays correct notings: it is the watch (ironically) that overhears the malefactors. Jean Howard describes this as "a play in which everyone in remarkably credulous—except the lowly social status of the reporter" (179). But it is a certain kind of credulity, I add, founded on a faulty equation: what's overheard is true. Conversely, people little credit the sallies of the merry war.

<sup>8</sup> Kant would disapprove of the honest lies. See his "On a Supposed Right to Lie because of Philanthropic Concerns."

<sup>9</sup> Jean Howard's article "Renaissance Antitheatricity and the Politics of Gender and Rank in *Much Ado About Nothing*" elaborates a far more subtle

critique of the play than I do here, tying its representation of staged lies to antitheatricity and other problems of power. Ultimately, I agree with her reading that "theatrical fictions create Benedick and Beatrice's love" (179). Yet, these fictions have certain conditions: the actors are friends, the audience has a known history of associations, and so on. Ideologically, the play seems to meditate on society more than itself.

<sup>10</sup> A well-intentioned deception seems an oxymoron, yet, as Lionel Trilling has noted:

'I am not what I am' could have been said not alone by Iago but by a multitude of Shakespeare's virtuous characters at some point in their careers. Hamlet has no sooner heard out the Ghost than he resolves to be what he is not, a madman. Rosalind is not a boy, Portia is not a doctor of law, Juliet is not a corpse, the Duke Vincentio is not a friar, Edgar is not Tom o' Bedlam, Herminone is neither dead nor a statue. (13)

<sup>11</sup> Tinkers, to put it simply, were disliked. One of the problems of playhouses, according to Thomas Dekker was that "your Car-man and Tinker claim as strong a voice in their suffrage, and sit to give judgement on the plaies life and death, as well as the prowdest *Momus* among the tribe of *Critick*" (qtd. Gurr 231). Dekker, however, did once encounter a likeable tinker once, described in *The VVonderful Yeare*, 1603:

a Tinker came sounding through the Towne, mine Hosts house being the auncient wating place where he did vse to cast Anchor. You must vnderstand hee was none of those base rascally Tinkers, that with a ban-dog and a drab at their tayles, and a pike-staffe on their necks, will take a purse sooner then stop a kettle: No, this was a deuout Tinker, he did honor God Pan: a Musicall Tinker, that vpon his kettle-drum could play any Countrey dance you cald for, and vpon Holly-dayes had earned money by it, when no Fidler could be heard of. Hee was onely feared when he stalkt through some townes where Bées were, for he strucke so swéetely on the bottome of his Copper instrument, that he would empie whole Hiues, and leade the swarmes after him only by the sound. (sig. F2<sup>v</sup>)

But in most lists of professions, tinker ranked low. Gervase Markham in his 1598 treatise *A health to the gentlemanly profession of seruingmen*, writes of the world's natural division into social classes:

IN this Bursse, or Exchange of humane affayres, which consisteth (as it were) altogeather in Marchandize, bargayning, buying & selling, it is very meete and necessary that there shoulde be men of all manners, conditions, and callinges: as the Princes or Potentats, Dukes, Earles, Barons, Knightes, Esquires, Gentlemen, Yeomen,

Husbandmen, Taylor, Tanner, and Tinker, Cowper, Carter and  
 Cobler, with men of all other estates, degrees, and professions ...  
 (sig. B1<sup>r</sup>)

Though not comprehensive, as Markham notes, the list gives a sense of where tinkers stand in the great chain of being. William Prynne in *Histrion-mastix* notes: "I conceive, that common Stage-playes (to which every cobbler, tinker, whore, and base mechanicke may resort from day to day, *(b) as many of them doe*) are no *meete sports or entertainments for (c) Christian Princes, States, and Potentates*" (sig. Aaaaa3<sup>v</sup>). Prynne is unhappy that anyone can attend "Extraordinary royall occasions, persons, entertainments" as if they were

common prostituted Enterludes, which every tinker, cobbler, foot-boy, whore or rascall may resort to at their pleasure, as they doe unto our Stage-playes; which as they are every mans for his penny, so they are every dayes Pastime too, at every roguish Play-house.  
 (sig. Bbbbb4<sup>r</sup>)

Tinkers were a reliable, easy target. William C Carroll's *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare* explores theatrical representations of vagrancy.

<sup>12</sup> "Tibs" was a pejorative hypocoristic form of Isabel used for lower class women. See also Richard Robinson's "tipling tib" (sig. H3<sup>r</sup>) in *The Golden Mirrour* from 1598.

<sup>13</sup> The pamphleteering Puritan William Prynne, for instance, asked whether "lovelockes," a newly and widely fashionable hair style, did not lose their loveliness if worn by everyone, especially by every:

Page, or Foote-boy, euery Groome, or Coach-driuer, euery  
loytering Rogve, or Cheating Rooke: euery Ragged, and  
Raggamuffin Souldier: euery Nasty, or strange-sented French-  
man: euery Runnagado, Light-footed, or False-handed Irish-man:  
or euery Sorded, Base, Deboist, and Rascall person weares: that  
which euery Scullian, Peasant, Cobler, Tinker: nay, euery Rogue,  
and Begger ...(sig. F4<sup>v</sup>)

In Prynne's list tinker comes third from last before beggar and rogue.

<sup>14</sup> Greene, Thomas Nashe wrote, "made no account of winning credite by his workes, ... his only care was to have a spel in his purse to conjure up a good cuppe of wine with at all times" (qtd. in Jordan 2-3).

<sup>15</sup> As William Carroll notes, period statutes defined tinkers as vagabonds and tinkers came to be "clearly defined vagrant stereotypes" (162).

<sup>16</sup> "The ultimate source of this frame—the popular old story of Philip the Good, who finds a drunken beggar asleep, entertains him royally, and returns him in his sleep to the place where he was found—also suggests the use of a comedy as part of the entertainment" (Greenfield 99). Marjorie Garber overviews the induction's analogs and sources in her essay "Dream and Structure." A host of



transformation myths stand in ironic opposition to Sly's mutation, such as the stories of "Adonis, Io and Daphne." She writes that "commentators remark the similarity in theme between Sly's change from beggar to lord and Kate's from shrew to wife" (Garber 7). But Sly's is different; he is persuaded that reality was a dream: "what they call his dream is actually the literal truth, while the 'truth' they persuade him of is fictive" (Garber 7).

<sup>17</sup> Many critics have homed in the gender concerns circulating around the induction and throughout the play: Garber writes that Sly's confusion "is resolved in the direction of humor when Sly wholeheartedly attempts to embrace the page-turned-lady" (Garber 10). Yet other critics find the scene filled with gender anxiety more than humor. Kahn notes that "Sly suffers public humiliation at the hands of a woman when the Hostess throws him out of her alehouse for disorderly conduct" (Kahn 41). Yet it is Sly's pretend lady that "tips the balance, convincing him that he really is the aristocrat of the servants' descriptions" (Kahn 42). Much of the humor resides in the contradiction that in real life "he is a woman's inferior" (Kahn 42). Joel Fineman is interested in the "the ultimate perversity of the lord who 'long[s] to hear' his pageboy 'call the drunkard husband' (Ind. 1.133), and who arranges for Sly to be subjected in this tantalizing way to what for Sly is nothing but the tedious unfolding of the play within the play" (112). All of this for Fineman "suggests the presence, behind the play, of an even kinkier lord" (112).

<sup>18</sup> The fact that someone lowborn could act highborn was central to the theatrical profession. In his biography of Shakespeare, Stephen Greenblatt points out

what was probably the most significant aspect of the Elizabethan actor's training: players were supposed to be able to mime convincingly the behavior of gentlemen and ladies. That is, boys and men, drawn almost entirely from the 98 percent of the population that were not 'gentle,' had to assume the manner of the upper 2 percent. (*Will* 74)

He continues: "the heart of their enterprise was a representation of the upper classes persuasive enough to delight a discriminating audience that included real gentlemen and ladies" (75)

<sup>19</sup> As Sly's change into verse represents the possibility of changing social place, it resonates with concerns about status's increasing instability: "the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe" (5.1.139-141). Hamlet, using low prose, gives the complaint an ironic twist.

<sup>20</sup> Auden's sentiment echoes Rousseau: "Conventional language belongs to man alone. That is why man makes progress in good as well as evil, and why animals do not" (244).

<sup>21</sup> Rossiter writes: "If I were to answer in a word what the Benedick and Beatrice plot turns on, I should say *misprision*. Benedick and Beatrice misapprehend both each other *and* themselves" (73).

<sup>22</sup> An essay that deserves more attention is William O. Scott's "Macbeth's—and our—Self-Equivocations" in *Shakespeare Quarterly*. Scott spends valuable time on the liar paradox, the fact that assertions of truth have no support but themselves.

<sup>23</sup> Sappho has perhaps the best description of love as antinomy:

fire is racing under skin  
and in eyes no sight and drumming

fills ears

and cold sweat holds me and shaking  
grips me all, greener than grass

I am dead—or almost

I seem to me. (10-16)

Fire races under skin covered with cold sweat, and the speaker, though greener than grass, feels dead.

<sup>24</sup> Giorgio Agamben found the phrase corrupt. As he explains in a recent article on "Friendship":

While Derrida was still working on the seminar which gave birth to the book [*The Politics of Friendship*], we had discussed together a curious philological problem that concerned precisely the motto or witticism in question. One finds it cited by, amongst others, Montaigne and Nietzsche, who would have derived it from Diogenes Laertius. But if we open a modern edition of the *Lives of the Philosophers*, we do not find, in the chapter dedicated to the biography of Aristotle (V, 21), the phrase in question, but rather one almost identical in appearance, the meaning of which is nonetheless different and far less enigmatic: *oi* (omega with subscript iota) *philoi*, *oudeis philos*, “he who has (many) friends, has no friend.”

A library visit was enough to clarify the mystery. In 1616 the great Genevan philologist Isaac Casaubon decided to publish a new edition of the *Lives*. Arriving at the passage in question—which still read, in the edition procured by his father-in-law Henry Etienne, *o philoi* (o friends)—he corrected the enigmatic version of the manuscripts without hesitation. It became perfectly intelligible and for this reason was accepted by modern editors.

Since I had immediately informed Derrida of the results of my research, I was astonished, when his book was published under the title *Politiques de l'amitié*, not to find there any trace of the problem. If the motto—apocryphal according to modern philologists —appeared there in its original form, it was certainly not out of forgetfulness: it was essential to the book's strategy that friendship be, at the same time, both affirmed and distrustfully revoked. (2-3)

<sup>25</sup> The first and third feet may be spondees. In the 1600 quarto of *2H4* the line reads:

God saue thy grace King Hall, my royall Hall.

The Folio reads:

Saue thy Grace, King *Hall*, my Royall *Hall*.

Early and late Pelican editors use the quarto line as do Wells and Taylor for the Oxford edition.

<sup>26</sup> "The great tavern scene of *I Henry IV* (II.iv) is the longest of the play and the most elaborate" (Gottschalk 337). But Gottschalk claims in this scene "nothing really happens" (339).

<sup>27</sup> Though called fourteeners now, this term did not come into use until the nineteenth century according to the OED.

<sup>28</sup> This may be a nine-syllable, catalectic line of heavily stressed pentameter.

<sup>29</sup> I would argue that to claim Falstaff's usual prose is not *un*-usual would be to miss the point of his character's all-pervading enormity—everything he does and says is large, out of proportion.

<sup>30</sup> Sister Miriam Joseph's *Shakespeare's Use of Language* contains one of the more astute readings of Antony's speech and how he "combines *logis*, *pathos*, and *ethos* in an expert manipulation of the minds and feelings of the crowd whereby he diverts their approbation from Brutus toward himself" (Joseph 283).

<sup>31</sup> Farnham extends consideration to *Cambises* (90-96), but links Falstaff with the character Ambidexter as a Vice character.

<sup>32</sup> Falstaff himself is a representation of representations. Thought Bloom in the *Western Canon* calls Falstaff "so original and so overwhelming" (46-47), but there are quibbles with the character's originality. Concerning Falstaff's own genealogy, the sources that contribute to the character, the most extensive treatment of Falstaff's relation to the *The Famous Victories* is D. B. Landt's "The Ancestry of Sir John Falstaff." He has been variously discussed "as descending from *miles gloriosus*, sensual appetite, Vice, or some similar type-character" (69). Despite all these possible connections, Landt asserts "We are always left with the feeling that this is not the man" (69). Landt's article is also a good source for

directions to other articles detailing Falstaff's connection to Oldcastle and other figures.

<sup>33</sup> The ultimate proof for Herodotus is that if Cambyes were sane, "he would not have gone in for mocking religion and tradition" (185).

<sup>34</sup> Yes, lettuce. The Egyptian version has his Queen pulling outer leaves off a head of lettuce, leaving the core bare. After doing so, she turns to Cambyes and claims this is what Cambyes has done to his family by killing his brother: stripped it bare. Unhappy with her opinion of the situation, he kills her.

<sup>35</sup> Hemingway's variorum edition notes Theobald's account of the reference to Preston's play, and Hemingway notes that Johnson, Capell and Halliwell all "doubt, strangely enough, whether Shakespeare is definitely burlesquing *Cambyes* in the 'play extempore.' They suggest it is merely a burlesque of old-fashioned plays in general" (n. 361, 160). Hemingway notes there is a stage direction in Preston that reads "At this tale told, let the queen weep" (n. 365, 367-68; 161). The text reads "¶ At this tale tolde let the Queene vweep" (sig. E4<sup>r</sup>). Hemingway also notes that Ritson noted in 1783 that the lines about floods may quote Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* "How can mine eyes dart forth a pleasant look, When they are stopped with floods of flowing tears" (n. 368, 161). Herbert and Judith Weil's edition of *The First Part of Henry IV* claims that the "weep not" line mimics line 1825 of Greene's *Alphonsus, King of Aragon*, "Then, daintie damsell, stint this trickling teares" (n. 323, 125).

<sup>36</sup> Pistol prefers the word "convey" to "steal": "'Convey,' the wise it call. 'Steal'? Foh, a fico for the phrase!" (*Merry*, 1.3.27-28).

<sup>37</sup> Howard notes "there is little doubt" that the Boars Head "very much resembles taverns in late sixteenth-century London" (Howard, *Stage* 141).

<sup>38</sup> Don Armado mentions the story earlier in the play (1.2.105-6) and the story surfaces in *Romeo and Juliet* (2.1.15).

<sup>39</sup> Given the continual references to Clement's Inn, Falstaff's "four terms" are likely four terms appointed for the sitting of law courts. There were roughly three or four terms in a year.

<sup>40</sup> James Winny's reading of the rejection is compelling:

Hal's descent into the murky world of the tavern does not prepare him for kingship. It represents the adoption of a moral attitude exactly opposite to the position taken up by Bolingbroke and Hotspur in common, a mask of dishonor assumed as though in protest against the spurious nobility of both. The audience is invited to recognise the Prince as the moral antithesis of Bolingbroke, and to find assurance in Hal's behaviour that the next king will reverse all the practices by which Bolingbroke has corrupted law and truth. (145)

By repudiating Falstaff and the lawlessness he embodies Hal repudiates his father's lawlessness by proxy.



## CHAPTER THREE

## THE ODDES IS VERY GREAT:

FORM AND CONTEXT IN *JULIUS CAESAR*

## I. The Oddes Is Very Great

I want to begin with a lesson in social etiquette that appears in George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie*. Puttenham's treatise frequently prescribes poetic rules using digressions drawn from social life, from banquets, or as in the following example, Parliamentary sessions. This story explains the importance of knowing your audience:

I remember in the first yeare of Queenes Maries raigne a Knight of Yorkshire was chosen speaker of the Parliament, a good gentleman and wise, in the affaires of his shire, and not vnlearned in the lawes of the Realme, but as well for some lack of his teeth, as for want of language nothing well spoken, which at that time and businesse was most behooffull for him to haue bene: this man after he had made his Oration to the Queene; which ye know is of course to be done at the first assembly of both houses; a bencher of the Temple both well learned and very eloquent, returning from the Parliament house asked another gentleman his friend how he liked M. Speakers Oration: mary quoth th'other, me thinks I heard not a better alehouse tale told this seuen yeares. This happened because

the good old Knight made no difference betweenne an Oration or  
 publike speech to be deliuered to th'eare of a Princes Maiestie and  
 state of a Realme, then he would haue done of an ordinary tale to  
 be told at his table in the countrey, wherein all men know the  
 oddes is very great. (sig. Q4<sup>r</sup>-Q4<sup>v</sup>)<sup>1</sup>

A lot happens here: first, Puttenham has his reigns wrong.<sup>2</sup> The first Speaker of Parliament in Mary's reign was "Sir John Pollard, the second son of Walter Pollard, of Plymouth, by Avice, daughter of Richard Pollard of Way, Co. Devon" (Dasent 133), whose constituency was Oxfordshire. However, in 1558, the first year of Elizabeth's reign, the Speaker was Sir Thomas Gargrave and his constituency was Yorkshire. The details of Gargrave's speech and its delivery—one is right to be curious: was it really as bad as they say?—were not as significant for Puttenham as what the speech represents: failure to recognize audience.<sup>3</sup>

Contemporary sociolinguists might note that this story involves notions of discourse community or code switching. Puttenham's assertion that "all men" know the difference is telling; one man, at least, Sir Thomas Gargrave, didn't. His "ye know" is inclusive, appealing to the reader, yet his "all men know" excludes the gap-toothed Yorkshire knight (and the negative physical description plays no less a part). There are several interleaved problems here that could be extracted—for example, the pitting of London against regional dialects. But the central lesson Puttenham wants readers to carry away concerns fitting in. The difference

between the Parliament house and one's personal table could not be greater; form your speech to fit the situation, to fit the audience.

I begin with this example because it might have helped Brutus, the character whose prose I explore in the pages following.<sup>4</sup> In short, during his forum speech on Caesar's death—though he claims he slew Caesar, he calls it death, not murder (3.2.38)—Brutus misunderstood his audience and used a logical prose instead of a rhetorical verse. His prose does not cause the speech's failure and prose's contribution to its failure is modest. And verse accounts less for Antony's success than the bloody presence of Caesar's corpse. Nevertheless, when compared to the forms used around him, and compared to the multitude of mistakes pervading the play, Brutus's prose *qua* prose becomes a fitting symbol of what critics have called his inability to connect with others. For instance, W.J. Rolfe wrote in his 1894 volume on *Shakespeare's Julius Caesar*:

It is to be noted that the speech of Brutus is in *prose*,—the only instance of the kind in all Shakespeare. It is the poet's way of emphasizing the mistake that Brutus makes. Confident in the purity of his motives, in his love of liberty and of Rome, he assumes that a plain straightforward statement of the 'reasons' that have influenced him and his confederates must commend itself to his fellow-citizens, and that no arts or rhetoric are needed to enforce and impress it. (qtd. in Furness, *Jvlivs* 166)

In the end, meditating on Brutus's choice as mistake helps understand the complex relationship of form, not to content, but to context.<sup>5</sup>

## II. Failure

Before treading far into the play, an explanation of why and how Brutus's speech fails may help. Though many critics agree that the speech fails to persuade ultimately, some critics have deemed it a success. E.A. Honigmann writes that "Brutus's Forum-speech proves him to be highly skilled in oratory (many critics have condemned it as weak and ineffective but, as Granville-Barker observed, 'it is certainly not *meant* to be ineffective for it attains its end in convincing the crowd')" (27). Indeed, Granville-Barker found it moving: "Personally, accepting its form as one accepts the musical conventions of a fugue, I find that it stirs me deeply. I prefer it to Antony's. It wears better. It is very noble prose" (qtd. in Furness 201). E. Rossi claimed that "this form was here used in order that the whole speech might thus be kept within the bounds of truth and simplicity" (qtd. in Furness 201). No doubt, one's perception of Brutus colors one's perception of his speech. Mark van Doren, for example, reads Brutus as "so selfless, and his consideration of other men so full and kind," that his compassion smothers him, rendering him inactive (152). W.H. Auden, on the other hand, found Brutus so out of touch with others that he "has to run on someone else's sword to establish contact with others" (Auden 134). Likewise, William Bowden notes that "Brutus'

political theory never descends to such a level of practicality as to consider what happens to the state or to other people" (65).

Though of Auden's camp, I would temper his assessment: Brutus's prose, as Rolfe noted, emphasizes his inability to read others and to read how others will read him. Close reading, we find that by speaking prose, Brutus steps out of the collective verse consensus. To give "public reasons" (3.2.7) to plebeians for Caesar's death, Brutus chooses prose, not verse. This is the first and last time Brutus uses prose in the play. Brutus's prose contrasts sharply with the verse around him, even more so because prose does not appear where we might expect: in the plebeians's mouths. The plebeians and Brutus speak verse together before Brutus addresses them in prose.<sup>6</sup> Following the Folio's lineation, the exchange runs:

*Ple.* We will be satisfied; let us be satisfied.

*Bru.* Then follow me, and giue me Audience friends.

*Cassius*, go you into the other streete,

And part the Numbers:

Those that will hear me speake, let 'em stay heere;

Those that will follow *Cassius*, go with him;

And publick Reasons shall be rendred

Of *Casars* death.

1. *Ple.* I will heare *Brutus* speake.

2. I will hear *Cassius*, and compare their Reasons,

When seuerally we hear them rendred.

3. The Noble *Brutus* is ascended: Silence.

*Bru.* Be patient till the last.

Though the first line is extra-metrical and Brutus speaks curt and catalectic lines, they stay within the allowed divergences for iambic pentameter. The audience, already attuned to Brutus's words, repeats them almost unconsciously: "Those that will hear me speake" becomes "I will heare *Brutus* speake" and "I will hear *Cassius*"; "Reasons shall be rendred" becomes "Reasons, / When seuerally we hear them rendred." These words about a dead man are modified in the guts of the living.

After asking for their patience, Brutus begins. For reference, I reproduce the speech in full:

BRUTUS: Romans, countrymen, and lovers, hear me for my  
cause, and be silent that you may hear. Believe me for mine  
honor, and have respect to mine honor, that you may believe.  
Censure me in your wisdom, and awake your senses, that you  
may the better judge. If there be any in this assembly, any dear  
friend of Caesar's, to him I say that Brutus' love to Caesar was  
no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose  
against Caesar, this is my answer: not that I loved Caesar less,  
but that I loved Rome more. Had you rather Caesar were living

and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men? As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honor him; but, as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his love; joy for his fortune; honor for his valor; and death for his ambition. Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak, for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak, for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his country? If any, speak, for him have I offended. I pause for a reply.

ALL: None, Brutus, none.

BRUTUS: Then none have I offended. I have done no more to Caesar than you shall do to Brutus. The question of his death is enrolled in the Capitol; his glory not extenuated, wherein he was worthy, nor his offences enforced, for which he suffered death.

*Enter Mark Antony [and others] with Caesar's body*

Here comes his body, mourned by Mark Antony: who, though he had no hand in his death, shall receive the benefit of his dying, a place in the commonwealth; as which of you shall not? With this I depart, that, as I slew my best lover for the good of

Rome, I have the same dagger for myself, when it shall please  
my country to need my death.

If speaking in prose is a poor choice, it is not due to the form's inferiority. S.S. Hussey claims prose in Shakespeare "appears to be used for special reasons of dramatic contrast" (Hussey 148), but not because it is "inferior to blank verse" (Hussey 149). She notes that "prose-speaking characters are not heroes, visionaries or romantics, but are sometimes beastly (Thersites), blunt (Enobarbus, Casca) or buffoons (Parolles, Menenius)" (Hussey 149). Yet to this list she adds the "the efficient, 'rational' man whose air of common sense may be either real or assumed" (Hussey 149). Brutus's speech epitomizes this sort of prose: "Its rhetoric is obvious: the answers to hypothetical questions, the antitheses, the repetitions, the isocolon and parison" (Hussey 150).<sup>7</sup> Many analyses compare Brutus's and Antony's speeches.<sup>8</sup> Alessandro Serpieri performs a powerful close reading of Brutus's circular figures, for example, condensing several: hear me and be silent that you may hear, believe me for mine honor and have respect that you may believe, censure me that you may better judge.<sup>9</sup>

Serpieri also distinguishes two ideological "spaces" forming the differences between Caesar and Antony and Brutus and Cassius, different spaces that inform the different speeches. His division runs:

<i>Space of Caesar and Antony</i>	<i>Space of Brutus and Cassius</i>
symbolic world-order	syntagmatic world-order
power of the one	power of the many



motivated name	arbitrary name
superstition	skepticism
passion	reason

These ideological differences determine the form and content of each speech, and "Brutus's succinct oration is delivered in prose, despite his 'high' social status, because prose is the vehicle of logical argumentation. While employing rhetorical figures, his oration is in fact a theorem, logical but tautological, brief but redundant" (130). Brutus's switch to prose at this moment is, as Russ McDonald claims, "ideological, expressive of his idealistic commitment to undecorated truth" (*Shakespeare* 132). Yet McDonald too notes that the speech is "manifestly rhetorical, so intricately organized and so thoroughly dependent on schemes of equivalence and repetition that it seems calculated and even manipulative" (*Shakespeare* 132-33). This choice for intellectual, rational prose is rooted in Brutus's self-perception. As Garber notes, Brutus "thinks of himself as a supremely rational man" (Garber 44). This is, as Maynard Mack remarks, a prose oration that "assumes that men in the mass are reasonable" (101) and this explains Brutus's failure: he is "so trusting of common decency that he expects the populace will respond to reason" (100-101). Prose may signal the speech's rationality: but one must admit that verse, or so it seems after the fact, would have been a more rational choice.

Brutus's Stoicism may cause his misjudgment, "For Brutus, as is conceded on all hands, is obviously presented by Shakespeare as a conscious Stoic" (108).<sup>10</sup>

J.B. Leishman in *Translating Horace* provides a useful definition:

the Stoic ate and drank from cold as if it were clay and from clay as if it were gold; amid the ruins of a falling world he would but involve himself the more impenetrably in his *virtus*, and his soul would finally ascend through the spheres to a region beyond the saw of fortune. (qtd. in Nuttall 109).

In this description, a Stoic dualism comes to the fore: "The Stoics admired a condition of passionless indifference, but they also admired the heroic achievement of that condition" (Nuttall 109).<sup>11</sup> As different as it is from the verse of those around him, Brutus's prose suggests indifference given that prose represents careful forethought and planning. For example, Octavio Paz understands prose as the intellect's violence upon language's poetic, verse-like spontaneity. Rhythm, for Paz, is the basis of language, and only "By the violence of reason words separate from rhythm" in prose (56). If one does not continually impose reason, "words return to poetry spontaneously" (56). Paz's assertion seems counter-intuitive, especially if one considers verse an ornament superadded to a prose thought. But Paz claims that prose is evidence of a rational process imposing linearity in an effort to defeat the rhythmic, circular correspondences of verse-like rhythm that define language. Left alone, thought wanders and returns to this rhythm: "reasons are transformed into correspondences, syllogisms into

analogies, and the intellectual march into a flow of images" (57).<sup>12</sup> Despite this, the circularity of Brutus's figures show how his intellectual march leads nowhere, unable to persuade a crowd for long: the prose circles round upon itself, foiling the form's usual logic.

In an essay on "Shakespeare's Prose," Jonas Barish outlines prose's usual logic as well as the structure and traditions that inform prose as a stylistic habit:

the habit, first, of treating a piece of discourse as argument, of tracking effects back to causes, discovering consequences from antecedents, elucidating premises, proposing hypotheses, and the like; and second, more important, the habit of proceeding disjunctively, of splitting every idea into its component elements and then symmetrizing the elements so as to sharpen the sense of division between them. (848)

Barish sees prose as a capable form. On the accusation that Shakespeare's prose is more colloquial than the verse, Barish disagrees and quotes Kenneth Muir:

Shakespeare was in no danger of becoming too colloquial in his dialogue. Even his apparently colloquial prose is a good deal further from actual Elizabethan speech than the dialogue of Middleton or Jonson; and when in his verse he uses language of extraordinary simplicity the powerful affect is obtained largely by contrast with the more complex language used elsewhere. (qtd. in Barish, n.6, 860).

Shakespeare's prose was not equivalent with everyday Elizabethan speech. In comparison to Shakespeare's verse, his prose may seem more loose, yet its structure is no less strict. Vickers' book, though it maintains verse's superiority throughout, attests to prose's dense intricacy.<sup>13</sup> Despite the evidence he himself marshals for prose's density and complexity, he maintains his assessment of prose as inferior. If anything, Vickers's book is some of the best evidence we have to prove that density and complexity cannot be claimed the exclusive essence of either form.

Once Brutus addresses the audience to render his reasons, he breaks from their speech patterns and breaks a fundamental rule of rhetoric in misjudging his audience—using a dialectic (logical) prose when a rhetorical verse would clearly prevail.<sup>14</sup> Cassius warns Brutus against allowing Antony to speak in a manner as becomes a friend, as Antony calls it: "Know you how much the people may be moved / By that which he will utter?" (3.1.236-37). Brutus, unconcerned, believes—knows—logic to be more powerful. He barely countenances Cassius's objection:

By your pardon:

I will myself into the pulpit first

And show the reason of our Caesar's death. (3.1.237-39)

Logic can give satisfaction, but never the satisfaction that the crowd craves. One confusion may lie with the plebeians themselves—they were in ancient Rome a group of diverse social classes, high and low. For example, Flavius and Marullus

are tribunes set against the "Commoners," as the Folio reads, yet tribunes were a type of plebeian:

The ten *tribuni plebis*, 'tribunes of the people,' technically were not magistrates. Their function was to protect the common people from the abuses of power of the magistrates and the Senate, both of which were usually patrician; by law, the tribunes had to be plebeian—that is, of the common people. The tribunes had great power: They could stop anything the government was doing simply by vetoing its actions (this was called *intercessio*). The tribunes were supposed to be sacrosanct: They were not to be harmed by anybody, even by holders of the *imperium*. The tribunes were elected annually by the Consilium Plebis (the assembly of the common people, or Popular Assembly). After 149 B.C. tribunes were automatically enrolled in the Senate. (Zoch 36)

Plebeians, then, were not all alike in rank and the fact that some plebeians had a better life did little to raise the whole group: "To the ordinary plebeians, it probably meant little that men of their class held positions of high authority and power. The ordinary plebeians would still be plagued by the persistent problems of debt and land hunger" (Zoch 56). In fact, tribunes, even though they were plebeians,

being rich and well connected, did not share the concerns of the ordinary plebeians; although grouped in the same class with

ordinary plebeians, the high-status plebeians had much more in common with patricians, with whom they had social dealings, marriage alliances, political deals, and business interests. (Zoch 57)

Shakespeare may not have intended to discriminate between act 1's commoners and act 3's plebeians, but he did distinguish tribunes from commoners using verse and prose, thus at least acknowledging in the earlier scene the possibility of differences.

The plebeians of act 3, then, because they speak verse, may not be the same as the commoners from act 1. As 3.2 begins, the plebeians cry for satisfaction in verse, even finishing Brutus's lines:

BRUTUS: Those that will follow Cassius, go with him;  
And public reasons shall be rendered  
Of Caesar's death.

FIRST PLEBEIAN: I will hear Brutus speak. (3.2.6-8)

The second plebeian continues the verse: "I will hear Cassius, and compare their reasons / When severally we hear them rendered" (3.2.9-10).<sup>15</sup> It does not take close analysis of Brutus's speech to know that, while successful for the moment, it does not work for long; its failure is prefigured in one plebeian's cry of approbation: "Let him be Caesar" (3.2.50).<sup>16</sup> As A.D. Nuttall writes,

When Brutus patiently explained, with lucid logic, how he had  
killed his friend to save Rome from the rule of an individual, the

crowd applauds him with the dreadful 'Let him be Caesar'... They do not understand the rigorous, tormented morality of his action and he, in turn, does not understand the place in history to which he has come. (Nuttall 117)

On both sides, then, there is misunderstanding. Part of Brutus's problem, however, is that he has an impossible, almost alchemical task: turning murder into sacrifice. Even before the assassination, visited by the conspirators in 2.1, Brutus knows the difficulties in doing so and the possible misreadings, which, unfortunately, happen. At least some of the plebeians didn't get it: according to Brutus, Caesar and Rome were mutually exclusive. In bringing the crowd together as Romans opposed to Caesarian ambition, "Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman?" (3.2.30), Brutus has succeeded in making them desire he were a Caesar: "Caesar's better parts / Shall be crowned in Brutus" (3.2.51-52). Brutus does not want to be another Caesar, but the crowd, despite his best efforts, can think of no other way to praise him but as a Caesar. Long before Philippi, Caesar's ghost walks abroad.

Prose alone does not induce the speech's failure, but it is one facet that makes, as Maynard Mack notes, "Antony's speech [differ] from Brutus's as night from day" (102). Brutus, despite the crowd's verse, uses prose, and the audience, despite Brutus's prose, continue to use verse as they sing his short-lived praise: "Bring him with triumph home unto his house" (3.2.49). Ironically, in the scene following Antony's speech, the crowd turns to prose and attacks Cinna the poet,

presumably moved to action by Antony's good verses against "bad verses," as they call Cinna's work. Antony's success confirms the political utility of verse but the ending of act 3 calls verse's place in politics into question: "the Plebeians," as the Folio calls them, now speaking prose, kill Cinna the poet. Though verse is a better choice in the context of Caesar's funeral oration, in other contexts, verse intrudes and fails as well as prose.

### III. A Strange Disposed Time

The Roman political world of *Julius Caesar* is not kind to poets: "Poets," as Lawrence Danson puts it, "generally have rough going" in the play (Danson 38). Rarely present, they appear at the wrong place at the wrong time. Readers and audiences lose these minor error-prone poets—Cinna the poet in act 3 and the poet-cynic in act 4—amid the play's larger concerns, but as Norman Holland argues, "In *Julius Caesar*, as so often in Shakespeare, it is the details that seem farthest from the heart of the play that shed most light on the central action" (444). Take first the play's second poet. In 4.3 the unnamed poet-cynic enters to settle a strife between Brutus and Cassius. Late and unaware their differences are settled, the poet forces past the guards:

Let me go in to see the generals!

There is some grudge between 'em; 'tis not meet

They be alone. (4.3.124-26)



Though Lucilius, a guard, bars his way, "Nothing but death" (4.3.127) can keep the poet from his appointed task. He enters:

For Shame, you generals! What do you mean?

Love and be friends, as two such men should be;

For I have seen more years, I'm sure than ye. (4.3.129-31)<sup>17</sup>

Cassius cannot help but laugh at the intrusion: "Ha, ha, how vilely doth this cynic rhyme!" (4.3.132). The humor is lost on Brutus: "Get you hence, sirrah. Saucy fellow, hence!" (4.3.133). Trying to soften the situation, Cassius advises, "Bear with him, Brutus. 'Tis his fashion" (4.3.134). But Brutus sees no reason to accept the poet's poor timing: "I'll know his humor," that is, tolerate his rhyming, "when he knows his time," when he knows the right time and place for it. Brutus, to clinch his position, asks the rhetorical question: "What should the wars do with these jiggling fools?" (4.3.135-36).<sup>18</sup> With those words, the poet is ushered off as quickly as he entered, and not mentioned again.

Julius Caesar, one imagines, would describe Brutus as he described Cassius: "He loves no plays " (1.2.204-5). If Brutus had attended an early modern production of *Julius Caesar*, he would have seen jiggling fools following hard upon politics—even more important to people than politics. Thomas Platter, a Swiss doctor visiting London, saw *Julius Caesar* at the Globe on September 21, 1599, near the end of the playhouse's opening summer. Once the play ended, what Brutus would have called jiggling fools entered:

On September 21st after lunch, about two o'clock, I and my party crossed the water, and there in the house with the thatched roof witnessed an excellent performance of the tragedy of the first Emperor Julius Caesar with a cast of some fifteen people; when the play was over, they danced very marvellously and gracefully together as is their wont, two dressed as men and two as women.  
(qtd. in Gurr, *Playgoing* 222)

Dancing, poetry, and politics: Platter, at least, was unsurprised.<sup>19</sup> Watching the play, we might ask: what should these jigging fools do with the wars?

The answer to Brutus's question and the moral to this brief exchange is obvious, at least to Brutus: what should the wars do with such a jigging fool? Nothing. The poet's failed interruption derives from Brutus's life in Plutarch's *Lives*. In Plutarch, the poet is Phaonius, a man who imitated a philosopher in his daily life, "not with wisdom and discretion, but with a certaine bedlem and frantick motion" (sig. XXXX2<sup>r</sup>). Barging into Brutus's chamber, "in despite of the doorekeepers," he then recited verses,

with a certaine scoffing & mocking gesture which he counterfeited of purpose, he rehearsed the verses which old *Nestor* sayd in *Homer*:

*My Lords, I pray you harken both to mee,  
For I haue seene moe yeares than such ye three.*

Cassius fel a laughing at him: but Brutus thrust him out of the chamber, & called him dogge, and counterfeate Cynick. Howbeit his comming in brake their strife at that time, and so they left eche other. (sig. XXXX2<sup>r</sup>)

There is little doubt Shakespeare turned to Plutarch for this scene. Shakespeare's modified the poet-cynic's role, making a needed interruption in Plutarch—the poet-cynic there actually breaks their strife—an unnecessary annoyance. Though in Plutarch the poet-cynic is aware of and exaggerates his ridiculousness, Shakespeare's poet-cynic is sincere and all the more useless for it.

Brutus's refusal to deal with a jiggling fool, a poet, argues poetry's impotence. Yet, an earlier scene—the killing of Cinna the poet—argues the potential of poetry's power. Cinna's name is qualified as "the poet" in the Folio and in all modern editions, and the qualification is important: Cinna the poet is not Cinna the conspirator that we have earlier seen in 1.3.<sup>20</sup> The confusion of the two hints at a confusion of poetry and politics, one with deadly results. When Cinna enters 3.3 he is musing on a dream where he "did feast with Caesar" (3.3.1), yet this is a bad omen: "things unlucky charge my fantasy" (3.3.2). Despite having "no will to wander forth of doors" (3.3.3), he goes into the streets. Before Cinna gets far, the plebeians accost him. Eager, as they rage, to "Pluck down forms, windows, anything!" (3.2.251), the plebeians press Cinna for his name, where he is going, where he lives, and if he is married.

Cinna gives the group answers in reverse order, his name last. Cinna's name, being the same as the conspirator's, triggers the crowd's wrath. Casca and Cassius could recognize the conspirator Cinna "by his gait" (1.3.132), yet the plebeians who encounter Cinna cannot. To assuage them, Cinna tries to clear the confusion by confirming his occupation: "I am Cinna the poet! I am Cinna the poet!" (3.3.29). But Cinna is wrong to think being a poet absents him from their anger; an aesthetic occupation does not get him out of a political problem.<sup>21</sup> To accommodate Cinna the poet, they shift their focus: "Tear him for his bad verses, tear him for his bad verses" (3.2.30-31). Again, Cinna tries to save himself: "I am not Cinna the conspirator!" (3.2.32), but as the plebeians respond: "It is no matter, his name's Cinna. Pluck but his name out of his heart, and turn him going" (33-35). It is no matter—like the tribunes for whom the holiday named Lupercal is no matter, Cinna's name is no matter.

Shakespeare's takes the Cinna episode from Plutarch's life of Brutus:<sup>22</sup>

... there was a Poet called *Cinna*, who had bene no partaker of the conspiracy, but was alway one of *Caesars* chieftest friends: he dreamed the night before, that *Caesar* bad him to supper with him, and that he refusing to goe, *Caesar* was very importunate with him, and compelled him, so that at length he led him by the hand into a great darke place, where being maruelously affrayed, he was driuen to follow him in spite of his hart. This dream put him all night into a feuer, and yet notwithstanding, the next morning when

he heard that they caried *Caesars* body to buriall, being ashamed not to accompany his funerals: he went out of his house, and thrust him self into the prease of the common people that were in a great vprore. And bicause some one called him by his name, Cinna: the people thinking he had bene that Cinna, who in an oration he made had spoken very euill of Caesar, they falling vpon him in their rage, slue him outright in the market place. (sig. VVVV4<sup>v</sup>)

Shakespeare has moved the scene from Plutarch to his own play and changed little at the local level.<sup>23</sup> Yet, in North's Plutarch, the mistaken killing of Cinna the poet prompts "Brutus and his companions" to flee Rome. In Shakespeare, this scene becomes more a punctuation mark than a turning point.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, the cinna and poet-cynic episodes "are singularly revealing of Shakespeare's purposes in *Julius Caesar* as a whole" (439). Holland notes that Shakespeare "replaces North's laconic 'presently dispatched him' with the lurid 'Teare him to peeces', 'Teare him, tear him'" (440). More significantly, "Cinna's unwillingness to leave home, echoes Caesar's" (440), linking Cinna's murder to Caesar's. Ultimately, the episode "helps develop images from the play as a whole" insofar as Cinna's death, "serves as an echo to Caesar's" and forces us to compare "Brutus' and Cassius' motives to the mob's" (441). No amount of rationalization can draw a firm dividing line between Brutus's and the conspirators' actions and those of a mob. Though the murder of Cinna has no reason, it does have rhyme.

Cinna rhymes, obviously, with Cinna, but it also acts as commentary on Caesar's murder. As Danson says,

The gratuitous murder of Cinna the poet reflects ironically upon the murder of Caesar. The poet's rending at the hands of the mob is unreasonable, based solely on a confusion of identities (of names, of words), and while it bears some resemblance to the sacrifice of a scapegoat figure, it is really no sacrifice at all but unsanctioned murder. Caesar's death, similarly, was undertaken as a sacrificial gesture, but became identified with plain butchery. (Danson 38)

Also, "Cinna's brief scene also looks forward to the 'Cynicke' episode. Not only is there the sound of 'Cinna' in 'Cynicke', but both men are poets, both are said to be bad poets, both are witty" (46). Cinna and the poet-cynic share, too, a knack for being at the wrong place at the wrong time. While the episode with Cinna can be read, as Frank Kermode claims, as "an ironic denial that poets, except by unhappy chance, have anything to do with politics" (86). The scene suggests that poetry is as good a replacement for politics as any. Further, the fact that both poets make mistakes—Cinna does not listen to his dream and the poet-cynic enters at the wrong time—links both minor episodes to a larger pattern of mistakes pervading the play.

For instance, in 5.3, during the battle at Philippi Cassius sends Titinius on a mission to see whether the troops amid their tents are "friend or enemy" (5.3.18). Cassius sends his slave Pindarus to "get higher" on a nearby hill to so

that he can "Regard Titinius" and report what he "not'st about the field" (5.3.22). Pindarus sees, but misinterprets. Thinking Titinius overwhelmed, he reports as much to Cassius. On this news, Cassius invokes Pindarus's loyalty to slay him and be free. Pindarus does, unwillingly. Immediately, Messala and Titinius enter on the bloody scene. As they enter Titinius interprets the scene, and does so correctly: "Mistrust of my success hath done this deed" (5.3.65). Though he tells Messala he will go to find Pindarus, Titinius remains behind to mourn Cassius's suicide, lamenting: "Thou hast misconstrued everything" (5.3.84). Placing the laurel on Cassius's brow, Titinius then kills himself. "This," he says, "is a Roman's part" (5.3.89). Cassius and Titinius have played their parts and Brutus later plays his by leaping, as he puts it, into the pit himself before being pushed. Cassius dies on his birthday, Brutus dies on his sword.

Cassius's misinterpretation, however, is only one among many misunderstandings plaguing *Julius Caesar*. Indeed, Cicero, after hearing Casca's description of the "portentous things" happening around Rome, remarks:

Indeed it is a strange-disposèd time.

But men may construe things after their fashion,

Clean from the purpose of the things themselves. (1.3.33-5)

Cicero could not be more right. Men do construe things after their fashion, and one man does so more than others—Brutus critics claim, is the play's principle *mis*-interpreter. In short, Brutus is, as Steve Sohmer puts it, "wrong about

everything" (85). Majorie Garber suggests that Titinius's remarks over Cassius's corpse could

serve as an epigraph for the whole of *Julius Caesar*. The play is full of omens and portents, augury and dream, and almost without exception these omens are misinterpreted. Calpurnia's dream, the dream of Cinna the poet, the advice of the augurers, all suggest one course of action and produce its opposite. (Garber, "Dream and Interpretation" 43)

The play's misinterpretations constellate around Brutus, the character who, as Garber writes, "has misconstrued everything" (45).<sup>25</sup> Everything is too much for any one to be wrong about, but Brutus does come close; even a stopped clock, Maria Von Ebner-Eschenbach said, was right twice a day.

Not only was Brutus wrong about "sparing Antony's life, the decision to march to Philippi, the time to join battle," but Brutus was also wrong about the Thames' tide. Sohmer maintains that when Shakespeare drafted *Julius Caesar*, he could easily have ascertained that "high tide in the Thames would crest ... at 2 p.m." on the day of the play's performance, June 12, 1599. When the actor playing Brutus reached the character's lines, comparing his state to "a tide" that should be "taken at the flood," a "full Sea" whose current calls (4.3.218-24), Sohmer notes "the hour would have been between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m., and the tide at Southwark strand was rapidly receding towards its ebb" (85). The Globe patrons, Sohmers writes, "if they trudged homewards past acres of reeking Thames mud," would



have realized Brutus was even "dismally wrong about the tide" (85). Plutarch, as Vivian Thomas notes, makes clear that Brutus is wrong to let Antony proceed (Thomas, *Roman* 54). In fact, as Naomi Conn Liebler puts it "Brutus's 'errors' including his reluctance to kill Antony and his permission for Antony to speak (and speak last) at Caesar's funeral, have been noted by nearly every critic since Plutarch himself pointed them out" (105). Though Brutus is wrong, and often, error does not so much reside in Brutus as it inheres in the world of *Julius Caesar* itself.

Though Lawrence Danson agrees that, "Every sign is misinterpreted by Brutus" (32), he adds that misinterpretation is less an idiosyncrasy than an inevitability: the world in which Brutus acts, the world that "seems to him to make a clear demand for words and gestures is in fact a world where words are equivocal and where gestures quickly wither into their opposites" (32). Getting things wrong is not just Brutus's problem, it is everyone's problem. *Julius Caesar* opens with an emblematic confusion. The tribunes Flavius and Marullus rebuke what the Folio calls "*certaine Commoners*" for walking without clear sign of their profession "Upon a laboring day" (1.1.4). Despite the fact the tribunes know, as Marullus says later, that "it is the feast of Lupercal" (1.1.67), they berate the commoners who claim "they make holiday to see Caesar and to rejoice in his triumph" (1.1.30-1).<sup>26</sup> Marullus is especially incensed at a cobbler, who being asked what his trade is, answers directly—yet Marullus does not seem to hear him or does not believe him. Marullus demands: "You, sir, what trade are you?"

(1.1.9). The cobbler responds: "Truly, sir, in respect of a fine workman I am but, as you would say, a cobbler" (11). At this answer, a definite one, Marullus continues to question: "But what trade art thou?" (1.1.12). Likely confused himself why Marullus asks again, the cobbler equivocates: he is a "mender of bad soles" (1.1.14), and Flavius loses his temper, if he hasn't already: "What trade, thou knave? Thou naughty knave, what trade?" (1.1.15-6). After even more punning on the cobbler's profession, Flavius intervenes: "Thou art a cobbler, art thou?" (1.1.19). The cobbler, caught, agrees: "I am indeed, sir, a surgeon of old shoes" (1.1.23).

A confusing exchange, to say the least: at the first question, the cobbler gave a direct answer, yet why did Marullus, and then Flavius, ask again? This unnecessary, confusing exchange mirrors the confusion surrounding the confrontation itself. Flavius asks: "Is this a holiday?" yet, Flavius tells us later they know it is the feast of Lupercal. But Marullus brushes off its significance: "It is no matter" (1.1.68). Lupercal is no matter, but celebration of Caesar is. Marullus, upset, berates them for their fickleness: when once they cheered Pompey, now they cheer Caesar. The result? Flavius tells us they "vanish tongue-tied in their guiltiness" (1.1.62) but we hear nothing from the commoners to confirm their innocence or guilt. Flavius, however, like so many other mistaken characters in this place, may mistake their silence.

This exchange over holidays participates in the play's larger concern with time. Hélène Cixous has said *Julius Caesar* is a "play bathed in the light of a

handless clock" (59). A favorite mistake of readers is the clock that strikes three as the conspirators plan Caesar's murder.<sup>27</sup> The mistake, I think, is no mistake: the clock strikes just after an argument about the time of day. The untimely clock anticipates Brutus's untimely mistake, choosing the wrong time and wrong place to use prose. The scene warrants attention: in 2.1, Cassius and the conspirators visit Brutus to persuade him to join their ranks. As Cassius and Brutus "whisper" alone, as the Folio stage direction reads, Decius, Casca, and Cinna disagree over the dawn. Decius, perhaps to chip at the icy atmosphere forming, remarks: "Here lies the east. Doth not the day break here?" (2.1.101). Casca meets his innocent, likely rhetorical question with a terse "No" (2.1.102). Cinna intervenes, politely: "Oh, pardon, sir, it doth" (2.1.103). Casca, heated, explains in no uncertain terms:

You shall confess that you are both deceived.

Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises... (2.1.105-6)

Depending on which word he speaks when he unsheathes his sword, Casca's imperative "shall" and his sword-pointing seems excessive if not aggressive.<sup>28</sup> This exchange, like many exchanges in *Julius Caesar*, revolves around a misunderstanding, yet this one, like many, goes unresolved. Someone misunderstands where dawn is breaking—are Decius and Cinna correct? is Casca?—and we never find out who is right: Brutus and Cassius break off their private conference, returning to the group and interrupting the disagreement to begin planning the assassination, a discussion no less fraught with disagreements and misunderstandings.

When Cassius proposes they swear their resolution, Brutus refuses; when Cassius suggests they recruit Cicero, Brutus disagrees; and when Cassius recommends they murder Antony, Brutus, again, disagrees. Casca, in the meantime, so sure about the dawn, waffles on Cicero: first maintaining "Let us not leave him out" (2.1.143), then claiming "Indeed he is not fit" (2.1.154). Casca's quick movements between opposed positions epitomizes the speedy movements the play requires of readers. Throughout the play readers are forced to a Casca-like position, to "entertain two apparently opposite points of view" (Danson 41). The dawn is here or there; Cicero will be helpful, Cicero will not. Murder will seem to be sacrifice, it will not.

During this discussion they begin theorizing how to "purchase us a good opinion" (2.1.145)—how to convert murder into sacrifice. At the last suggestion to murder Antony, Brutus explains why they should not:

Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius.

To cut the head off and then hack the limbs,

Like wrath in death and envy afterwards;

For Antony is but a limb of Caesar.

Let's be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius. (2.1.163-67)

Brutus continues, explaining that thus moderating their actions to "the common eyes" they will "be called purgers, not murderers" (2.1.180-1). Besides, Brutus goes on, Antony is not someone to worry over: "he is given / To sports, to wildness, and much company" (2.1.189-90). This, of all of Brutus's misreadings,

may be his most disastrous. Antony may be given to sport, as was known. Yet Brutus thinks gamesomeness precludes Antony from being a threat. As the clock strikes three, Shakespeare's famous mistake tells the time of Brutus's biggest mistake of all: underestimating Antony. From here, the number of misreadings, mistakes and misunderstandings escalate. After the assassination of Caesar, Brutus continues to misread Antony, letting him speak and speak last.

Brutus, however, in choosing prose likely made the right decision, as far as form relates to content. As Mack notes,

this is a speech in what used to be called the great liberal tradition, which assumes that men in the mass are reasonable. It has therefore been made a prose oration, sparse and terse in diction, tightly patterned in syntax so that it requires close attention, and founded, with respect to its argument, on three elements: the abstract sentiment of duty to the state (because he endangered Rome, Caesar had to be slain); the abstract sentiment of political justice (because he had delusions of grandeur, Caesar deserved his fall); and the moral authority of the man Brutus. (101)

Arguably, Brutus does not misunderstand the relation of form to content. It is conceivable he made the right choice, but he does misunderstand the relation of form to the world. Prose, in this case, sets Brutus too far apart from the versed crowd he addressed. And setting yourself apart in this way sets yourself up for failure.

Today, sociolinguistics argue language does not reveal essence: there is no essential difference between two speaker of different dialects. Yet in this period, as Jonson, the harried former brick-layer, always conscious of his social standing, wrote, "*Language* most shewes a man" (sig. Q2<sup>v</sup>). That speech tells us about the inner person is debatable—there is no art to find the mind's construction in the face or in the speech. Though Caesar is somewhat able—he does suspect Cassius by his lean and hungry look: sometimes we can judge a book by its cover. Speech can in unobvious ways forge social bonds and break them, as Puttenham's example shows. The Yorkshire Knight, already an outsider, will never be accepted not so much because of speech difference, but because of an inability to know when to speak differently. Brutus, then, should have known that, as Puttenham says, "the oddes is very great" between a calm and rational prose oration and an impassioned verse one. Instead, as Hussey says, "Intellectual prose is vanquished by passionate blank verse" (Hussey 150). The problem, of course, is that Brutus behaves like the poet-cynic he spurned from his tent; a couplet was as inappropriate to that moment for those men as a prose speech was to Caesar's funeral for that audience. While form and content may fit, matching form to the moment is just as crucial. Sometimes, regardless of content, the medium is *the* message.

## CHAPTER THREE NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Puttenham, again and again, when defending poetry, points not to poets but politicians. As proof that poetry and poets were once esteemed by princes, and should be again, George Puttenham wrote that, "*Iulius Caesar* the first Emperour and a most noble Captaine, was not onely the most eloquent Orator of his time, but also a very good Poet, though none of his doings therein be now extant" (sig. D3<sup>r</sup>). Julius Caesar is Puttenham's first example that poets were not just "Princepleasers," as he calls them, "but vary sufficient men," often sought out for "counsell or for conduct" (sig. D3<sup>r</sup>). Poetry and politics, he means to show, are not mutually exclusive but are mutually beneficial. Likewise, Harrington writes:

For who would once dare to oppose himselfe against so many *Alexanders, Casars, Scipios*, (to omit infinite other princes, both of former and later ages, and of forraine and nearer countries) that with fauour, with studie, with practise, with example, with honors, with giftes, with preferments, with great and magnificent cost, haue encoraged and aduanced Poets, & Poetry? (sig. ¶2<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> Not one of the speakers during Mary's reign was from the North. After Pollard, Sir Richard Brooke from Devon was speaker and his constituency was also Oxfordshire. After Brooke was Sir Clement Heigham whose constituency was West Looe. Gargrave was summoned to the first Parliament on January 25 and presided from 1558 to May 8, 1559 at the close of his office. Subsequently

Gargrave was Vice-President of the Council of the North. He died in 1579 (Dasent 379). All of Elizabeth's speakers, Dasent claims, "without exception were lawyers" (135). In Dasent, Gargrave is only listed in the catalogue and he is given no space in the text proper. His portrait does appear and its inscription reads from bottom up the left above to right: "A councler of State to / King Henry the VI & Elizabeth / He was President of the Councel / In the North Parts Tresurer for the Warres" (136). The portrait names him "Thomas Gargrave Miles" (Dasent 136).

<sup>3</sup> That someone's linguistic misstep, however big a misstep it was, is even imagined as a topic of conversation after a Parliamentary session during one of the most religiously contentious periods in England's history—a period during which Parliament is actively engaged in determining the relation of church to state, and state to church—is surprising in itself. It is even more surprising that one could confuse Mary and Elizabeth's reign: that one could confuse Catholic and Protestant during this time period is almost unthinkable.

<sup>4</sup> It bears noting that the overall style of *Julius Caesar* has proven a moving critical target that everyone believes they hit with accuracy. Mark van Doren claimed the play's characters lacked variety: "All of its persons tend to talk alike" (153). Conversely, Muriel Bradbrook claimed "style is the man" in this play.

<sup>5</sup> There are many other instances of verse in the play that reward attention. As Kermode notes, Casca, first seen as a prose character, is later in the storm



"terrified—in verse, for he is suffering and talking about divine portents" (90).

Coleridge did not think this was authentic, he thought that this part was originally for another person. Also, Coleridge has taken the time to scan Brutus's verse early in the play, specifically the line "A soothsayer bids you beware the Ides of March." Coleridge claims "If my ear does not deceive me, the metre of this line was meant to express that sort of mild philosophic contempt," a contempt that Coleridge sees suffusing Brutus' character. Coleridge reads this "a trimeter—each foot containing two unaccented and two accented syllables, but variously arranged" (375). His scansion is - / / - / - / - / - / . Another scansion might see this not as trimeter but hexameter: - / / - / - / - / - / . Either way, it is unclear how a scansion registers contempt, moreover a more subtle but mild philosophic contempt. Also, a useful article on the editorial tradition and its influence on the play's lineation is Carol Marks Sicherman's essay "Short Lines and Interpretation: The Case of *Julius Caesar*."

<sup>6</sup> Little attention has been paid to the plebeians' verse prior to Antony's speech. Some critics have proposed that Antony's verse address is so persuasive that the crowd adopts its rhythms, using verse themselves. As Frank Kermode notes, "during Antony's performance even the plebeians use verse, until moved to destructive action at the end of the scene" (*Shakespeare's* 95). Such a statement, however, seems to neglect the plebeians' earlier use of verse.

<sup>7</sup> A thorough discussion of the syntactical intricacy and rhetorical origins of Brutus's prose is in Vicker's *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose* (241-245).

<sup>8</sup> No analysis I have found notes that both pause very different reasons—Brutus for people to respond, Antony to gather himself until his heart "come back" (3.2.109).

<sup>9</sup> Sister Miriam Joseph's *Shakespeare's Use of Language* contains one of the more astute readings of how Antony's speech "combines *logis*, *pathos*, and *ethos* in an expert manipulation of the minds and feelings of the crowd whereby he diverts their approbation from Brutus toward himself" (283).

<sup>10</sup> Dowden wrote that "To stir emotion is as foreign to his purpose as to show emotion is contrary to his nature" (qtd. in Furness, *Ivliivs* 166).

<sup>11</sup> Though his prose may stand for rationality and a detached Stoic dispassion, Brutus is not the lone person unable to connect with others. "It is important to note that this dispassionate evaluation falls impartially on both parties" (Traversi 19). Consider the marking out of people to die that opens the very next scene: "The callousness of the exchange," Derek Traversi writes, "the readiness to write off human lives by marks on paper, is rounded off by Antony's complacent rejoinder" (19) that he shall not live: "The world which is to replace that formerly dominated by Caesar is indeed mean, petty and dangerous. The triumvirs are already engaged in the first stages of a ruthless struggle for power" (19).

<sup>12</sup> In Paz's chronology, verse is prior to prose, much in the same way that many early modern thinkers believed it was. John Harrington argues that verse is older than prose, that "verse is as auncient a writing as prose, and indeed more auncient in respect that the oldest workes extant be verse, as *Orpheus*, *Linus*, *Hesiodus*, & others beyond memory of man, or mention almost of history" (sig. ¶5<sup>v</sup>). In Harrington's view, verse is even pre-historical—before narrative.

<sup>13</sup> Critics have long thought verse a form superior to prose. Given verse's critical valuation as "a more intense and persuasive medium" (Vickers, *Artistry* 428) and prose as "on the whole, a lower order" (Wright, *Shakespeare's* 108).

<sup>14</sup> As Aristotle writes in his *Rhetoric*, of speech-making's three elements, speaker, subject and hearer, "it is the last one, the hearer, that determines the speech's end and object" (1358b1).

<sup>15</sup> All of the lines discussed here are lineated in the Folio as well.

<sup>16</sup> Milton Crane reaches the same conclusion. If Brutus "were to listen a little more closely to the plebeians, he might have certain qualms about the success of his explanation" for Caesar's death (144).

<sup>17</sup> Norman Holland writes that,

The Cynicke's doggerel emphazies 'Loue,' one of the most significant themes in the play and reminds us, among other things, of Cassius' first overtures to Brutus. The illogic of the poet's argument, that they should be friends because the poet is older than

they, suggests the folly of ever trying to combine such different and incompatible men as Cassius and Brutus. (442)

<sup>18</sup> In an appendix, Sohmer notes that Brutus's "unprepared fury at the intrusion of the Cynicke poet" could be explained by Brutus's reading of Cicero. Sohmer places this among several instances where "Brutus reveals himself to be the intellectual hostage of Cicero" (253).

<sup>19</sup> Jigs were popular: "The German Paul Hentzner, writing in 1598, noted the 'excessive applause' that accompanied these jigs" (Thomson 12). Another example: "On 1 October 1612, at the General Session of the Peace in Westminster, 'An order for suppressing of Jigges att the ende of Playes' was issued, to meet protests about the disorderly crowds that rushed to the Fortune for the jig at the end of the performance" (Thomson 12).

<sup>20</sup> Cinna the poet was Helvius Gaius Cinna, a Roman poet: "The ancient sources identify him with the tribune of 44 BC who, after the murder of Caesar, was lynched by the angry mob in mistake for Cornelius Cinna" (Howatson 135).

<sup>21</sup> Cinna learns that the literary and the social, the poetic and the political, are interchangeable. Further, having Cinna the poet mistaken for Cinna the conspirator is a comparison that cuts more ways than one—poetry is perhaps at heart conspiratorial. Once they do know Cinna's true identity as poet, they decide the poetic, in this case, will do just as well as the political. This mixing could be

construed as confusion, yet I think it is symptomatic of the early modern view of poetry and society's interrelatedness.

<sup>22</sup> The "incident evidently fired Shakespeare's imagination, because he created out of it a chilling scene consisting of an amalgam of tragedy and farce" (Vivian Thomas 54). One of "the most significant of the probable sources" of the play is Appian's *Civil Wars*: "in Appian's account the crowd storm off to take their destructive revenge, including the terrible killing of Cinna, whom they 'cruelly tore ... to peeces, and lefte not one parte to be put in grave'" (66). Kermode sees both instances as simple elaborations of poetry's impotence: "the two poets in this play are so unequal to the occasion that one is murdered in mistake for a politician and the other turned out when he interrupts politicians in conference" (*Shakespeare's* 95).

<sup>23</sup> In writing the Roman plays, Berry argues that Shakespeare "was expected to offer a respectful and well-informed imitation of Roman society; he was tied to authenticity" (xxi). I think this is hardly ever the case with Shakespeare. Take for comparison Maynard Mack's discussion of what has been added to the historical Caesar in this play alone. Mack notes that in Plutarch there is no suggestion of the procession we see in act one and no mention of Calpurnia's infertility. Shakespeare transforms Plutarch's phrase—"Caesar sat to behold"—into "an unforgettable picture of a man who would like to be emperor, pathetically concerned that he lacks an heir, and determined, even at the cost of making his

wife a public spectacle, to establish that this is owing to no lack of virility in him" (93). Shakespeare was not tied to authenticity but tied to what early modern audiences expected as authentic.

<sup>24</sup> As Douglas Trevor notes in his introduction to the play, "In Plutarch, Cinna the poet is genuinely mistaken for Cinna the conspirator... In Shakespeare's play, by contrast, the correct identity is established but then ignored" (xxxiv).

<sup>25</sup> J.L. Simmons notes that this portrayal is at odds with Plutarch's: "Plutarch judges that Brutus's 'only fault' was in promising his soldiers two cities to sack as an incentive to fight" (Simmons 73). Shakespeare's conception is "of a Brutus who does not understand the quite fallen condition of humanity" (74). Brutus does not hear their misunderstanding, that they call him Caesar. Humans, Brutus fails to recognize, are fallible: "Shakespeare's Brutus does not know this tendency in man or at least cannot grapple with its implications" (74).

<sup>26</sup> Naomi Conn Liebler discuss the rites themselves, their ambiguous origin, and sets them in context. Lupercal here represents "an ancient religious festival overshadowed and swallowed up by the more modern pragmatic and secular concerns of politics" (63).

<sup>27</sup> John Hunter noted in 1869 that "This is one of Shakespeare's anachronistic licences or inadvertencies: the use of clocks and watches was unknown to the Romans; but they had sun dials and clepsydrae at the time to which this play refers" (Qtd. in Furness, *Tragedie* 99).

<sup>28</sup> For example, imagine the actor's hand to hilt at "You," sword removed at "shall," and sword pointed at Decius and Cinna at "confess." On the next line's "Here," Casca sweeps his sword to the dawn.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FORM AND MADNESS IN *HAMLET*

#### I. Abnormal States of Mind

The generalization that a character's shift from verse to prose corresponds to a shift from sanity to madness prompts little debate among Shakespeareans. At a recent conference, mentioning the familiar generalization caused a wave of subtle agreeing nods to sweep around the room. Old and new divergent approaches—those interested in prose more than madness and those interested in madness more than prose—link the two. A.C. Bradley stated it was Shakespeare's "general rule to assign prose to persons whose state of mind is abnormal" (336). Fifty years later, Milton Crane wrote, "Prose is for Shakespeare the language of melancholy, of cynical and caustic wit, and above all of madness" (146). In his 2001 overview on *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language*, Russ McDonald maintains the change from verse to prose signals "reversals in character, indicating for example the onset of madness or a loss of control" (116), and Carol Thomas Neely's recent monograph on early modern madness claims that "Shakespeare invariably uses prose to represent abnormal states of mind" (Neely 2-3). This generalization works, to a point.

Consider Othello's fit in 4.1. At the height of his jealous rage, Othello, who as G. Wilson Knight said "usually luxuriates in deliberate and magnificent rhetoric" (*Wheel* 103), falls into stuttering prose just before falling into, as the



Folio's stage direction reads, a trance (4.1.50). In *Macbeth* an otherwise versed Lady Macbeth sleepwalks in distracted prose. In *King Lear*, Lear, too, rants on the heath against cataracts and hurricanoes—in verse?

— / — / — / — / — /

You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout

— / — / — / — / — /

Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks! (3.2.2-3)

If Shakespeare's characters go mad in prose, "invariably" as Neely writes, then readers face at least two interpretative choices at this moment in *Lear*. Either Lear's versed madness breaks the rule or the rule reigns and the verse proves Lear's sanity. If verse signifies sanity here, it does so despite contrary evidence. Lear exits two scenes previous, in 2.4—likely weeping, despite all his efforts not to weep—exclaiming: "O Fool, I shall go mad!" (2.4.288). Returning from having chased Lear, Gloucester reports, "The King is in high rage" (2.4.298), and "high rage," suggests madness. Plus, the anonymous gentleman's report to Kent in act three, scene one describes a madman, "minded like the weather, most unquietly" (3.1.2). Finally, when we encounter Lear commanding the storm to singe his white head, this is, at the very least, a kind of madness, even if Lear tells us his wits are only beginning to turn. Who, or what, do we trust? The verse—is this sanity? Gloucester—is this high rage? Or Lear: is the high rage still to come?

Lear persists in verse for 3.2 and begins 3.4 in verse; Lear wavers between verse and prose when Edgar enters the hovel, ending the scene with slivers of

dialogue oscillating between the forms. When Lear seems most mad—trying joint stools for kicking their father—he speaks, primarily, in verse:

— / — / — / — / — /

It shall be done, I will arraign them straight. (3.6.20)

— / — / — / — / — /

Thou robèd man of justice take thy place. (3.6.36)

/ / — / — / — / — /

False justicer, why hast thou let her scape? (3.6.55)

Verse predominates, but before sleeping, Lear slips into prose: "You, sir, I entertain for one of my hundred; only I do not like the fashion of your garments. You will say they are Persian; but let them be changed" (3.6.77-80). Applying the rule, Lear's turn to madness would seem complete, if prose in this scene belonged madmen only: Gloucester and Kent, speaking in prose, enter the scene ahead of Lear's mad entourage. To further complicate matters, 3.6 is prefaced by the brief 3.5, an entirely prose exchange between Cornwall and Edmund. If who uses prose and how prose is used conditions its significance, finding other prose moments deepens the interpretative pitfalls: Lear speaks his first prose to Caius, a disguised Kent, not in madness, but where he feels safest and sanest, with his knights in act 1: "Let me not stay a jot for dinner. Go get it ready. How now, what art thou?" (1.4.8-9). Indeed, the play opens not in verse, but prose: "I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall" (1.1.1-2). Prose, from the play's first lines, connects with anything but madness. Instead prose marks the ribald

jesting between Gloucester and Kent; Goneril and Regan's plotting; Gloucester's questioning of Edmund; Edmund's deception of Edgar; Lear's banter with Caius, his Knights and his fool; and Kent's encounter with Oswald. Not until Edgar's antic disposition does madness accompany prose, and Lear enters prose after Edgar.

In sum, prose does not always indicate madness. Associating madness and prose evinces a critic's desire to stabilize the drama's conflicting dramatic representations of psychological instability. Take, for example, Titus in *Titus Andronicus*. Though some critics and editors contend Titus is not really mad—he does say in an aside that Tamora and sons have but "supposed me mad" (5.2.142)—cutting off your own hand, baking and serving someone her children in a pie, and killing your only daughter is close to, if not, genuine madness.<sup>1</sup> Whether Titus goes mad or only feigns madness, one thing is certain: his madness is not linked with prose. Titus does speak prose in a brief exchange in 4.4 with the unlucky clown who, entering at the wrong moment bearing a basket of pigeons, is mistaken for Jupiter's messenger. The clown's prose likely indicates his social status and the humor of the moment—dark as it is. Titus's shift into prose could correspond with a shift into madness, but there seems to be no overwhelming dramatic reason for that to happen: why more mad now than at any other time. Also, his brother Marcus adopts prose with a clear head, a fact that muddies things further. As Titus interrogates the clown and sends him on an errand to

Saturninus, he does appear genuinely mad, but madness can not account for the prose of those around him.

Madness in this play has no definite relationship to prose, if any. Instead, madness is versed, a possible signal of the rationality underlining a pretended insanity. The verse—viewed as prose's superior—may legitimate genuine madness as the only sane response to the play's circumstances. Also, if verse invariably signals a mental state, then verse links Titus to everyone and links everyone to Titus, further compounding the problem of discerning who is mad and who is not. Titus himself is never quite certain if he is mad. More often than not, however, he seems so. After discovering Lavinia's rape, Titus himself remarks to his brother Marcus that "no man should be mad but I" (3.2.24). Later in the scene, Titus helps Marcus kill a fly, and goes on to "insult on him [the fly]" more, (3.2.71), a series of acts that lead Marcus to remark: "He takes false shadows for true substances" (3.2.80). Marcus repeats his diagnosis in 4.3 to Publius: "is not this a heavy case, / To see thy noble uncle thus distract?" (4.3.26). In response to Titus's attempt to "solicit heaven" with letter-laden arrows, Saturninus says "His sorrows have so overwhelmed his wits" (4.4.10) as to result in "his fits, his frenzy" (4.4.12). On this evidence, Tamora and her sons proceed to "temper him" (4.4.108) in the guise of Revenge, Rape, and Murder and are convinced of "his lunacy" (5.2.70). Titus, however, plays along—his madness is no longer madness. He tells us in an aside that they "supposed me mad" (5.2.142) and at this moment, we are right to wonder if, along with everyone else in the

play, we have wrongly supposed him so. We have already seen him murder and refuse to bury a son in the first act, and do so more or less sanely. He thinks he is right to kill his son despite the fact he is seen twenty-one of his sons die: and is not unmovable opinion in the face of evidence the mark of insanity? In the end, no mark, no indicators provide clear indication of madness or sanity, and discriminating the two proves difficult.

Just as in *Titus*, so it is in *Hamlet*: madness has no definite relationship to prose. Quincy Guy Burris made this contention in 1951, examining the maxim that "*Prose in the mouths of the principals indicates an abnormal state of mind*," Burris finds, as he finds for all such maxims, "Close reading ... confounds them all" (234). He explains:

Hamlet according to this generalization, should speak prose from a troubled mind, blank verse in his sanity. Actually, he does the precise contrary. He speaks prose when, to Ophelia, he pretends madness. Likewise, to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and to Polonius, he simulates madness to avert danger. However, in the frenzy of his grief at Ophelia's funeral, when he leaps into the grave to struggle with Laertes, he speaks blank verse. (234)

Again and again, he writes, "people, worried, hysterical, frenetic, or calm, speak in both forms" (234). Consider too that "though much of the gravediggers' prose is rude enough jest, the prose of Hamlet among the skulls is in no sense foolery" or madness (234).

Hamlet instructs the players in deliberate prose and he will, as he often does, switch into verse with Horatio. During *The Mousetrap*, Hamlet remains in prose and only changes to verse in his mother's closet before going away to England. There he rages against Gertrude's adultery in verse and even upon seeing the ghost remains in verse. When Hamlet declares his sanity in verse during the scene—declaring that his sanity can be proved on his pulse—he seems most mad. And despite the assurances verse might bring, Gertrude believes Hamlet to have been "Mad as the sea and wind when both contend" (4.1.7), that he exhibits a "very madness" (4.1.25).

Verse does not hide madness any more than prose indicates it. Prose is spoken by too wide a range of characters in too wide a range of psychological states to have its functions limited. Though the upper class rarely speak prose in this play, when it is spoken, it is not always madness. The lower-classes, represented only briefly by the gravediggers, speak prose, but so too does Osric, the hyperbole of courtly elevation. Before Osric, however, Hamlet has perhaps his sanest moment in the play in prose, conversing with Horatio in the graveyard. The prose meditations on life and death are sober and stirring and Horatio, for the first time, is drawn into prose. This scene is interrupted by a rhyme:

Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay,  
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.  
O, that the earth which kept the world in awe  
Should patch a wall t'expel the winter's flaw! (5.1.200-203).

This interruption precedes another: Ophelia's maimed funeral procession enters, startling Hamlet. Laertes's profession of familial love provokes Hamlet to burst upon the scene in what Gertrude calls "mere madness" (5.1.287). Hamlet's crazed challenges are versed:

Woo't weep? Woo't fight? Woo't fast? Woo't tear thyself?

Woo't drink up easel? Eat a crocodile?

I'll do't. Dost come here to whine?

To outface me with leaping in her grave?

Be buried quick with her, and so will I. (5.1.278-82)

Hamlet's madness here comes before the calm verse retelling of his return from England.

Though more rule breaking abounds, Burris earlier tempers his claims, giving the generalizations their due. It would be absurd to deny these rules "their moiety of truth" (235). But he warns "It would be equally absurd, however, to assert that [Shakespeare] follows, in any consistent manner, any of the patterns outlined" (235)—that prose is for madness, low characters or letters. The fault of these rules "lies not in the absence of truth, but in the effort to bind him to too petty a pattern, to a too logical consistency" (235). A post-structuralist would assert that applying such patterns denies not Shakespeare's genius, but language's boundless fluidity. Burris's work is hardly outdated, but the wording of some conclusions strike postmodern readers as facile. This is a fault not so much of Burris, but readers—so steeped to our post-structuralist vocabulary, even the not-

so distant critical past seems a foreign country. For Burris, "to assert that Shakespeare had in his mind a carefully articulated plan for the alternation of the three media ... is patently absurd. He did not need to. He used them freely, richly, as they came from the careless opulence of his genius" (239). Knowingly or not, Burris echoes Goethe: "Seine Pläne sind, nach dem gemeinen Stil zu reden, keine Pläne" ["His plans are no plans at all, in the common sense of the word"] (qtd. in Hartman, "Shakespeare" 88). We can, I think, without too much damage to Burris, revise his conclusion, shifting focus from the author to language itself, which we know works according to no plan. If we can attribute greatness to Shakespeare, this is where his greatness lies: in allowing language to do its work, in not pressing pattern upon what will always resist it.

Yet, if prose did signify madness invariably it would be an invaluable key for *Hamlet*, a play whose central character vacillates between prose and verse with an "incoherence of style," as Taine put it (310). Shakespeare, for Taine, was one of the "most immoderate of all violators of language" (310), yet this incoherence of style has a purpose: this vacillation of forms, as Milton Crane writes, is done "partly in order to symbolize [Hamlet's] inner conflict" (5). Most often, Crane notes, Hamlet's motive for prose is

to feign madness, but it is not his sole motive: Hamlet with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern satirizes the world, maintains a suspicious reserve, admits the fact of his melancholy, but conceals



its cause; Hamlet with Horatio and the Gravediggers jests about mortality and moralizes on the skull of Yorick—all in prose. (5)

It is these other moments with different motives that make every moment of prose questionable—all motives are possible. Instead of being an unequivocal sign, prose operates more like a heuristic, a guideline without guarantees to the question that continues to trouble critics: when in *Hamlet* is Hamlet is mad? Whenever we encounter him in a supposedly mad state, we are confounded like Polonius: "Though this be madness, yet there is method in't" (2.2.203-4). Though Hamlet tells us he puts on an "antic disposition," it remains unclear whether it is ever put on or put off.

In 1823 Ludwig Tieck, for example, wrote that it is not clear if he is sane when he tells us he plans to act insane: "Being at a loss to pull himself together, he devises a plan of acting insane—a plan about which it is difficult to ascertain whether he is able to avoid insanity at all or whether he is already in the clutches of mental illness (when he devises the scheme)" (107). Similarly, Shelley called Hamlet's antic disposition "his plan of pretending madness, which, indeed, he does by indulging into excess his own real feelings" (345). For Shelley, Hamlet pretends madness by indulging in his real feelings—presumably, his real madness. Hippolyte Taine would write: "His madness is feigned, I admit; but his mind, as a door whose hinges are twisted, swings and bangs to every wind with a mad precipitance and with a discordant noise" (338). Tieck, Shelley and Taine's comments anticipate the attempts of later critics to pin the problem down. J.

Dover Wilson argues that several speeches prior to his claim of an antic disposition show he is already mad and Wilson concludes that "Shakespeare wishes us to feel that he assumes madness because he cannot help it" (Wilson 92)—that he assumes madness because it has already assumed him. Hamlet's antic disposition, then, is a backward-looking excuse for future actions:

All that actually happens is that, realising he had displayed intense and uncontrollable emotional excitement in the presence of Horatio and Marcellus, he pretends that he has been acting a part, and warns them that it may occur again. (Wilson 92)

Wilson, in this, defers to Dowden's Arden edition:

Hamlet's madness is not deliberately assumed; an antic disposition is, as it were, imposed upon him by the almost hysterical excitement which follows his interview with the Ghost, and he ingeniously justifies it to himself by discovering that it may hereafter serve a purpose. (Dowden xxvi).

Most recently in *Will in the World*, Stephen Greenblatt picks up the thread from Wilson to Dowden to Shelley, claiming that "Hamlet's show of madness, then, seems a cover for something like madness" (Greenblatt, *Will* 307).

Stephen Booth's reading of Hamlet's madness revels in the play's disjunction between real and feigned madness. When Hamlet speaks alone, or supposedly alone, with Ophelia in prose he "appears suddenly, inexplicably, violently, and really mad—this before an audience whose chief identity for the

last hour has consisted in its knowledge that Hamlet is only pretending" (32). At such moments, "When Hamlet seems suddenly mad, the audience is likely for a minute to think that it is mad or that the play is mad" (32). The audience's confusion over madness results from the play's structure: "Each time the play seems insane, it is also obviously ordered, orderly, all of a piece" (32). After Hamlet rails at Ophelia, he enters the next scene "perfectly sane, and lecturing, oddly enough, on what a play should be" (32). As Booth puts it, "the play seems to be the work of a madman" (33).

What to make of all this? Nothing, Lear says, will come of nothing, and making much of so many disparate things is equally hard. Explaining these varied instances—with a single rule or even multiple rules—risks reduction and *Hamlet* refuses to be bound in a nutshell. As an alternative, approaching the play on its "own terms" proves impossible; *Hamlet* owns an inexhaustible store of terms. Yet between the two interpretations offered above—either Lear's mad verse breaks the general rule or the verse rule holds and signifies his sanity—there is another interpretative track: instead of relying on formal cues to resolve questions, using form to "guide us through to the right reading" (2), as Timothy Steele puts it, close formal observation can explore how the blurring of prose and verse functions, how the confusion of forms itself signifies within a speech, scene, or play's larger thematic structures. In short, as Paull Franklin Baum put it, prosody is haunted by "complexity. The various ways in which the formal rhythms of verse combine with the infinitely modulated rhythms of natural prose produce a

resultant which is complicated to the last degree and which almost precludes orderly exposition" (vi). In what follows, I read for form in *Hamlet*, exploring its prosodic complexity, yet my goal is not to settle questions about form, but to unsettle conventional approaches to form, opening it up to further questioning.

To linger over my purpose I ask you to season your admiration a while: I contend that attention to form amplifies indeterminacy. For instance, the confirming nods from conference attendees when I associated prose and madness marked what had, to them, long been determined familiar: prose means madness. But precisely because this formula is familiar, it needs defamiliarizing (*ostranenie*). In trying to make this formula less familiar, I seek to revel in "contradictions and equivocations," and thus make the text "interpretable by making it less readable" (32). As Geoffrey Hartman writes, criticism when effective causes the reader to do a double-take: "The fluency of the reader is affected by a kind of stutter: the critic's response becomes deliberately hesitant. (*Criticism* 32). The power to defamiliarize is more often attributed to literature, not criticism. James Russell Lowell wrote: "It is the office and function of the imagination to renew life in lights and sounds and emotions that are outworn and familiar" (89). Criticism, he wrote, "before this phenomenon of life in literature and language ... is forced to stop short" (89). Criticism can see but not touch the power to defamiliarize: "It flits before us like the bird in the old story. When we think to grasp it, we already hear it singing just beyond us" (89-90). Criticism may stop at this phenomenon, but it does not stop and stare empty-handed. In

criticism we can grasp the bird, carefully in our cupped hands, then let it go, knowing more for having done so.

## II. The Slovenly Wilderness

The origins of Renaissance English dramatic prose, Milton Crane writes, "is veiled in obscurity" (2). In short, "no single precise and consistent principle informing the use of prose existed in the English drama preceding Shakespeare" (Crane 28). Yet, Shakespearean criticism has determined at least three conventional uses for dramatic prose. According to Crane, playwrights use prose "for letters and proclamations, madness, and comic matter" (2).<sup>2</sup> By 1590, Crane remarks, these conventions were "well established" (2) and Shakespeare "rarely violated" them (3). Though Crane allows that "the simple division of verse for serious matter and prose for comic matter which prevailed in the pre-Shakespearean drama is meaningless when applied to *Hamlet* or *King Lear*" (3), nevertheless in Shakespeare's work "prose remained always an inferior medium" (4). Not only different but subordinate to verse, prose marked a passage as contrastive, and the contrast operates in two ways: either parts of a scene "may be set off against one another, or a character may be opposed to the prevailing tone of the scene in which he figures" (5). Crane argues that the use of dramatic prose follows, ultimately, one convention: dramatists used prose for contrast.

Though Crane excepts *Hamlet* from the rule of prose-madness, other critics have not. With atypical breeziness, Bradley applies his prose-madness

maxim to *Hamlet*, noting: "Hamlet when playing the madman, speaks prose, but in soliloquy, in talking with Horatio, and in pleading with his mother, he speaks verse" (365). Though he deemed Shakespeare's connection of prose and madness a general rule, or "custom" (365), he footnoted that for Shakespeare it was one more honored in the breach than the observance:

In the last Act ... [Hamlet] speaks in verse even in the quarrel with Laertes at Ophelia's grave. It would be plausible to explain this either from his imitating what he thinks the rant of Laertes [sic], or by supposing that his 'towering passion' made him forget to act the madman. But in the final also he speaks in verse in the presence of all. This again might be accounted for by saying that he is supposed to be in a lucid interval, as indeed his own language ... implies. But the probability is that Shakespeare's real reason for breaking his rule here was simply that he did not choose to deprive Hamlet of verse on his last appearance. I wonder the disuse of prose in these two scenes has not been observed, and used as an argument, by those who think that Hamlet, with the commission in his pocket, is now resolute. (n.1 365)

Bradley's diction discloses a controlled bewilderment: a "plausible" here, a "might" there. In the end, his hermeneutic strategy, one that is, as Hartman writes, "startling and even liberating in its very drive for harmony" (32), prevails over *Hamlet's* indeterminacy. Liberation via harmony happens, but harmonies also

enchant, entrain and constrain. As Theodor Adorno wrote, music both tames and manifests impulse; and so it happens here. The music-like harmony Bradley achieves tames the text but in so doing manifests via contrast the text's impulsiveness.

Yet, without Bradley's general axiom applied, what wildness would there be? The smuggler needs the customs agent, in the words of Jean-Jacques Lecercle.<sup>3</sup> For a criticism that prizes heterogeneity over harmony, Bradley's deft scrambling helps emphasize hairline textual fractures: applying a general template one can find and organize specific problem points. Consider it this way: applying Bradley's general rule parallels Stevens's placing a jar on a hill. The play's wilderness rises up to meet the rule which, tall and of a port in air, makes the wilderness seem slovenly. The rule, not giving of bird or bush, can make a reader more attune to the wilderness *qua* wilderness, Shakespeare as bewildering reading and critical reading as bewilderment.

In another sense, Bradley's footnote supplies what Hartman calls, "The spectacle of the critic's mind disoriented, bewildered, caught in some 'wild surmise' about the text and struggling to adjust—is not that one of the interests critical writing has for us?" (20). But more than interest, such spectacles hold insight. Bradley's slight disorientation magnifies when one considers a missed opportunity: to read local formal incongruities back into the play's larger tragic structure. As Bradley argues, Shakespearean tragedy represents conflict; the tragedies represent "a world travailing for perfection, but bringing to birth,

together with glorious good, an evil which it is able to overcome only by self-torture and self-waste" (29).<sup>4</sup> In his reading, Shakespearean tragedy is a "painful mystery" where intimations of resignation that there "must needs be a contradiction and no ultimate truth, avail nothing to interpret the mystery" (28-9). Bradley's mystery is structuralism's oppositional structure. Reading the interaction of verse and prose with Bradley's definition of tragedy in mind, division grows together. Hamlet's madness pushes against his verse, his prose pushes against his sanity. Sanity and madness, verse and prose, good and evil become two distincts, division none. The next section takes up these structural oppositions, large and small.

### III. Antitheses

Goethe, A.C. Bradley thought, misunderstood Hamlet. For Bradley, Goethe's reading—really Wilhelm Meister's reading—epitomized "the sentimental view of Hamlet" (103). Though Bradley excerpts and excoriates a different quote, the following is the more famous passage from what Joyce's quaker librarian, Thomas William Lyster, called "those priceless pages" (151):

To me it is clear that Shakespeare meant, in the present case, to represent the effects of a great action laid upon a soul unfit for the performance of it. In this view the whole piece seems to me to be composed. There is an oak-tree planted in a costly jar, which



should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom; the roots  
expand, the jar is shivered. (Goethe 306)

This portrays Hamlet, Bradley writes, as "a graceful youth, sweet and sensitive ... but frail and weak, a kind of Werther" (103), and this portrayal "is utterly untrue" (104). Bradley assaults Goethe's Wilhelm with an imperative that Leavis et al. would thirty years later call close reading: "consider the text" (104). Bradley's Hamlet threatens to "make a ghost" (1.4.85) of his dearest friend, insistently insults the king, rages at Ophelia and his mother, runs Polonius through, sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their death, boards a pirate ship, fights Laertes in Ophelia's grave, kills Claudius and, dying, wrests the poisoned cup from Horatio's hands. This man, he writes, "would have been formidable to Othello or Macbeth" (104). Bradley's Hamlet could sweep Wilhelm's Hamlet from his path "with one sweep of his arm" (104).

Yet, one might justly tell Bradley: consider the texts, Goethe's and Shakespeare's. The compelling list of Hamlet's actions Bradley details are actions compelled; once the Ghost pours his story in the porches of Hamlet's ears, Hamlet's mind is, as the Ghost fears, tainted. When the Ghost exhorts Hamlet not to tolerate his father's murder—"If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not" (1.4.81)—the Ghost expects revenge as response, as does Hamlet; he commands his sinews to "grow not instant old" but to bear him "stiffly up" (1.4.94-95). Yet, those sinews bend and crack. As we know the story, he cannot bear his father's murder; the crime's weight becomes a fardel, a weight he thinks and sweats under.

Sicklied over with thought's pale cast, he loses the name of action and Hamlet becomes synonymous with delay. Further, the actions Bradley lists, all but one, are undertaken after the oak tree's planting. Wilhelm might contend, as I do: in these actions—if they are genuine actions, being as they are actions substituted for a required action—we see the jar breaking. In short, the Ghost's story and its imperative to revenge are the roots expanding in Hamlet, jarring him into actions that protract his unrelenting inaction, his avoidance of *the* action he agreed to take: revenge.

Yet I quibble too with Wilhelm's Hamlet as jar: I doubt it should have held only flowers; instead I imagine a dim terrarium, readers peering through the dappled condensation—flowers, trees, fungus, moss, water, dirt, sticks and stones. Nevertheless, Wilhelm's image of a jar (remember, not a well-wrought urn), if allowed, takes dominion everywhere. Elaborating Goethe's metaphor—even if as Bradley contends it is born of misreading—we can assign it tasks: the oak tree is a ballroot combination of the ghost's imperative, his father's murder, the jar: hamlet's consciousness. The jar, to describe with detail, cannot hold: what is the jar's make up? The jar, Hamlet's consciousness is a fine mixture of cherished dualities. Hamlet is, in his way, a Manichean who sees the world strictly in terms of good and evil. When faced by his father's death now murder, the center around which the oppositions spin cannot hold. *Hamlet* explores these oppositions, these antitheses, at every level, from the philosophical to the rhetorical and back again.

George Wright's essay on "Hendiadys and *Hamlet*" shows how Shakespeare uses a literary device "to explore his characters and to probe his themes" (91). At the minute level of words and conjunctions, for example, Shakespeare uses hendiadys to convey "our dual perception of a dual phenomenon" (80). The conjunction itself joins the words yet also "precisely registers the separateness of the two distinct segments" (80). In doing so, "The perception may even be a triple one—of each idea in turn and then of their combination or fusion" (80). In the end, hendiadys, Wright maintains, a figure of "amplification or intensification," becomes a complex "interweaving, indeed sometimes a muddling, of meanings, a deliberate violation of clear sense" (87). An interweaving that violates: this too could describe the play's interaction of prose and verse, but also the entire play.

A rhetorical strategy that dominates Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is "the use of what rhetoricians have called antitheses and of what the structuralists have come to call binary opposition" (Gates 87). In *Figures in Black*, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., investigates the binaries Frederick Douglass explores in *Narrative of the Life*. But more than a local rhetorical strategy, binary oppositions are, Gates writes, "a fundamental principle of language formation itself" (87). For support Gates assembles formidable authorities: Roman Jakobson, Morris Halle, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Frederic Jameson. In particular, Jameson sees binary oppositions as useful critical tools. Gates explains:

When any two terms are set in opposition to each other, the reader is forced to explore qualitative similarities and differences, to make some connection, and, therefore, to derive some meaning from points of disjunction. If one opposes A to B, for instance, and X to Y, the two cases become similar as long as each involves the presence and absence of a given feature. In short, two terms are brought together by some quality that they share and are then opposed and made to signify the absence and presence of that quality. (88)

In Gates' reading, Douglass reproduces plantation culture, a world where binary classification operates on contrast to the exclusion of comparison. Wherever contrast reigns, Douglass intervenes with comparison. If the slavemaster's appropriate the curse of Ham's tribe to justify exclusion, that same curse will render slavery unscriptural given that, as Douglass writes, "thousands are ushered into the world, annually, who, like myself, owe their existence to white fathers" (qtd. in Gates 94). Douglass, then, acts as a mediating trickster, reversing relations, blurring boundaries, mastering binaries.

While Douglass as narrator masters binaries, similar binaries transform Hamlet into a rogue and peasant slave. Whereas Douglass sets out to dissolve the barriers separating false oppositions, the connections abiding at the heart of binaries revolt Hamlet. Take a fundamental binary: good and bad. Good and bad are, as Hamlet tells us at one point, subjective qualities: "there is nothing either

good or bad but thinking makes it so" (2.2.251-52). However, we know Hamlet is not a relativist. Before the play begins, he has decided that his mother's marriage is bad.<sup>5</sup> His "good mother," within a month,

Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears  
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,  
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post  
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!  
It is not nor it cannot come to good:

But break, my heart; for I must hold my tongue. (1.2.154-59)

That his "good mother" has done something which "cannot come to good" propels Hamlet's melancholy. He does not indulge an exploratory skepticism— as John Updike does, for example, in his novel *Gertrude and Claudius*—to imagine the reasons why Gertrude remarried.<sup>6</sup> Yet, Hamlet's clarity on the marriage runs counter to critical claims that he cannot make up his mind, that "he is pure deferral and diffusion, a hollow void which offers nothing determinate to be known" (72), as Terry Eagleton puts it.<sup>7</sup>

The maxim Hamlet pronounces, that "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so" (2.2.251-52), is not his maxim. Consider where it appears: it surfaces in Hamlet's exchange with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, a pair that he knows is up to no good. As Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter 2.2 of *Hamlet*, Hamlet welcomes them to Elsinore as his "excellent good friends" and "good lads" (2.2.224-225). By and by, he begins questioning: "What have you,

my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune that she sends you to prison hither?" (2.2.241-42). Puzzled, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern ask, "Prison, my lord?" (2.2.243). Denmark, Hamlet responds, is a prison, to which Rosencrantz adds, "Then is the world one" (2.2.245). Not one to be bested, Hamlet fires back that indeed the world is "A goodly one," a goodly prison full of "many confines, wards, and dungeons," with "Denmark being one o'th'worst" (246-248).

Rosencrantz, no longer willing to keep up the joke, says he and Guildenstern "think not so" (2.2.249), a response Hamlet uses against them: indeed, because they think not so, Denmark is not so to them. We return to Hamlet's maxim; he explains to them: "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so" (2.2.251-52). This, Hamlet knows, is only half true.

Repeatedly, *Hamlet* blurs boundaries. As Booth notes, the "To be, or not to be" speech is "determinedly methodical about defining a pair of alternatives that should be as easily distinguishable as any pair imaginable; surely being and not being are distinct from one another" (35). However, as the speech goes on and as the play goes on, "the apparently sure distinction between 'to be' and 'not to be' is becoming less and less easy to maintain" (36). Yet, as being and non-being "become less and less distinguishable, rhetorical coherence continues in force" (37). This unflagging rhetorical coherence in the face of increasing incoherence makes the speech even more contradictory: we are witnessing a self with itself, yet speaking from a soapbox. As Millicent Bell argues, "one may object that the status of Hamlet's soliloquies as rhetoric gives them a certain impersonality. As I

have remarked, they are inadequate representations of his reasons for action" (70).

In particular, she writes,

"To be or not to be"—in which "I" is not used even once—sounds like the young philosophy student's pondering of abstract questions, with the merest implication of personal emotion to make us try, not altogether successfully, to apply them to his case. They show only an *intellectual* inner man. (70)

We witness Hamlet's innermost speech, but perhaps not his innermost thoughts.

Words fly up, thoughts remain below: the inner conflict is smoothed over by the gloss of rhetoric. The fact that this detached speech is in verse gives us no more or less access to Hamlet's madness or sanity. Booth put his finger on the play when he wrote: "*Hamlet* is the tragedy of an audience that cannot make up its mind" (28), echoing Laurence Olivier's voice suspended over a foggy Elsinore: "This is the tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind." As Booth suggests, the audience's confusion is far deeper than Hamlet's.

Hamlet, unlike his audience, can make up his mind if only occasionally; for Hamlet some things are certain and some are not—determining which is which is the conflict. Take the Danish custom of the King's rouse, for instance: there's little question where Hamlet stands. Hamlet is most disturbed by such actions that are more honored in the breach than the observance, like his mother's marriage. Hamlet's questions repeatedly interrogate and lament the dissolving boundaries separating opposed states, conditions, and things. The play, Mack

explains, "reverberates with questions, anguished, meditative, alarmed" (109), and these questions both "mark the phases and even the nuances of the action" and "establish its peculiar baffled tone" (109). The questioning begins with the play's first line: "Who's there?" (1.1.1) and continues unabated to the end. Yet, this interrogative mood is less defined by the act of asking questions than the state of divided doubt or perplexity, the *aporia*, that prompts them. This first question leads to other questions, not just in the play but for it: As Terence Hawkes asks in *Shakespeare and the Reason*, who does he think was going to be there except for the man he was meant to relieve? This tension between Bernardo's question and the knowledge he likely has anticipates the disjunctions to come. In *Shakespeare's Imagination*, Norman Holland writes:

Just as Hamlet and Claudius are pulled in this tension between words and deeds, between thought and actions, between mind and body, between the exterior and the inward man, between mental abstractions and dirty, physical reality, so is the play as a whole; so is man as a whole. And as man responds by questioning, so *Hamlet* is a play of questions. (Holland 171)

Norman Holland, like Mack, insists that *Hamlet* is a play of questions and notes that "In incident after incident, we see the characters questioning, probing, testing, spying" (172). These questions, too, revolve around the fact that "everything in *Hamlet* is fragmented and broken into pairs" (178). In fact, the play "leaves us with a sense of division as the ultimate fact of life" (178). This division is felt



most keenly by Hamlet where it is absent: the division that should exist between uncle and father.

The act his mother committed, for instance,  
     ... blurs the grace and blush of modesty,  
     Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose  
     From the fair forehead of an innocent love,  
     And sets a blister there, makes marriage vows  
     As false as dicers' oaths. (3.4.42-46).

It is precisely such blurring that Hamlet cannot abide, an act that has resulted in the confusion of parental and avuncular relations: his "uncle-father and aunt-mother" (2.2.376). Claudius and Gertrude—brother and sister by Gertrude's earlier marriage to Claudius's brother—by exchanging vows exchanged their previously established relationship to Hamlet.<sup>8</sup> Their willingness to exchange familial roles is parodied later by Hamlet's caustic reversal of parental roles as says farewell to Claudius for England: "Farewell, dear mother" (48). Likely taking this as more of Hamlet's madness, but too incensed not to correct him, Claudius corrects: "Thy loving father, Hamlet." But Hamlet then tests his father-uncle's logic against itself, the logic that must have approved his marriage to Gertrude: "My mother—father and mother is man and wife, and man and wife is one flesh, and so, my mother" (4.3.50-51). At this, Claudius, Hamlet's uncle-father-mother is silent—and so are we.

Claudius, established by one social ritual as his uncle, cannot now be his father; to Hamlet, that Claudius is now his father is as absurd as if he became his mother. What Hamlet views as the essential incompatibility and opposability of Claudius's two roles—uncle and father—haunts his otherwise skeptical nature. "In *Hamlet* the comparison of uncertain duplicates is of deep importance, beginning with the questionable twinship of the ghost with the dead man Hamlet remembers" (58), and continuing throughout the play. And Hamlet's conflict before these blurred boundaries is understandable insofar as he does not seem aware that

social distinctions are by nature fragile; their edges must be marked and those markings observed by members of a culture to protect both its physical integrity and conceptual identity. Such boundaries, whether of individual social status (child/adult, single/married, living/dead) or territorial or even seasonal designations, are socially defined. They are also for the most part imprecise, ambiguous, and therefore require custodial vigilance. (Liebler 117)

Hamlet, I think, would add to this Mary Douglas's assessment that "cultural categories are public matters. They cannot so easily be subject to revision" (40). The truth is somewhere in between: the boundaries may be imprecise, but they are not easily subject to revision. When anything disrupts those boundaries, madness ensues. Even territorial boundaries: Fortinbras's pressure on Denmark's

boundaries results in a kind of madness questioned by Marcellus: he asks Horatio about: "the nightly watch, the accelerated market in domestic and imported munitions, the endless employment in shipyards that 'Does not divide the Sunday from the week' and makes 'the night joint-laborer with the day' (I.i.70)" (Liebler 120). And as Horatio says, such anomalies bode strange eruptions to the state.

These strange eruptions come in waves. But before the eruption, tremors are felt. Before encountering the Ghost of his father, Hamlet is sliding into depression at his mother's hasty marriage. The world is already to him "an unweeded garden" and his distracted verse stutters and starts in this first soliloquy (1.2.129-159). After his interview with the Ghost, Hamlet puts on his "antic disposition" (1.5.172) and he also puts on prose. The first time we see him in prose is 2.2 with Polonius. Perhaps the most intriguing and least understood effect of prose happens here—Polonius, a verse speaker, is drawn into prose, just as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter speaking verse but are attracted into Hamlet's prose. No present theory adequately explains the formal shifts that characters around Hamlet undergo, but I do think it is an instance of a form's ability to socialize those who hear it. A question is whether they enter the form willingly. Either way, a social transaction is taking place where speakers are entering into and moving among a another person's linguistic form, adopting or being adopted by a mode of speech.

Hamlet's speeches with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have a different tone than those with Polonius, seeming more sad than mad. His insistence that the

pair have ulterior motives, for instance, is more indignant than insane. As Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter 2.2 of *Hamlet*, Hamlet welcomes them to Elsinore as his "excellent good friends" and "good lads" (2.2.224-225). As good as they are, he suspects some ill.<sup>9</sup> By and by, he begins questioning: "What have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune that she sends you to prison hither?" (2.2.241-42). Puzzled, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern ask, "Prison, my lord?" (2.2.243). Denmark, Hamlet responds, is a prison, to which Rosencrantz adds, "Then is the world one" (2.2.245). Not one to be bested, Hamlet fires back that indeed the world is "A goodly one," a goodly prison full of "many confines, wards, and dungeons," with "Denmark being one o'th'worst" (246-248). Rosencrantz, no longer willing to keep up the joke, says he and Guildenstern "think not so" (2.2.249), a response Hamlet uses against them: indeed, because they think not so, Denmark is not so to them. For, as Hamlet explains, "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so" (2.2.251-52). This exchange, appearing only in the Folio, is a significant instance of one of the play's insistent blurring of distinctions, the crossing of boundaries, the exchange of opposites.

Time and again in *Hamlet*, the central character stands in quandary after quandary, poised between good and ill. The specific nature of these quandaries changes: sometimes he is forced to often decide between good and bad, other times, and more treacherously, he is forced to decide whether something is either good or bad. Sometimes, in the face of these decisions, he is certain, but

sometimes he is not. And sometimes this uncertainty is productive, yet at other times it is not. The word "good" and its variants are used over a hundred times in *Hamlet*, yet there are few things that can ever come to any good, at least to Hamlet. This is perhaps one of the play's central quandaries—relativity with abandon is impossible. Life requires some stabilization of categories. But how do we decide which aspects of life to treat as relative, which to treat as essential? What to question, what not?

Consider the scene above: Hamlet, when Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter, may at first be genuinely happy to see his good friends, the good lads. But, as the conversation continues, good goes bad: he repeatedly asks his "good friends" why they have come to Elsinore. Against their evasion, Hamlet finally states: "I know the good King and Queen have sent for you" (2.2.282). The "good" King and Queen—the sarcasm drips. Calling the earth "this goodly frame" negates the word and all its related terms: goodly is sterile, excellent is foul, majestical is pestilent, good is bad. Later in the scene, however, Hamlet's welcoming of the players as "good friends" seems sincere—his attitude brightens. He then explains the variability of taste: one man's meat is another man's poison. The play he remembers, "pleased not the million; 'twas caviar to the general" but it was nonetheless "an excellent play" (2.2.428). The players are good, the play was good, this he knows, but the goodness of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern remains to be sounded.

His certainty here leads to his scene-ending resolution that "The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king" (2.2.590-1). And it is this play that will solve for him the primary dilemma: whether the ghost is good or bad. Because, as he reminds us here "the devil hath power / To assume a pleasing shape." When he first encountered the ghost, he proclaimed himself caught between possibilities; it is was either a "spirit of health or a goblin damned" (1.4.40). Yet, the ghost's "questionable shape" mirrors the world's shape: all people, all events, all things prompt questions. The world's changeability demands variability of us, but the movement required is exhausting: we require momentary stays against the confusion. During the play, Hamlet reaches moments where thinking on a thing's value does not make it so. In these moments skepticism pauses and essentialism takes hold—when X is good because X is essentially good and not because I have thought it so—it is these moments that most torture Hamlet, making him a victim of his own selective skepticism.

Hamlet's resolution ending act 2, however, is as uncertain as the audience has been the entire act. He tells us he is sane: "his uncle-father and aunt-mother" are deceived. He is but mad, "north-north-west," (2.2.369) he tells them. Upon Polonius's arrival he shifts to his madder self: "Buzz, buzz." Yet then again he shifts into sanity when the players arrive, only then to show how he can shift from prose into verse for performative reasons, when he gives his speech on Pyrrhus. The scene continues in prose, but ends with Hamlet's versed "rogue and peasant slave" speech. Guildenstern later reports what they've seen is a "crafty madness"

and the King himself on watching Hamlet's interaction with Ophelia (though Hamlet cries "it hath made me mad") notes that "what he spake, though it lacked form a little, / Was not like madness" (164)—though he does later flatly call him mad: "Madness in great ones must not unwatched go" (3.1.148). That is the key phrase: it lacks form a *little*. Claudius does not mean Hamlet lacks literary form, but organizational and ideational shape. Nevertheless, that is at all it lacks. Again, Hamlet's prose attracts Ophelia into the orbit of prose. All of which makes the King sure he must send Hamlet to England, a place, we later discover, where the line between madness and sanity is non-existent.

#### IV. *Qui nil molitur inepte?*

In 5.1, Hamlet and Horatio watch a "fellow" who "sings in grave-making" (5.1.65-66). The voyeurs provide running commentary as the gravedigger "jowls" skulls to the ground (5.1.76). Fascinated by this fine revolution, as he calls it, Hamlet interrupts the gravedigger's work. They exchange equivocations until Hamlet switches subjects, asking: "How long has thou been a grave maker?" Never one to give a straight answer, the gravedigger replies he began the occupation "that day our last king Hamlet overcame Fortinbras" (5.1.144). Hamlet continues to probe:

HAMLET. How long since is that?

FIRST CLOWN. Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell that. It was the very day that young Hamlet was born—he that was mad and sent into England.

HAMLET. Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

FIRST CLOWN. Why, because 'a was mad. 'A shall recover his wits there, of, if 'a do not, 'tis no great matter there.

HAMLET. Why?

FIRST CLOWN. 'Twill not be seen in him there. There the men are as mad as he. (5.1.144-55)

Mocking England's burgeoning sense of national identity, the humor also draws on early modern anxieties about the fine line dividing madness and sanity: to reword Blaise Pascal's comments in *Pensées*, men in England are so necessarily mad, that not to be mad there would amount to another form of madness.<sup>10</sup>

After ribbing England, the gravedigger taunts the anonymous skull of one who was mad:

FIRST CLOWN. A whoreson, mad fellow's it was. Whose do you think it was?

HAMLET. Nay, I know not.

FIRST CLOWN. A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! 'A pour'd a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the King's jester. (5.1.170-72)



The gravedigger implies no connection between Hamlet's madness, supposedly so real it requires him to be removed to England, and Yorick's feigned and licensed madness. Yet the difference lies in memory: Hamlet's madness, so noticed in Denmark, will be unnoticed in England and so forgotten at home. By Yorick's madness people, including Hamlet, remember him, recalling his gibes, gambols, songs, mocks and flashes of merriment. Even without his lively form—now dead, an empty, skinless skull smelling of earth—Yorick's madness kindles memories; he lives again in Hamlet's good report.

Ironically, Hamlet's madness is not seen in him by the gravedigger—madness goes unnoticed in Denmark as well as England. This dramatizes a problem that plagues the play—when is Hamlet mad? Is Hamlet mad—and a problem that plagued the period: how does one diagnose madness? Consider the seventh stanza of "The Argument of the Frontispiece" to Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. It reads:

But see the Madman rage downright  
 With furious looks, a ghastly sight.  
 Naked in chains bound doth he lie,  
 And roars amain, he knows not why.  
 Observe him; for as in a glass,  
 Thine angry portraiture it was.  
 His picture keep still in thy presence;  
 'Twixt him and thee there's no difference.

Richard Burton is "supposed to have written the Argument" that appeared with the engraved title page in the 1628 edition (Bamborough 1).<sup>11</sup> Corbett and Lightbown note: "Under *Hypocondriacus*, numbered '7' in the margin, is *Maniacus*, a madman in rags shackled to the floor; in the sky Mars and Luna in conjunction" (192). They find various discrepancies between the engraving and 'The Argument'," one being that "the representation of the madman does not tally faithfully with the poem" (195): primarily, he is not naked nor is he lying down.<sup>12</sup> He appears to be rising, and roaring seems an overstatement. The pun on downright—as "absolutely" and an indication of location (the madman is down to the right)—lightens the pun Burton is making with us: madman and reader are one. But the madman's supposed Everyman-esque appearance is foiled by the stark difference between the madman and the other characters. The madman *is* different—in chains and raving—yet Burton's verse converts that difference into sameness. We are all, in a way, raving in chains, naked to the world, clothes being but poor protection; we are all, Lear would say, unaccommodated men.<sup>13</sup>

Burton's vision sees more than most, making it hard to claim his position represents early modern English perspectives on madness. However, the legion of past writers he enlists as authorities impresses. If anyone doubts him, he writes, I shall desire him to make a brief survey of the world, as Cyprian adviseth Donat; 'supposing himself to be transported to the top of some high mountain, and thence to behold the tumults and chances of this wavering world, he cannot choose but laugh at, or pity it'. (39). Burton then lists St. Hierome (Jerome), Epichthonius

Cosmopolites, Apollonius, Strabo, Cebes, Seneca, Porcius Latro (one of Ovid's instructors), Alexander Gordonius, Jason Pratensis, (Girolamo) Savonrola, Guianerius, Aelianus Montaltus, David, Plutarch, Tully (Cicero), and Soloman, to name a few.<sup>14</sup> Authors from classical to biblical times affirm, as he writes, quoting Horace's epistle to the Pisones: "*Qui nil molitur inepte*, who is not brain-sick?" (39). The axiom's truth lies in its irony: despite madness's supposed pandemic proportions, it is an abnormal condition, like melancholy—madness stands out. And it is this uniqueness that universalizes madness: everyone has idiosyncrasies. Still, the desire to normalize one's self remains: I have habits, the world has compulsions.

Madness, then, exists in relation to others: "Madness is the most solitary of afflictions to the people who experience it; but it is the most social of maladies to those who observe its effects" (MacDonald 1). As Michael MacDonald puts it: "mental disorders manifest themselves in their victims' relationships with other men and women," and they are "profoundly influenced by social and cultural conditions" (MacDonald 1). The relativity of madness, like any fluid phenomena, prompts rule-making—how does one discriminate madness from sanity? Returning to *Hamlet*, we can fine-tune this general question: How does one tell when Hamlet is mad? This question occupies the following pages. Yet, given the character's and the play's complexity, the question requires more refinement: how does one tell when Hamlet is mad, pretending madness, sane, or pretending

sanity? *Hamlet* offers no single answer, but explores many. One heuristic the play introduces for determining madness is formal: lovesick verses.

## V. Hamlet's Tenders

Polonius's advice to Ophelia: "In few, Ophelia, / Do not believe his vows" (1.3.127-28). Hamlet's tenders, as she calls them, are not to be trusted. Yet, after Ophelia tells of Hamlet's entrance, Polonius believes his vows—just at the moment they become most false. Gertrude later tells us she hoped Ophelia to have been Hamlet's wife—something Polonius never seemed to know. But Polonius trusts what he reads. At first he does not believe Hamlet could love her, yet then he does and it is verse that convinces him. In 2.2 Polonius asserts to Claudius and Gertrude: "Your noble son is mad" (2.2.92). His evidence? A letter containing, importantly, a poem. Polonius reads and annotates aloud:

POLONIUS. I have a daughter—have while she is mine—

Who in her duty and obedience, mark,

Hath given me this. Now gather, and surmise.

"To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified

Ophelia"—

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; "beautified" is a vile phrase.

But you shall hear. Thus:

[He reads.]

"In her excellent white bosom, these, etc."

QUEEN. Came this from Hamlet to her?

POLONIUS. Good madam, stay awhile. I will be faithful.

[He reads.]

"Doubt thou the stars are fire;

Doubt that the sun doth move;

Doubt truth to be a liar;

But never doubt I love.

O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers; I have not art to reckon my groans; but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu.

Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him, Hamlet."

The poem's diction occupies Polonius more than its prosody. His elliptical "etc." intimates that ill and vile phrases abound. Hamlet, however, remarks on his own meter: he is ill at numbers. As at other times in this play, the same word has different weights. Polonius's "ill phrase" registers his prudery, but Hamlet's ill numbers anticipate his fear of an ill report from the players and, more ominously, how all is later ill about his heart.

Lacking art to reckon his groans—one wonders, is this letter dated before or after he learned his father was cut off, "no reckoning made"? (1.5.79)—Hamlet epitomizes the lovesick poet, one mad with love, or one just mad. On April 21 in 1657, John Evelyn wrote after visiting Bedlam that he saw "several poor

miserable creatures in chains; one of them was mad with making verses" (323).

This could have been the fate of *As You Like It's* Orlando, if caught hammer in hand before a poeticized perennial. Characters driven to verses by love occupied Shakespeare, or at least his funny bone. In *Love's Labor's Lost*, Don Armado invokes: "Assist me, some extemporal god of rhyme, for I am sure I shall turn sonnet. Devise, wit; write, pen; for I am for whole volumes in folio" (1.2.176-8). Hamlet's ill numbers, however, are no laughing matter. For Polonius, they evince his madness: the poem is not explained because it does not need explaining—poetry proves love. The sonnets revealed as *Much Ado About Nothing* ends confirm Benedick and Beatrice's love for one another; the sonnets written in secret, discovered in public in *Love's Labor's Lost* also confirm, as Berowne says, "love is as mad as Ajax." A lunatic, a lover, and a bad poet: love is the very cause of Hamlet's lunacy, the downfall of his prosody.

It is not alone Hamlet's inky cloak nor his lovesick verses that convinces the royal court or the play's critics that he is mad. Adducing poetry as evidence of his madness runs counter to the generalization that prose distinguishes madness, but it also serves as a fitting final reminder that generalizations generally fail to hold. Shakespeare did associate prose and mental instability, but not invariably. For every clear case where prose indicates madness, as many instances emerge where characters rave in verse.

## VI. Conclusion

This chapter, more than any other, has been a failure. Facing *Hamlet* is worse, far worse, than facing Orillo in Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, the monster whose lopped-off arms rejoin the body. In Boiardo's story, Orlando achieved victory "by an astounding feat of dexterity: he slashed off both the monster's arms and quick as a wink seized them and flung them into the river" (qtd. in Krieger 12). The literary critic, Robert Penn Warren described, is a slower Orlando, one unable to muster the dexterity to defeat the perpetually monstrous text. Yet, Warren notes, "the monster will always win, and the critic knows this. He does not want to win. He knows that he must always play stooge to the monster. All he wants to do is to give the monster a chance to exhibit again its miraculous power" (qtd. in Krieger 13). Tempering Warren's fairy-tale vocabulary but not the tale, Murray Krieger rephrases the critic's task: she dares the text to make her fail. Yet, the critic "must knowingly fail to make it work. To the extent that he is a good critic and a faithful reader, that failure will be a significant measure of its success" (Krieger 13). In essence, this chapter has intended to be an extended meditation on the failure of a critical axiom, that prose means madness. But in meditating, I have by indirections never quite found directions out; *Hamlet* has fewer exits than entrances. Having reached this chapter's point of exit, the end of this strange history, this conclusion can register little more than a feeling of mere oblivion, sans everything. Yet one thing remains conclusive, if critical failure can measure success, then, as A. Clutton Brock

wrote, "The reader is now, I hope, convinced that *Hamlet* is a good play, if he needed convincing" (83).



## CHAPTER FOUR NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Bate, for example, does not believe Titus goes mad:

Critics who believe that revengers like Hieronimo and Titus are really mad read the play-within-the-play as 'a symbol of the revenger's subjective world' and argue that the 'entrance into this self-created illusory world is what finally allows the revenger to act' (Hallett, 10). I would argue on the contrary that the revenger is but mad north-north-west and that his play or banquet serves as a mirror of the civic world, revealing it to be not illusory but dependent upon the performances of power. (Bate, Introduction 27)

<sup>2</sup> Harry Levin writes that "Credit for the actual innovation" of giving prose to madness, "should be accorded to Marlowe's *I Tamburlaine*, wherein the distraught Zabina anticipates Ophelia with a good-night speech in distracted prose (IV.ii.247-56)" (Levin 115). Given that *The Spanish Tragedy*'s prose Painter's scene is likely a later addition, Levin hazards the claim that most "pre-Shakespearean madmen" rave in grandiose verse until Marlowe's Zabina inserted prose into a versed drama. Yet, Levin notes, "By the time of *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1633), this convention seems to have come full circle; Sir Giles Overreach raves in Marlovian blank verse" (127). Though Zabina goes mad in prose, act four, scene four, an earlier scene, gives prose to Tamburlaine, his

retinue and his prisoners as they feast. Tamburlaine and Usumcasane discuss calmly in prose whether to feed Bajazeth his own flesh or his wife's while the caged Bajazeth curses Tamburlaine in verse. The exchange is chilling yet Tamburlaine and his retinue, sane in manner if not act, speak a humorless prose.

<sup>3</sup> Jean-Jacques Lecercle writes that

linguistics is an imaginary construct, and that the only real in language is that of grammar, i.e. of largely arbitrary and negative frontiers. But the rules are overturned—the smuggler needs the customs officer, and where there is no (linguistic) prohibition, there is no speakeasy. I wish to describe language as a speakeasy, sometimes raided by the grammatical untouchable, where fraudulent imitations of the real stuff are served in the midst of mirth and boisterousness. In other words, I refuse—and here I am closer to Deleuze and Guattari than to Milner—to separate language from the world of which it is a part, to make it autonomous (as *langue* is *causa sui*). Language is both material and social. (52)

<sup>4</sup> John Drakakis's introduction to *Alternative Shakespeares* (6-9) looks at Bradley's conception of tragedy, declaring it a "reduction of Hegel" (6). With the quotes Drakakis gathers, the conception does seem a reduction, but I think a close

reading of Bradley's text shows a mind conflicting with its own refusal "to break with the metaphysical conception of order and harmony" (7).

<sup>5</sup> Eliot wrote in "Hamlet and His Problems" that "The essential emotion of the play is the feeling of a son towards a guilty mother" (124). Lisa Jardine critiques this "unlawful marriage," looking at what "constituted unlawful marriage in the early modern period" to understand "the *offence* that it causes Hamlet" (Jardine 262).

<sup>6</sup> Updike's imagining of Gertrude's youth, her adolescent marriage to an older Hamlet, her repressed attraction to a younger, more modest Claudius, is sympathetic.

<sup>7</sup> Bloom also asserts this, in *Shakespeare: Invention of the Human*, that Hamlet has no center.

<sup>8</sup> Margaret Ferguson notes that "Claudius's isocolonic style is also characteristically oxymoronic: opposites are smoothly joined by syntax and sound" (293).

<sup>9</sup> Hamlet often has suspicions. He recounts to Horatio his trip to England, during which "in my heart there was a kind of fighting / That would not let me sleep" (5.2.4-5). Later, before his dual with Laertes, he tells Horatio "how ill all's here about my heart" (5.2.201-2).

<sup>10</sup> This is one more instance of Shakespeare enjoying mocking the English's sense of national identity. In *Othello*, Iago dispenses backhanded praise

on the country where he learned a drinking song. He tells Cassio about his "canakin clink" song that he "learned it in England, where indeed they are most potent in potting. Your Dane, your German, and your swag-bellied Hollander—drink, ho!—are nothing to your English" (2.3). Cassio, unfamiliar with English drinking ability, has Iago explain: "Why, [an Englishman] drinks you, with facility, your Dane dead drunk; he sweats not to overthrow your Almain; he gives your Hollander a vomit ere the next pottle can be filled" (2.3). There are no figures for what percentage of Shakespeare's audience would have thought ability to drink foreigners into vomiting fits a badge of honor.

<sup>11</sup> The frontispiece was changed in 1638 to add a "skull-cap with what appears to be a lace edging" (Bamborough 1).

<sup>12</sup> Not only does the frontispiece not fit the poem, the poem does not fit the book: madness is not melancholy. As for madness the condition, Burton's *Anatomy* does not treat it. Corbett and Lightbown argue that although

The madman is shown on the title-page ... [yet] Burton decided to treat madness apart from melancholy, and, following the most advanced thought on the subject, as a disease of the mind best cured by the attention of the most approved physicians. He defines it as 'a vehement Dotage'. (199)

<sup>13</sup> This notion of madness as ubiquitous persists. As Foucault writes: "There is no madness but that which is in every man, since it is man who

constitutes madness in the attachment he bears for himself and the illusions he entertains" (26).

<sup>14</sup> Epichthonius Cosmopolites is supposed to have originated the cartographic image of a map framed by a foolscap. See Rodney W. Shirley, "Epichthonius Cosmopolites: Who Was He?," *The Map Collector* (1982): 39-40.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## LEARNING TO CURSE IN IAMBES:

NATURE VERS(E)S CULTURE IN *THE TEMPEST*

## I. The High Green Hill Sits Always by the Sea

So, to remember our changing garden, we  
 Are linked as children in a circle dancing:  
 My Dear One is mine as mirrors are lonely,  
 And the high green hill sits always by the sea.

—W.H. Auden, "The Sea and the Mirror."

In W.H. Auden's "The Sea and the Mirror," Caliban addresses the audience as their echo, asking the questions they would ask, if they could, of "our so good, so great, so dead author" (422). He begins:

We must own [*for the present I speak your echo*] to a nervous  
 perplexity not unmixed, frankly, with downright resentment. How  
*can* we grant the indulgence for which in his epilogue your  
 personified type of the creative so lamely, tamely pleaded?  
 Imprisoned, by you, in the mood doubtful, loaded by you, with  
 distressing embarrassments, we are, we submit, in no position to set  
*anyone* free. (423)

As a phrase, few come as close as "the mood doubtful" to summing up how audiences may feel—and how I do feel—after reading or watching *The Tempest*. The mood doubtful most prevails over Caliban, as it must have done for Auden. Consider the character Auden constructs: his syntax alone has more charms than Sycorax. With Henry James's prose style, Caliban holds forth in a self-possessed, recrudescant ramble.<sup>1</sup> Far from being merely "a gibbering fist-clenched creature," Auden's Caliban strolls a city, never left alone "to go my whole free-wheeling way to disorder ... to forge checks or water the widow's stock," yet this Caliban indulges "an unmitigatedly minor wildness" (434): he has license to break shoelaces, spill soup and lose borrowed books.

Auden concretizes his allegorical Caliban to cross-examine and emphasize the blurring of allegorical dualities seen dominating the play. He intended his long poem, the subtitle tells, as "A Commentary on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*," but more specifically a commentary on the play as "a manichean work" (qtd. in Kirsch xiii). Auden frowned on the play, "not because it shows the relation of Nature to Spirit as one of conflict and hostility, which in fallen man it is, but because it puts the blame for this upon Nature and makes the Spirit innocent" (xiii). Auden is both right and wrong: right to see the play in terms of duality, but wrong to think it resolves them. Instead, as Leo Marx wrote, the play "implies that we can remain human, which is to say, fully integrated beings, only when we follow some such course, back and forth, between our social and natural (animal) selves" (70). One can understand Auden's conclusion given the reconciliatory

ending—Prospero returns to Milan, Ariel is freed: Spirit seems to prevail. Yet, spirit, or rather the spirit of culture (and given that Prospero's power over spirits derives from books, aligning the two is appropriate at least for now), causes much of the conflict and hostility the play stages—Caliban desires to rape Miranda after learning her language; Prospero's turn to books has him turned out of Milan; Caliban's plans for insurrection take shape after meeting Stephano and Trinculo; and the list goes on.

Auden's sense of spirit's innocence, I think, misreads the play, but produces, as Bloom would say, a strong misreading: "The Sea in the Mirror," in correcting what was perceived as the play's Manichean philosophy, helps to underscore just how Manichean *The Tempest* is not. Nature and Spirit, or Nature and Imagination, or Nature and Civilization, or Nature and Culture, or Nature and Art—whatever binary you choose, the play blurs: no character, as character or as allegorical personification, possesses the plain and holy innocence Miranda invokes as she banishes bashful cunning. Yet with cunning banished and innocence attained, she enters into a relationship where love turns all to lies, where cunning comes rushing in: "for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle, / And I would call it fair play" (5.1.176-77). Auden's poem, focused on exploring dualities, becomes an ideal plateau from which to view the play's insistent undermining of oppositions: reading the play, we find that the high green hill, as Auden says, sits always by the sea.<sup>2</sup>



In what follows, I read the blurring of boundaries separating dualities—to assuage, if for a moment, the mood doubtful—as the play's *leitmotiv*, the thematic watchtower under which all else passes, including the play's distribution of prose and verse. I am hardly the first and unlikely the last to see the play in these terms. Through this lens, even if darkly, critics have seen *The Tempest*. As Terence Hawkes writes, "Most critics would recognize the lineaments of the 'pastoral drama' described by Frank Kermode. Focusing on the opposition of Nature and Culture, pitting their representatives, Caliban and Prospero, firmly against each other, this seems to be the play's organizing principle" (*That* 1-2).<sup>3</sup> This principle may organize the play, yet Hawkes notes the play interrogates the organization:

Culture and Nature are not the simple opposites we tend to presuppose in our covert preference for one over the other, and convincing arguments exist to persuade us that what we call 'nature' is really just a special case, if not a deliberate invention, of what we term 'culture': that Prospero actively constructs Caliban as part of a complex self-establishing process perhaps recorded in his admission, 'this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine.' (23)<sup>4</sup>

I would push the assertion further, asserting the terms' and characters' mutual dependence.<sup>5</sup> Prospero may have constructed Caliban, but Prospero required Caliban's constructions and instructions. Prospero acknowledges to Miranda that Caliban

does make our fire,  
 Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices  
 That profit us. (1.2.314-315).

And without Caliban's instruction in "all the qualities o' th' isle, / The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile" (1.2.341), Prospero and Miranda would have howled, not whiled, away twelve winters. Nature needs culturing as much as culture needs naturing.<sup>6</sup>

To prove nature and culture resist neat division one hardly needs Raymond Williams, yet his *Keywords* does make clear that nature is "perhaps the most complex word in the language" (219) and culture is "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (87). Not only do the terms refuse to stand still, but they refuse to stay separated. Claude Lévi-Strauss opened *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* with the proclamation that "Of all the principles advanced by the forerunners of sociology, probably none has been so confidently repudiated as the distinction between nature and society" (3). Though repudiated, Lévi-Strauss acknowledges the binary's usefulness as a conceptual tool: "this distinction between nature and society [or culture], while of no acceptable historical significance, does contain a logic, fully justifying its use by modern sociology as a methodological tool" (3). The distinction may not correspond to an objective world, but it does offer a useful lens through which to view it.

Yet, the defining and subsequent fusing of opposites may organize the play more than Nature and Culture. As Terence Eagleton maintains in *Shakespeare and Society*, the "theme of unity is dominant" in *The Tempest*, but the play problematizes unity as multiplicity in singularity (158). Throughout, "Opposites are resolved into unity," but into an "image of two-in-one" or "singleness in variety" (159). Eagleton examines Ferdinand's doubled sense of Ariel's music: "I have followed it, / Or it hath drawn me rather" (1.2.397-98). For Ferdinand, as for many characters in the play, "Following and being drawn, acting and being acted on, seem part of a single condition" (159). The theme of active passivity, or passive activity, characterizes Caliban's relationship with Stephano and Trinculo, as Eagleton notes. Caliban's promise to "show [them] every fertile inch of the isle," to show the pair the best springs, berries, and fishing holes, is a promise to serve by leading: Caliban serves by leading them to where "crabs grow," and he serves by instructing them how to snare "the nimble marmoset" (3.1.146-170). Stephano and Trinculo accept their position as students yet close the scene by commanding Caliban as a subject, "Lead the way" (3.1.186), a command repeated at the end of 3.2, "Lead, monster" (3.2.153). This imperative to lead complicates the trio's hierarchy of relations: in commanding Caliban to lead, they relinquish command, and in accepting the command to lead, Caliban follows. In this spirit, I want to follow Caliban, specifically follow the line of his verse through the play, maze that it is. Picking up this thread, I intend to follow not out but deeper into the maze, to explore how the entanglements of verse and

prose serve as a metaphor that tightens the play's entanglements of nature and culture. We will find, as Alonso says, "This is as strange a maze as e'er men trod."

## II. Leade Monster

Neil Rhodes' 2004 book *Shakespeare and the Origins of English* asks: "Why does Shakespeare end up by allowing what the First Folio refers to as a 'salvage and deformed slave' to speak blank verse?" (144).<sup>7</sup> Though Rhodes attends to Caliban's "versatile eloquence," Rhodes analyses the plays movements "between the furious and the visionary," not between prose and verse (145). Nevertheless, Rhodes does acknowledge the difficulty that Caliban's verse poses: "If stylistic register helps to define status in Shakespeare, it is noticeably unhelpful in the case of Caliban" (145). If any Shakespearean character should speak prose according to the high/verse-low/prose model, it is Caliban—if we believe what other characters say about him.<sup>8</sup> Characters across the play's social spectrum describe Caliban as inferior. Prospero insists six times in one scene that Caliban is his slave: "Caliban, my slave" (1.2.311), "Slave! Caliban!" (1.2.316), "poisonous slave" (1.2.322), and a "most lying slave" (1.2.347) and "Abhorred slave" (1.2.354) and "So, slave, hence!" (1.2.377). Prospero calls him a "tortoise" while Stephano and Trinculo call him a "strange fish" (2.2.28), "some monster of the isle" (2.2.66) and "a devil" (2.2.103). These descriptors make Caliban not only subhuman but inhuman, pushing him further down the great chain of being and further away from Shakespeare's usual verse speakers.<sup>9</sup>

Despite this rarely discussed incongruity, critics consider an extended imperative spoken by Caliban in 3.2 of *The Tempest* some of Shakespeare's greatest poetry:

Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises,  
 Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.  
 Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
 Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,  
 That if I then had waked after long sleep,  
 Will make sleep again, and then in dreaming  
 The clouds methought would open and show riches  
 Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked  
 I cried to dream again. (3.2.133-41)

In 1933 Emma Brockway Wagner claimed that the passage proves "Caliban is poetic, that he hears and is affected by music, and that he has a soul that aspires." Wagner wrote that "The poetry, the pathos, the longing expressed in this passage are universally recognized" (76-75). Little did Wagner know her "universally" would include a wide of range critics from a diverse range of critical perspectives. F. E. Halliday termed the lines "celestial" in 1954 (185) and a few years later, Leo Marx wrote that "Caliban's bestiality is partly offset by his singular, heavy-footed grace of language. (If the language was given him by Miranda, the feeling is his own)" (59-60). More recently, an otherwise disinterested Stephen Orgel called Caliban's speech, "one of the great poetic setpieces in the play" (23). Arguing that

"we hear much more than curses in Caliban's language," Orgel noted Caliban's possession of "a rich and sensuous apprehension of nature, and an imaginative power that is second only to Prospero's" (23). Likewise, Julia Reinhard Lupton has called the speech "Caliban's fullest poetic response to the island" (12), a "poetry of wonder" that "indicates ... the creative potentials of the Creature himself" (13). Park Honan writes that "The monster's language is like that of a Stratford glover's son, in being above his worldly station or rank, and he speaks the loveliest blank-verse lines in *The Tempest*" (372). Frank Kermode in *Shakespeare's Language* is more reserved, but claims Caliban's speech shows that he "responds to music as good men are supposed to do who have it in their souls" (296).<sup>10</sup>

We can trace this adulation's origin to the Romantics. As Milton's Satan fired the imagination of poets as diverse as Blake and Shelley, Shakespeare's "poisonous slave, got by the devil himself" captured Schlegel's imagination, who wrote: "Caliban has become a by-word as the strange creation of a poetical imagination" (395), as he indeed had. Schlegel continued:

He is rude, but not vulgar; he never falls into the prosaic and low familiarity of his drunken associates, for he is, in his way, a poetical being; he always speaks in verse. He has picked up every thing dissonant and thorny in language to compose out of it a vocabulary of his own; and of the whole variety of nature, the

hateful, repulsive, and pettily deformed, have alone been  
impressed on his imagination. (395)

Twentieth-century assessments of Caliban's poetry likely owe more to Henry Howard Furness's preface to the play's 1892 Variorum edition. Picking up where Schlegel left off, Furness tells us prevailing criticism saw Caliban as "the abhorred slave typical of the earth and of all brutish appetites" (vi). For a taste of this prevailing criticism, consider Hippolyte Taine's perspective on Caliban, whom he calls

a deformed savage, fed on roots, growls like a beast under the hand of Prospero, who has subdued him. He howls continually against his master, though he knows that every curse will be paid back with 'cramps and aches.' He is a chained wolf, trembling and fierce, who tries to bite when approached, and who crouches when he sees the lash raised above him. He has a foul sensuality, a loud base laugh, the gluttony of degraded humanity. He wished to violate Miranda in her sleep. He cries for his food, and gorges himself when he gets it... We find in him rebellious and baffled passions, which are eager to be avenged and satiated. Stephano had beaten his comrade. Caliban cries, "Beat him enough: after a little time I'll beat him too." (317)

Furness, however, saw good in him, or rather, saw the good in Caliban that Shakespeare saw: "Kindly Nature never wholly deserts her offspring, nor does

Shakespeare" (vi). Shakespeare, he writes, could not have created a character "without infusing in his nature some charm which might be observingly distilled out" (vi). Furness asks: "Why is it that Caliban's speech is always rhythmical? There is no character," Furness continues, "whose words fall at times into sweeter cadences" (vi). The riddle's answer is clear for Furness—Miranda's beauty and the beauty of the landscape itself inspired Caliban's poetry:

When Caliban says that it was his mistress who showed him the man in the moon with his dog and bush, what a picture is unfolded to us of summer nights on the Enchanted Island, where, however quiet lies the landscape in the broad moonlight, every hill and brook and standing lake and grove is peopled with elves, and on the shore, overlooking the yellow sands where fairies foot it feately, sits the young instructress deciphering for the misshapen slave at her feet the features of the full-orbed moon. With such a teacher, in such hours, would it be possible for Caliban, even were he twice the monster that he is, to resist, at the most impressible age, the subtle influence of the atmosphere of poetry which breathed in every nook and corner of the Enchanted Island? (vi)

"The wonder," Furness concludes, "is not that he ever after speak in rhythm; the wonder would be if he did not" (vi). In sum, "It was by Miranda's pure loveliness and rare refinement that the soul of poetry was distilled out of that evil thing" (vii), and without this "poetic feeling in Caliban," audiences might never have



come to the clearest sense of the "magic isle of our imaginations, forever floating in unknown summer seas" (vii). For this, we owe Caliban thanks: Furness asked rhetorically, "Is there no gratitude due for such a glimpse of the isle as that?" (vii).

Not all critics or writers have thought we owe Caliban or his poetry thanks, or worse, any critical attention. Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* satirized the servant-monster, reading him as "the mark of a larger artistic weakness, a pandering to the theatrical public" (Pask 740). Though John Dryden was fascinated with Caliban as an emblem of Shakespeare's "copiousness," William Davenant and Dryden excised the lines entirely from their version of the play.<sup>11</sup> At roughly the same plot moment in Davenant and Dryden's *The Tempest*, instead of commenting on the isle's music, Caliban himself sings a song accompanied by "great roaring Devils" (4.2.42) left him in Sycorax's will. To which performance Trincalo (Shakespeare's Trinculo) responds: "What a merry Tyrant am I, to have my Music and pay nothing for't!" (4.2.50-51). The 1756 opera of *The Tempest* also omits the speech and J. P. Kemble's 1789 version only retains the first two lines of Caliban's speech: "Be not afraid; the isle is full of noises, / Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not" (3.2). Charles Kean's 1857 version of the play reintegrates Caliban's speech in full.<sup>12</sup>

Though later critics share Furness's fascination with Caliban's poetry, they are fascinated with a different facet of it. An important word triggers Furness's interest in Caliban's poetry, a word absent in later critics' descriptions: rhythm. Though they call Caliban poetic (by which term most mean, as Wagner puts it,

pathos, or, as Orgel writes, sensuousness), later critics would not take up Furness's original question: "Why is it that Caliban's speech is always rhythmical?" (vi). That Furness asks about Caliban's rhythm and not his meter is a crucial distinction. In choosing "rhythm" over "meter" at a time when metrical tests were rigorously measuring the pulse of Shakespeare's verse, Furness may want to shift attention away from the statistical to the musical. But whether rhythm or meter, musical or statistical, Furness is asking a question that is not asked again until over a hundred years later.

### III. *Cela dut être*.

Unpublished in his lifetime, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages* sets out to persuade readers that "The speech of the first men is represented to us [as if they had been] Geometers' languages, whereas we can see that they were Poets' languages. It had to be so [*Cela dut être*]. (245). When he writes "Poets's languages," Rousseau means figurative: "Figurative language arose first, proper [or literal] meaning was found last" (246). The evidence, to him, is obvious. The passions (our "moral needs") unite men, not need—"Not hunger, nor thirst, but love, hatred, pity, anger"—therefore, because language unites, it has its origin in what unites: the passions (245). While primarily figurative, the first languages were also "songlike and passionate before they were simple and methodical [*les premières langues furent chantantes et passionnées avant d'être simples et méthodiques*]" (246). In essence, using numberless sounds

to which they added "meter or quantity," the first peoples would have overcome inarticulation by music: "men would sing rather than speak" (248). This first language would "neglect grammatical analogy in favor of euphony, variety, harmony and beauty of sounds" (248); the first language would be poetry.

Rousseau is one among many writers past and present to make the entangled contention that society's origin depends upon poetic language and that poetic language was born of social interaction. In this theory, if poetry can be said to have a nature, that nature is social, as it was for writers like George Puttenham in 1589.<sup>13</sup> Not only was poetry's nature social for Puttenham, but poetry was what drove man out of nature and into society. Puttenham argues that poetry preceded "ciuil society" and was even "th'originall cause and occasion of their first assemblies" (sig. C2<sup>r</sup>).<sup>14</sup> Poets brought people together, tamed animals, organized religion, and they were

the first lawmakers to the people, and the first politiens, deuising  
all expedient means for th'establishment of Common wealth, to  
hold and containe the people in order and duety by force and  
vertue of good and wholesome lawes, made for the preseruacion of  
the publique peace and tranquillitie. (sig. C3<sup>r</sup>)

Compare Puttenham's position to Octavio Paz's in *The Bow and the Lyre*: "There are no peoples without poetry," he writes, and in fact, "the existence of a society without songs, myths, or other poetic expression is inconceivable" (57). Where

society appears, so too does poetry. If society's basis is language, it is not prose language, but poetry.

Or as Paz puts it, "Prose is a tardy genre," the "offspring of thought's distrust of the [poetic] tendencies of language" (57). One might substitute Julia Kristeva's work for Paz here. Kristeva, in *Revolution in Poetic Language* defines literature, via Mallarmé, as "rhythm made intelligible by syntax" (30). In short, poetic language acts as a return to the semiotic *chora*, that pre-linguistic, pre-social space that "precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm" (26). Language itself (the symbolic) is born from the *chora* (the semiotic)—society is born of rhythm.

Puttenham and Paz avow that without poetry society would not exist, a view Sidney endorses. Poetry, Sidney wrote, was "first light giver to ignorance, and first nurse whose milk little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges" (103). Consider too William Webbe's words:

To begin therefore with the first that was first worthelye  
memorable in the excellent gyft of Poetrye, the best writers agree it  
was *Orpheus*, who by the sweete gyft of his heauenly Poetry,  
withdrew men from raungyng uncertainly, and wandring brutishly  
about, and made them gather together, and keepe company, made  
houses, and kept fellowshippe together, who therefore is reported  
(as *Horace* sayth) to asswage the fiercenesse of Tygers, and moove  
the harde Flynts. After him was *Amphion*, who was the first that

caused Citties to bee builded, and men therein to liue decently and orderly according to lawe and right. (sig. A8<sup>v</sup>-B4<sup>r</sup>)

Poetry educates, in the strictest sense of *educare*: it leads man out of ignorance and into society. This mythic origin for poetry betrays an anxiety to give a glorious past to what seemed headed into an inglorious future. But this myth gives a sharp sense of how early modern English poets envisioned poetry's relation to the world of human activity. Poetry was not tangential, but essential.

Yet, the more one meditates on poetry's role in living, as Webbe put it, according to law and right, poetry as societal glue becomes a sticky subject. Poetry's power to unify people is its greatest strength and its most deplorable weakness; poetry, for better *and* worse, circumvents reason with rhyme. To borrow a phrase from Stephen Greenblatt, what Renaissance England called poetry we call ideology.<sup>15</sup> As an elementary definition of ideology, Slavoj Žižek in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* suggests "the well-known phrase from Marx's *Capital*: 'Sie wissen das nicht, aber sie tun es' — 'they do not know it, but they are doing it'. The very concept of ideology implies a kind of basic, constitutive *naïveté*" (28). The influence of poetry's narratives and verse's rhythms can render readers and audiences naïve, a phrase that can mean artless or innocent. Ideology enforces a kind of specious innocence that poems help police. Yet poems can also pierce ideology, unwinding its entanglements.

The foundational narratives cited above portray a poetry obligated to bring people together, but this poetry misses a primary function: curse. The word

"curse," from Old English *curs*, eerily has no known origin; a word with no beginning that spells—or hopes to spell—someone's end. Uttered with intent, poetry can ostracize a person as well as organize people. And, as Greenblatt writes, "This paradox ... was central to Shakespeare's entire career. As a dramatist and a poet, he was simultaneously the agent of civility and the agent of subversion" (*Will* 48). This paradoxical position mirrors the questions hanging over Caliban: whence his verse? Nature or nurture? This was Furness's question and it has different answers depending on whether one reads Caliban's rhythm as metrical or not. Caliban has rhythmic speech, to be sure, but it is not quantifiably different in rhythm from that of Prospero, Miranda, or any other of Shakespeare's characters. Curses, not verses, define Caliban's idiosyncratic language. Yet, these curses are most often versed. Simon Palfrey argues that Caliban's

grammar is in part an emulation of Prospero and Miranda, and the monster's graceful iambic pentameters might be considered a small triumph of civility. At times he betrays the rhythms of court, speaking with an antithetical, almost euphuistic symmetry. But he uses such rhetoric knowingly, even parodically. (163)

That Caliban uses verse as parody is possible, but it is unclear why the parody would persist even into private moments. Either way, his outline becomes less clear and status more problematic.

Alternately, Neil Rhodes notes that Caliban "says he has been taught language by Prospero, but allows him no credit for his poetry, and given

Prospero's own claim that he is ineducable we are more likely to conclude that Caliban is really some sort of primitive bard or barbarous rhymers" (145). Turning to early modern treatises, there is a nascent multiculturalism that suggests verse is a pan-cultural phenomenon. Daniel, for example, argues that English verse traditions are not "grosse, vulgare, barbarous" (sig. D4<sup>v</sup>) but "vniuersall" (sig. F3<sup>r</sup>) and found in other lands. He cites

Turkish Rymes ... any example in Europe ... The Sclauonian and Arabian tongs acquaint a great part of Asia and Affrique with it, the Moscouite, Polack, Hungarian, German, Italian, French, and Spaniard vse no other harmony of words. The Irish, Briton, Scot, Dane, Saxon, english, and all the Inhabitants of this Iland, either haue hither brought, or here found the same in vse. (sigs. F3<sup>r</sup>-F3<sup>v</sup>)

Earlier, George Puttenham maintained that accentual verse

was common to all the nations of the world besides, whom the Latines and Greekes in speciall called barbarous. So as it was notwithstanding the first and most ancient Poesie, and the most vniversall, which two points do otherwise giue to all humane inuentions and affaires no small credit. This is proued by certificate of marchants & trauellers, who by nauigations haue surueyed the whole world, and discovered large countries and strange peoples wild and sauage, affirming that the American, the Perusine & the very Canniball, do sing and also say, their highest

and holiest matters in certaine riming versicles and not in prose,  
 which proues also that our maner of vulgar Poesie is more ancient  
 then the artificiall of the Greeks and Latines, ours comming by  
 instinct of nature, which was before Art or observation, and vused  
 with the sauage and vnciuill, who were before all science or  
 ciuilitie. (C4r)

Puttenham, then, would tell Palfrey that Caliban's rhythmic verse is not a sign of civility but nature itself. Yet, iambic pentameter is a cultural hybrid, and English verse marked with French (syllabic tradition) and Italian (*endecasillabo*) civilities. As rhythm, iambic pentameter connects Caliban with nature and the new world—Puttenham's Americans, Peruvians, and cannibals—but as meter, iambic pentameter signals old-world education.

#### IV. Education

Caliban's initial education by Prospero was like his first moments with Stephano and Trinculo. Caliban followed by leading:

When thou cam'st first,  
 Thou strok'st me and made much of me; wouldst give me  
 Water with berries in't, and teach me how  
 To name the bigger light and how the less,  
 That burn by day and night; and then I loved thee,



And showed the all the qualities o' th' isle,

The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile (1.2.332-38)

As Caliban tells the story, when Prospero first arrived, he comforted Caliban, gave him "Water with berries in't." Prospero not only provided what few material comforts he could, he and Miranda educated Caliban, an education Caliban repaid in kind: in return for comforts and language, Caliban instructed Prospero in the island's landscape. Their relationship was reciprocal, until Caliban attempted to reciprocate Miranda's love—in teaching Caliban the sun and moon Prospero neglected the birds and bees.

Caliban's attempt to "violate / The honor" of Prospero's child is the reason he gives for ruling the island. Though Prospero subjected Caliban to his rule, Caliban is never fully subjugated. Though Prospero has lodged Caliban "In this hard rock" (1.2.346) and keeps him from "The rest o'th'Island" (1.2.347), he cannot rescind language. Prospero can pinch and cramp him, but Caliban's speech is beyond Prospero's curses—yet Prospero is not beyond Caliban's.

Despite the assertion that Caliban has a "nature" on which "Nurture can never stick" (4.1.188-89), language is the one bit of Prospero's nurture that did stick to Caliban's nature. English, here a stand-in for Milanese, is not Caliban's native language. Early in the play Caliban confirms the fact of Miranda's language instruction, but complicates the matter with a second-person possessive pronoun:

You taught me language, and my profit on't  
 Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you  
 For learning me your language! (1.2.362-64)

That Caliban curses Miranda not for the teaching of language but the teaching of "*your* language" troubles any retelling of his linguistic history: either Caliban was without language and English was his first—as Miranda implies when she reminds Caliban that she "took pains to make" Caliban speak (1.2.353)—or English is his second language— as Caliban himself suggests when he stresses that the language Miranda learned him to speak was not his, but hers.<sup>16</sup> Caliban's education was double-edged: the language is now his and he uses it to curse, but that language was first Prospero's. Yet, without Prospero's language he could never have planned and executed his insurrection: Prospero's curse-worthy language is what enables the coup attempt. Without it there would be no talking with Stephano and Trinculo, no persuading them with verse to burn books or bash heads.

#### V. Caliban's Verses Versus the Editors

Neil Rhodes claims Caliban's problematic status has prompted editorial problems: "Editors from the First Folio onwards have struggled to decide which of his speeches should be in verse and which in prose" (145). If so, signs of the past struggle have eroded. In footnotes, Rhodes locates this struggle in Nicholas Rowe's commentary and later John Holt's, but neither Rowe nor Holt think

Caliban a problem. In fact, no early editor does. John Upton remarks on his verse in 1748, in *Critical Observations on Shakespeare*, but only to note that Caliban often uses an iambic trimeter acatalectic line. This line, however, does not evince a problem for Upton, but evidences Shakespeare's "fine ear and skill" (Vickers, *Critical* 3: 319). Otherwise, eighteenth-century critics agree time and again with Dryden's first assessment of Caliban, as John Holt would rephrase it: "His Language is finely adapted nay peculiarized to his Character" (Vickers, *Critical* 3: 344). Overall, Caliban, much less his verse and prose, produced relatively little commentary from 1623 to the early 1800s.

Though the fact Caliban speaks verse has troubled few past editors, it does nonetheless present problems, if small ones, to twenty-first century editors. It is relatively certain that the scribe Ralph Crane worked on the play, a printer with notable habits: "in particular the lack of clarity in indicating prose and verse, and his readiness to amend the verse where he found it unmetrical, both by elision and by substantive changes to the text" (Lindley 223). Crane's work on *The Tempest* makes any attempt at definitive demarcations between verse and prose impossible, yet the real extent of Crane's influence in this case remains unknowable.<sup>17</sup> David Lindley sums up the verse and prose situation in *The Tempest*:

The scenes involving Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban are printed erratically in F, but in practice pose few serious problems. The general pattern is that Stephano and Trinculo always speak in

prose, whilst Caliban, who speaks verse to himself and to Prospero, moves from prose to verse in his conversations with these characters in each scene. (233)

Earlier editors confirm Lindley's impression of the text. As W.W. Greg wrote, "The text of *The Tempest* is clean," so clean in fact that J. Dover Wilson thought it printed from Shakespeare's manuscript (151).

Kermode in his Arden edition remarks on "the exceptionally 'clean' character of the substantive text, which is generally agreed to be one of the most careful in the Folio" (xi). He continues:

There is some other evidence that *The Tempest* was, more than most of the other plays, the object of editorial care. Its division into Acts and Scenes is accurate and thorough; it has the unusual distinction of bearing an indication of locality ("An un-inhabited Island"); it is one of the four plays equipped with a *Dramatis Personae*. There is certainly a presumption that it was, as the first play in the collection, quite attentively prepared. (xii)

The text also has "excellent punctuation," one among many "marks of editorial care" (xii).

Cleanliness does not rule out any editorial problems, but with *The Tempest*, Greg only struggles, as many editors have, over the provenance of the play's stage directions, a question now considered settled by Trevor Howard-Hill. The only metrical confusion Greg indexes is in *King Lear* and overall, Greg

maintains that, "With certain exceptions (such as the tendency of the Shakespeare first folio to split some lines in two) the printer may be supposed normally to have followed his copy fairly close in this" (liii). Greg, in fact, offers some of the more helpful comments:

The author, on the contrary, was, we may suspect, often loose in his habits, and it would be unwise to attach any great significance to what he appears to have done. The blank-verse line was itself an elastic unit, and Shakespeare at any rate, especially in his later work, did not seek to cut it to a rigid length. (liii)

More generally, any problems where verse appears as prose and vice versa, Greg attributes to technical exigencies:

... an author sometimes crowded additions into the margin of his manuscript in such a way that the metrical structure was obscured, in which case the printer was reduced either to setting them as prose or to cutting them up as best he could in accordance with his own idea of verse. Also the absence of capitalization in the manuscript tended to obscure the distinction between verse and prose, and it is not uncommon to find the printer mistaking one for the other. (liii)

Greg is confident in his ability to detect verse hidden in prose and prose sliced into verse, a confidence modern textual studies would now admonish. Yet, Greg's honesty pays tribute to the text's instability: given that no rule seems to have been

followed, the editor may be "guided by his own sense of the fitness of the verse"

(liii). What Greg allows is what textual studies now maintains, that editorial decision is often, at root, a matter of one's own sense of fitness.

Lindley continues to detail the particular problems:

In 2.2 his shift to verse as he speaks of the island at line 137 is unambiguous, and seems to suit his fascination with the material world. Things are perhaps less clear in 3.2. After line 46 all his speeches fit comfortably as verse, and are so printed in F. His earlier speeches are less certain. Lines 21-2 are printed as verse, are regular iambics, and could be preserved as such, but since his subsequent speeches cannot be reduced to regularity and must be taken as prose, I have chosen, on the analogy of 2.2 and of 4.1 (where Caliban also begins with prose but swiftly moves to verse), to lineate 21-2 as prose, so that Caliban's move to verse is a decisive one. (233)

Pope first smoothed over the shift in 2.2 (line 137 in Lindley, 169 in Furness) and all subsequent editors follow his lead, much as Stephano follows Caliban—"without any more talking" (2.2.150). Instead of printing the lines as unbroken prose as was done from 1623 to Rowe's edition, Lindley's version matches Pope's:

I'll show thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee berries;  
I'll fish for thee, and get thee wood enough.  
A plague upon the tyrant that I serve!

I'll bear him no more sticks, but follow thee,

Thou wondrous man. (2.2.137-41)

Lindley's concluding remarks bear repeating: "the imposition of an assumption of consistency in the division of verse and prose might lead to a failure to recognise brief moments when Shakespeare's practice tolerates fluid movement between them" (236). A closer examination upholds Lindley's claim for fluidity, but pushes it further: throughout *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's practice does not tolerate fluid movement so much as it is defined by fluid movement.

## VI. The Trio

The fluid complexity of Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano's relationship is registered in the formal confusion of 3.2. To further complicate matters, Shakespeare's irregular late verse resists whatever pressure one places on it: formally, the late verse pushes the pentameter toward prose, and prose toward pentameter creating a verse-like prose and a prose-like verse. This formal confusion, however, has its place, echoing the play's thematic of divided unity. Neither verse or prose form leads the other, but within each form, as within the trio of Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban, hierarchy remains a problem. Prose and verse combine, but each stands apart as a distinct formal device with specific socializing functions: the upper class speak verse, and the lower class speak prose. But not always: for instance, 3.2 ends with a lineation problem. In the Folio, Stephano and Trinculo speak verse yet the last edition to keep Stephano and

Trinculo's lines as verse was Nicholas Rowe's in 1709. Since Alexander Pope's edition in 1723, they've spoken prose.

Pope's edition set out with specific principles. In his preface, Pope claims he will talk not about the author, but the author's works, and he will instead "give an account of the fate of his Works, and the disadvantages under which they have been transmitted to us" (i). While Pope does not address the author's life, the author remains central: the goal is to "extenuate many faults which are [Shakespeare's], and clear him from the imputation of many which are not" (ii). Pope desires to exorcise Shakespeare of defects and aims to "account for these defects, from several causes and accidents" (iv). The first cause for the defects lies in the fact that Shakespeare wrote "Stage-Poetry," a type of writing, "particularly levell'd to please the *Populace*" (v). Another cause is "deduced from our Author's being a *Player*" (vii). Finally, the problem lies with "editors" (xiv) whose practices have led readers and audiences to suspect that Shakespeare wanted "sense as well as learning" (xv). Pope continues that, "Prose from verse they did not know, and they accordingly printed one for the other throughout the volume" (xix). Pope's "they" equivocates. Pages before he has specifically targeted Heminges and Condell's practice of using what is "said to be printed from the *Original Copies*" (xvii). But the problem with these copies is again a matter of plurality—to many hands involved, and especially the lower-class hands of players. As Pope explains, the folio came from "no better than the *Prompter's Book*, or *Piece-meal Parts* written out for the use of the actors" (xvii). The editing



duo made their mistake in using what Pope sees as the most corrupt of all: plays based on acting texts.

He notes "the Players," a group he feels he "ought in justice to remark, that the Judgment, as well as Condition, of that class of people was then far inferior to what it is in our days" (xix), might have caused these mislineations. Even the period's best theatres, he writes, "were Inns and Taverns" and the "top of the profession" was composed of "meer Players, not Gentlemen of the stage" (xix). For clarification, he explains where players sat in houses: "They were led into the Buttery by the steward, not plac'd at the Lord's table" and were deprived of "those advantages they now enjoy" which is "intimacy (not to say dearness) with people of the first condition" (xix). Ultimately, Pope faults Shakespeare: if he had taken care to publish his works readers would find "the errors lessened by some thousands" (xx).

Generally, editors have elided any verse that complicates these characters' social status, a common practice. But in the instance closing 4.2, the confused distribution of verse and prose enacts the play's exploration of tangled opposites. After Caliban's "Be not afeard" speech, the scene ends with these lines:

*Ste.* This will proue a braue kingdome to me,

Where I shall haue my Musicke for nothing.

*Cal.* When *Prospero* is destroy'd.

*Ste.* That shall be by and by:

I remember the storie.

*Trin.* The sound is going away.

Lets follow it, and after do our worke.

*Ste.* Leade Monster,

Wee'l follow: I would I could see this Taborer,

He layes it on.

*Trin.* Wilt come?

Ile follow *Stephano*.

The Folio lineation is revealing. The first line's concluding "me" mirrors Stephano's "kingdome" (*kingdome*) and highlights Stephano's profusion of first person pronouns: the objective form, the subjective form and finally the possessive. Caliban wakes the solipsistic Stephano, reminding the daydreaming Stephano that his fantasy requires Prospero's destruction but Stephano's babbling "be by and by" (anticipating the "b" in "remember") leads into slant-rhyming "story" with "destroy'd." Trinculo then interrupts to complain the sound is going away, an interruption that is regular iambic pentameter—Trinculo enters verse as the sound of Ariel's tabor enters him: "Let's follow it, and after do our worke" (3.2.148).<sup>18</sup> Whether read as strict iambic pentameter, allowing the first foot as a spondee, this is by all rules an allowable line not unlike a line of Prospero's later: "(Weake Masters though ye be) I haue bedymned" (5.1.41). Trinculo follows with "follow" and Stephano's "follow" echoes Trinculo's. Stephano's "I would I could" is the first of several rhymes: the a's in "Taborer" and "layes," the -il's in "Wilt" and "Ile," and the o's in in Trinculo's proclamation to "follow Stephano."

If Trinculo or Stephano do speak verse, its brief presence does not erase what their prose has told us about them. In a formal reading, their prose is significant in that it appears to be what induces prose in Caliban. Whereas they are resolutely prose speakers, Caliban only reaches into prose occasionally and more or less unsystematically—but perhaps consciously. Caliban seems to know when he speaks in verse and when in prose and this is unusual. Generally, it is a safe assumption that Shakespearean characters do not know they are speaking in verse. Although in *As You Like It* Jacques immediately notices when Orlando enters act 4 speaking in blank verse ("God b' wi' you an you talk in blank verse" [4.1.29]), as Wright maintains, "the mode in which a character speaks—verse or prose—and the style adopted for any particular conversation are usually to be understood as having been chosen by the poet, not by the character" (*Shakespeare's* 255). Caliban, however, seems aware. When he first meets the pair, Caliban speaks prose in snatches. Caliban's sparse prose turns back to verse as he persuades Stephano and Trinculo in 3.2 to batter Prospero's skull and burn his books. Caliban's turn to verse is his call to arms: this is Caliban's St. Crispian's Day speech. Verse, he thinks, as Henry V knew, and as Brutus didn't know in *Julius Caesar*, is more persuasive in certain contexts. It is this awareness that makes Caliban a problem: most characters who begin in and then shift out of verse like Caliban are noble characters—and most of those, except Henry V, go mad. Caliban is one of few characters who seem conscious of their form whether

verse or prose—or at least conscious of socio-linguistic register, for which the differences between prose and verse are Shakespeare's shorthand.

## VII. Power Relations

Power relations, Russ McDonald writes, "are inscribed in iambic pentameter, which is constructed on the interdependence of syllables, an ordered struggle within stressed and unstressed units of sound" (15).<sup>19</sup> Power relations are also inscribed in the movements between forms, in the struggles into and out of them. *The Tempest* begins with a group of mariners and courtiers struggling against Prospero's storm—and each other. As the Boatswain asks, so too does the play: "What cares these roarers for the name of king?" (1.1.16-17). Titles are unimportant: councilors cannot calm storms, but neither can the Boatswain counsel the courtiers to remain below. The court party repays the Boatswain's counsel with curses: "bawling, blasphemous, incharitable dog," "cur," "whoreson dog," "insolent noisemaker" (1.1.40-45). Cursing the Boatswain, however, works as much magic as blessing him: what cares these roarers for the name of Boatswain? Names and titles—marks of social distinction—are empty.

While the Boatswain reminds the anxious court party they're not in charge, the exchange also highlights his position's titularity. The courtiers themselves care little for the name of Boatswain: they want the Master. The name of Master, however, is, in this scene, hollow and powerless like all names: the Master appears in the scene's first few lines and disappears. The Boatswain's refusal to

fetch the Master for Alonso and Antonio is a refusal to perform a useless task: what can the Master do? The storm is now the master. As when asked by Antonio where the Master is, the Boatswain replies: "Do you not hear him?" (1.1.13). In referring the title of master to the storm, the Boatswain does not know how right he is: this is Prospero's storm—the storm by which he is making himself heard.

Like Sly's verse in *The Taming's* induction, the verse spoken here may signal social status, but social status is under heavy interrogation. The social world the courtier's verse represents is out of place—just as verse is in the Boatswain's mouth. Marine and court hierarchies contest, vying for verse and prose—the mariners seagoing experience contends with the court party's sense of decorum—while the ultimate usefulness of social distinction is clear: the roarers do not care. Formally, this storm scene begins and ends in prose, the literary form of the lower ranks, and is only punctuated with verse. In most modern editions, Gonzalo, Sebastian, and Antonio intervene with verse before the scene ends. Their verse, however, is an editorial invention. In the Folio, the Boatswain and Gonzalo speak verse where Antonio and Sebastian remain in prose. Most editors treat this as mislineation and revise, denying the Boatswain verse while giving it to Antonio and Sebastian. The amount of verse in the scene and who speaks it when is less important than the fact that it is useless whoever speaks it.

As the distinction between prose and verse is blurred, so too is the fate of the mariners and courtiers. Though the courtiers are told to go below, some do, some do not; though the mariners try to stay on top of things, they cannot. In the

end, as the characters themselves exclaim, they split. The boat's imagined split is the play's formal texture: a divisive group, together on a boat (one language), split (into verse and prose) in order to be reshaped together (as a dramatic whole).

Though the boat never splits, those aboard the boat do: the mariners remain on board while the courtiers, to put it bluntly, spill—or did some split?—overboard. This is all part of Ariel's plan to disperse them "'bout the ilse" (1.2.220), a split that results in several separate unities: the mariners remain a group as does the court party—minus Ferdinand. While Ariel tells Prospero the mariners are "all under hatches stowed" (1.2.230), another group is forming unbeknownst to Ariel. Stephano and Trinculo, the play's primary prose speakers, have washed ashore and begin to erode Prospero's power as they erode the play's formal structure: prose and verse—Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban—will intrude unexpectedly.

This unexpectedness is a fundamental function of Shakespeare's distribution of prose and verse in *The Tempest*, a practice defined by fluid movement between forms, movement that highlights boundaries as it dissolves them, causing us to wonder, like Ferdinand at Ariel's music: where should this be? I'th air or th'earth? Ferdinand's perplexity at Ariel's song, which passes, as Geoffrey Hartman notes, "from revel to dirge," and then into barking and crowing nonsense, matches the reader's perplexity (96). *The Tempest* forces readers to finger the fine line between "woe and wonder, dreaming and waking, cursing and blessing," never sure which is which (Hartman, *Criticism* 97). The line between cursing and blessing is touched when Ferdinand first hears Miranda speak. He is

surprised: "My language? Heavens!" (1.2.432). Shocked at hearing a woman speak his language in such a place—"were I but where 'tis spoken" (1.2.434)—imagine the curses if he had encountered Caliban first. When Caliban speaks, Stephano invokes hell not heaven: "Where the devil should he learn our language?" (2.2.67). While Miranda's language attracted Ferdinand's admiration, Caliban's language stirs Stephano's sympathy. Stephano proposes to "give him some relief, if it be but for that" (2.2.68). Hard work requires relief, and, as critics know, the language's work is hard. But, being a servant, Stephano's idea of communication relies on command. Stephano's rhetoric, dominated with imperatives, recapitulates what he has likely heard his entire life: "He shall taste of my bottle ... He shall pay for him ... Come on your ways ... Open your mouth ... come forth ... Swear by this bottle ... kiss the book ... Come, kiss ... lead the way" (2.2). As Auden put it, "*many a sore bottom finds / A sorer one to kick*" (408).

#### VIII. Quicksand

G. Wilson Knight wrote that "'Metre' is clearly a dangerous quicksand. Any poet can vary his metre at will, and Shakespeare appears to have done so continually" (*Shakespearian* 3). Combining Shakespeare's potential capriciousness with that of even more capricious editors, actors, collaborators and one has the quicksand's composition. The only mention of quicksand in Shakespeare comes in *3 Henry VI*. Queen Margaret, that tiger's heart wrapped in a

woman's hide, urges her son and other soldiers on in the face of sure defeat with imagery that recalls *The Tempest's* storm scene:

We will not from the helm to sit and weep,  
 But keep our course, though the rough wind say no,  
 From shelves and rocks that threaten us with wreck.  
 As good to chide the waves as speak them fair.  
 And what is Edward but ruthless sea?  
 What Clarence but a quicksand of deceit?  
 And Richard but a ragged fatal rock?  
 All these the enemies to our poor bark.  
 Say you can swim; alas, 'tis but a while!  
 Tread on the sand; why, there you quickly sink:  
 Bestride the rock; the tide will wash you off,  
 Or else you famish; that's a threefold death.  
 This speak I, lords, to let you understand,  
 If case some one of you would fly from us,  
 That there's no hoped-for mercy with the brothers  
 More than with ruthless waves, with sands and rocks.  
 Why, courage then! what cannot be avoided  
 'Twere childish weakness to lament or fear.

Criticism should not avoid the clear problems Shakespeare's meter presents. If meter is a quicksand, what is prose? A ruthless sea. And rhyme? A ragged fatal



rock. Even materialist and historicist scholarship finds no hoped-for mercy from the text. These difficulties should be faced, unavoidable as they are, with a panoply of critical methods, as I have tried to do here, no one left alone to famish. If every person shift for all the rest, and let no person take care for himself, then we can race into the quicksand and the storm, crying *corragio*, bully monster, *corragio*!

## CHAPTER FIVE NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Caliban can contain multitudes. Robert Browning, for example, made him a natural theologian meditating on Setebos in the mire.

<sup>2</sup> Relying on Auden, I risk going unread: "the formalist or playful thinker who does not justify his enterprise by appealing to theory or science is not considered worthwhile" (Hartman, "Tea" 3). Appealing to poetry to read poetry remains relatively uncommon in Shakespeare studies. "Suspicious of their love for literature, they are even more suspicious of the literary element in themselves. They are sober people who shield themselves from contamination by the hygiene of their practice" (Hartman, "Tea" 5).

<sup>3</sup> To Kermode, "*The Tempest* is a pastoral drama" (xxiv) in which "The main opposition is between the worlds of Prospero's Art, and Caliban's Nature. Caliban is the core of the play; like the shepherd in formal pastoral, he is the natural man against whom the cultivated man is measured" (xxiv). As he explains: "Caliban represents (at present we must over-simplify) nature without benefit of nurture; Nature, opposed to an Art which is man's power over the created world and over himself; nature divorced from grace, or the senses without the mind" (xxiv-xxv). Caliban, he writes, is the ground of the play. His function is to illuminate by contrast the world of art, nurture, civility" (xxv).

<sup>4</sup> A.L. Kroeber argues the exact opposite of Hawkes over his career. theorizing "culture as a 'level' or 'order' or 'emergent' of natural phenomena" (4).

Culture, he wrote, "must always be construed as within nature" (10). Leo Marx writes: "the artificial is but a special, human category of the natural. Mind and nature are in essence one. Nature is all. This conviction underlies the seriousness with which Shakespeare, in *The Tempest*, treats the pastoral ideal" (67)

<sup>5</sup> Terry Eagleton wisely inserts a third term:

Ariel and Caliban symbolize, respectively, pure language and pure body, a freedom which threatens to transgress all restraint and a sensuous enslavement to material limit. Prospero strives to bring both of them within that dialectic of activity and passivity, bondage and transcendence, which for Shakespeare is prototypically human. (*William* 95)

<sup>6</sup> I would be remiss not to at least footnote Polixenes' speech from *The Winter's Tale*:

... nature is made better by no mean  
But nature makes that mean. So, over that art  
Which you say adds to nature, is an art  
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry  
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,  
And make conceive a bark of baser kind  
By bud of nobler race. This is an art

Which does mend nature—change it rather—but

The art itself is nature. (4.4.89-97)

Robert Burton echoes this when he writes that "custom doth alter nature itself" (I. 230). His evidence concerns digestion: "There be of them too that familiarly drink salt sea-water all their lives, eat raw meat, grass, and that with delight" (I. 231).

<sup>7</sup> Ralph Berry's work, that I do not give its due here, deserves more attention, but his comments on *The Tempest* are brief:

Both Caliban and Ariel speak blank verse, which one can read in two ways. First, it may be a mark of their human worth and social potential, which reflect Caliban's progress toward the light. And certainly his speeches improve noticeably, from the club-footed stumping of 'As wicked dew as e'er my mother brush'd' to the free-moving energy of 'What a thrice-double ass / Was I to take this drunkard for a god. / And worship this dull fool!' The other view of Caliban's verse is that it reflects the speech he has been taught by Prospero. (Or Miranda: the speech heading at 1.2.351 is disputed). (183-184)

<sup>8</sup> Hulme and Barker articulate the problem as one of confusing Prospero's staged events with *The Tempest*: "Such identification hears, as it were, only

Prospero's play, follows only his stage directions, not noticing that Prospero's play and *The Tempest* are not necessarily the same thing" (199).

<sup>9</sup> That Caliban is thought a "strange fish" is not so strange. In George Best's recording of Frobisher's travels, the narrator claims to have observed from a hill "a number of small things fleeting in the sea afarre off, which he supposed to be porposes or seales, or some kinde of strange fish; but comming neerer, he discovered them to be men in small boats made of leather" (Hakluyt 5:196). As this suggests, strange fish could mean porpoises or seals, two sea animals that might suggest the size and shape of a man. Another account describes: "In Suffolke was a strange Fish tooke, that bore / The shape of man, and six months liu'd a shore" (Heywood sig. Pp1<sup>r</sup>). The strange fish washed ashore in Suffolk, then, was likely a sea mammal like a porpoise. Kermode reminds us that Ajax in *Troilus and Cressida* is called "a land-fish, language-less, a monster" (3.3.265). Prospero also calls Caliban a "Tortoyse," or tortoise, a word applied in England to all turtles. A tortoise, we would say, is not a strange fish or even a fish, yet tortoises weere considered shell fish by the early modern English. Richard Huleot's 1552 *Abcedarium Anglico Latinum* lists the "Tortoyse fyshe, *chelys*"—a *chelys* being a lyre made from a tortoise shell. The Folio spelling of "Tortoyse" recalls a description in *The decades of the newe worlde or west India*: in Cuba, Pietro Martire d'Anghiera writes "are founde great Tortoyse (which are certeyne shell fysshes) of such byggenesse that tenne or fyfteene men are scarcely able to

lyfte one of them owt of the water" (Anghiera sig. DDd8<sup>v</sup>). But a tortoise not only suggested strange fish, but Venus: Robert Greene's *Menaphon* pictures Venus "on the Tortoys, as shewing that Loue creepeth on by degrees" (sig. D2<sup>r</sup>). Again and again, the further we go into the play's descriptions of Caliban, the more complicated he becomes. Caliban may physically resemble a tortoise, or figurally move as slow as one—he may be a marine monster or a reluctant, enslaved Other. One need also remember Trinculo declares "this is no fish, but an Islander" and Stephano claims Trinculo is made like a goose.

<sup>10</sup> Speaight reads the line as epitomizing not good men, but low:

Here we can feel the gropings of the untaught masses towards beauty and form, and in the line that follows we can read what it is that obstructs their progress; the vanity which claims, as a right, to have the utmost amenity for the minimum of effort; the vanity which rejects the basis of all human progress—the recognition of original sin. (Speaight 186-87).

<sup>11</sup> Dryden's preface to his *Troilus and Cresside* reads:

I will instance but in one, to show the copiousness of his Invention; 'tis that of Caliban, or the Monster in the Tempest. He seems to have created a person which was not in Nature, a boldness which at first sight would appear intolerable: for he makes him a species of himself, begotten by an Incubus on a Witch! but this as I have

elsewhere prov'd, is not wholly beyond the bounds of credibility, at least the vulgar stile believe it. We have the separated notions of a spirit, and of a Witch; (and Spirits according to Plato, are vested with a subtil body; according to some to some of his followers, have different sexes) therefore as from the distinct apprehensions of a Horse, and of a Man, Imagination has formed a Centaur, so from those of an Incubus and a Sorceress, Shakespear has produc'd his Monster. Whether or no his Generation can be defended, I leave to Philosophy; but of this I am certain, that the Poet has most judiciously furnished him with a person, a Language, and a character, which will suit him, both by Fathers and Mothers side: he has all the discontents, and malice of a Witch, and of a Devil; besides a convenient proportion of the deadly sins; Gluttony, Sloth, and Lust, are manifest; the dejectedness of a slave is likewise given him, and the ignorance of one bred up in a Desart Island. His person is monstrous, as he is the product of unnatural Lust; and his language is as hobgoblin as his person: in all things he is distinguished from other mortals. (sig. B1<sup>r</sup>)

<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed discussion of how criticism has received Caliban's language over time see *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History* (89-117).

<sup>13</sup> This is complicated by the specific type of poetry under examination: dramatic verse. Poetry in the theatre was not a new phenomenon by any means, but the early modern theatre did borrow blank verse from the realm of non-dramatic verse, and its own. The poetry circulated in printed books and manuscripts differed from the period's dramatic verse in social value. Non-dramatic poetry presumably had greater social value (it increased one's social worth) whereas dramatic verse had greater exchange value (it could increase one's monetary worth). Monetary worth could be increased by patronage of non-dramatic poetry, of course, but the monetary worth was almost secondary to the status it afforded.

<sup>14</sup> Octavio Paz writes:

As soon as peoples have great armies and invincible leaders, great poets appear. Other historians maintain that this poetic greatness occurs a little earlier—when armies sharpen their teeth—or a little later—when the grandsons of the conquerors digest the winnings. Dazzled by this idea, they form radiant pairs: Racine and Louis XIV, Garcilaso and Charles V, Shakespeare and Elizabeth. (32)

<sup>15</sup> "What we call ideology ... Renaissance England called poetry" (*Hamlet* 46).

<sup>16</sup> Miranda understands that her task is "to make [Caliban] speak," a phrase that echoes Columbus's plan to "carry off six" Indians to Spain in order



"that they may learn to speak" (qtd. in Greenblatt, *Learning* 17). Greenblatt comments that "the idiom has a life of its own; it implies that the Indians had no language at all" (17). Though Miranda claims Caliban did "gabble like / A thing most brutish" (1.2.355-56), her words imitate new-world encounter rhetoric, as Stephen Greenblatt notes: "the view that Indian speech was close to gibberish remained current in intellectual as well as popular circles at least into the seventeenth century" (19). The "gibberish" was interpreted by Europeans not as an untranslated language or culture, but as a sociolinguistic void (17). Miranda's description might be more a subjective perception than an objective account of language's absence. Though it is not clear Caliban was without verse prior to English verse, this linguistic void, real or imagined, has been filled with English almost to overflowing: the verse persists in Caliban's private moments.

<sup>17</sup> Crane's habits have been deduced from his documented work on other plays, such as Middleton's *A Game at Chess*.

<sup>18</sup> Kermode's Appendix G has this note: "146-7 '*The work ... work.*] *The ... away, / Lets ... worke.*' F (neither line full)" (164). Why he marks the line as not a full line of verse is unclear.

<sup>19</sup> In another essay, McDonald has written: "It will come as no surprise to anyone who has followed developments in Renaissance studies that treatments of *The Tempest* seldom concern themselves with the verse" ("Reading" 15). He claims that "Sensitivity to the verse offers an alternative" to present interpretative

trend, but what he means by verse is not meter but patterns of repetition, repetition of: "vowels and consonants, words, phrases, syntactical forms, and other verbal effects" (17). He claims too that "attention to the verse makes one increasingly dubious about the bluntness of most political interpretation" (18). Finally, McDonald's approach attempts to dehistoricize the text, releasing it from the hold of colonialist criticism, the tone of which criticism he calls "shrill" (16).

## CHAPTER SIX

## INCONCLUSION: EXITLESS

Scorning advice, read the conclusion then ...

—*Pericles*

I know that some of the poetry to which I am most devoted is poetry which I did not understand at first reading; some is poetry which I am not sure I understand yet: for instance, Shakespeare's. (144)

— T.S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and The Use Of Criticism*

## I. Otters

Shakespeare's texts are like otters. Not any otters, but early modern English otters. In 3.3 of *I Henry IV* Falstaff accuses Mistress Quickly of otter-ness. Confused—there is nothing obviously otter-like about Mistress Quickly in behavior or appearance—Hal asks Falstaff, "Why an otter?" (3.3.127). Falstaff: "Why?" (3.3.128). Likely pausing after asking himself this question, he answers: "She's neither fish nor flesh; a man knows not where to have her" (3.3.128-29). Otter or no, the joke is clear enough and bawdy enough.<sup>1</sup> But despite the explanation, Hal's question remains: why an otter? A hunting analogy Falstaff uses may help. Earlier, Falstaff claims Quickly has "no more truth" in her than a fox drawn into the open (3.3.114). This analogy suggests a venereal-venery

context where otters fit quite well; they were a favorite—but confusing—quarry of early modern English hunters.

Period hunting manuals confirm Falstaff's choice of otter to epitomize the befuddlement Quickly provokes: few other animals prompted as much classificatory confusion as otters. Abraham Fleming's translation of a guidebook for aspiring hunters, John Caius's 1576 treatise *Of Englishe dogges*, notes that otters "sometimes haunte the lande, and sometime vseth the water" (sig. B4<sup>r</sup>). Likewise, George Gascoigne's 1575 book on *The noble arte of venerie* details the "beast well knowne" as one difficult to catch: "There is great cunning in the hunting of them," as he shows, given that they "abideth not much nor long in one place" (sig. N4<sup>v</sup>). To complicate matters, their abodes vary—they live in trees, under roots, in rivers and on their banks. In appearance the otter is, Gascoigne describes, somewhere between fish and flesh; it is somewhat like "a Foxe, Polcat, wildecate, or Badgerd" but is "footed like a Goose" (sigs. N4<sup>v</sup>-N5<sup>r</sup>). Izaak Walton in the *Compleat Angler* writes that whether the otter be beast or fish "hath been debated among many great Clerks, and they seem to differ about it; but most agree, that his tail is fish" (sig. D5<sup>v</sup>).

As Gascoigne says, "inough of their natures" (sig. N5<sup>r</sup>): what can otters tell us about Shakespeare and literary form? Much. Falstaff's otter provides a useful analog for the structural interrelation of prose and verse throughout Shakespeare's plays, an interrelation I have tried to map in the previous chapters. The otter's between-ness is not at all unlike a play's, being neither verse nor prose,

but constructed of both. As Jonas Barish put it, "The web of [Shakespeare's] verse and prose is of a mingled yarns, its strands sometimes nearly impossible to disentangle by any simple rule of thumb" ("Hal" 268). Attending to Shakespeare's formal movements teaches us more about the unpredictable current of Shakespeare language, its challenges to conventional closures. As John Dryden wrote, Shakespeare is "the very *Janus* of Poets; he wears, almost everywhere two faces: and you have scarce begun to admire the one, e're you despise the other" ("Defence" sig. Y1<sup>r</sup>) Recent critics concur. Russ McDonald writes that Shakespeare's mind works "antithetically" (*Shakespeare* 164), and Helen Vendler claims, "As soon as he thinks of one thing, he thinks of something that is different from it" (33); or as Norman Rabkin said about *Henry V* we might say about each of Shakespeare's works: "the play can scarcely have been anything but a rabbit-duck" (35). Exploring this antithetical movement—perhaps more dialectical than antithetical—"elucidates not only his poetic choices but also his more general theatrical habits" (McDonald, *Shakespeare* 164). McDonald writes:

"Shakespeare's conception of language was broad and fluid, combining enthusiasm with anxiety, optimism about its benefits with suspicion of its dangers" (164). Shakespeare has an apt description of his own linguistic habits—two lines from Balthasar's song in 2.3 of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Shakespeare in his practice of form had "One foot in sea and one on shore," and he was "To one thing constant never" (2.3.63-64). In other words, Shakespeare's language is like an otter: neither fish nor flesh, but both.

This otterness has dogged Shakespeare the way hunters' dogs hunted otters: from a very early age—if we let him by lies be flattered—Shakespeare moved between and mixed forms and styles. John Aubrey recorded in his *Brief Lives* that Shakespeare's "father was a Butcher, & I have been told heretofore by some of the neighbours, that when he was a boy he exercised his father's Trade, but when he kill'd a Calfe, he would doe it in a *high* style, & make a Speech" (Campell 49). I do believe Aubrey though I know he lies: Shakespeare's father was a glover, not a butcher and butchery was a heavily regulated trade; Charles Isaac Elton proved long ago a boy would never have done what was legislated as a man's job (Schoenbaum 457-58). Yet already here, at the birth of the Shakespearean mythos, stands Shakespeare's Shakespearean-ness: his refusal to respect boundaries. This apocryphal story makes Shakespeare, the person, quite a character, yet better approximates what Keats called his poetical character, a mind that "enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated" (199).<sup>2</sup> A mixer of high style and lowly life, a blender of work and play; Aubrey's account echoes *Hamlet*: "It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there." Hamlet, jeering at Polonius's past playacting, enacts a moment of representative Shakespearean word-play: the classical story of Caesar's assassination morphs into a slaughterhouse scene (just as Brutus feared: "Let's be sacrificers, but not butchers" [2.1.167]); Brutus plays a brute part; Polonius, as Caesar, becomes a calf, or dolt; and the noun "Capitol" resurfaces as the adjective "capital." Polonius becomes Caesar (he is, later, mistaken for a rat,

his better), nouns become adjectives, aristocratic assassination becomes lower-class butchery. As a boy and a man, as a worker and a playwright, Shakespeare would make the low high and bring the high low.

## II. The Shakespearean Climate

Such wide-ranging, transgressive linguistic movement—puns, classical allusions, substitutions, the conflation of tragic and comic—defines Shakespearean language. Perhaps the best description of how his language works is Antony's description of himself to Eros late in *Antony and Cleopatra*:

ANTONY. Eros, thou yet behold'st me?

EROS. Ay, noble lord.

ANTONY. Sometimes we see a cloud that's dragonish,

A vapour sometime like a bear or lion,

A towered citadel, a pendent rock,

A forked mountain, or blue promontory

With trees upon't, that nod unto the world

And mock our eyes with air. Thou hast seen these signs;

They are black vespers' pageants.

EROS. Ay, my lord,

ANTONY: That which is now a horse even with a thought

The rack distains, and makes it indistinct

As water is in water.

EROS. It does, my lord.

ANTONY. My good knave Eros, now thy captain is

Even such a body: here I am Antony,

Yet cannot hold this visible shape, my knave. (4.14.1-14)

Antony, in the prior scene desiring Cleopatra's death, has calmed, but is not happy: he compares the mood swings Cleopatra elicits to ever-changing clouds. Antony's cloud-like sense of self draws on clouds' fluidity—a mutable object—but Hamlet's cloud-watching with Polonius draws on perception's instability—the mutable mind:

HAMLET: Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

POLONIUS: By the mass, and 'tis like a camel, indeed.

HAMLET: Methinks it is like a weasel.

POLONIUS: It is backed like a weasel.

HAMLET: Or like a whale?

POLONIUS: Very like a whale. (3.2.375-381)

Even on the issue of clouds Shakespeare takes two sides and Shakespeare's linguistic cloudiness draws on both: even as he cannot hold his shape, we cannot decide what shape he is. This penchant—a pendency between high and low—was the fatal Cleopatra whereby Shakespeare was content to lose the world, as Johnson put it. Others argue this penchant was how he achieved the world. Whatever the case, this cloudiness makes Shakespeare monumental. Just as



Antony compares himself to clouds, Cleopatra images the reverse: a monumental Antony, steadfast, bestriding the ocean, touching the clouds. This too is Shakespeare.

This comparison of Shakespeare's language to clouds and monuments is not mine but John Middleton Murry's, a critic who noted in 1936 "that Shakespeare has no pattern" (14). This patternlessness made Murry feel like a mute, marble Milton. In part, Milton's epitaphial poem for the second Folio reads:

... thou our fancy of it self bereaving,

Dost make us Marble with too much conceaving

Gilded monuments will not outlive Shakespeare's rhyme, nor will they outlive the figuratively marble monuments into which Shakespeare makes us "with too much conceaving." Too much conceiving—this describes my process over the last few years as I have wrestled with Shakespeare's protean language. Milton's too much means we think too hard, yet I would argue that we may never think about Shakespeare's language hard enough to dispel the clouds. If anything, the clouds grow lower, the clouds grow darker.

Conceiving of Shakespeare's language as a dense and dark linguistic climate is another approach to what John Keats called his "Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (198). Shakespeare's ability to inhabit uncertainties manifests itself formally in the movements I have tried to track, from prose to verse, from verse to prose. Answering this uncertainty with a

conclusion, or even conclusions, seems inappropriate to the task. If obtaining a style answerable to Shakespeare is possible—one doubts Milton found the switch to tragic notes, a generic shift, answerable to eternal providence—it may necessitate an uncertain conclusion.

### III. Strange Conclusions: An Answerable Style

Shakespeare liked strange conclusions. Consider the sonnets' anticlimatic end: 154 repeats 153, and both shun the previous sonnets' narrative. These two final poems provide, as 153 puts it, "no cure," no closure for what's come before. Instead of easing us out of the sequence, a trapdoor drops the reader into the Greek Anthology: we exit into familiar, anthologized, classical tropes. Cupid twice lays his brand aside, nymphs twice steal it as he sleeps, and twice the fiery brand turns cool water hot. The speaker twice bathes in the new-created medicinal pool, the remedy twice fails. The speaker, and the reader, go back, or in circles, rather than out of the sequence. Likewise, *As You Like It* has Hymen descending, an ambiguous figure whose iconic marriage torch provides light and blinding smoke, delight and dole.<sup>3</sup> Hymen makes conclusion, but bars confusion? Hardly: the deity's unexpected appearance has been, as Touchstone would say, quarreled over in print.

These strange conclusions suit Shakespeare's habit of crossing genres, mixing styles, but they make concluding for a critic difficult. Indeed, "Shakespearean interpreters," Geoffrey Hartman writes, "have a problem with

*summing up*" (sic, "Shakespeare's" 37). Conclusions do not necessarily sum up a project, but readers are right to expect some summation: what has been the point? The point of this project was to map Shakespeare's formal movements. That *was* the point. In the end, the point *is* more complex: when mapping Shakespeare, "the Proteus of human intellect," as William Hazlitt called him (qtd. in Abrams 245), way not only leads onto way, but the ways change as we travel them; as inroads are made, the road shifts direction and disappears in the undergrowth.<sup>4</sup>

Put another way, a goal has been to reveal Shakespeare's inconstancy by unsettling settled questions. Consider Erich Auerbach's words on Shakespeare's style:

He treats only noblemen, princes and kings, statesmen, commanders, and antique heroes tragically. When common people or soldiers or other representatives of the middle or lower class appear, it is always in the low style, in one of the many variations of the comic which he commands. The separation of styles in accordance with class appears more consistently in him than in medieval works of literature and art. ... It is true, as we have said, that in him tragic personages of the higher classes exhibit frequent stylistic lapses into the corporeal-creatural, the grotesque, and the ambiguous; but the reverse is hardly so. (328)

Auerbach's statement, at least in the context this project constructs, represents a critical stance I counter: Shakespeare always resists "always." True, few scholars

of Shakespeare's meter have shut such a door on his prosody: critics have long noted and valued its flexibility; this project hopes to force that door open further, to keep it always ajar.<sup>5</sup>

Shakespeare's shifts have made "Shakespearean" a synonym for "protean." Coleridge, like Hazlitt, was fascinated by his shape-changing, calling him "Proteus of the fire and the flood ... Shakespeare becomes all things, yet forever remaining himself" (325). Protean shape-shifting works well as a metaphor for formal movement, in Shakespeare and others. In his presentation ceremony address for the 1953 National Book Award, Ralph Ellison claimed that the "chief significance of *Invisible Man*" may be "its experimental attitude" (36). This attitude, he described, was one of formal experimentation in the face of the "rich babel of idiomatic expression" he found "swirling with over three hundred years of American living" (37). His response was "to dream a prose which was flexible, and swift" (38). This dream, however, was a struggle—and for all those who struggle with form, Ellison recalled

Eidotha's advice to Menelaus when in the *Odyssey* he and his friends are seeking their way home. She tells him to sbreize her father, Proteus, and to hold him fast 'however he may struggle and fight. He will turn into all sorts of shapes to try you,' she says, 'into all the creatures that live and move upon the earth, into water, into blazing fire; but you must hold him fast and press him all the harder.' (38-39).

For his tale, Ellison chose one with a happy ending: though Menelaus undergoes difficulty, Proteus answers his questions and he returns to Lacedaemon; the struggle has an end.

For this study, Ellison's recalling of Menelaus's struggle with Proteus fits not just the writer's struggle with form, but the critic's. In the version told here, Shakespeare was Proteus to my Menelaus, with a difference—there is no arrival, only ongoing struggle. Pressing Shakespeare for answers, I watched him change from form to form: fiction, autobiography; comedy, tragedy; verse, prose. And every attempt to apply or derive a system of rules to explain these formal changes seemed to activate more, faster change. One such failed systemization that will not see daylight was a look at how, as C.L. Barber suggested, differences in "attitude towards time" explained "the difference between verse and prose mediums" in the *Henriad* (230). The worlds of prose and verse marked time differently. J. Dover Wilson put it this way: "The clock, that is to say, symbol of regularity, register of human duties, controller of the world's business, has no relevance whatsoever to the existence of so 'superfluous and lust-dieted' a being as Falstaff" (37). Elaborating this throughout the *Henriad*, the prose world renders the clock and all Wilson suggests it means irrelevant. This division works, more or less, until we encounter Fluellen—a prose character unlike any other. Sensitive to duty ("Up to the breach, you dogs! avaunt, you cullions!"), history ("the disciplines of the pristine wars of the Romans" and "Alexander the Pig"), and one's duty to history—Fluellen's prose possesses concerns paralleling those of

verse speakers. Several similar interpretative dead-ends were traveled and like the speaker of sonnets 153 and 154, I tried again, not going out, but circling back.

Each time, however, Shakespeare led me through the cul-de-sacs like Socrates' leading of Meno and the slave boy through Plato's *Meno*. For a time, I felt no perplexity. With continued work, however, perplexity increased; I became the slave boy:

Now however he does feel perplexed. Not only does he not know the answer; he doesn't even think he knows.

MENO. Quite true.

SOCRATES. Isn't he in a better position now in relation to what he didn't know?

MENO. I admit to that too. (368)

Perplexity, Socrates shows Meno, is an end as much as it is a beginning. The slave boy, numbed by perplexity "like the sting ray," has been "helped to some extent toward finding out the right answer." Though he is now ignorant of what he thought he knew, "he will be quite glad to look for it." Having reached perplexity, he will be ready to start the quest for answers anew. Reaching a conclusion that does not conclude: this is a strange conclusion Shakespeare would have liked.

#### IV. Inconclusion

Inconclusion, an vncertaintie. Also in conclusion, finallie.

—John Florio, *A World of Wordes*

A conclusion, then, can mark both an end and a beginning, as it does here; not the reaching of a conclusion, but the reaching of *inconclusion*: an uncertainty that does not close the problem, but opens it further. John Florio, in his 1598 dictionary of Italian and English, *A World of Wordes*, defines the Italian term "Inconclusionone" as "*an vncertaintie. Also in conclusion, finallie*" (sig. P4<sup>r</sup>).<sup>6</sup> The English language, according to the *OED*, lacked "inconclusion" until the mid 1800s, but the condition of inconclusion—the state of uncertainty—was already under cultivation by critics, editors, spectators, and readers of Shakespeare. What follows explores inconclusion in Florio's two senses: in conclusion (finally), I unpack inconclusion (uncertainty) as a response to Shakespeare's language—not so much a response lacking any certainties, but one caught between them.<sup>7</sup>

Projected but postponed chapters evince my inconclusion: they explore the variable functions of rhyme, its ability to reconcile and divide, provide closure and provoke problems; song's adaptability from bawdy, drinking tunes to charming, heaven-like harmonies; the intersections of femininity, feminism and form; Shakespeare's metrical development. The critic's confession of inadequacy—my confession of inconclusion—before Shakespeare: it has become a genre unto itself, one criticized, rightly, by William Beatty Warner. The quasi-religious, mystical tone bows before a text that seems "inexhaustible" (Warner 221). Shakespeare is said to have a "linguistic energy that exceeds any of the topoi, genres, or structures it engages" (Warner 221). Shakespeare, in these narratives, achieves the authority "to be and represent 'everything and no thing,'

the terms used by Keats (and Borges) to describe Shakespeare's negative capability, his penetration into the essence of life from a sublime and magisterial position above its mundane contingencies" (Warner 221). We cannot measure the text's inexhaustibility: yet, it seems inexhaustible because it so exhausts us. This exhaustion results not from trying to reach Shakespeare's great heights, from trying to leap with the cow over the moon, but from following Shakespeare's movements from sublime to mundane, from familiar to fantastic. This linguistic energy, if it exists, readers activate by engaging, not merely admiring, the texts' topoi, genres, and structures.

Shakespeare refuses to be *conclusus*, refuses to be confined; conventions help readers, but only so far. Any investigation about Shakespeare's language suffers under its capriciousness, but how can criticism acknowledge that suffering? As Hartman asks, "How can the critic respond to the extraordinary language-event and still maintain a prose of the center?" (*Criticism* 157). In search of a responsive methodology, an answerable style, I have shuttled between the archive and analysis, between historical research and observation of movements between verse and prose: in doing so, at times I achieved the pleasure of merely circulating, when question trumped systemization.<sup>8</sup> If, as Hartman claims, the work of art and the work of reading are inseparable, then Shakespeare's negative capability, his art, is answered by my uncertain reading.<sup>9</sup>

The perplexities of prose and verse, then, are the expected, winding features through Shakespeare's formal landscape, one that's "exitless," to use



Hartman's adjective for Walter Benjamin's language (*Criticism* 64). James Calderwood remarks, "if he does not always let us out of his mazes, at least he often advertises where the entrances are and graciously asks us in" (Calderwood, *To Be* 53-4). The entrances, I would contend, are as clearly marked as the exits. Readers often have to move closely along the outer wall, searching for tell-tale cracks. Yet, this mixes metaphors: who or what moves? Is Shakespeare the building we circle around, or is Shakespeare circling us, his readers made marble? Borges' Hermann Sörgel claims Shakespeare consciously used mixed metaphors "so that his discourse, destined for the stage, might appear to be spontaneous, and not overly polished and artificial" (513). Borges himself, not Sörgel, wrote: "I sometimes think that good readers are poets as singular, and as awesome, as great authors themselves" (3). A good reader of Shakespeare would be a Shakespeare, moving here and there, knowing all the ways in and out.

Attention to the movements characters make between prose and verse is one way into Shakespeare—but there is no reliable way out. Shakespeare's form resists systemization and insists on readerly dexterity. The significance of movements from verse to prose and vice versa changes from play to play, from act to act, from scene to scene, from speech to speech. There are, to be sure, general, dependable patterns—prose is often comic, verse is spoken by nobility—but these conventions are heuristic: guidelines without guarantees. As Shakespeare's has the King say in *All's Well That Ends Well*, so we can imagine Shakespeare himself saying:

I am not a day of season,  
For thou mayst see a sunshine and a hail  
In me at once. (5.3.32-34)

Though Shakespeare promises a beautiful day, though a clear interpretation may shine apparent, we readers must travel forth with our cloak. If we learn anything from Shakespeare, it is that roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud.

## CHAPTER SIX NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Falstaff's otter reference is prescient: Quickly's between-ness makes her a suitable go-between in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson's description deserves quoting: Shakespeare's plays are compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety or proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolick of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design. (16)

<sup>3</sup> Hymen's torch sputtered and smoked at the marriage of Orpheus and Eurydice, a bad omen.

<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Hartman too claims Shakespeare "throws off, like Proteus, all constraints" ("Shakespeare" 88). But Shakespeare is unlike Proteus given that Proteus is, in the end, constrained.

<sup>5</sup> Dorothy L. Sipe's work deserves mention insofar as she makes a compelling case for Shakespeare's metrical regularity: Shakespeare, she writes, "wrote carefully constructed iambic verse into which he introduced only those

few minor variations considered permissible in his time" (vii). A primary point she makes is that "Shakespearean blank verse is overwhelmingly decasyllabic" (vii). Part of our sense of Shakespeare's greatness, she writes, derives from the tension between "his disregard for traditional grammatical categories and delight in unorthodox verbal shortcuts" and his "Metrical regularity" (192).

<sup>6</sup> Florio's sense of "inconclusionone" is similar to the *OED*'s sense of "inconclusion" as it was used in the mid- to late-1800s: "The condition of reaching no conclusion; an inconclusive result, an unwarranted conclusion."

<sup>7</sup> It is fitting that in 1882, the Shakespearean actress Fanny (Frances Anne) Kemble, Charles Kemble's daughter, was one of the first to use the word in print, though not specifically on Shakespeare:

... whenever I attempt to put the notions that float through my brain, on which I float comfortably enough over infinite abysses of inconclusion into precise form and shape, there is not one of them that does not seem to me quite controvertible; nor did I ever utter or assume a position of which I felt most assured while uttering it, without perceiving almost immediately that it was assailable on many sides. (288)

Kemble's inconclusion is a state not so much lacking conclusions, but a state where, as she says, "there was no proposition ... which does not admit of its own reverse" (288). Propositions cannot, in this state, exist without their contraries.

<sup>8</sup> This method recalls Goldberg's in *Voice Terminal Echo*: "A certain kind of historicism and a practice of analysis is ... explored in these pages" (5). This mixture Goldberg borrows, in part, from Geoffrey Hartman as well as Terence Cave and Thomas Greene.

<sup>9</sup> Hazard Adams dislikes this sort of phenomenological criticism: "The French critic Poulet writes meditations or Mallarméan orations on poems. The American critic, Bloom, moves radically to obliterate distinctions and seeks miraculously to turn himself into a poet through criticism" (58).

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- Žižek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso, 1989.

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## EDUCATION

University of Washington, Seattle  
 MA, English Literature, 1996-98  
 PhD, English Literature, 1998 to 2005  
 University of South Carolina, Columbia  
 BA, English Literature, 1991-95  
 BA, History, 1991-95  
 Graduated *summa cum laude*; member of Phi Beta Kappa since 1995  
 University of Warwick, Coventry, England  
 Exchange Student, 1993-94

## PUBLICATIONS

*Professional:*

- The Music and Art of Radiohead*. Ed. Joseph Tate. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005. ISBN 0754639800 (Paperback) and ISBN 0754639797 (Hardback).
- "Tamburlaine's Urine." *Fecal Matters in Early Modern Literature and Art*. Ed. Russ Ganim and Jeff Persels. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishers, 2004: 138-153.
- "Response to Reader Mail." *Postmodern Culture*. 13.1 (September 2002). <<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/pmc/current.issue/13.1letters.html>>
- "Radiohead's Antivideos: Works of Art in the Age of Electronic Reproduction." *Postmodern Culture*. 12.3 (May 2002). <<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/pmc/v012/12.3tate.html>>
- "Numme Feete: Meter in Early Modern England." *Early Modern Literary Studies*. 7.1 (May 2001): 3. <<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/07-1/tatefeet.htm>>.
- "The Motion of Emotion: Physical Responses of Early Modern Playgoers." *Shakespeare in the Classroom*. 6.2 (Fall 1998): 41-45.

*Reviews:*

- Rev. of *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, dir. Peter Brooks. Mercer Arena, Seattle, 6th-19th April, 2001. *Early Modern Literary Studies*. 7.2 (September 2001). <<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/07-2/taterev.htm>>.
- Rev. of *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* by Brian Vickers. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999. *Early Modern Literary Studies*. 7.1 (May 2001). <<http://www.shu.ac.uk/emls/07-1/revtate.htm>>.

## EMPLOYMENT

Department of English, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon  
Instructor, Fall 2004-present

Department of English, Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Oregon  
Adjunct Instructor, Fall 2003

*Versification: An Electronic Journal of Literary Prosody*, University of  
Washington, Seattle

Co-editor, Autumn 2001-present

*MLQ: A Journal of Literary History*, University of Washington, Seattle  
Assistant Editor, Autumn 2001

Comparative History of Ideas Program, University of Washington, Seattle  
Teaching Assistant, Autumn 2000 to 2003

Department of English, University of Washington, Seattle  
Teaching Assistant, September 1997 to Spring 2001

Department of English Writing Center, University of Washington, Seattle  
Assistant Director, November 1999 to January 2000

#### SELECT PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

##### *Conferences, Colloquia, Lectures and Seminars:*

"Radiohead's America" Coventry, England. University of Warwick.  
America in the British Imagination Conference. May 2005.

Invited Lecture. "Into Radiohead." Craft of Writing Series. Oregon State  
University, Corvallis. April 2005.

"Learning to Curse in Iambs: Caliban's Verse in *The Tempest*." Portland,  
Oregon. Reed College. Shakespeare and Related Topics Session.  
Pacific and Ancient Modern Languages Association Annual  
Conference. November 2004.

"Sly Verse: Meter as Social Form in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the  
Shrew*." Bellingham, WA. Western Washington University. Pacific  
Northwest Renaissance Association Conference. May 2004.

Chair. Panel entitled Meter in Early Modern England. Toronto, Ontario,  
Canada. Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting. March  
2003.

"Rime's Wrongs: Reading Jonson's 'A Fit of Rime Against Rime.'"   
Bellingham, Washington. Western Washington University. Pacific and  
Ancient Modern Languages Association Annual Conference.  
November 2002.

"Radiohead's Antivideos and the Internet as Late-Capitalist Fantasy."   
Seattle, Washington. University of Washington. A Comparative  
Literature Colloquium entitled The Story of How Things Are: Studies  
at the Intersection of Narrative and Sciences. May 2002.

"'Doubtfull, Obscure, and Uncertaine [No More]': Renaissance Uroscopy  
and the Internet." Tempe, Arizona. Renaissance Society of America  
Annual Meeting. April 2002.

Chair. Panel entitled "Re-Imagining English Renaissance Poetic Subjectivity." St. Louis, Missouri. South-Central Renaissance Conference and the Saint Louis University Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies. Exploring the Renaissance 2002: An International Conference. April 2002.

"Is a Music Video Without Music a Music Video?" Seattle, Washington. University of Washington. University of Washington Film Colloquium Interdisciplinary Conference entitled Emerging Forms: Media, Narrative and Technique in the Twenty-First Century. November 2001.

Panel on New Media. Tours, France. University of Tours. Seeing Things Symposium sponsored by The British Council. September 2001.

"The Work of Art in the Age of Electronic Reproduction." Tours, France. University of Tours. Seeing Things Symposium sponsored by The British Council. September 2001.

"To Satisfie & Delight Th'Eare Onely: A Cultural Poetics of Prosody." Vancouver, British Columbia. University of British Columbia. Pacific Northwest Renaissance Association Conference. May 2001.

"Zizek's Idiotic Jouissance, or Scansion Tells Us Very Little: Notes Toward a Phenomenological Prosody." Seattle, Washington. University of Washington. A Comparative Literature Colloquium entitled Crossovers: Language and Literature. April 2001.

*Service to Institutions:*

Oregon State University, Student Awards Committee, 2005.

University of Washington, Expository Writing Committee, 1998-2000.

University of South Carolina, Warwick Exchange Committee, 1995.

*Consulting:*

Reviewer. Shakespeare's Complete Works. Ed. David Bevington. Fifth Edition. New York: Pearson Longman, 2004.

Editorial Advisory Board. *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture (1900-present)*. 2001 to present.

<<http://americanpopularculture.com/AmericanaJournal.htm>>.

Editorial Advisory Board. *SHAKSPER: The Global Electronic Shakespeare Conference*. 1999 to present. <<http://ws.bowiestate.edu/>>.

Editorial Advisory Board. *Academic Discourse: Readings for Argument and Analysis*. Gen. Ed. Gail Stygall. Fort Worth: Harcourt Custom Publishers, 1999.

## SELECT GRANTS AND AWARDS

American Embassy Travel Grant, 2005.

University of Washington, Department of English, Hermione and Louis Brown Graduate Prize for best article accepted by a journal, 2003.

University of Washington, Department of English, Honorable Mention, Webber Teaching Prize-200 level, 2001.



University of Washington, Graduate School, David Fowler Travel Fellowship, 2001.

University of Washington, Department of English, Travel Grant, 2000, 1999, 1998.

University of South Carolina, First candidate for the British Marshall Scholarship, 1995.

University of South Carolina, Department of English, J. S. Reynolds Essay Award, 1995.

University of South Carolina, Department of English, Academy of American Poets Award, 1995.

University of South Carolina, Department of English, Academy of American Poets Award, 1993.

University of South Carolina, James A. Hicks Scholarship, 1993.

#### NOTE

An unabridged CV is available at <<http://joseph Tate.com/cv.html>>.