

The
**Upstart
Crow**
A Shakespeare Journal



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Contents

Essays

Margaret Maurer ♦ <i>Again, Poets and Julius Caesar</i>	5
Nicholas F. Radel ♦ <i>The Ethiop's Ear: Race, Sexuality, and Baz Luhrmann's</i> <i>William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet</i>	17
James W. Stone ♦ " <i>A Carrion Death</i> ": <i>The Theme of the Gold Casket in The</i> <i>Merchant of Venice</i>	35
Stephanie Chamberlain ♦ <i>Domestic Economies in The Taming of the Shrew:</i> <i>Amassing Cultural Credit</i>	50
Gabriel Rieger ♦ " <i>I woo'd thee with my sword, / And won thy love doing thee</i> <i>injuries</i> ": <i>The Erotic Economies of A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	70
Fred Blick ♦ " <i>Duble Vantage</i> ": <i>Tennis and Sonnet 88</i>	82

Performance Reviews

Peter J. Smith ♦ <i>The 2009 Season at London's Globe Theatre</i>	94
Craig Barrow and Bryan Adams Hampton ♦ <i>The 2009 Alabama Shakespeare</i> <i>Festival: Othello</i>	104
John R. Ford ♦ <i>The National Theatre's The Revenger's Tragedy and The Royal</i> <i>Shakespeare Company's A Midsummer Night's Dream (2008)</i>	109
Michael W. Shurgot ♦ <i>The 2008 Oregon Shakespeare Festival Season</i>	114

Book Reviews

Aaron Kitch ♦ Julia Reinhard Lupton, <i>Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and</i> <i>Political Theology</i> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)	129
Jason E. Cohen ♦ Andrew Hadfield, <i>Shakespeare and Republicanism</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and Oliver Arnold, <i>The Third Citizen: Shakespeare's Theater and the Early Modern House of</i> <i>Commons</i> (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007)	130

Philip Lorenz ♦ Paul Kottman, <i>A Politics of the Scene</i> (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2008)	133
Adam H. Kitzes ♦ Paul Griffiths, <i>Lost Londons: Change, Crime and Control in the Capital City 1550-1660</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)	137

Poems

Rosemary Dunn Moeller ♦ <i>The Faults of Fairies</i>	81
James B. Nicola ♦ <i>Sylvius</i>	89
Sean Lause ♦ <i>Shakespeare of Westinghouse</i>	90
Dolores Stewart ♦ <i>Envoi: A Kitchen in Verona</i>	91

List of Illustrations

Image from Emblem XLI of Guillaume de la Perrière's <i>Theatre des bons engins</i>	84
<i>Troilus and Cressida</i> : Ensemble	93
<i>As You Like It</i> : Naomi Frederick as Rosalind and Jack Lasky as Orlando, Globe Season 2009	96
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> : Ian Redford as Capulet, Ellie Kendrick as Juliet, and Penny Layden as Nurse, Globe Season 2009	99
<i>Troilus and Cressida</i> : Paul Stocker as Troilus, Matthew Kelly as Pandarus, and Laura Pyper as Cressida, Globe Season 2009	101
<i>Othello</i> : Matt D'Amico as Iago, Esau Pritchett as Othello, Jeffrey de Picciotto as Lodovico, and Jarrod Yuskas as Soldier, Alabama Shakespeare Festival 2009	105
<i>Othello</i> : Kaytie Morris as Desdemona and Esau Pritchett as Othello, Alabama Shakespeare Festival 2009	106
<i>The Revenger's Tragedy</i> : Rory Kinnear as Vendice, National Theatre 2008	110
<i>Comedy of Errors</i> : The ensemble in the Shady Pine Saloon, Oregon Shakespeare Festival 2008	115
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> : Kevin Kenerly as Oberon and Christine Albright as Titania, Oregon Shakespeare Festival 2008	118
<i>Othello</i> : Sarah Rutan as Desdemona and Peter Macon as Othello, Oregon Shakespeare Festival 2008	120
<i>Coriolanus</i> : Richard Elmore as Menenius, Danferth Comins as Coriolanus, Michael Elich as Aufidius, and Christopher Michael Rivera as Adrian, Oregon Shakespeare Festival 2008	123



Letter from the Editor	4
Call for Papers for <i>The Upstart Crow</i> Vol. XXX (2011)	140



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Dear Readers,

It is my pleasure to introduce Volume XXVIII (2009), “Politics and the Citizen in Shakespeare.” This issue marks a transitional moment for *The Upstart Crow*: it is the last volume to draw on the annual Clemson Shakespeare Festival, which came to a conclusion in 2008. Thus, this volume is an occasion to celebrate the wealth of scholarship and the invigorating exchange of ideas inspired by the Shakespeare Festival during its seventeen-year run, while looking forward to a new chapter for *The Upstart Crow*, which we initiate in 2010 with a special guest-edited issue.

Our two lead essays this year are derived from the 2008 Clemson Shakespeare Festival and consider “Politics and the Citizen” from different angles. Margaret Maurer, Colgate University, writes about the poet in *Julius Caesar* as a way of considering poetry’s role in discourses of politics and citizenship. Nicholas Radel, Furman University, calls for a re-consideration of the early modern politics of race and sexuality in *Romeo and Juliet* as refracted through Baz Luhrmann’s late twentieth-century film adaptation. Essays by Stephanie Chamberlain and Gabriel Rieger speak to the mutual constitution of the public and private spheres in, respectively, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The issue also features provocative essays by James Stone, on the ambivalent connotations of gold in *The Merchant of Venice*, and Fred Blick, on the tennis metaphor in Shakespeare’s Sonnet 88.

The book review section, edited by Henry Turner, Rutgers University, synthesizes many of the volume’s approaches to politics and citizenship, with reviews of recent studies by Julia Reinhard Lupton, Andrew Hadfield, Oliver Arnold, Paul Kottman, and Paul Griffiths. Our performance reviews address important productions staged in both the UK and the US, including performances by the Globe Theatre, the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and the Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

With Volume XXIX, scheduled for 2010, *The Upstart Crow* begins to pursue new opportunities. Leslie Dunn, Vassar College, and Wes Folkerth, McGill University, are guest-editing a section of essays on “Shakespearean Hearing,” based on a seminar they led recently at the Shakespeare Association of America. Complementary book and performance reviews will round out what promises to be an innovative exploration of the auditory in Shakespeare’s plays and theater. In addition to continuing to publish a wide range of new scholarship, we look forward to generating future issues on special themes and topics, whether arising from conference seminars or from proposals by scholars.

Thank you for your interest in *The Upstart Crow*. I hope that you enjoy this issue.

Elizabeth Rivlin
Editor

AGAIN, POETS AND *JULIUS CAESAR*Margaret Maurer, *Colgate University*

Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, a dramatization of Plutarch's account of the death of Julius Caesar and the consequences of that event in the war waged against his assassins by Mark Antony and Octavian, is particularly admired for the elegance of its plot. The main episodes in the history as Plutarch's *Lives* conveys them are contained in a structure that, by line count, is shorter than any of Shakespeare's English histories and all but two of his tragedies.¹ In relation to his apparent commitment to economy in *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare's inclusion in his play of two episodes involving characters identified as poets invites comment and has drawn it concertedly in three essays: Norman Holland, "The 'Cinna' and 'Cynicke' Episodes in *Julius Caesar*" (1960); Thomas Pughe, "'What should the wars do with these jiggling fools?' The Poets in *Julius Caesar*" (1988); and Gary Taylor's "Bardicide" (1992).²

A curious feature of the attention paid these scenes by all three of these essays is that none of them considers all of what is known about Cinna, the poet identified by name in Shakespeare's play. Being specific about this, however, particularly about what was known by Shakespeare of Cinna's poetry (and little more is known today than what Shakespeare knew), heightens the already remarkable effect of Shakespeare including these scenes. In this light, incidental as they remain to the historical and political questions surrounding the play's action, the poet scenes make *Julius Caesar* eerily predictive of the dilemmas faced by teachers of the humanities these days. Because of them, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* seems to be considering the value of poetry in a time of cataclysmic change; and it is a consideration that, typical of Shakespeare, is unflinching in its unwillingness to mount an expedient defense.

Holland and Pughe avoid the questions attendant on Cinna's poetry by assuming his name is no more than a counter for the figure of a poet. In accord with the critical assumptions implicit in close reading, they justify both 3.3 (the scene depicting the death of Cinna) and lines 123-36 of 4.3 (in which an unnamed camp poet intrudes on the quarrel of Brutus and Cassius) by emphasizing thematic connections to what they define, differently, as the prevailing concerns of the play. Holland sees 3.3 and 4.3.124-38 as "play[ing] into one of the chief complexes of imagery" in the play (sleep) and underscoring an important theme in the play, "the separation between Brutus the idealist and Cassius the realist."³ Pughe sees the "poets, together with some of the other minor figures [in the play, as] establish[ing] a metalevel of criticism on which the discourse of reason can be seen to deconstruct itself."⁴

Holland, Pughe, and Taylor all notice that it is Shakespeare who makes the person who Plutarch says reconciled Brutus and Cassius in the camp scene of 4.3 into an unnamed poet, transforming him from Plutarch's "one Marcus Phaonius, that had bene a friend and follower of Cato...and [who] tooke upon him to counterfeate a Philosopher."⁵ But only Taylor, approaching the play from a more

historicist perspective, acknowledges that the Cinna of 3.3 is an actual, if shadowy, figure in literary history. Noting that the poet Cinna's existence is a historical fact but that his poetry has all but vanished, Taylor argues that what Shakespeare does with the two episodes in Plutarch makes *Julius Caesar* "Shakespeare's *Defence of Poetry*."⁶ He suggests, in effect, that in *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare is defending poetry as Sir Philip Sidney does in a treatise published under that name, *The Defence of Poesie*.⁷ In so doing, Taylor says, Shakespeare means to distinguish genuine poetry, that is, his own, from that of writers whose topical satires and epigrams were ordered to be publicly burnt in 1599, the probable date of *Julius Caesar*'s composition and performance.

Taylor pays close attention to the changes Shakespeare makes as he adapts the episodes from Plutarch's life of Brutus, observing (somewhat tendentiously, since the detail that "poore Cinna the Poet" is "torne . . . in peeces"⁸ comes from Plutarch) that Shakespeare's representation of Cinna's murder is modeled on the death of Orpheus:

the only wholly admirable poet would have to be a murdered poet, none of whose poems survive—that is a poet like Shakespeare's Cinna. Because every action involves political and moral choice, the perfect poet must be passive, must be a victim, must be murdered. And because any surviving poem would be subject to criticism, the perfect poet's work could only be beyond criticism if it were beyond content: absent, ravaged, and murdered.⁹

For Taylor, the implication of Shakespeare emphasizing that it is the plebeians who silence the poet is that Shakespeare distances himself from writers who, in his own day, were the object, not of public outrage, but of the government's censure: "The poet Shakespeare constructs a scenario in which the [genuine] poet is unmistakably innocent; the poet's work, unmistakably apolitical; the poet's intentions, unmistakably clear; the popular reading of the poet, unmistakably mistaken."¹⁰ So, Taylor argues, Shakespeare uses the episode to exonerate the real agents of censorship; and his Cinna, the martyred poet, a true poet, is nothing at all like the writers whose satires were being prohibited and destroyed.

The element of Taylor's argument that requires reconsideration, however, is the inference he draws about Shakespeare's interest in Cinna from the fact that none of his poems survive. Though it is true that only a few words of Cinna's poetry are known, Shakespeare and probably many in his audience knew perfectly well what his poem *Smyrna* was about from Ovid's retelling of its story in *Metamorphoses* 10. Acknowledging Ovid's connection to Cinna's poem has important implications for interpreting the changes Shakespeare makes in the Cinna episode and, by extension, his inclusion of a figure called a poet in the quarrel scene of 4.3.

It is as if *Julius Caesar*, in the text of it that comes down to us, catches Shakespeare reading Plutarch's account of Julius Caesar's assassination and its consequences in the civil war that followed and puzzling over the relationship between this cataclysmic event and the magnificent poetry he associated with this time and its

immediate aftermath—with the poetry of Vergil, Horace, and Ovid, all of whom wrote their greatest works under the regime of the man who triumphed at Philippi, and one of whom, Ovid, was ultimately banished from Rome, according to the literary history Shakespeare knew, by that man for, in the poet's own account in *Tristia II*, “*duo crimina, carmen et error*,” two crimes, a poem and a mistake.¹¹ That is, in its representation of one of the most significant moments in Roman history, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* obliquely considers a question as old as Plato and as much alive to Shakespeare and his contemporaries as it is to humanist educators today: what good is poetry? or, if some poetry's goodness be granted, what kind of poetry is good?

In his play *Poetaster* (ca. 1601), Shakespeare's younger contemporary Ben Jonson imagines the mature Octavian, Augustus Caesar, in conversation with poets, with Vergil, Horace, Ovid, Tibullus, and Gallus. Augustus addresses the question of poetry's value to society by asserting that poems have value, but it is for their capacity to convey wisdom, promote virtue, and condemn vice. Vergil, the epic poet, and Horace, a satiric one, receive Augustus's particular commendation. The play also, however, condemns a certain kind of poet and poetry. Augustus exiles “Licentious Naso . . . From all approach to our imperial court / On pain of death” (4.6.52, 55-56).

Augustus's taste in poetry in Jonson's play accords with the overt argument mounted by Sir Philip Sidney in his *Defence*.¹² In that treatise, which Shakespeare might well have known before it was printed in 1595 but which he had almost certainly read by the time he wrote *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare would have found the argument that genuine poetry, which Sidney defines as “an art of imitation . . . a speaking picture, with this end, to teach and delight,”¹³ can be favorably compared to history and philosophy because it more effectively than any other form of writing can promote virtue, both in the general sense of men's manners or behavior and in the particular sense to which Sidney repeatedly reverts, valorous action in war:

The philosopher, therefore, and the historian are they which would win the goal [of being the supreme knowledge], the one by precept, the other by example. But both, not having both, do both halt. . . . Now doth the peerless poet perform both. . . .¹⁴

Poetry, Sidney asserts, not history and not philosophy, is “the companion of camps,”¹⁵ the form of writing that men take to war with them to inspire them to heroism. The point is explicitly raised in the *Defence* and underscored by example:

This Alexander [the Great of Macedon] left his schoolmaster, living Aristotle, behind him, but took dead Homer with him. He put the philosopher Callisthenes to death for his seeming philosophical, indeed mutinous, stubbornness; but the chief thing he ever was heard to wish for was that Homer had been alive.¹⁶

In the two poet scenes in *Julius Caesar*, especially when considered against the form in which Shakespeare found them in Plutarch, Shakespeare seems to be calling into question if not mocking outright Sidney's argument.

Both of *Julius Caesar*'s poet scenes seem to be addressing Sidney's *Defence*, but 4.3 warrants attention first as the more clear-cut instance of Shakespeare's rejection of Sidney's terms. Shakespeare read in Plutarch's life of Brutus that during the military campaign that followed the assassination an enmity arose between Brutus and Cassius: "Nowe, as it commonly hapneth in great affayres betwene two persons . . . there ranne tales and complaints betwixt them." Plutarch describes how this conflict came to a head in the city of Sardis, where the two met:

they went into a litle chamber together, and bad every man avoyde, and did shut the dores to them. . . . Their friends that were without the chamber hearing them lowd within, and angry betwene them selves, they were both amased, and affrayd also lest it would grow to further matter: but yet they were commaunded that no man should come to them.

It is then, according to Plutarch, that "one Marcus Phaonius, that had bene a friend and follower of Cato while he lived, and tooke upon him to counterfeate a Philosopher, not with wisdom and discretion, but with a certaine bedlem and frantick motion," forces his way into the room:

This Phaonius at that time, in despite of the doorekeepers, came into the chamber, and with a certaine scoffing and mocking gesture which he counterfeated of purpose, he rehearsed the verses which old Nestor sayd in Homer:

My Lords, I pray you harken both to mee,
For I have seene moe yeares than suchye three.

Cassius fel a laughing at him: but Brutus thrust him out of the chamber, and called him dogge, and counterfeate Cynick. Howbeit his comming in brake their strife at that time, and so they left eche other.¹⁷

Shakespeare uses only this much of the incident, omitting Plutarch's account of Phaonius's further antics to keep the company in good humor.

In 4.3 of *Julius Caesar*, the episode unfolds in fourteen lines. The intruder is not named but is described in the stage directions and speech headings as a poet. Even if this word in the direction is not authorial, other words in the episode as it unfolds ("rhyme" at line 131 and "jigging" at line 135) associate his speech with characteristics of poetry, though, significantly, with characteristics of poetry that Sidney insists are not essential to it.¹⁸ Shakespeare's translation of this character from "counterfeate" philosopher to poet recalls Sidney's argument in the *Defence* that

poetry surpasses philosophy in its capacity to inculcate virtue, and Shakespeare's imagining of the presence of a poet in the tents of an army preparing for battle likewise recalls Sidney's description of poetry as the "companion of camps." The "scoffing and mocking gesture" with which Phaonius parodies lines from Homer's *Iliad* in Plutarch is not explicit in the lines Shakespeare writes for the poet, who appears to take his role in the camp very seriously:

Let me go in to see the generals.
There is some grudge between 'em; 'tis not meet
They be alone.

When Lucilius tries to prevent his entrance, the poet responds heroically:
Nothing but death shall stay me.

His admonition is likewise high-toned:

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.

His earnestness contrasts to the reactions of Brutus and Cassius, which register, in Shakespeare's text, the irrelevance of his intervention. Cassius says, "Ha, ha, how vildly doth this cynic rhyme," and Brutus is angry: "Get you hence, sirrah; saucy fellow, hence." Cassius is amused: "Bear with him, Brutus, 'tis his fashion," but Brutus is impatient:

I'll know his humour, when he knows his time.
What should the wars do with these jiggling fools?
Companion, hence. (4.3.123-36)

Glossing "companion" as a term of contempt, as editors do, is surely right.¹⁹ Sidney's use of the word to express the relationship between poetry and valorous action is decidedly perverted.

Though the reactions of Brutus and Cassius to the poet differ, they are alike in registering the inconsequentiality of what he says. Shakespeare has not followed Plutarch in using the episode to resolve the quarrel: the poet's assumption of the role of Nestor in Homer's *Iliad* urging Achilles and Agamemnon to forego their differences occurs after Brutus and Cassius have clasped hands. By introducing the intrusion belatedly and translating Plutarch's counterfeit philosopher into a poet who construes his function as holding up models of conduct to Brutus and Cassius, Shakespeare seems to be registering, if only to himself, the pretension of such arguments as Sidney makes. Shakespeare seems disinclined to impute to poets here any overtly significant role in the great events he recounts beyond their capacity to provide diversion.

The other poet scene, the Cinna episode of 3.1, is a more oblique pondering of the terms of Sidney's *Defence*. In that scene, Shakespeare is not quibbling with the inadequacy of the argument Sidney puts forward to defend poetry but rather confronts directly the charges against poetry that Sidney tries to answer—its duplicity, its frivolity, its indifference to the judgment that what it represents might be considered impious or perverse. The murder of a poet named Cinna by the riotous “mutinie” of common people who set fire to Caesar's body is recounted by Plutarch in both his life of Julius Caesar and his life of Brutus. The latter account is longer and is the version in which Plutarch explicitly says Cinna is a poet:

And furthermore, when the fire was thoroughly kindled, some here, some there, tooke burning fire brands, and ranne with them to the murderers houses that had killed him, to set them a fire. Howbeit the conspirators foreseeing the daunger before, had wisely provided for them selves, and fled. But there was a Poet called Cinna, who had bene no partaker of the conspiracy, but was alway one of Cæsars chieffest friends: he dreamed the night before, that Cæsar bad him to supper with him, and that he refusing to goe, Cæsar 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 marvelously affrayd, he was driven to follow him in spite of his hart. This dreame put him all night into a fever, and yet notwithstanding, the next morning when he heard that they caried Cæsars 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 uprore. And bicause some one called him by his name, Cinna: the people thinking that he had bene that Cinna, who in an oration he made had spoken very evill of Cæsar, they falling upon him in their rage, slue him outright in the market place. This made Brutus and his companions more affrayd, then any other thing, next unto the chaunge of Antonius. Wherefore they got them out of Rome, and kept at the first in the city of Antium, hoping to returne againe to Rome, when the furie of the people were a litle asswaged. The which they hoped would be quickly, considering that they had to deale with a fickle and unconstant multitude, easye to be caried, and that the Senate stooode for them: who notwithstanding made no enquierie of them that had torne poore Cinna the Poet in peeces . . .²⁰

Shakespeare is a poet of great inventive power in his own right, but moments like this are occasions to observe that an important element of his genius was his knowing whom to imitate and adapt.

The description of Cinna in his dream, being led by Caesar “into a great darke place” and being afraid but being “driven to follow him in spite of his hart,” is already dramatic in its aura of suspense. Shakespeare seems unable to resist writing the scene and even sets it up in 3.1 with a small exchange that the conspirators have with Publius, giving to Brutus lines that will reverberate ironically when Cinna meets his

fate. In the confusion following the assassination, Brutus says, “Where’s Publius?” Someone, the conspirator Cinna, in fact, answers, “Here, quite confounded with this mutiny”; and a nervous exchange unfolds:

Metell us. Stand fast together, lest some friend of Caesar’s should chance—
 Brutus. Talk not of standing. Publius, good cheer. There is no harm intended to your person, nor to no Roman else. So tell them, Publius.
 Cassius. And leave us, Publius, lest that the people rushing on us, should do your age some mischief.
 Brutus. D o so, and let no man abide this deed but we the doers.
 (3.1.85-95)

Cinna’s brutal death will confirm just how inadequate is Brutus’s attempt to confine the chaos they have unleashed to themselves.

Shakespeare’s handling of the scene makes Cinna’s identity as a poet crucial to what transpires and characterizes him as the kind of poet particularly given to incidentally witty display. Plutarch uses Cinna’s name as he begins his account, calling him a poet, an identity that seems underscored by his vividly prophetic dream. The mob that kills him, however, as Plutarch tells it, has no sense of who he is beyond his name, which causes them to assume he is one of the assassins. Indeed, to accept Plutarch’s account as a plausible report and not his own invention (that is, as history, not poetry), a reader needs to assume that Cinna confided his prophetic dream and his motive for leaving his house before setting out on that fatal day to someone who might have passed the story along after the fact, because, in Plutarch’s telling of it, once Cinna appears in the streets, he is swept to his death without being given the opportunity to say anything.

Shakespeare rationalizes any uncertainty about the credibility of the story of Cinna’s premonition by having Cinna speak aloud about his dream and his motive in coming forth. Both are established in the four lines with which he opens the scene:

I dreamt tonight that I did feast with Caesar,
 And things unluckily charge my fantasy.
 I have no will to wander forth of doors,
 Yet something leads me forth. (3.3.1-4)

His identity as a poet, however, in contrast to Plutarch’s account, is a point of suspense in the scene, even more postponed than his name, emerging gradually in the dialogue that ensues between him and the plebeians. First, he tries to deflect their menacing questions with verbal wit, delaying as long as possible his answer to the initial question they ask, “What is your name?” (3.3.5). His cleverness seems to incite them. When he at last replies, “Truly, my name is Cinna” (3.3.27), he finds that he has, truly, told them something that falsely fuels their mischievous intent.²¹ As poets often do, he has, here unwittingly, used a word with more than one signification. His name Cinna

admits two interpretations, that of friend and enemy to Caesar. Once he has said it, in vain does he assert the truth of the matter: “I am Cinna the poet, I am Cinna the poet” (3.3.29). Rather than “tear him to pieces” because “he’s a conspirator,” they “tear him for his bad verses” (3.3.28, 30).

Gaius Helvius Cinna’s name would have been known to any grammar school boy in Shakespeare’s time. Cinna and his fellow poet Catullus began their careers in the age of Pompey, whom Caesar had defeated on his own path to power. Though “three lines and a stray word” are all that survive of Cinna’s *Smyrna*,²² two things can be said with certainty about it—that it told the story of Myrrha and that the poet Catullus thought it was superb.

Catullus alludes to his friendship with Cinna in carmen 10, an anecdote of his encounter with another friend’s girlfriend (the speaker of the poem blurts out Cinna’s name to deflect the girlfriend’s attempt to get the speaker to lend him the litter he is bragging of). Catullus also addresses Cinna by name in carmen 113 to share with him a wittily salacious joke about the prostitute Mucia, who has plied her trade consistently through the years when Pompey has been consul, the first and second time. It is in carmen 95 that Cinna is more than a name, identified by Catullus as the author of *Smyrna*:

Smyrna, my Cinna’s opus, is published at last, nine harvests
and nine long winters after she was begun,
While Hortensius meantime scribbles five hundred thousand
<ill-chosen words, never pausing, in one short day.>
Smyrna will travel as far as Satrachus’ sacred streambed;
when the ages are hoary, *Smyrna* will still be read—
unlike Volusius’ *Annals*, that’ll die by Padua’s river,
their only regular use to wrap cheap fish.
Dear to my heart is my comrade’s small monument—let the
vulgar enjoy their bloated Antimachus.²³

The reader who takes Catullus’s word on the excellence of Cinna’s poetry, and it is likely that Shakespeare would have done so because anyone who can read Latin poetry knows Catullus as an excellent poet himself, must register the irony of his prediction that his *Smyrna* will be read “when the ages are hoary” in contrast to the oblivion to which his contemporaries’ works would be consigned. Shakespeare might have observed that the people (“populus” at carmen 95.10) who praised *tumidus Antimachus* over Cinna are akin to the citizens of his play, who literalize their judgments of Cinna’s poetry by tearing his body to pieces.

The camp poet and Cinna episodes in *Julius Caesar* register two comments on the impulse to assert the value of poetry to a society negotiating profound change. In the camp poet episode, Shakespeare arranges things so that the model of conduct offered by the intruder in what Brutus calls his jiggling poetry is belated advice, deeply irritating to Brutus, merely amusing to Cassius. The Cinna episode conveys another image of an ineffectual poet, handicapped this time by his own cleverness;

he becomes the occasion of, in this case, brutal amusement. But the Cinna episode raises, albeit away from the surface of the play, another aspect of this issue in the plebeians' description of Cinna's poetry as "bad verses." So long as what Cinna wrote remains unspecified, their judgment of his work can be imagined as hasty, imperfect, unsophisticated. In relation to what *Smyrna* was about, however, Shakespeare's reconstruction of the episode begins to look like the representation of an act of censorship, one that, applied to such a story as Cinna seems to have told, public schools in a modern republic would be hard pressed not to accept.

Ovid makes his retelling of Cinna's *Smyrna* the longest of the songs of Orpheus, the Thracian bard whose exquisitely beautiful singing is enhanced by the irrevocable loss of his Eurydice. His singing is so ravishing that it insulates him from any harm; his music can charm even stones and trees. In this mournful but protected condition, Orpheus turns from the "graver" subjects of his earlier work to sing "Of boys beloved of gods and girls bewitched / By lawless fires who paid the price of lust."²⁴ Myrrha is a girl consumed by a love for own father, King Cinyras. With the help of her nurse, she contrives to have sex with him without him knowing it, and she conceives by him Adonis, who bursts from her after her grief and shame have transformed her into a myrrh tree.²⁵

Ultimately, Orpheus, like Cinna, is a poet ripped apart by a mob of frantic people, all women in Orpheus's case, who in their frenzy drown out the music of his lyre, leaving him vulnerable to their fury. Ovid connects the circumstances of his demise to the tradition that it was Orpheus's "lead that taught the folk of Thrace / The love for tender boys, to pluck the buds, / The brief springtime, with manhood still to come" (10.83-85).²⁶ So, as Ovid tells it, the Thracian women assault him for his scorn of them (11.7ff.). Presumably, they are individually enraged by his scorn for each of them; but they act collectively, so their outrage seems to register the threat his poetry poses to the social order. In Ovid's account, however, the impiety of Orpheus's poetry proceeds not from any commitment to a subversive system of beliefs (in Hades after his death, "he found Eurydice, / And took her in his arms with leaping heart," 11.63²⁷) but from the mad indifference induced by loss, from his sublimated desire for Eurydice, which becomes complete involvement with his art, regardless of any consequences that might result from the stories or ideas it conveys. Poetry's involvement with its medium, language, to the point of distracting its readers from making judgments about the situations or ideas it represents, is the crime for which poets like Cinna must answer.²⁸ Shakespeare represents Cinna as disdainful of his interrogators, glibly dodging with incidental cleverness the implications of the questions posed to him. Similarly, Ovid's retelling of *Smyrna* exploits opportunities, presumably implicit in Cinna's poem, for irony and witty double entendre that deflect a reader's attention from condemning Myrrha's incestuous love.²⁹

To value imaginative writing at all is to mount, at least implicitly and maybe, if its enemies are confrontational enough, explicitly, a defense of poetry. *Julius Caesar* is a play that, on the level of its major action, offers elements out of which a good argument in poetry's defense can be constructed. It is a play that teaches a kind of history, that holds up models of human conduct constructed to allow us to consider virtue and vice as we judge the actions of the people it represents. These are the

terms of Sidney's defense of poetry. They allow us to construct an easy defense and, on its own terms, a persuasive one. It is a wonder, then, that Shakespeare seems not to have been able to let it go at that.

It would appear that Shakespeare recognized, as teachers of him must also acknowledge, that the easy and persuasive defense is not, after all, predicated on the mysterious operations of what the best poetry is all too apt to do: to drive both language and all that it conveys to the verge of, if not beyond, coherence and acceptability. By most metrics, poetry is not defensible. It is not moral nor useful in any ordinary way. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare seems compelled to grant the validity of what those who disdain poetry say about it: that it is inherently, and, especially in moments of political crisis, at best irrelevant to the world's workings and at worst liable to the accusation of being perverse, even dangerous, in its indifference to everything but its own logic. His camp poet, intent on doing the job of a defensible poet, misses the point entirely of the enormity that is unfolding; and his Cinna dies for being what he truly is: a poet who, if Ovid's retelling of *Smyrna* is any measure, represented with reckless wit the consummation of indecent desire. Writing a play about the assassination of Julius Caesar, the author of *Romeo and Juliet*, of *Twelfth Night*, of *Hamlet* could not, apparently, resist taking passing note of him, the first victim of citizens made profoundly fearful by radical change.

Notes

1. *Timon of Athens* and *Macbeth* are shorter. *The Pelican Complete Works*, gen. ed. Stephen Orgel and A. R. Braunmuller (New York: Penguin Books, 2002) includes a "comparative table" that describes the plays in terms of line count, percentage of prose and verse, number of scenes, and numbers of men and women (lii). I quote Shakespeare's plays, except *Julius Caesar*, from the Pelican text. I quote *Julius Caesar* from the Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, ed. David Daniell (London: Thomson Learning, 2000).
2. Norman Holland, "The 'Cinna' and 'Cynicke' Episodes in *Julius Caesar*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 11 (1960), 439-44; Thomas Pughe, "'What should the wars do with these jiggling fools?': The Poets in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*," *English Studies* 4 (1988), 313-22; Gary Taylor, "Bardicide," in *Shakespeare and the Cultural Traditions*, ed. Tetsuo Kishi, Roger Pringle, and Stanley Wells (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1994); rpt. in *New Casebooks: Julius Caesar*, ed. Richard Wilson (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 188-209. Page numbers in this essay refer to the reprint.
3. Holland, 439, 443. Holland's essay assumes that Shakespeare was primarily influenced by Plutarch's life of Caesar. It is more likely that the life of Brutus was his primary source. It is in the latter that Plutarch emphasizes that Cinna was a poet.
4. Pughe, 313.
5. Throughout this essay, I cite Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes* in the translation by Sir Thomas North from the excerpts reprinted in Geoffrey Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. 5 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964). Relevant excerpts from "The Life of Marcus Brutus" are on 58-140. This passage occurs on 114.
6. Taylor, 190.
7. Sidney's treatise appeared in print in 1595, nine years after his death, in two somewhat different versions and under two titles: *An Apologie for Poetrie* and *The Defence of Poesie*. I cite the text of

Sidney's treatise from the edition of J. A. Van Dorsten, *A Defence of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

8. Plutarch, 106.
9. Taylor, 200.
10. Taylor, 190.
11. *Tristia*, II.207. I have used Ovid, *Tristia, Ex Ponto*, trans. Arthur Leslie Wheeler and rev. G. P. Goold, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).
12. At 5.3.600, Augustus Caesar calls Horace, Gallus, Tibullus, Maecenas, and Vergil the "worthiest friends of Caesar." Maecenas was a patron of poets; Gallus and Tibullus were other poets praised, respectively, by Vergil and Horace. See Ben Jonson, *Poetaster*, ed. Tom Cain (New York: Manchester Univ. Press, 1995), 64. Sidney does not mention Ovid's poetry in his *Defence*, though he quotes or adapts lines from *Ars Amatoria*, *Remedium Amoris* (only in the version called *A Defence*), and *Tristia*, and alludes to stories of *Metamorphoses*.
13. Sidney, 25.
14. Sidney, 31-32.
15. Sidney, 56.
16. Sidney, 57.
17. Plutarch, 114.
18. "For indeed the greatest part of poets have appareled their poetical inventions in that numbrous kind of writing which is called verse—indeed but appareled, verse being but an ornament and no cause to poetry." Sidney, 27.
19. For "companion," Arthur Humphreys, in the Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), reads "fellow"; Marvin Spevack, in the New Cambridge Shakespeare (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), comments, "a term of familiarity or contempt"; David Daniell, in the Arden Shakespeare, notes "derisive."
20. Plutarch, 105-06.
21. The plebeians require Cinna to speak "directly," "briefly," "wisely," and "truly" (3.3.9, 10, 11, 12) to the four questions they ask him: "What is your name? / Wither are you going? / Where do you dwell? / Are you a married man or a bachelor?" (3.3.5-8). Cinna plays with the symmetry between the four questions and the four requirements they impose on him, answering the last question first and "wisely," then the second question "directly," then the third "briefly." This leaves "truly" to accompany his fateful declaration in response to their first question, "What is your name? / Truly, my name is Cinna." "Truly" is a word that recurs in Sidney's *Defence*, conspicuously when he refutes the objection made to poetry that it "is the mother of lies" and for this reason "Plato banished [poets] out of his commonwealth" (51, 52). "Truly, this is much," Sidney writes, "if there be much truth in it. . . . [To that charge] I answer paradoxically, but truly, I think truly, that of all writers under the sun the poet is the least liar. . . . Now, for the poet, he nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth" (52). This conspicuousness of "truly" in Sidney's *Defence* may underlie Touchstone's rationalization of his wish that the gods had made Audrey poetical in *As You Like It* 3.3. Audrey, who claims not to know "what poetical is," asks, "Is it honest in deed and word? Is it a true thing?" to which Touchstone replies, "No, truly; for the truest poetry is the most feigning" (3.3.15-18).

16 *The Upstart Crow*

22. David P. Kubiak, "Cinna Fragment 6 Morel," *Classical Philology* 76 (1981), 296.
23. *The Poems of Catullus, a Bilingual Edition*, trans. Peter Green (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). The brackets indicate an interpolated line.
24. Orpheus's song announcing the new themes of his poetry occurs in a prelude to the Ganymede section of book 10, lines 152-54, in the Latin text of the Loeb Classical Library *Metamorphoses*, trans. Frank Justus Miller, rev. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984). I quote the translation of A. D. Melville for the Oxford World Classics edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), with notes by E. J. Kenney. The lines of this translation are not numbered, so I have located their equivalent in the Loeb text.
25. Thus Shakespeare would have read this story just ahead of the tale in Ovid that he transformed into his poem *Venus and Adonis*.
26. According to Kenney, George Sandys, the seventeenth-century translator of Ovid, found these lines "too shocking to translate" (note to 10.84). He also notes (to 11.7) that when Vergil recounts the death of Orpheus in *Georgics* iv, he "delicately scouts the Alexandrian tradition [that Ovid follows]: 'no love, no thought of marriage moved his mind.'"
27. Kenney notes to this line that "this happy ending is Ovid's invention." It sets up a moment of whimsical irony: "There [in Hades] hand in hand they stroll, the two together; / Sometimes he follows as she walks in front, / Sometimes he goes ahead and gazes back . . ." (11.64-65).
28. I am obviously assuming that, in Shakespeare's view, Ovid was a poet like Cinna—a reasonable assumption, I think, as Ovid's poem would be what Shakespeare would know of Cinna's. That Shakespeare himself should be grouped with them is suggested by Frances Meres' comment in *Palladis Tamia, Wits Treasury* (1598), that "As the soule of Euphorbus was thought to liue in Pythagoras: so the sweete wittie soule of Ouid liues in mellifluous & hony-tongued Shakespeare, witnes his Venus and Adonis, his Lucrece, his sugred Sonnets among his priuate friends, &c." I quote Meres from the excerpt included in Appendix C of *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., gen. ed. G. Blakemore Evans (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 1970.
29. One example will have to suffice here:
 . . . the old nurse took her hand
 And led her to the high-raised couch and said
 "She's yours" [ista tua est], your Majesty. "Take her"; and joined
 The pair in doom. In that incestuous bed
 The father took his flesh and blood, and calmed
 Her girlish fears and cheered her bashfulness.
 Maybe, to suit her age, he called her "daughter"
 And she him "father"—names to seal the crime.
 Filled with her father Myrrha left the room... (10.462-69)

Kenney notes (to 10.429 and also at 10.464) that "tuus" would be used for "loved one," though it primarily is the familiar possessive pronoun, "your own."

THE ETHIOP'S EAR: RACE, SEXUALITY, AND BAZ LUHRMANN'S
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S ROMEO + JULIET

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Although it hasn't always been the case, it is now commonplace to observe that when we idealize Shakespeare's famous lovers Romeo and Juliet by seeing them as transcending their feuding social world and its limits, we "obscure" the "social function" of their corpses in making possible the union of the houses of Montague and Capulet.¹ We allow their deaths to stand—like the golden statue proposed by their fathers—as a monument symbolizing peace and harmony outside the famous feud that divides Verona. But, in fact, their deaths are in some ways the result or fulfillment of that feud, and we might better understand Romeo and Juliet as citizens of a city that is a "matrix for . . . violence and disorder" and as characters whose lives and identities, like those of all the other inhabitants of Verona, are subsumed and defined by the conflict between the Capulets and Montagues.² That the lovers seem to stand outside their own social world is perhaps an effect of Shakespeare's exquisite poetry; however, they are called into being—interpellated as subjects—in connection to those discourses of darkness and desire that characterize the social world of Verona. This is a thesis I want to develop, but rather than consider Romeo and Juliet as figures defined by a specific history represented in Shakespeare's play itself, I want to examine how they emerge across the histories of the early modern and modern periods. In particular, I want to explore the languages of darkness and desire that inform the play and the ways they become linked, in our own age, to specific racial and sexual discourses that continue to echo in our apprehension of the sixteenth-century text.

Accordingly, in the first part of this essay I examine the racial and sexual politics of Baz Luhrmann's 1996 filmed version of the play, *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*, starring Leonardo Di Caprio and Claire Danes. Luhrmann's film does not interpret Shakespeare in a traditional way, representing his play's historical difference from modern concerns; instead, it focuses on seemingly anachronistic, modern social fantasies about race and sex, interpreting the famous "star-crossed" lovers within the social and sexual divisions of our own society.³ Luhrmann does so primarily, it seems, to show some of the ways race and sex (played out so often in our post-colonial cultures as social divisions or feuds perhaps analogous to Shakespeare's more famous familial feud) divide late twentieth-century communities and individuals within those communities. Intriguingly, Luhrmann uses Shakespeare's sixteenth-century play to interpret or "read" his viewers in the modern West.⁴ But, and this is the other point I wish to emphasize, his insights make it easier for us to re-read some of these complexities of color and desire back into *Romeo and Juliet* as an historical artifact. His film, in other words, helps position the play itself within an overlapping history of

homophobia and racism in the West. Correspondingly, I turn in the second half of the essay to Shakespeare's play, to tease out the possible racial and sexual meanings of the famous imagery of lightness and darkness.

My essay, then, is something of a test case for W. B. Worthen's suggestion that performance, even a filmed performance, "reconstitutes the text" of a play so that Shakespeare seems to speak to us not from an historical past but within the present framework of production.⁵ More to the point, it outlines some of the ways Shakespeare's play was produced at the limits of early modern England's representation of racial and sexual difference, around discursive tensions that would be read differently in the future to which we are heir. As Graham L. Hammill brilliantly demonstrates with regard to sexuality, early modern texts acquire meaning in future readings that are not part of their own times and places. Textual discourse transmits sexual meanings not specifically available as such to playwrights and audiences in their own time but that become available, with a difference, in the future. To take one example, readings of a homosexual subtext in Caravaggio do not—cannot—simply represent the painter's or his viewer's understanding in an era in which homosexuality as such does not exist; and yet the homosexual content to be found in his paintings by modern readers is not simply an anachronistic imposition. Caravaggio's paintings become queer, Hammill argues, in the sense that their present meanings not only disrupt dominant understandings of sexuality but dominant understandings of the historical difference between sexualities then and now.⁶ My argument is that Luhrmann's film helps reveal the (history of the) critical reception of *Romeo and Juliet* as a racist, heteronormative one. It reveals the ways the play is related to that history in terms that cannot be divorced from the early modern text itself or the social discourses it represents.

I

For obvious reasons, I focus on Luhrmann's Mercutio, played by the African-American actor Harold Perrineau and represented in the film as a black, gay man. In this and other ways, Luhrmann's film reflects the discontinuities and incoherencies of our own highly politicized racial subjectivities while simultaneously suggesting that those subjectivities are maintained and perpetuated by social fantasies of romantic love and racial harmony. Locating the insular world of Shakespeare's Verona in a modern multicultural, multiethnic setting,⁷ Luhrmann's film asks some disturbing questions: first, what does romantic love of the Romeo-and-Juliet-variety look like when we factor into it the divisions of social and political subjectivity created by the feud in Shakespeare's play; and if these divisions can be represented in our culture by racial, ethnic, and sexual difference, then how does Shakespeare's play reflect on our own notions of social community forged positively through difference?

Perrineau's performance may, of course, be a noteworthy instance of color-blind casting. The actor may have been the best available to play the part or his

reputation and following may have helped secure the film's finances or both. There is, of course, no good reason to think black actors cannot play any role in Shakespeare, even ones that seem specifically to be coded European or white, as when, for instance, a few years back in New York Denzel Washington played the Roman Brutus in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Nevertheless, as Barbara Hodgdon observes, *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet's* camera shots often triangulate the black, seemingly worldly wise Mercutio between the naïve Romeo and his Latin rivals in ways that suggest the film's racial constructions are deliberate.⁸

Far from imposing political ideas onto Shakespeare, Luhrmann reflects ideas not far removed from the playwright's own concerns with difference as these are represented in plays as disparate as *Titus Andronicus*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *The Tempest*.⁹ Although early modern England did not have a clearly developed concept either of race or sexuality (and so we should rightly expect Shakespeare to handle these issues differently from the ways we do), in each of these plays the author imagines a dark-skinned or alien figure whose threat to the integrity of the individual subject or social community is represented as a type of sexual disorder. Factoring racial and sexual difference into *Romeo and Juliet*, Luhrmann depends, then, on a rather Shakespearean idea to comprehend the tragedy that befalls the play's young lovers. In other words, he helps us see Romeo and Juliet as pure, bright, and even "white" young lovers through their tense relationship to the difference imaged in Mercutio's black skin and sexual difference. In doing so, he does subtly shift Shakespeare's emphasis, for whereas the primary sexual disorder in the play might be said to be located in the lovers themselves, we might think—watching Luhrmann's film—that it is located almost exclusively in Mercutio.

Crucially, Mercutio is a border figure in Shakespeare's play. His presence helps mark the liminal space in which Romeo moves from boy to man.¹⁰ He is the most brilliant and attractive of Romeo's friends, and Romeo's fateful love for Juliet disrupts the important male bonding signified by that friendship. When Juliet's cousin, Tybalt, challenges Romeo to a duel, Mercutio defends him and is killed, and, in retaliation, Romeo kills Tybalt. Mercutio's death, then, precipitates the tragic action that leads to Romeo and Juliet's suicides. Although nothing in Shakespeare's text suggests that Mercutio is anything but Italian (perhaps a stand-in for an Englishman, but otherwise not racially distinct from Romeo), Luhrmann discerns his role as a mediator between different worlds of innocence and experience imagined as different worlds of race and sexuality. Hence, it seems that Mercutio is black and gay because the filmmaker wants to emphasize racial, ethnic, and sexual issues. Indeed, Luhrmann seems to use the border figure Mercutio to mark a space between the Montagues and the Capulets as distinct ethnic types.

Romeo's family and many of his friends are stereotypically (as well as literally) coded white through costume and manner.¹¹ Juliet's family, for the most part, seems Latin—although, judging from her understated (and sometimes failed) attempt at an

accent, the blonde Lady Capulet (Diane Venora) seems to hail from the American South. In this context, a black Mercutio might seem to play a salutary role as the example of friendship that transcends race, ethnicity, or culture. Standing at a mythic mid-point in the play, Shakespeare's Mercutio is friend to the Montagues and kinsman to the Prince and County Paris; he is also invited to the Capulets' masked ball. On one hand, then, Mercutio's friendship with Romeo seems to suggest that Romeo himself is not racist, a point also seemingly signified when he marries the Latin Juliet. In this regard, Mercutio's role may implicitly critique the racialized or ethnic war portrayed in the film, rendering in compellingly modern terms the human waste of the feud represented in Shakespeare.

On the other hand, the film rightly suggests that any personal triumph over racism Romeo may experience does not adequately address the racial divide in his culture. Like common sense, religion, and love itself, personal interracial sympathies fail to prevent the impending personal and social devastation that unfolds in the tale. Apparently rejecting the individualist ethic as a solution to the race problem in the modern world, Luhrmann calls into question those sentimental notions about the value of love and human connection in overcoming social boundaries that seem to be fundamental to the reception of *Romeo and Juliet* since at least the eighteenth century. That these notions have become fundamental to modern if not early modern readings of the play makes Luhrmann's film all the more valuable to us, for in calling into question Mercutio's and Romeo's inability to mediate the divisions of the feud it reminds us of the point with which I began: the social tensions underlying the play may not even be settled by the deaths of the lovers at the end.

In fact, Mercutio's role as failed mediator in the conflict between the Capulets and the Montagues reflects any number of cinematic and other discursive representations that presume to mediate the black/white division in contemporary society, exposing the sentimental hypocrisy of a dominant Western cultural imagining that friendship with the black man is the key to erasing white complicity in and guilt over Western racism.¹² Luhrmann's film alludes to a huge, international repertoire of movies, so he knows well that friendship between a black and a white man has become a stereotypical convention of, at least, Hollywood films.¹³ In American cinema this pairing usually seems to symbolize racial harmony, even in an America in which racial disharmony may be more the norm. In other words, the relationship gives the appearance that the race problem has been solved, when, in fact, often very little is being done to improve conditions for African-Americans and other minorities.¹⁴ While it may represent an advance in the history of film, and a positive response to a larger history of racism in Hollywood film, the role of the black friend does not lessen tensions around the racial divide in contemporary culture so much as create new ones. Indeed, introducing race into a film of Shakespeare's play in this particular way means that the black character gets the dubious privilege of dying for his white friend. Mercutio, then, may seem to be sacrificed for some limited ideal of racial harmony.

Nevertheless, his role in the film suggests an idea implicit in Shakespeare's play relevant to modern understanding: in a divided culture such as Verona or our own, the notion of the individual who might bridge profound social gaps is an unattainable fantasy. Read carefully, Shakespeare's play and Luhrmann's film both help us interpret the modern world and its illusions about the impact of individuals on social process, for in neither does Romeo's friendship with Mercutio or his love for Juliet exist outside the pervasive social violence represented. Both relationships reflect that violence, and both end badly. Significantly, the later actions of Shakespeare's protagonists replay the tragedy's celebrated opening scene of male violence and aggression: Juliet, having felt Romeo's "pretty piece of flesh," thrusts herself through with his dagger, putting herself into the place of those imaginary Montague women whom Sampson and Gregory threaten to rape and kill (although not entirely seriously) as the play begins (1.1.29).¹⁵

Luhrmann thus cleverly comments on our social and cultural failings, using Shakespeare's language: at his death, Mercutio curses both the Capulets and the Montagues. In Shakespeare, of course, where Mercutio is not specifically black, the character's curse is that of a man angered by the brutal stupidity of two clans who cannot stop fighting. In the film, where Mercutio seems to function in some ways as a Hollywood stereotype, his curse seems to reject the image of the black man as sacrificial victim and indict the racist hypocrisy of a society that takes solace in that image.

In both works, the murderous effects of the feud are transferred from Mercutio onto Romeo. In Shakespeare's play, Mercutio's death evokes a crisis of masculinity in which Romeo realizes that his love for Juliet has made him effeminate (3.1.112-13). Revenging the death of his friend becomes a sign of Romeo's emerging masculinity, which is intimately connected in the play with violence, in advance of his consummating his marriage with Juliet (whose image in the film fades into the space of the ruined theater stage where Mercutio has just played out his death scene).¹⁶ So, the transfer of violence does not represent Romeo's break from his male buddies but the fulfillment of their example, with all its fatal consequences. In Shakespeare, these moments acknowledge the ways early modern women were understood to threaten masculinity and Romeo's triumph over that threat.

Much the same might be said about Luhrmann, with the proviso that the film's racial framework makes clear to a modern audience that Romeo cannot dissociate himself from the divisions in Verona (imaged explicitly in the terms of racial tensions that he cannot erase) even in his marriage to Juliet. Conflicting or incoherent cultural divisions lead to the formation of incoherent social and personal identities. Revealing this idea in our racially divided culture, Luhrmann's film establishes an intriguing dialectic with Shakespeare's play, reading it, reading us, reading it. If dominant readings of *Romeo and Juliet* have tended to see the lovers as transcending the social malaise of Verona,¹⁷ Luhrmann's film shows that in Shakespeare's play the lovers cannot escape the violence of their culture any more than we can evade the

pressures of race. The film, then, helps clarify some of the ways Shakespeare's play and its subsequent readers and audiences yearn for what they must, finally, deny: the enlightened subject free of social determinants.

But if the death of Mercutio helps mark Romeo's transition from the privileged world of male friendship to the problematic bond he attains with Juliet, that bond is, nevertheless, revealed to be racially pure—indeed, white—in Luhrmann's film. The film seems to represent a specific relationship between sexuality and race that, Richard Dyer suggests, is significant to the formation of white identity in the West. Dyer argues that white identity constitutes itself as racially pure by dissociating itself from sexual desires that are imagined as dark and displaced onto the bodies of dark-skinned others.¹⁸ That this point is pertinent to Shakespeare's play, in which the lovers might be said to signify as white in the absence of any specific black characters, I will argue later. For now, I want to suggest how the issue comes into clearer focus when we consider the sexuality of Perrineau's Mercutio.

It does not overstate the case to say that the film's visuals clearly signal something about Mercutio that is not, characteristic of its treatment in the West, to be spoken. The Capulets' ball is represented as a costumed affair, so Mercutio's performance there in drag may not seem to signify much. But considering the film as a whole, one could certainly make the case that Mercutio is gay. For instance, he taunts Tybalt with sexual jokes. When Tybalt says, "Gentlemen, good e'en. A word with one of you," Mercutio responds with, "And but one word with one of us? Couple it with something: make it a word and a blow" (3.1.37-39). The word "blow" in Shakespeare, of course, refers to a hit with a sword or punch with a fist. It is a provocation to fight. But here (albeit within the parameters of a male violence that functions as desire throughout the play), the word seems specifically sexual. It is telling that Mercutio becomes violent when Tybalt accuses him of "consort[ing]" with Romeo (3.1.44), because Mercutio's relationship with Romeo does seem to be more than friendly. To be sure, Luhrmann himself told the American gay and lesbian news weekly, *The Advocate*: "It's in the text . . . There's no question he is [gay]."¹⁹

In Shakespeare's play, the relationship between Romeo and Mercutio is charged with erotic implication.²⁰ Their jokes and word-play are often sexual in nature, and usually have to do with male sex organs. This was not odd in Shakespeare's time, because as is now clear, friendship in Shakespeare's England was more erotically charged than it is for us. Friendship, it seems, allowed for some kinds of erotic activity between friends in certain instances.²¹ Not all friendships were erotic, of course, but the institution seems to have allowed for the possibility of eroticism between men in ways it does not for us. What is surprising and different about Shakespeare's England is that in most instances it didn't seem to occur to people to be concerned with whether or not men were having close, intimate relations—even erotic ones. So, Mercutio's relationship with Romeo, even if it is full of erotic energy, would be normative in the period.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, however, men who are erotically interested in other men are usually viewed as a separate category of males. It is precisely this category of difference, along with his race, that marks Luhrmann's Mercutio's seeming historical difference from Shakespeare's character. Luhrmann, of course, doesn't suggest that there is anything perverse about Mercutio's being gay. Rather he seems to be repeating what has become almost a cliché of modern interpretations of *Romeo and Juliet*. The sense that Mercutio has a specific sexual desire for Romeo emerged in the late twentieth century and was given tremendous affirmation in the popular imagination by that other famous film of Shakespeare's play, Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 version. In both Zeffirelli's film and Luhrmann's, Mercutio definitely seems hung up on Romeo, even though—and this is crucial—his physical desire is apparently not returned. In the modern world some men are and some men definitely are not.

Obviously, both films refract their modern audience's understanding of sexuality, for a film has little room for historical contextualization of the type I provided above. Also, ideas about masculinity change, and Romeo's is a highly problematic case for the modern age. A weak and vacillating character in the early part of Shakespeare's play and later a man made seemingly irrational by his love for Juliet, he hardly constitutes an ideal of early modern masculinity. That he grows to manhood in the play is arguable,²² but the fact that masculinity in our time is often (and homophobically) posited around heterosexuality provides a convenient type of cinematic shorthand for both Zeffirelli and Luhrmann, who displace homosexual desire onto Mercutio alone. Add to these cultural assumptions what Barbara Hodgdon refers to as Leonardo Di Caprio's "pale, androgynous beauty" and you can see something of a problem Luhrmann faced in creating a credibly male figure for a modern audience.²³ Mercutio's seeming homosexuality, then, is used to mark by contrast the otherwise questionable sexuality of one of Shakespeare's most famous lovers.

But, in a move that seems extraordinarily problematic, the film equates same-sex desire, viewed almost exclusively as a minority sexual position, with a black character. In other words, Mercutio's sexuality conditions our apprehension of his blackness, and vice versa. Two contested—indeed embattled—minority figures, the black man and the gay man, are coded as one. It seems worth thinking about what this means, because the connection between aberrant sexuality and dark skin has a long and damaging history in the imperial West dating back at least (as I've already suggested) to Shakespeare himself. Sander Gilman, for instance, describes some of the complex ways black sexuality was classed as disease in much modernist writing, and Dyer argues that a characteristic "projection of sexuality onto dark races was a means for whites to represent yet dissociate themselves from their own desires."²⁴ The specific linking of homosexuality to a blackness that threatened white racial purity has an equally clear history in the United States. It was only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that people began to label and identify a separate category of human beings that we call homosexuals, and it

was also at this moment in history that so-called scientific ideas about race were employed to classify non-white peoples as biologically different from—and less well developed than—people descended from Europe. Siobhan Somerville, for instance, argues that the techniques of science were used simultaneously to show that both black people and homosexuals were supposedly more primitive than white heterosexuals. One result of this racist, so-called science was to associate homosexuality with blackness, a point confirmed by Ferguson, who shows how in the early part of the twentieth century sociological theories of minority sexual dysfunction were employed to justify the development of a capitalist ideology that favored white labor and production.²⁵

Representing his Mercutio as black and gay, Luhrmann may appear to participate in an aesthetic tradition Robert Aldrich identifies as “homoerotic Orientalism,” a widespread though minor category of European and American art that explored homoeroticism as an exotic aspect of dark-skinned peoples and cultures located in climes decidedly not European.²⁶ While this tradition tended to be celebratory of same-sex desire, it also helped consolidate an idea that people of color might serve as markers of sexual difference while white love and white people were associated with sexual normativity and even purity.²⁷ The idea is not so far removed from Shakespeare’s evocative imagining of Caliban in *The Tempest*. Not one with the Europeans in the play, native to the island that sometimes seems as if it is in the West Indies, Caliban’s grotesque, fleshly character is naturalized in its association with the exotic island setting of the play.²⁸ In the European Prospero’s imaginary, Caliban is a “thing of darkness,” to be claimed and controlled (5.1.278). His sexual criminality is marked just so precisely as he expresses desire for the virginal, European Miranda. Even though Alonso, the King of Naples, has ruinously—according to some of his nobles—married his own daughter to the presumably dark-skinned (or at least non-white) King of Tunis, Prospero intends Miranda to be sexually matched to a man whose culture and skin color signify what it is that excludes Caliban from consideration. There is no homosexual in *The Tempest*, of course, but the promise of pure, white marital alliance is defined in distinction to dark-skinned others whose sexuality is conceived as perverse. In short, the play reflects a connection between white purity and sexuality that excludes dark (and implicitly perverse) desires.

Perrineau’s Mercutio might be seen within that same racist sexual history, for he is a black man whose sexuality presumably excludes him from the marital and reproductive alliances of Verona Beach. And it does so in a context in which the purest and most compelling desire seems to be valorized as heterosexual and represented as white. For one thing is very odd about Luhrmann’s film. Though Juliet is supposedly Latin, she is played by Claire Danes, an actress clearly marked white in the Hollywood star system. Given that Lady Capulet is a blonde (possibly Southern) woman, Juliet’s racial markings may seem suitably verisimilar:

certainly, it is possible to be Latin and have skin as white as Claire Danes', for race is not reliably marked on the body. But it also seems noteworthy that Juliet is not played by a darker actress, and that the love enshrined in the conclusion's beautifully conceived visuals is marked vividly white by the wedding dress Juliet wears to her death.

Thus, the movie privileges whiteness in at least two ways: one, by safely containing the black man and black desires within a gay body so that they pose no threat to a white woman such as Juliet; two, by containing the gay man within an imaginary, sexually exclusive identity that poses no threat to Romeo either. The film represents Romeo's love for Juliet as the opposite of homosexuality and as the opposite of black or dark desires. Even at the same moment that it shows Romeo beginning to participate in the racist discourses of the feud after the death of Mercutio, the film also shows him beginning to participate in heterosexist ones in which the purity of his different-sex desire for Juliet is revealed in contrast to all others. So, the film literally seems to represent Dyer's argument: the association of dark desires with dark bodies marks out a space of whiteness disassociated from sexuality threatening to whiteness. In the absence of a mystical authority figure like Prospero, who intervenes to eliminate the threat to white female purity, homosexuality serves in Luhrmann's film as a convenient impediment imposed from within and written on the body of its Mercutio/Caliban. Such a reading can only make sense, of course, in the modern world, where both race and sexuality are naturalized as essential features of the body and identity. What is significant about Luhrmann's film is that it demonstrates how both intersect to reinforce an ideology of pure white love in distinction to other, darker ones.

The question that remains unanswered is whether the film reproduces such a reading through Luhrmann's inattention to the intricacies of race and sexuality in Western cultures or whether the director intends to suggest the ironies of that reading. Does Luhrmann critique the trope of the black friend by exposing it as a space of black male (homosexual) desire disallowed, a space that preserves the fantasy of white racial purity even in a multicultural world? Or does his film simply reproduce that figure as a necessary corollary to its fantasy of white, heterosexual subjectivity? Whatever the case, the racial markings of Luhrmann's film call into serious question the place of *Romeo and Juliet* in a modern multicultural world, for it reminds us, if a bit perversely, that the revered idealization of romantic love at its core may foreshadow some of the racist and homophobic determinants of that world. The film reminds us of what often seems to get left out of both historical and modern readings of *Romeo and Juliet*—the dark and the sexually different—even as it perhaps makes us aware that these readings only press that difference beneath the surface. For the violence and social disorder of the play point toward an undercurrent of desire reflected in a persistent imagery of darkness only seemingly set in contrast to the brightness of the lovers.

II

So, if Romeo brilliantly and famously imagines Juliet on her balcony as the sun rising in the east, he also backtracks slightly to call her a “maid” to the “envious” moon, whose “vestal livery is but sick and green” (2.2.7-8). “Cast it off,” he says (2.2.9). While her association with the moon thus signifies her loss of maidenhood, it is not entirely clear that after meeting Romeo, Juliet will ever again stand in the sunlight, much less in place of it. Juliet is a “bright angel,” but only against the backdrop of the “glorious” “night” (2.2.26-27) that sets her off. Romeo himself has “night’s cloak to hide” him from the eyes of Juliet’s kinsmen (2.2.75), and Juliet wears “the mask of night” upon her face (2.2.85). It is the “dark night” that “discover[s] their ‘light love’” (2.2.106, 105). And love’s contract, like the lightning, “cease[s] to be / Ere one can say it lightens” (2.2.119-20). Who Romeo and Juliet are to one another depends upon a difference from the dark forces of the play, but it is a difference that never quite comes into focus. Indeed, as is widely recognized, the lovers are primarily bright, light, or white to each other, in each other’s eyes, as when Juliet imagines Romeo as “day in night,” or “new snow upon a raven’s back” (3.2.17, 19). Romeo shines in such imagining like the stars, but he makes the world to “be in love with night” (3.2.24).

Significantly, the tenor of all these metaphors from the balcony scene and Juliet’s bedroom remains little changed from those to be found in the Capulets’ “dark” monument, that “palace of dim night” where Romeo finds that “death’s pale flag is not advanced” upon the face of Juliet, which remains, even now, “fair.” (5.3.105, 107, 96, 102). From first to last, Romeo and Juliet’s desire plays out not merely as light but in and as light in darkness. Darkness in the play is not the opposite of the lovers’ young desire; it becomes the fruition of that desire.

In this regard, we might re-consider Mercutio’s Queen Mab speech as a lyrical interlude made thematically rich by encapsulating many of the play’s simultaneous fears and fantasies of violence and desire. If, initially, Mab references pleasant dreams of wished-for benefits, she comes increasingly to be associated with disturbing and unsettling threats, so that pleasure perhaps seems to be disordered. Most interestingly, she causes the soldier to dream of

cutting foreign throats,
Of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades,
Of healths five fathom deep, and then anon
Drums in his ear, at which he starts and wakes,
And being thus frightened swears a prayer or two
And sleeps again. (1.4.83-88)

The soldier’s dream of Mab provides something of a mirror image of Juliet’s vision of waking in the tomb, where, in a “rage,” she dashes out her own brains “with

some great kinsman's bone" (4.3.53). And it anticipates her actual awakening from a feigned death just long enough to satisfy her desire for Romeo's dagger. Mab is, of course, the benign aspect of the "spirits" Juliet imagines in the tomb (4.3.44). But, and this is the relevant point, both are linked to the imagination of a wild desire—associated with the "horrible conceit of death and night" (4.3.37)—that is never tamed and always present in the play, first to last.

That these images and metaphors do not entirely evade the pressures of race that Luhrmann and others have echoed in their multicultural versions of the play might be inferred from a single moment in which the light/dark imagery of Shakespeare's work acquires an explicitly racist cast, in Romeo's exquisite lines: "O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! / It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night / As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear" (1.5.45-47). The image of a beautifully bejeweled Ethiop evokes the African or dark desires as the necessary and defining field against which to imagine Romeo's desire for Juliet. If Juliet signifies the bright, rich jewel of love, her recognizably European color is only set off against the black skin of the Ethiop, revealing, perhaps, how even in Shakespeare's time the idealized purity of love could be conceived in a racial dialectic that anticipates the future. As Romeo's evocation of the Ethiop usefully reminds us, the conjunction of lightness with darkness in our culture always has a capacity for racial inscription.

My point is not that these lines justify reading the light/dark imagery of *Romeo and Juliet* as inherently being about race, for such a reading would simply replicate a potentially racist imaginary in the metaphor of the Ethiop, one in which light is associated with whiteness and love while darkness is linked to the alien and different. I want to suggest, however, that future readings of the play that merely reproduce the play's contrasts of lightness and darkness uncritically may, in fact, energize something of the same racist imaginary Romeo does. To be sure, there is as little of what we might recognize as race in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* as there is of homosexuality. That is, there are no characters whose identities are marked explicitly in the terms of difference by which we in the modern period negotiate race; certainly, no Othello or Aaron marks the seeming racial difference or whiteness of other characters in the play. But the equivocations introduced by the metaphor of the Ethiop reveal how racially problematic it has become for our own age to read Romeo and Juliet's love in distinction to other desires in the play associated with darkness. As we saw with Luhrmann's film, doing so seems to privilege lightness and purity in terms that cannot be separated from the subsequent development of raced thinking in the West.

In making this point, I follow Toni Morrison, who argues that the overloading of moral discourses with color symbolism in American literature connotes racialized structures of meaning, an idea that seems to hold for many European works as well.²⁹ Certainly, once the moral discourses of color become attached to race within the performance traditions of *Romeo and Juliet*, as they evidently do in productions

such as Baz Luhrmann's among others, it becomes increasingly difficult to disentangle the two and the play becomes increasingly open to racialist inscription. Just as Zeffirelli's and Luhrmann's presentations of a homosexual Mercutio reflect the ways discourses of male friendship in the Renaissance may be co-opted for heteronormative uses in the present, a black Mercutio reveals how images of darkness prepare us for a racially polarized understanding of the play. This Mercutio not only images proscribed desire in association with dark-skinned others, but, more to the point, he clears the way for us to imagine an idealized love between Romeo and Juliet as a brilliant Other to his sexually ambiguous darkness ("a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear"), that is, as whiteness. As such, the appearance of a black, gay Mercutio reveals ways contemporary romantic idealizations of love in the play may always already be silently coded white and normatively heterosexual. Such considerations militate against assimilating the young lovers to an idealizing notion of transcending the social order. Luhrmann's film reminds us that Romeo and Juliet (and *Romeo and Juliet*) are easily inscribed into homophobic and racialist ideologies in our own time, because the lovers are represented within formulations of desire in Shakespeare's imaginary Verona that can and will be re-imagined in interpretive and performance history as race and homosexuality.

To be more precise, the particular readings of race and sexuality in *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* alert us to the difficulties both of reading race in and removing it from Shakespeare's play. On the one hand, in evoking the Ethiop Shakespeare himself reminds us explicitly of what would become—in the history of Western imperialism—a persistent contrasting of idealized desire (figured as light or whiteness) with racial others that is potentially (though not inevitably) racist. On the other hand, however, our own willingness to read the young lovers in terms that dissociate them from dark desires may replicate the erasure of sexual and racial Others from our conceptions of love. Idealizing Romeo and Juliet as examples of love transcending dark desires not only abjects desires that are not normatively heterosexual but also (especially given the powerful place of the play in Anglo/American culture) tends to elide darkness, along with, perhaps, dark-skinned peoples, from that idealization. Such readings universalize love in terms that seem inevitably, racially, "white," even as—perhaps because—they obscure the blurring of boundaries between desires and races that might otherwise be read in Shakespeare's play. Indeed, Luhrmann's film forces us to recognize that there is a kind of race in or racialist significance to *Romeo and Juliet*, though perhaps in more interesting ways than Luhrmann imagines, for in Shakespeare's work, distinctions between lightness and darkness play out as tensions of the same, not difference.

Because there is no ethnic, national, or sexual difference to be found in Verona, Romeo and Juliet's subjectivities, or senses of self and identity, are not divided against "aliens" or Others but formulated against the very families and citizens

among whom they have grown up and whose desires are only seemingly figured in contrast to theirs. Their subjectivities, that is, are simultaneously dyadic and dualist, both within and outside the social body of Verona, and therefore both light and dark. Whereas transgressive sexual desires in Luhrmann's film are largely marginalized in a black, gay Mercutio, dark sexual desires in Shakespeare's play (as my discussion of the imagery shows) are found in the lovers themselves, and these desires remain to disturb their final moments, unsettling any sense we have that these unfortunate children achieve a coherent subjectivity that places them outside Verona and its tensions. Indeed, in Verona darkness lies within, and it is necessary to the apprehension of these lovers. But, the crucial point, this unsettling mixture of lightness and darkness is often left out of modern discussions of Shakespeare's play, as it was largely left out of Luhrmann's film.

That this point, too, is not unrelated to race and sexuality, to racialized sexuality, in our own culture becomes manifest if we think about *Romeo and Juliet* as allowing us comfortably to displace our concern with the seemingly more explicit divisions of subjectivity into racial (and sexual) categories that we find in *Antony and Cleopatra* or *Othello*. In these plays, Shakespeare employs a more familiar, dualistic conception of race and desire that points specifically to the social problems energized by transgressive romantic love, whereas in *Romeo and Juliet* he reveals sexual, even perhaps heterosexual, desire (certainly romantic love) as a dark possibility within the social fabric of Verona. It is, I would say, precisely our attempt to disentangle this desire, heterosexuality, from its association with darkness that explains those idealizing readings of *Romeo and Juliet* that replicate, as I've suggested, modern racial and sexual binaries.

Not to spin the point too finely, such idealizing readings almost inevitably conspire with Romeo in seeing the Ethiop as the Other to be excluded and not as the sign of a lack in the lovers' identity and desires. The Ethiop is necessary to Romeo to signify the social transgressions of his love for Juliet as being elsewhere, just as the dark signifies what he otherwise does not wish to articulate in his own idealizations of her. In other words, unlike Luhrmann's Mercutio, the Ethiop does not merely exist in darkness as the Other that clarifies Romeo and Juliet's brilliance. She is, rather, an image of the darkness that Romeo, and perhaps the play, must construct to create the illusion that Juliet and Romeo's love for her is pure. The metaphor signifies, then, the racial dimension always implicit in patterns of light/dark imagery capable of inscripting the Other as a sign of disorder that actually proceeds from within. And it alerts us to the potentially racial and even racist implications of accepting at face value the young lovers' sometime attempt to represent sexual disorder as darkness elsewhere. At the very least, then, *Romeo and Juliet* reveals how thoroughly saturated with one another are our categories of race and sexuality, and how attempts to untangle them lead in multiple false directions.

It is worth pointing out in this regard that while those performances of the play that cast Romeo and Juliet across racial lines seem, intuitively, to be responding to

the kinds of racist tensions I am identifying in the play, even they may not manage to blur boundaries in a way that suggests an effective escape from the racial trap. Famously, Arthur Laurents re-invented Juliet as a beautiful Puerto Rican girl, Maria, in *West Side Story* (albeit one played on stage and in film by a white actress). In doing so, he certainly can be credited with bringing some version of ethnic otherness into America's collective imagining of the possibilities of heterosexual romance. At the same time, however, this very attempt to imagine heterosexuality across color lines reifies racial boundaries as precise and specifically problematic cultural discourses. As Celia R. Daileader shows, when Michael Attenborough cast Ray Fearon as Romeo in his 1997 Royal Shakespeare Company production, critics applauded the director's liberal ambitions even as they seemed to quantify the bodily difference of the black actor: "Overall, I counted forty-nine explicit responses to the sex appeal of a black actor (what leading actor does not have sex appeal?) in the above-mentioned reviews; this figure by far outnumbered such comments on the white female co-star [Zoe Waites]."³⁰ Although there may be possibilities for imagining race differently that a fuller history of production of *Romeo and Juliet* may evidence, in these examples whiteness (in the body of the actresses who originally played Maria and in the ways Zoe Waites's Juliet seemed to escape the need for discursive elaboration) remains an ideal set over and against the necessarily-to-be-commented-upon body of the dark-skinned Other.

To return to Shakespeare, it seems clear that race does not appear—indeed it cannot appear—in *Romeo and Juliet* in precisely the ways that we know it; still, discourses within the play necessarily become racialized within the context of our present knowing, so that the play signifies differently because of—indeed echoes—our racialized histories of desire. Reading *Romeo and Juliet* after seeing Luhrmann's film, we begin to imagine more carefully what the conflating of racial and sexual threat in Western cultures seeks to protect: an idealized, pure or "white" love imagined as emerging from or set over and against darkness. We might, then, also imagine how we conspire with that synthesis when we seek that idealized, white love in modern reproductions of the play.

III

If *Romeo and Juliet* establishes its lovers' subjectivities outside a specific duality of self and other, it also creates a dyad of internal difference through which the self never comes into clear relief in distinction to what is imagined as its opposite. Luhrmann's film seems to have recognized this subtlety of the play to the extent that it uses modern racial categories to suggest that all the citizens of Verona Beach are implicated in a social struggle from which no one will escape unharmed. Race in the film inscribes social tension, the feud, on the body of all the film's characters. Nevertheless, by literally marginalizing dark desire in Mercutio simultaneous with idealizing Romeo and Juliet as exemplars of love color-coded white, Luhrmann's film tends

to replicate an idealist reception history of the play that places love itself outside a social world conceived in darkness. It may or may not be the case that Luhrmann reveals the ironies of this displacement by emphasizing—in the final moments of his film—media constructions of Romeo and Juliet's love as a force for positive social change within the racial imaginary of Verona Beach; his film, however, helps recall Shakespeare's play to a Western history of the inter-implication of race and sexuality. After Luhrmann, it seems naïve, even racist, to read *Romeo and Juliet* outside that history, for even if we choose to ignore the complicating pressures of race, we still tend to reproduce the play within an idealized history of white heterosexuality. That Shakespeare fails to make race explicit in *Romeo and Juliet* (if, in fact, that is the case), may simply suggest that he, too, intended to idealize love as a moral category in ways that could become—only through history—encoded white. What seems more likely, as Luhrmann reminds us, is that because darkness suffuses the play, any reproduction of its lead characters primarily in terms of a purity encoded as light or whiteness (whether conceived morally or racially) effects a specifically racialized and sexualized construction, possibly for Shakespeare and certainly for us.

Notes

The essay originated as a talk in April 2005 at South Carolina State University, in Orangeburg. I would like to thank both students and faculty at SCSU (especially Dr. Reginald Rampone) for providing me with help and inspiration in thinking about the racial politics of Luhrmann's film. A later version was presented at the 2008 Clemson Shakespeare Festival under the direction of Dr. Elizabeth Rivlin, whose superb editorial work with the essay I also wish to acknowledge.

1. Jonathan Goldberg, "Romeo and Juliet's Open Rs," in *Queering the Renaissance*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 219. Although he does not discuss race in *Romeo and Juliet*, I am indebted throughout to Goldberg's argument that modern readings of the "idealization" of Romeo and Juliet "provide the bedrock of the . . . heterosexual order," 218-35, 219.
2. Naomi Conn Liebler, "'There is no world without Verona's walls': The City in *Romeo and Juliet*," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works*, vol. 1, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 303-18, 305.
3. Luhrmann's film is not the only or the first to re-invest Shakespeare's famous story of love with the discourses of race: the most memorable example is Arthur Laurents, Stephen Sondheim, and Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*, though the effect has been hinted at as well in stage productions that cast across racial lines (as, for instance, Michael Attenborough's 1997 Royal Shakespeare Company production starring Ray Fearon as Romeo). It seems necessary, however, to clarify the difficulties of speaking about race in Shakespeare's England, where the word would have initially signified something more akin to our notions of *breed*, *lineage*, or *species*. For a useful, brief survey of the complexities of the concept in early modern England, see Margo Hendricks, "Surveying 'race' in Shakespeare," in *Shakespeare and Race*, ed. Catherine M.S. Alexander and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-22. In this essay, uses of the word "race" that refer to Shakespeare's texts should be understood as provisional, marking differences in a character's identity that only signify as race from a modern perspective and even then in highly ambiguous ways. Because, however, the essay primarily refers to modern constructions of race as these are translated back onto Shakespeare's plays, I will avoid clumsy generic attempts (such as italics or quotation marks) to demarcate a difference and specify only if appropriate.

4. In "William Shakespeare's *Romeo + Juliet*: Everything's Nice in America?" *Shakespeare Survey* 52 (1999): 88-98, Barbara Hodgdon points out that Luhrmann's film "has been watching us," 95.
5. W. B. Worthen, "Drama, Performativity, and Performance," *PMLA* 113.5 (1998): 1093-1107, 1097.
6. Hammill argues that "[t]here is no homosexual ego formation before the mid-nineteenth century. Only, this assertion doesn't exactly mean that these poses [that seem to appeal to homosexual desires in Caravaggio] aren't homosexual; it means that the temporality of this 'homosexual appeal' remains unthought...Can't there be poses that appeal to groups not yet formed?" *Sexuality and Form: Caravaggio, Marlowe, and Bacon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 67-68.
 In pursuing the ambiguities of Hammill's queering of history itself, I mean to bypass (as Luhrmann does) readings of *Romeo and Juliet* that discover its meaning in its historical specificity and move toward understandings such as Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon's "homo-history," albeit without resisting entirely—as they do—issues of sexual (and racial) identity. In "Queering History," *PMLA* 120.5 (2005), Goldberg and Menon explore "the project of unhistoricizing sexuality," in order to undertake what I believe to be the important and "difficult task of thinking the relations between a past and present, neither of which is self-identical or identical to the other" (1609, 1610). Nevertheless, Goldberg and Menon reject the concern with "knowable identities" (1613) that is part of my project in this essay. In distinction to their argument, I do not wish to argue that Luhrmann's film merely reproduces the conceptual incoherence of both early modern and modern racial and sexual subjectivities, although I will show that it does, in fact, do that.
7. On the setting of Luhrmann's film, see Alfredo Michel Modenessi, "(Un)doing the Book: 'With-out Verona's Walls': A View from the Receiving End of Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*," in *Spectacular Shakespeare: Critical Theory and Popular Cinema*, ed. Courtney Lehmann and Lisa S. Starks (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002), 62-85, esp. 69-71.
8. Hodgdon, 95. The problematic assumptions that lie behind the notion of colorblind casting have been examined from a variety of angles in a recent collection: *Colorblind Shakespeare: New Perspectives on Race and Performance*, ed. Ayanna Thompson (New York: Routledge, 2006); see especially Lisa M. Anderson, "When Race Matters: Reading Race in *Richard III* and *Macbeth*," 89-102, who argues that "[t]o assume that we can watch a theatrical production and ignore the racial identities of the actors on stage is to assume the impossible," 91. Celia R. Daileader likewise argues that supposedly colorblind casting in productions by the Royal Shakespeare Company are anything but. "Casting black actors: beyond Othellophilia," *Shakespeare and Race*, 177-202.
9. Support for this assertion might be found in many places, but in particular Ania Loomba's analysis of *Othello* and the ways "the filtering of sexuality and race through each other's prism profoundly affects each," 1989, rpt. as "Sexuality and Racial Difference," in *Shakespeare: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1945-2000*, ed. Russ McDonald (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 794-816, 797. See also Arthur L. Little, Jr., *Shakespeare Jungle Fever: National-Imperial Re-Visions of Race, Rape, and Sacrifice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) on *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, and Patricia Parker, "Fantasies of 'Race' and 'Gender': Africa, *Othello*, and bringing to light," in *Women, "Race," & Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London: Routledge, 1994), 84-100. On *The Tempest* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, see "'Commerce and Intercourse': Dramas of Alliance and Trade," chapter 3 in Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 123-176.
10. Noting this liminality, Joseph Porter, in *Shakespeare's Mercutio: His History and Drama* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), writes suggestively about the ways in which Mercutio "has a kind of immanence throughout the second half of the play," 115.

11. Margo Hendricks clarifies some of the ways race is signified through "gesture and costume" in Luhrmann's film. "Gestures of Performance: Rethinking Race in Contemporary Shakespeare," in *Colorblind Shakespeare*, 187-204, 196.
12. Leslie Fiedler long ago demonstrated the enduring sentimentality of the trope in American literature in which a white man befriended a darker-skinned one who, ultimately, loved and forgave him for the racism of the culture at large. For Fiedler this fantasy of interracial homosocial bonding displaced fears about miscegenation by imagining bonds between men that misogynistically excluded women. See "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!," 1948; rpt. in *Leslie Fiedler and American Culture*, ed. Steven G. Kellman and Irving Malin (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 26-34; and *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Criterion Books, 1960).
13. Famous examples include Mel Gibson and Danny Glover in the *Lethal Weapon* series, dir. Richard Donner (1987, 1989, 1992, 1998), Samuel Jackson and Bruce Willis in *Die Hard: With a Vengeance*, dir. John McTiernan (1995), or Jackson and John Travolta in *Pulp Fiction*, dir. Quentin Tarantino (1994).
14. See Benjamin DeMott, "Put on a Happy Face: Masking the Differences Between Blacks and Whites," 1995; rpt. in *Signs of Life: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*, 3rd ed., ed. Sonia Maasik and Jack Solomon (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), 538-48. See also Michael E. Ross, "Black and White Buddies: How Sincere is the Harmony?" *New York Times*, 14 June 1987. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B0DE4D81038F937A25755C0A961948260> Accessed 2 April 2009.
15. References to Shakespeare's plays are to *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, updated 4th ed., ed. David Bevington (New York: Longman, 1997).
16. On the connections between masculinity and violence, see Robert Appelbaum, "'Standing to the Wall': The Pressures of Masculinity in *Romeo and Juliet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997): 251-272.
17. In a section on performance history, "Restoration to the Late Twentieth Century" in her introduction to the Oxford edition of *Romeo and Juliet*, Jill Levenson surveys briefly the ways productions of the play up until the twentieth century were impacted by Garrick's eighteenth century text, which "decreased the public dimension of the narrative," "idealized both lovers," and transformed the play into "pathetic drama, the contemporary blend of romantic love and tragedy," 69-96, 76. At the same time, she clarifies how even John Gielgud's influential 1935 production, which restored Shakespeare's complete text, continued to emphasize the ways the lovers were mythologized types of universal love, 85. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). See as well Levinson's *Shakespeare in Performance: Romeo and Juliet* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987).
18. Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997), 28; the literature outlining the relationship between notions of whiteness and sexuality is, by this point, vast. In addition to Fiedler's and Dyer's groundbreaking works, readers might also consult for a colonial perspective, Ronald Hyam *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); and for an American take on the subject, Mason Stokes' *The Color of Sex: Whiteness, Heterosexuality, and the Fictions of White Supremacy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001) and Gregory Tomso, "The Queer History of Leprosy and Same-Sex Love," *American Literary History* 14 (2002): 747-775.
19. "Homeo, homeo," *The Advocate* 720 (11/12/96), 84. Accessed 2 April 2009.
20. See Nicholas F. Radel, "Queer Romeo and Juliet: Teaching Early Modern 'Sexuality' in Shakespeare's

34 *The Upstart Crow*

'Heterosexual' Tragedy," in *Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Maurice Hunt (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2000), 91-97.

21. In *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Mario DiGangi writes that "early modern gender ideology integrated orderly homoeroticism into friendship more seamlessly than modern ideological formations, which more crisply distinguish homoeroticism from friendship," 12; see also Alan Bray, "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England," 1990, rpt. in *Queering the Renaissance*, 40-61.
22. Coppélia Kahn argues that "Romeo and Juliet create and try to preserve new identities as adults apart from the feud, but it blocks their every attempt." "Coming of Age in Verona," 1978; rpt. in *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 171-93, 172.
23. Hodgdon, 93.
24. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 110; Dyer, *White*, 28; see as well, Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), who notes that in "nineteenth-century Britain, the prostitute [who was frequently represented as being black] was a racial metaphor for the gender and sexual confusions unleashed by capital," 9.
25. Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 34; Ferguson, 13.
26. *Colonialism and Homosexuality* (London: Routledge, 2003), 148. The genealogy of Luhrmann's rehearsal of "homoerotic Orientalism" in the figure of Mercutio is not clear. While the discourse itself has a wide valence and would make sense to Luhrmann and others educated in post-colonial traditions, it is likely that Luhrmann's immediate source for the image of the black, gay drag figure is Jennie Livingston's film *Paris is Burning* (1990).
27. One racially explicit example is a pulp-fiction novel published in the United States in 1931. In Andre Tellier's *Twilight Men: The Story of a Homosexual* (1931; rpt. New York: Lion Books, 1950), the protagonist is introduced to homosexual love by a Frenchman who spent his youth in the West Indies. The novel relies on this fact of geography to explain homosexuality through its association with dark-skinned people, who, in turn, represent an exotic, native primitivism. Considering his desire for the novel's main character, the Frenchman, Jean Mareau, imagines that "[t]he tropics had broken loose again, had got control of the European in him," 85-86. He, then, contrasts the "respectable habitations and centuried veneer of Europe" with what he calls the "primordial wisdom of the black race. Wisdom of blood, not brain," 87. And, finally, after their first sexual encounter, Mareau says, "We lie here like pagans, rejoicing in a love that has been since the world began, but which is somehow struck off the white list of loves," 90.
28. Whether or not Shakespeare sees Caliban's supposed deformities as deriving from his nature, Prospero certainly attempts to imagine his condition as inherent. Prospero calls him "A devil, a born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick" (4.1.188-89).
29. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 37.
30. Daileader, 196.

**“A CARRION DEATH”: THE THEME OF THE GOLD CASKET IN
*THE MERCHANT OF VENICE***

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Portia: “I had rather be married to a death’s-head with a bone in his mouth”
(1.2.49-50).

Critics in recent years, from James Shapiro in *Shakespeare and the Jews* and Janet Adelman in *Blood Relations* to Stephen Greenblatt in the popular biography *Will in the World*, have continued to focus, and with provocative results, on the centrality of Shylock and the suffering that he bears as a Jew, a usurer, a scapegoat, an outsider and an alien forced by the bad faith of his persecutors to convert and to proclaim himself content.¹ Even prior to the Holocaust, especially on the stage, Shylock dominated critical and popular discourse, whether portrayed as devil or victim. Harold Bloom’s popular book on Shakespeare and the invention of the human has encouraged us to return to the criticism of literary characters and to imagine them as prescriptive paradigms of real human behavior.² But I will have little to say about Shylock as a character—whether he is a villain or a figure of pathos. The purpose of this essay is to ground itself in the impersonal, the non-characterological, by exploring a pattern of imagery in the play, especially the dominant motif of gold. Gold coin, ducats, is the currency that moves not only the economy of Venice but also motivates the three suitors’ pursuit of the fabulously wealthy Portia. But there is more to gold than its use or exchange value, for it is steeped as well in a literary and moralizing tradition, a tradition of interpretation and allusion, which entails a proverbial rhetoric along the lines of “All that glisters is not gold” (2.7.65).³ This allegorical mode seeks openly to dismiss gold while secretly cherishing and hoarding it as the value of all values. Gold holds forth the lure of fortunate prospects, prospects ultimately betrayed by death, castration, the severing of the futurity of love.

Shakespeare’s play contradicts itself so often in its attitude towards gold as to challenge the possibility of coherent interpretation.⁴ Anticipating the first casket scene, Portia speaks the lines that I take as my epigraph, indicating that eating dead flesh would be preferable to marrying either the Neapolitan prince or the County Palatine—a sentiment relevant for elucidating, even as it complicates, the relationship between gold and death. Portia cannot know at this early stage in the drama that the gold casket will indeed contain a skull of “carrion Death” and that her father’s will will accord with hers in rejecting Morocco and the gold casket containing the skull. Portia’s father wills her not to marry any suitor greedy for gold since such desire is implicated in necrophilia: the suitor wants his wife dead so that he can appropriate her ducats. The suspicion that love is linked to an undercurrent of avarice and necrophilia will arise with respect to all of the suitors, including Bassanio.

The symbolic association of gold with death is not Shakespeare’s innovation but lies in his ancient source story of the three caskets in the *Gesta Romanorum*, in which the gold casket, full of “dead mens bones,” is “engraven with this posey,

Who so chooseth mee shall finde that he deserueth," while the silver casket is "fylled with earth and wormes" and given the moralizing superscription, "*Who so chooseth me shall finde that his nature desireth.*"⁵ Death is what man deserves and what he desires, it seems, the latent consequences of his pursuit of wealth, perhaps even his latent motive as well—he deserves death, he desires death. The connection between gold and death is so deeply rooted in the depths of time and of literary history as to qualify as primal—in other words, untraceable, not available to the conscious mind. Does gold carry the valence of death because too often people kill others and then are themselves killed in their obsessive-demonic pursuit of it, as in a tale by Kipling or *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*? The goal of boundless wealth may be as much an exercise in futility as the dreams of alchemists, or so Thomas More implies in *Utopia*. Is gold not only the *elixir vitae* of alchemy but also the petard upon which the alchemist dies immiserated, his hopes transmuted into despair, his body worn to a skeleton? Voltaire's *Candide* stumbles into the heart of the jungle of El Dorado, whose savages are notably eccentric and unsophisticated in their contempt for gold, a contempt to which their longevity and happiness are above all due. The literary anthropologist is not lacking for a long catalog of narratives on the vanity of gold. The study of sources and analogues, however, has little to tell us about *The Merchant of Venice*. Better to plumb the devices of the play itself, rich in its imagery of gold, the analysis of which will not yield, however, a consistent morality or a coherent political economy.⁶ To say that in this Shakespearean play the gold casket enfolds bones and an admonitory scroll is accurate enough as forensic inventory, but the yield in terms of fundamental anthropological structuration or the unconscious universals of myth criticism is richly ambiguous at best, at worst hopelessly muddled.

Bassanio's familiar speech to Antonio in the opening scene, in which he praises Portia's "value" and her "worth," makes the first allusion in the play to the story of Jason and the Golden Fleece:

In Belmont is a lady richly left,
 And she is fair, and (fairer than that word),
 Of wondrous virtues,—sometimes from her eyes
 I did receive fair speechless messages:
 Her name is Portia, nothing undervalu'd
 To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia,
 Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
 For the four winds blow in from every coast
 Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks
 Hang on her temples like a golden fleece,
 Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strond,
 And many Jasons come in quest of her.
 O my Antonio, had I but the means
 To hold a rival place with one of them,
 I have a mind presages me such thrift
 That I should questionless be fortunate. (1.1.161-76)

Bassanio's speech is laced with words that tack in more than one direction, for example terms like “worth” and “value” (“nothing undervalu'd”) that may refer to either Portia's moral or financial endowments. Bassanio prizes her because her worth and value, her character and her money, together will make her husband “fortunate.” He makes clear in this speech and elsewhere in this scene that he values Antonio's friendship at least in part because Antonio is generous with his money and is willing to hazard it for the benefit of his friends. Without a loan, Bassanio cannot hope to make the voyage to Belmont to try to win the good fortune of being Portia's husband. That “worth” and “value” are ambiguously motivated words has been remarked often enough and needs no further elaboration. The reference to Portia's hair as Jason's golden fleece calls for pause, however. Jason wins his fleece at great cost, and his relationship with Medea entails even greater cost to himself, his children, and Medea as well. The implicit analogy of Portia to Medea does not bode well. Bassanio's fetishizing of her sunny golden locks is portentous, for later in the play Bassanio himself will warn against the many women who wear wigs of “crisped snaky golden locks” (3.2.92) that are shaved and collected from corpses. The question of the authenticity of a woman's golden hair—are the locks hers, or are they stolen from the head of a dead person?—is unsettling. Is the golden fleece a fleece—a hoax—or a good fortune that holds forth authentic promise of marital bliss?⁷ Bassanio seems naïve when he lauds the golden fleece of Portia's hair and casts himself as a Jason in quest of it, seeing in Belmont a replay of the romance on Colchos' strond. The golden fleece as synecdoche for Portia reveals that it is more the part (the gold) than the person that excites Bassanio. The ominous Medea serves as a bookend, since Shakespeare alludes to her in both the first and the last scenes of the play. In the final scene, Lorenzo and Jessica sing of doomed lovers like Troilus and Cressida, Thisbe, Dido, and Medea, to whom they compare their own love and predict that it too will turn tragic since it involves betraying the father: “In such a night / Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew, / And with an unthrift love did run from Venice” (5.1.13-15). Although Bassanio's actions are entirely in line with the will of the deceased father-in-law, the mention of Medea as an archetype implies the possible betrayal of some father figure. Allusions to Medea imply that death may be the ultimate telos of marriage.

I. Morocco and the Rhetoric of Gold

The first of the three casket scenes in Belmont is crucial for understanding some of the mixed messages concerning the value of gold. Morocco chooses the gold casket and is rewarded with the skull, a “carrion Death,” whose satirical scroll points the moral in sing-song simplicities and jiggling clichés worthy of an admonitory fable for children:

All that glisters is not gold,
Often have you heard that told,—
Many a man his life hath sold
But my outside to behold,—

Gilded tombs do worms infold:
 Had you been as wise as bold,
 Young in limbs, in judgment old,
 Your answer had not been inscroll'd,—
 Fare you well, your suit is cold. (2.7.65-73)

This amusing jingle does not pretend to be anything but superficial and hackneyed moralism, proverbs from Tilley and commonplaces that an audience has tired of hearing rehearsed. “Gold” rhymes with “cold” (and with seven other words in this tag), as elsewhere in the play some readers are inclined to hear an implicit rhyme of “lead” with “dead.” It is child’s play, at least in hindsight, to see that the gold casket is death. That Morocco is unaware of the gold trap in making his choice of casket is simply an obvious signal that as an African nobleman he has not been privy to the Christian tradition that teaches suspicion of gold. He does not know how to read the caskets allegorically because gold for him is an unadulterated good. But it would be hard to accuse Morocco of being a gold digger, since he is rich enough not to need more of it, and for him the primary use value of gold is as a rhetorical vehicle for praising Portia. He laces his wooing with aureate images, loading every rift with ore.

The moralized scroll that points the finger at Morocco for choosing falsely does little justice to him or to his poetic intuition. Although he is capable of using the gold trope in uninspired ways—at the beginning of his long deliberative speech, for example, he reasons unoriginally that “A golden mind stoops not to shows of dross, / I’ll then nor give nor hazard aught for lead” (2.7.20-21)—many of his arguments in favor of gold express sound reasoning infused with a symbolism that pays rich and justified compliment to Portia. For example, although it was once common to bury the dead in lead, Morocco demurs. Addressing Portia *de vivant*, face to living face, Morocco cannot hold back his sense of disgust in contemplating her buried alive, as it were, in a casket of lead, a metal far too base for her:

Is’t like that lead contains her?—‘twere damnation
 To think so base a thought, it were too gross
 To rib her cerecloth in the obscure grave,—
 Or shall I think in silver she’s immur’d
 Being ten times undervalued to try’d gold?
 O sinful thought! Never so rich a gem
 Was set in worse than gold. (2.7.49-55)

These are sincere thoughts, expressed powerfully and with due poetic complexity, not the doggerel of one easily dismissed because his supposed lack of sophistication derives from the fact that he hails from foreign climes and is of dark “complexion” (1.2.124, 2.7.79).⁸ In these lines Morocco seems to imagine Portia as already dead, like her father, for in his question about whether lead “contains her,” “her” may refer ambiguously either to her portrait or to her person. The fantasy of Portia as

dead is hardly surprising in light of the fact that caskets are, after all, an obvious *memento mori* and are not symbols commonly associated with wooing. A portrait too connotes the absence of the person represented; painterly representation may imply death as much as the casket does. The whole ceremony of matching young lovers is overcast by death. In “The Theme of the Three Caskets,” Freud argues that the fantasy of choosing one’s beloved is a wish-fulfilling screen that seeks to deny the fact that death is inevitable, at odds with the young and beautiful partner whom one seems to choose freely as his bride. The man’s apparent choosing of a bride covers over the non-choice (the inevitability) of death. The wish-fulfillment of marriage forestalls the hard fact of death by driving it underground.⁹

Morocco’s logic for choosing the gold casket he expresses as follows:

Let’s see once more this saying grav’d in gold:
 “Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire”:
 Why that’s the lady, all the world desires her. (2.7.36-38)

The concatenation of gold, desire, and “grav’d” may indicate that what men desire unconsciously is death; more precisely, the writing (“grav’d”) of man’s desire is death (“grav’d”). (Shakespeare anticipates Blanchot as much as he does Freud.) Thanatos, the death drive, is the counterpart of Eros, the life instinct. What begins as desire tends eventually towards death. The assertion is the more credible given the saturation of death imagery in the scenes in which the suitors seek fulfillment in love.

Morocco’s foreignness notwithstanding, he is familiar with a favorite literary device of Shakespeare and other native English poets, the play on the double sense of the word “angel” as heavenly messenger and as coin:

They have in England
 A coin that bears the figure of an angel
 Stamp’d in gold, but that’s insculp’d upon:
 But here an angel in a golden bed
 Lies all within. (2.7.55-59)

Morocco runs with the figure of the gem set in gold, which he amplifies as an angel set in a golden bed. As a coin the angel is two-sided: St. Michael’s image appears on the face, whereas a trading ship is on the reverse side.¹⁰ The angel-coin is engraved (recalling “grav’d” at 2.7.36) and rendered as figural relief (“insculp’d upon”) on the metal ground. The earthly arts of engraving and sculpture are a *techne*, whereas (“But here...”) Portia is the heavenly ideal that serves as the model for the coin-maker’s artistic representation. To call Portia an “angel” is a conceit—itself a *techne*, that of rhetoric—that points less to some envy for Portia’s gold than to Morocco’s admiration for her angelic beauty. His verse aims to underplay (though not cancel out) the sense of gold as wealth; instead, gold is taken in a symbolic, even ethereal sense in that Morocco seeks to leave behind the worldly world of money (angel-coins) and translate himself to the heavens in order to be in the company of angels whose bodilessness frees them from the dyer’s hand, as it were, from the *techne* of being

“grav’d” and “insculp’d.” Portia is like the angel-coin except that (“But here...”) she is the thing itself—pure gold sans inscription—unincorporated, immaterial.¹¹

The dismissive doggerel penned on the scroll held in the empty eye of carrion Death—“All that glisters is not gold,” etc.—is a snide caricature of Morocco as a mere gold digger. But nothing in his speech or conduct supports the sneer. Of the three suitors Bassanio is most plausibly open to the charge of seeking gold through marriage. Morocco is a rich aristocrat who neither needs nor wants more money, whereas Bassanio is a climber without enough resources of his own to be a serious contender, the only suitor who has to take out a loan in order to reach Belmont. Bassanio’s indebtedness to Antonio for the loan, and his vicarious subjection to Shylock’s bond with Antonio, is the secret condition that makes possible his wooing, the disguised debt that he is forced to reveal immediately after his victory in the game of the caskets, when he offers the embarrassing, unmanly explanation to Portia that he cannot consummate the wedding since he has prior obligations, both affective and financial, to another man back in Venice, who loaned him three thousand ducats (a coin made of gold, of course). Morocco has no embarrassing financial secrets that compromise his suit to Portia. Unlike Bassanio, he does not have ducats on the brain, nor is he in debt to anyone.

II. Bassanio and the Golden Dowry of a Second Head

When given his turn to make the choice of caskets in 3.2, Bassanio demonstrates considerable savvy in distinguishing between the golden locks in the painter’s counterfeit of Portia and the gold wig of the artisan—a savvy that was absent earlier in the play, when a glib Bassanio cast himself rhetorically as Jason eager to pursue the golden fleece, seemingly oblivious to Jason’s fate at the hands of Medea. In 3.2 Bassanio is no longer willing to be seen jumping headlong for the gold. Although he is not privy to the fates of previous suitors like Arragon and Morocco, Bassanio seems to have been vouchsafed some premonition that the gold casket is a chimerical fleece, whereas it is the lead casket that contains the golden counterfeit.

Bassanio rehearses and dismisses the arguments of the rival suitors whom he has not heard. He deploys the pious denunciation of gold as a trap: “outward shows be least themselves,— / The world is still deceived with ornament” (3.2.73–74). Portia is who she is, not what she wears (a point that will escape Bassanio entirely in Act 4). In his wooing and choosing of Portia, Bassanio understands that gold is the symbol of death that forecloses any possibility of marriage. Gold is vanity, and for the purposes of this wooing scene both Portia and Bassanio manifest that they value humility, at least rhetorically. In his great speech on the vanity of hair, the ornament that is “excrement,” Bassanio catalogues figures of heroic men whose seemingly daunting beards belie their cowardice, and the women who seek to impose an impression of beauty and gravity by porting golden tresses, an ornament that in fact designates, even in the act of attempting to cover, the follies of the “light” and “wanton”:

There is no vice so simple, but assumes
 Some mark of virtue on his outward parts;
 How many cowards whose hearts are all as false
 As stairs of sand, wear yet upon their chins
 The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars,
 Who inward search'd, have livers white as milk?—
 And these assume but valour's excrement
 To render them redoubted. Look on beauty
 And you shall see 'tis purchas'd by the weight,
 Which therein works a miracle in nature,
 Making them lightest that wear most of it:
 So are those crisped snaky golden locks
 Which make such wanton gambols with the wind
 Upon supposed fairness, often known
 To be the dowry of a second head,
 The skull that bred them in the sepulchre. (3.2.81-96)

The “snaky golden locks” effect a masquerade of liveliness and beauty, and an appearance of virtue, that ill disguise the fact that the hair is but a wig confected of hair shorn from corpses. One should beware of the ordinary means of mensuration in the marketplace, of the scales that claim a woman is worth her weight in gold hair. Such a “miracle in nature” is anything but natural, and is more travesty and impious imposition than genuine miracle. Despite his vaunted insight into hair as masquerade, Bassanio will fail to remark the fake beard with which Portia so easily transforms herself from male into female in the trial scene and disarms the highly experienced, expert, and exclusively male lawyers who form her audience.¹²

The “snaky golden locks” that entrap and deceive the naïve, glib suitor recall the phallic snakes of Medusa's hair, the sight of which kills the male viewer by turning him to stone, a petrification which Freud reads as castration in his essay “Medusa's Head.”¹³ In the story as told by Ovid and others, Medusa's hair is far from golden. Its dark tangles and snaky snarls make no pretense of welcome or comfort but announce instead, in an obviously admonitory and apotropaic way, that the snaky head is fatal. The snakes that Bassanio dreads in contemplating the golden locks of the wig are close kin to the “worms” that Morocco discovers that the gold casket enfolds. Bassanio eschews golden locks, the gold casket that encloses a skull, and the “gaudy gold, / Hard food for Midas” (3.2.101-02) because he has learned to read in the mode of allegory, whether one takes allegory to be the art of moralized reading, as in the *Ovide moralisé* tradition (which includes a version of the Jason and Medea story as well as the tale warning against Midas' vain love of gold), or instead defines allegory as that hermeneutic of suspicion whose deconstructive method aims to ferret out the non-being of what is. A woman who wears golden locks lives on the stolen, second-hand remains of the dead. Her vitality is not what it appears to be. Her head is the “living” epitome or analogue of the carrion Death's head buried in the golden casket, her golden locks like the menacing phallic worms in the lead

casket. Bassanio understands this lesson of death masquerading as life even though he was not present when Morocco made his fatal choice of gold, nor has he had access to Morocco's fate by hearsay, but the sequence of the three casket scenes is arranged in such a way that each one contains traces and echoes, both conscious and unconscious, of its predecessor(s). As careful readers of 3.2 we cannot help but see how Shakespeare sets Bassanio up to avoid the mistakes of Morocco in 2.7 and of Arragon in 2.9.¹⁴

What makes Bassanio a canny allegorical reader is that he is able to distinguish between the painted gold of Portia's "counterfeit" that signals victory and access to her dowry, on the one hand, and the second-hand golden hair, the "dowry of a second head," on the other hand, that signifies defeat and death. He wants no spurious dowry that could be called into question on legal grounds. He wants to do the will of Portia's father because only by this means will he secure the real gold that is his goal, not the fool's possession of the snaky golden wig. Just twenty lines after speaking of the pitfall of the latter, Bassanio praises the gold hair of Portia's "counterfeit," the token of victory that he lifts from the lead casket:

here in her hairs
The painter plays the spider, and hath woven
A golden mesh t' entrap the hearts of men
Faster than gnats in cobwebs. (3.2.120-23)

The word "entrap" would ordinarily indicate a warning, to the reader if not to Bassanio, but the latter believes that the golden web of painted hair entrances rather than entraps in some admonitory way. Bassanio is as happy to fall for the painted image of Portia's golden hair as he was wary to forgo the "crisp'd snaky golden locks," the dowry of death and fool's gold, that he avoided just a few lines earlier. The painter's art presents a metaphorical trap that sounds dangerous, as gnats are trapped fatally in cobwebs, but the gold paint of the counterfeit of Portia is life-affirming and pleasure-giving. Portia cannot be a temptress spider who weaves webs of doom; she is not one of the Moerae like Clotho the spinner of fate or Atropos who cuts the thread (or the hair); she cannot be the wig maker whose recycled art preys on the gold hair of the dead. Or can she? Perhaps it is just a wish fulfillment, a dream image framed in the artist's counterfeit, that sees Portia as immutable. Immortal beauty is a counterfeit; it is to be found only in factitious images forged by the vision of an artist, whether painter or poet, but evidently not in the manufacture of an artificer such as the perruquier.

The continuation of the lines just quoted broaches the theme of castration in the image of the aesthetic vision that blinds the eye of the artist:

—but her eyes!
How could he see to do them? having made one,
Methinks it should have power to steal both his
And leave itself unfurnish'd. (3.2.123-26)

In *Shakespeare Among the Moderns*, Richard Halpern comments perspicuously on these lines: “Bassanio’s reaction to the image verges on idolatry or fetishism. Moreover, his fantasy of an eyeless portrait surely recalls the [“carrion death”] skull with the ‘empty eye’ (2.7.63) contained in the golden casket, just as the ‘golden mesh’ of the portrait’s hair evokes the golden casket itself and its false allure. Thus Portia’s picture somehow doubles or reproduces the vacant death’s head which symbolized the void.”¹⁵ The symbolic valences of gold and lead, life and death, are as interchangeable as the eye and its empty socket (which is its grave).

The apotheosis of golden-haired, angelic Portia in her portrait cannot cover over the oddness, verging on inappropriateness, of Bassanio’s image of the painter as spider and of Portia’s golden mesh of hair as cobwebs, or the analogy of himself to a gnat caught in the golden web of Portia’s hair. It is a quick slide, a short circuit built into this threatening metaphor, to pass from the painter as spider to Portia as spider. The spider’s web is often taken to be a symbol of destiny—for the gnat, for the human—not of free and happy choice. The wishful assertion that Portia is *not* one of the Moerae is belied by the mixed metaphor whose confusion and sense of threat Bassanio seems willful in ignoring. Although he does not cite this passage—indeed he quotes only one line from *The Merchant of Venice* in “The Theme of the Three Caskets”—Freud comments on the fatal destiny of the lover who prevails in a love contest, and his observations are borne out by these odd lines in which Bassanio seems to welcome being trapped (and devoured) by the spider and presents this fate as a free choice in favor of love, his choice of the lead casket. Over against Bassanio, one recalls Morocco’s typical association of lead as the material of choice for burying people, although he avers that for Portia lead “were too gross / To rib her cerecloth in the obscure grave” (2.7.50-51).

III. Caskets and Jewelry

If the golden “counterfeit” with its spidery “golden mesh” of Portia enclosed in the lead casket is a life symbol—and I have argued above that this is too simple a valuation—its vitality is undoubtedly clouded by the many negative associations for gold in the text, like the gold casket that enfolds worms, bones, and carrion Death, or the snaky golden hair that masks its origins in the gleanings from a corpse, or the gold patens in the heavens which Lorenzo praises in song to Jessica, whose aureate rays mock our all too distant and mortal regard as souls grossly clad in “this muddy vesture of decay” (5.1.64). I want now to emphasize the meaning of jewelry often enclosed in a container for safe keeping. As we have seen, Morocco refers to Portia not only as an “angel” (gold coin) but also as “an angel in a golden bed” (2.7.58), which may be taken to mean a jewel set in a bed of gold as its background or foil, or the phrase may have another sense, which the Arden editor glosses, citing Pooler, an earlier editor of the play, as “Portia’s picture in a golden casket.”¹⁶

There is no need for Shakespeare to belabor the two common but antithetical meanings of “casket”: a container for a corpse, and a container for jewelry. Nor would there be any need for the critic to do so, save that so few critics mention the obvious double play on the word or make anything of it. It is a corpse that

one expects to find in a casket, as Shakespeare's source tale in the *Gesta Romanum* makes abundantly clear, whereas to find a golden counterfeit therein—"an angel in a golden bed"—would indeed be a pleasant surprise, but a surprise licensed by the positive meaning of the word "casket" as a jewelry box. The word "casket" epitomizes what Freud calls the antithetical sense of primal words, in his famous essay so entitled,¹⁷ in that the "identical" word has two referents that not only are not identical but are usually taken to be quite different in meaning, as the word "casket" refers both to death, on the one hand, and to life, love, marriage, and wealth, on the other hand, that nexus of happy destinies often associated with jewelry placed securely in a chest.

Jessica uses "casket" to designate a jewelry box when she says to Lorenzo, "Here catch this casket, it is worth the pains" (2.6.33). This quotation puts into play again the two senses of the word "worth"—monetary and moral—that formed in Act 1 an important ambiguity in characterizing Portia, and an ambiguity regarding Bassanio's motives for pursuing her, but in this case Jessica's use of "worth," it is safe to say, refers solely to the monetary value of what the casket contains. And just what are the casket's (monetary) contents? Shylock specifies the inventory, like the accountant that he is, as soon as Tubal tells him of the elopement—the theft of his daughter by Lorenzo, and the daughter's theft, in turn, of the family jewels:

Why there, there, there, there! a diamond gone cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort,—the curse never fell upon our nation until now, I never felt it till now,—two thousand ducats in that, and other precious, precious jewels; I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear: would she were hears'd at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin. (3.1.76-82)

Shakespeare places Shylock's fantasy of his newlywed daughter dead at his feet and her "coffin" loaded with ducats just one scene before Bassanio chooses the lead "casket" and wins his bride. That Shylock curses his daughter's marriage is not surprising in light of the fact that she, unlike Portia, has violated the will of the father and has stolen his casket of jewelry in order to appropriate a dowry for herself. Shylock's sense that marriage in defiance of the father should be cursed by death, that the bride merits "hearse" and "coffin" for having stolen the jewels, receives a further ironic turn of the screw a few lines later when Tubal informs him of another article purloined in the casket: the turquoise wedding ring that Leah gave to Shylock, which Jessica has sold in exchange for a monkey. One dies intestate, without his jewels, as Shylock laments the traumatic loss of his patrimony: "And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones / Stol'n by my daughter" (2.8.20-21). The jewels that represent Shylock's wealth ("my ducats!" [2.8.15]) and the stones (testicles; jewels that form one's patrimony) whence his flesh and blood ("my daughter!" [2.8.15]) had its genesis are now stolen goods hidden in Jessica's casket and her two bags.¹⁸ The body may be dismembered after death (the decapitated carrion Death's head that Morocco finds in the lead casket is a case in point) or *de vivant* in the case of Shylock's stones (or in the case of Antonio's heart in the trial scene)—in any event there is no possibility of remaining intact or of securing a patrimony for one's heirs.

The death drive is always already implicit in the desire that consummates itself in marriage. The union that rings symbolize cannot completely stave off underlying threats of castration. Shylock's marriage ends in death, and the wedding ring finds its ultimate end as alienable property, to be passed on and on to the highest bidder. No trick of gender impersonation can return Leah or the turquoise wedding ring to Shylock, as opposed to the rings returned to their rightful spouses in the comic ending of Act 5. Jessica's transvestism, unlike Portia's, is not recuperative but instead serves as conduit and cover for Jessica to steal away from her father and to rob him of his jewels and his ducats. In Jessica's vow to “make fast the doors and gild myself / With some moe ducats” (2.6. 49-50), the possible off-rhyme consonance of “gild” and “guilt” and her understanding that what she is doing must take place behind locked doors, surreptitiously, indicates her awareness that the love of gold is a dark and guilty pleasure since she is alienating the family's patrimony. Janet Adelman traces puns on “geld,” “gild,” and “guilt” that are relevant as well to Gratiano's wish that the clerk to whom he gave his wedding ring “were gelt” (5.1.144).¹⁹ As Jessica crosses over in dress to impersonate a man when she elopes with Lorenzo, concurrently she gilds her father in stealing his “gelt” (money) or “stones,” thus placing him in the feminine position. In cross-dressing as a man, Jessica converts not so much in terms of gender as in terms of religion, from Jew to Christian. The Jewish ducats cross over or convert to become “Christian ducats” (2.8.16), which Shylock rails against. Jessica's elopement with Lorenzo flies in the face of the marriage of Leah and Shylock and of the patrimony that they had hoped to transmit to their daughter. The religious conversion of Jessica, the conversion of her father's goods into the hands of Christian Lorenzo, and the forced conversion of Shylock at the end of the trial scene are irreversible and tragic from a perspective that centers on Shylock, unlike the comic because reversible gender conversion of female Portia into male Balthazar.

IV. The Teleology of Death

The three caskets are a continuum that belies the defensive, false compartmentalizations into birth, life, and death. In a well-known passage Freud writes that the three caskets are the three women that determine the trajectory of a man's life, “the three inevitable relations that a man has with a woman—the woman who bears him, the woman who is his mate and the woman who destroys him; or that they are the three forms taken by the figure of the mother in the course of a man's life—the mother herself, the beloved one who is chosen after her pattern, and lastly the Mother Earth who receives him once more.”²⁰ Life, wife, and death are the three women / caskets that telescope to form a continuum; in one's beginning is one's end.²¹ The continuum model, in effect a nesting of the caskets, effaces the model of separate and insulated stages of human development by effecting a massive reduction: One's birth is one's marriage is one's fatality.²² We find in the details of Bassanio's “choice” of the winning casket in 3.2 the many images, explored in this essay, that combine and conflate love and death in confusing, often haunting ways. The muddled contradictions implied in the play's imagery of gold and lead, of death and life, suggest that the lead casket

implicates death as much as the gold one does, as if gold and lead are obverse and reverse of the same emblematic coin. The lead casket, like its gold counterpart, is an inevitability masquerading as free choice, and desire for love and life ultimately find their *telos* in the death drive.²³

It is not my desire as some incorrigible pessimist to turn *The Merchant of Venice* into *King Lear*, although were I to do so I would enjoy the precedent of many a nineteenth-century production that did just that by omitting Act 5 in order to concentrate on the sad fate of Shylock at the end of Act 4. (It was Henry Irving, by the way, who restored Act 5 of the play in his 1879 production.)²⁴ But I do wish to emphasize how gold, gems, rings, and jewels may get lost; as a defense against mutability they are not reliable. Many critics and spectators feel that the superfluous romantic ending of Act 5 does not compensate for Shylock's irremediable losses in the first four acts of the play. The metaphysical Donne, pondering the longevity of love on the basis of relics left in the grave, wonders what becomes of the reliquary tokens of love when the flesh wears away or the grave is robbed. The corpse that opens before the eyes of Morocco, we recall, has been dismembered, perhaps by some species of grave robber, and none of the priceless relics remain intact. Morocco finds instead a skull severed from the rest of the skeleton, all of whose other parts, including the digits and whatever jewels they supported, are absent. Even Bassanio's prize of the golden counterfeit, the artist's effort to eternize the golden locks of Portia, is likened unsettlingly to a fatality, a spider's web that entraps gnats—uncannily at odds with one's expectations of idealizing Italian Renaissance portraiture. Our muddy bodies are deaf to the music of the spheres, and the golden music of the empyrean mocks mortals like Jessica and Lorenzo who are deaf to it. Death conducts towards fragmentation, dissolution, erasure; and gold, for all its symbolic weight, cannot stop this decay. One thinks of the inversion of Ariel's song on Alonso's sea-change after death: Where pearls used to shimmer are now empty sockets—shorn the golden hair, the ruby lips no more. We die intestate, without our jewels, our precious stones now lost.

Notes

1. James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Janet Adelman, *Blood Relations: Christian and Jew in The Merchant of Venice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 2004).
2. Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998).
3. All quotations from the text of *The Merchant of Venice* are taken from the Arden edition, ed. John Russell Brown (London: Methuen, 1955).
4. One finds ambivalence about gold in Sidney and Spenser too, whom C.S. Lewis typed as poets of the golden decade of the 1580s, just before Shakespeare began to write for the stage, but Lewis uses the word "golden" as a term of approbation, in a wholly non-ambivalent way. See *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954).
5. Quotations from the *Gesta Romanorum* are taken from the Arden edition of *The Merchant of Venice*.

6. In *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (London: Methuen, 1951), Wolfgang Clemen confines his few pages (81-84) on *Merchant* to a discussion of how images of shipwreck early in the play foreshadow the fate of Antonio's ships in Act 3. In *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), Caroline Spurgeon devotes her attention to the money motif in *Cymbeline* but not in *Merchant*, and her catalogue and analysis of the imagery of jewels leaves out *Merchant* altogether. Subsequent treatments of *Merchant* have also tended to neglect analyzing the many images of gold in the play, although Richard Halpern (see below) is one recent critic whose Marxist analysis of value and the money form yields insight into the varied processes of commodification in the play.
7. The *OED* makes clear that both literal and figurative senses of “fleece” were available in Shakespeare's day. “Fleece” may designate sheep's wool (1a) or booty (2b), and as a verb it may indicate either the legitimate removing of the fleece (1) or the effort to cheat someone of his rightful property (3). In “The Lead Casket: Capital, Mercantilism, and *The Merchant of Venice*,” in *Money and the Age of Shakespeare: Essays in New Economic Criticism* ed. Linda Woodbridge (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), Mark Netzloff argues that references to Jason's “golden fleece” are designed to suggest how the English wool trade proved more reliable than Spain's dedication to specie. Citing passages from Donne's “Elegy 11: The Bracelet” to Bassanio's remark that gold is “Hard food for Midas” (3.2.102), Netzloff demonstrates how in English eyes mercantilist Spain's greed for gold caused the inflation that would ultimately prove to be its undoing, 166-71. If we contrast Spanish adventuring for gold to British “venturing” in a capitalist mode, then it is possible to see Morocco as a mercantilist and pre-capitalist, like the Spanish, in that he does not put gold into circulation; he takes no hazard or risk with his money, the way that Antonio does. As an aristocrat he is true to his class in that he literalizes the money form.
8. I do not focus in this essay on Morocco's blackness, which Portia subjects to withering critique, but instead on how Morocco's rhetoric belies for the most part the negative stereotypes of Africans held by Europeans. For the genesis and deployment of racialist discourse in Shakespeare's time, see Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).
9. Freud regards Bassanio's apparent “choice” of Portia as an expression of the wishful illusion of his being intelligent and forceful enough to be able to elect love and life over death. I believe that the same may be said of Morocco's choice. The wishful replacement of death by love harks back to a primeval identity between them that has been repressed:

The same consideration answers the question how the feature of a choice came into the myth of the three sisters. Here again there has been a wishful reversal. Choice stands in the place of necessity, of destiny. In this way man overcomes death, which he has recognized intellectually. No greater triumph of wish-fulfillment is conceivable. A choice is made where in reality there is obedience to a compulsion; and what is chosen is not a figure of terror, but the fairest and most desirable of women. (299)

In *The Merchant of Venice*, this fairest and most desirable of women is Portia, an inevitability masquerading as a choice and a victory in a contest. See Freud, “The Theme of the Three Caskets” (1913), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74), 12:289-302. For a graphing of Freud's three caskets onto Lacan's schema of the Imaginary (the pre-Oedipal mother of loss), the Symbolic (the mother/wife as object of desire and lack), and the Real (the mother's “uncanny post-Oedipal complement, woman as death” [147]), see Julia Reinhard Lupton and Kenneth Reinhard, *After Oedipus: Shakespeare in Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).
10. Richard Wilson, *Shakespeare in French Theory: King of Shadows* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 104. See also Sandra K. Fischer, *Econolingua: A Glossary of Coins and Economic Language in Renaissance Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 41. Netzloff, 163-64, notes that the angel was one of the few coins whose rate of valuation remained stable during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. In “Healing Angels and ‘golden blood’: Money and Mystical Kingship in *Macbeth*,” Stephen Deng discusses how monarchs from Edward the Confessor to James I used

golden angels to cure scrofula. In *Macbeth: New Critical Essays*, ed. Nick Moschovakis (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 163-81.

11. Gustav Ungerer demonstrates that England got most of its gold for the minting of angels from the Saadian kings of Morocco. Ungerer sees in Shakespeare's prince an allusion to Moroccan ambassadors who tried to persuade Queen Elizabeth to sign a League of Amity with Ahmad al-Mansur. He argues that the Prince of Morocco is portrayed in a more flattering light than the stereotype of the villainous black Moor. "Portia and the Prince of Morocco," *Shakespeare Studies* 31 (2003): 89-126.
12. Like the boy actors in Shakespeare's day, most contemporary actresses wear a beard for the role of Balthazar. Unlike other Shakespearean transvestite heroines, Portia as Balthazar is not androgynous. Male characters in the courtroom comment on how youthful Balthazar looks, but not on how good he looks. In his letter of introduction Bellario comments on Balthazar's appearance: "I beseech you let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend estimation, for I never knew so young a body with so old a head" (4.1.159-61). Portia/Balthazar's lack of years never translates into doubts about his maleness. Balthazar seems too *young* to be so learned in jurisprudence, but he does *not* seem too womanly to be a man. In male dress Portia, unlike Viola/Cesario or Rosalind/Ganymede, does not swoon—the woman inside does not rear its head or rise to the surface and "out" Portia as a woman—and Bassanio, unlike Olivia, Orsino, or Orlando, never feels any subliminal recognition or sexual attraction for his cross-dressed partner. Perhaps one should keep in mind the premises of transvestite theater, that it calls for a suspension of the skeptical faculty, and thus absolve Bassanio for failing to recognize his wife behind the beard. See Stephen Cohen's "(Post) modern Elizabeth: Gender, politics, and the emergence of modern subjectivity" for an analysis of how Portia's assumption of male power, not just a man's costume, sets her apart from other transvestite heroines. In *Shakespeare and Modernity: Early modern to millennium*, ed. Hugh Grady (London: Routledge, 2000), 20-39.
13. Sigmund Freud, "Medusa's Head" (1940), *Standard Edition*, 18:273. The proliferation of phallic symbols like snakes and worms, so often in Freud as in Shakespeare, is a defensive reaction against an impending threat of castration. On the Renaissance Ovid see Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), and my essay, "The Mirror of Hermaphroditus," *Style* 36 (2002): 169-85.
14. In her introduction to *Merchant* in the *Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 1997), Katharine Eisaman Maus reiterates the consensus among critics that the choice of caskets is stacked in Bassanio's favor, primarily because as an insider, a Venetian Christian, Bassanio understands that he must appear to value the spiritual over the monetary in choosing his wife (1086). In *Money, Language, and Thought* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), Marc Shell points out that in 3.2 Portia uses as line endings a number of words that rhyme with "lead" in order to point the way to the lead casket as the winning choice, 57.
15. Richard Halpern, *Shakespeare Among the Moderns* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1997), 200.
16. Brown, 60.
17. Sigmund Freud, "The Antithetical Sense of Primal Words" (1910), in *Standard Edition* 11:153-62.
18. Shell, 62, adduces a relevant biblical reference to stones. According to Jewish law, "he that is wounded in the stones . . . shall not enter the congregation of the lord" (Deut. 23:1). Castrated Christian men, by contrast, are allowed to be members of the congregation.
19. Adelman, 100-01.
20. Freud, "On the Theme of the Three Caskets," 301.

21. Burton A. Melnick suggests that there may be a fourth woman in a man's life: his daughter, who symbolizes rebirth for her elderly father. Melnick quotes a letter from Freud to James S. H. Bransom, in which he refers to “the secret meaning” of *King Lear* as being “the repressed incestuous claims on the daughter's love,” 25. Melnick unravels multiple valences for gold: as a symbol of infancy, of Ovid's account of the Golden Age, of the faeces that are the child's first gift to the mother, and of a futile, regressive attempt to deny death by seeking in fantasy to recapture an idealized mother-figure. “Psychoanalysis as Poetry, Psychoanalysis as Rhetoric: Freud's ‘On the Theme of the Three Caskets,’” *Studies in Psychoanalytic Theory* 4 (1995): 18-28.
22. Othello sees a man's wife's adultery as “destiny unshunnable, like death” and characterizes the compacted birth-marriage-death trajectory thus: “Even then this forked plague is fated to us, / When we do quicken” (3.3.280-81). *Othello*, ed. M. R. Ridley, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1958). Marriage, the intermediate term, hastens the transition from infancy to adulthood to death. The end (final cause) of birth is death via the adultery not only of his wife, Othello implies, but also of the mother who created her son a forked and death-destined bastard in the first place.
23. The death drive enters into Freud's work seven years after “The Theme of the Three Caskets,” in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), in *Standard Edition*, 18:3-66.
24. John W. Mahon gives an extensive critical and stage history of the play in “The Fortunes of *The Merchant of Venice* from 1596 to 2001,” in *The Merchant of Venice: New Critical Essays*, ed. John W. Mahon and Ellen Macleod Mahon (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1-93. The essays in the same volume by Jay L. Halio and John O'Connor, on Shylock in performance, are also helpful.

DOMESTIC ECONOMIES IN *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*:
AMASSING CULTURAL CREDIT

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Early in Act 1 of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, an ambitious Petruccio announces his intention of seeking fortune in the world. As he tells Hortensio, "I have thrust myself into this maze / Happily to wive and thrive as best I may. / Crowns in my purse I have, and goods at home, / And so am come abroad to see the world" (1.2.52-55).¹ It is an intriguing announcement. On the one hand, it represents Petruccio as a would-be fortune hunter, one who seeks to capitalize on his inheritance through marriage to this daughter of the wealthy Baptista. At the same time, while it is clear that marriage constitutes a form of investment, Petruccio's choice of Kate as wife calls into question the wisdom of his economic decision-making. Not only is this eldest daughter "renowned in Padua for her scolding tongue" (1.2.96), but Kate's publicly proclaimed shrewishness must inevitably threaten the domestic economy of any would-be husband in this early modern play. More than a figure of unrest to the domestic peace, the shrew undermines the household's ability to transact within the larger economic network.

My essay considers Kate's impact on the household within the framework of the early modern domestic economy. Any discussion of early modern domesticity must, however, necessarily begin with an examination of the perceived division between the public and private spheres. Studies of early modern domesticity have long posited a separation between the two spheres, the husband charged with public interactions, the wife with preserving that found within the private, i.e., the husband's assets, through vigilant as well as prudent household management. As I will argue, however, the early modern household was inseparably linked to the larger economy; the crucial ability to transact within the marketplace depended upon good, i.e., public, credit. While the early modern household undoubtedly constituted a distinct socio-economic unit, its collective credit nonetheless determined its viability within the larger community.

The second part of the essay applies this theory of early modern domesticity to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, arguing that Petruccio's domestic sphere extends well beyond the disrupted household setting to which he drags Kate at the conclusion of his disordered wedding day, that he is, in fact, dependent upon good credit to make as well as preserve his fortune. To accomplish these things, Petruccio must not only contract an advantageous matrimonial alliance, he must also "tame" his unruly bride, less for the purpose of controlling consumption of his material wealth than of amassing the necessary credit which will allow him to transact within the public realm. To tame Kate is to establish Petruccio's fortune within the world.

I begin with the issue of early modern domesticity, which has been a subject of discussion among literary scholars and historians for at least the past twenty years. How we define the domestic in a gender stratified early modern world has emerged

as one of the central questions governing this discussion. Many scholars discuss the domestic in spatial terms. In his economic history of early modern England, Keith Wrightson, for instance, defines the domestic as “a unit of residence and of authority: a group of people living under the same roof and under the authority of the household head—usually, though not always, an adult male.”² This unit could, and often did, include servants as well as wife and children. Elizabeth Mazzola and Corinne Abate, in their study of privacy in early modern literary texts, likewise define early modern domesticity in terms of space, but see it as a site of female authority. It is “a female world inaccessible to male reason, and not entirely interested in it . . . it includes segregated, sometimes secluded, places for primarily female activities like nursing, sewing, cooking, and caring for children and the sick.”³ In her study of householding in *The Comedy of Errors*, Jessica Slights argues that the early modern domestic is more than demarcated space. It is also “the source of affective bonds that enable both individual happiness and collective justice.”⁴ The domestic, clearly identified as female space, thus provides emotional refuge from the often brutal and decidedly masculine world of the marketplace.

Other scholars of the early modern period, most notably cultural materialists Natasha Korda and Wendy Wall, define the domestic unit primarily in terms of household production and consumption. While, as Wrightson notes, early modern households were really not the self-contained, self-producing units they had been in the medieval period, they did serve as repositories of the household’s material assets and thus came to serve as status markers of both patriarchal wealth and identity.⁵ Preservation of domestic assets constituted good household management, a responsibility which was typically assigned to the wife. Wall, in her study of the household and drama, adds that during the early modern period “domesticity was placed at the fore of economic and status issues, and . . . was used to debate and mark ‘proper’ definitions for social groups.”⁶ And, as Korda discusses in her study of early modern domestic economy, “household objects . . . functioned to signify the subject’s place within the social order . . . the mobility of objects or ‘moveables,’ which are not tied down to a fixed site but are open to purchase, sale, borrowing, exchange, inheritance, or theft, renders their functionality as status markers highly unstable. For status objects not only fix social boundaries, they also breach them.”⁷ As a result, as Korda further observes, there appeared “an expanding market of domestic literature designed to educate household subjects in ‘domesticall duties’ that increasingly centered on the acquisition, maintenance, display, and safekeeping of household stuff.”⁸ What emerges from these studies of early modern domesticity is an understanding of the household not simply as space, but as space where the economic and the social intersect.

Key to ongoing discussions about early modern domesticity has been the concepts of public and private, the two realms separated according to function along gender lines. Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin’s observation is perhaps representative of these discussions. As they note, “public and private spheres were gradually demarcated and separated from one another and as productive work ceased to occur mainly in the household, gender roles and ideologies were further transformed. Valued work—work that produced money or brought public recognition—was in-

creasingly gendered masculine, and the public world of government, business, and citizenship came to belong to men.”⁹ While this observation reasonably describes the division of space, it does not really account for the lived experience of men and women in early modern England. We might ask why the family domicile was deemed private, female space—an assessment at odds with the depiction of the husband as head of household—while the marketplace, where we know women gathered to transact household business, was declared masculine. How do we separate the man from his wife when her reputation impacted his credit and thus his ability to transact within a credit-dependent market?

Certainly, a privileged early modern patriarchy would have found convenient justification for the confinement of women within the domestic sphere. In his instructions to his son (1609), Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland, advised that because of their greed, “women should have no control over the estate or the servants, but should concentrate on bringing up the children and caring for linens and household stuffs, appearing only at the necessary social occasions.”¹⁰ Alice Friedman’s study of Wollaton Hall, in fact, describes the extraordinary efforts the Willoughby patriarchs undertook to ensure that their women were isolated in private areas of the family domicile.¹¹ One need only scan conduct manuals, such as Juan Luis Vives’s *Instruction of a Christian Woman* (1524), to understand the extent to which early modern English society argued for the control of women through domestic confinement.¹² Couple the conduct literature with pamphlets and broadsides from the period, many of which rigorously condemn women who spend their time gossiping, drinking and even whoring on the streets, and one has a pretty good understanding that early modern patriarchal society viewed the private, domestic sphere as the most appropriate place for women.¹³ It seems more than apparent, however, that the body of early modern prescriptive literature provides evidence that women were not staying put, that the boundary between public and private was not fixed. As Gary Schneider concludes in his cultural analysis of space in *The Taming of the Shrew*, “there was a dynamic relationship between the spheres.”¹⁴

Indeed, even within what is arguably “private” space, there were clearly demarcated areas deemed public in early modern England. Queen Elizabeth’s own private chambers illustrate the perceived importance of this distinction. Royal residences were notoriously public places, given the large numbers of courtiers and dignitaries gathered to curry a monarch’s favor. The private chamber arguably served as a sanctuary of sorts against this ever-present intrusion by the outside world. It was, of course, the Queen’s private chamber into which the Earl of Essex burst during his unscheduled and unwelcome return from Ireland in 1599. Elizabeth, having just awakened, found herself without wig, dress, or any adornment signifying her status or authority. That she was outraged by this intrusion may be attributed not only to Essex’s violation of her order that he remain in Ireland, but to this former favorite’s violation of her private space as well.¹⁵

The complexity of the separation between public and private is evident in early modern changes to domestic space. While early medieval households, as Mark Girouard’s study of the English country house demonstrates, were largely public

entities, by the latter Middle Ages and certainly by the early modern period, they became more compartmentalized to accommodate an increasing need for privacy.¹⁶ Russell West-Pavlov notes this evolution of English households in his study of the theatre, observing that “the interior organization of early modern houses constituted an aggregate of rooms linked together by multiple interconnecting doorways, through which it was necessary to proceed to reach another room, so that all members of the household were constantly circulating through the spaces where the day-to-day business of life was carried on.”¹⁷ By the mid-seventeenth century, as West-Pavlov further observes, “domestic interiors were becoming less and less visible to the outside world. From that date, houses were increasingly structured by organizing rooms along the central axis of a long corridor, a design for interior space which allowed the separation of private functions from the main routes of circulation through the house. These developments were evinced across a broad spectrum of socio-economic groups.”¹⁸

What is clear is that the separation of the public and the private became the means by which to organize everyday experience. As Edmund Tilney instructs in his early modern domestic manual, “the office of the husband is, to go abroad in matters of profit: of the wife, to tarry at home, and see all be well there. The office of the husband is, to provide money, of the wife, not wastefully to spend it . . . finally I say, that the office of the husband is to maintain well his livelihood, and the office of the woman is, to govern well the household.”¹⁹ Yet, whether these separations were accomplished through walls, functions, or gender roles, they remained ambiguous, easily challenged distinctions that require careful examination. While public/private spatial categories have become a useful starting point for critical discussions regarding early modern domesticity, I believe it important to recognize the ultimately arbitrary nature of such a division. What such discussions overlook, I would argue, is the permeability of space in early modern England. As Jürgen Habermas notes, “[in early modern England] the line between private and public spheres extended right through the house.”²⁰

One can, in fact, view the early modern household as an extension of the larger public sphere. While private, gendered space can be identified within the household, the role of the community at large within the day-to-day lives of early modern individuals challenges an unambiguous division between that deemed public and that private. As historian David Cressy argues in his study of early modern households, “even within the recesses of domestic routine, every action, every opinion, was susceptible to external interest, monitoring or control.”²¹ The neighborhood, in fact, played a pivotal role in domestic life in early modern England. In her study of early modern jesting literature, Pamela Allen Brown suggests that “the early modern concept of *neighborhood* marked out a lived geography rather than a legally determined one; from birth to death, neighbors shaped and weighed one’s identity, creating narratives that determined one’s reputation . . . neighbors were expected to take an active interest in each other’s households.”²² As traveler Philip Julius would observe in 1602, “in England every citizen is bound by oath to keep a sharp eye at his neighbor’s house, as to whether the married people live in harmony.”²³ When, for example, John Farmer began abusing his

wife Margaret in 1586, a neighbor intervened, later testifying in court that “when she came she found hym [John Farmer] with a cogell in his hand beating on his wyff cruellye more like a madd man then enie other.”²⁴ As Brown observes, “men’s brutality toward their wives was the business of the neighborhood, not a private matter; and abused wives usually turned to women neighbors first for help.”²⁵ This public involvement within the private is vividly depicted in early modern jesting literature. In one instance, neighbors composed a ballad which berated Richard Turner for beating his daughter Anne. The ballad included the following verse:

Hye thee home Anne,
 Hye thee home Anne,
 Whippe her arse Dicke,
 Will have thee anon.
 All those that love puddinge,
 Come unto Parke Street,
 And learne the songe,
 Whip Her Arse Dick.²⁶

One can only imagine the humiliation Richard Turner must have experienced in having his private life chanted on the streets. Four walls could not create a strong enough barrier between his domestic world and the very intrusive public one that condemned his handling of an arguably private matter. While it was certainly within a husband’s and father’s rights to discipline his wife and children, such public involvement in household matters argues disapproval: strong enough disincentive perhaps for perpetrator and would-be perpetrator alike.

Such public intervention was not limited to cases involving physical abuse. Female infidelity or inappropriate household dominance also proved fodder for public ridicule through the folk rituals of the charivari and skimmington. In his study of politics and culture in early seventeenth century England, David Underdown notes the centuries-old use of charivari, a European folk practice, used to humiliate those who had violated communal standards. While these violations frequently focused on women’s sexual infidelity, overly dominant wives or scolds were also subject to communal sanction. Accompanied by “rough” or discordant music, the charivari involved parading the offending couple (or their caricatures) through the streets for public ridicule. Offending wives could also end up on cucking-stools, where they were dunked repeatedly in water, to cleanse them of their crimes against the public sensibility. Skimmington, originally practiced primarily in Somerset and Wiltshire, involved a wife beating her husband, while he rode backwards on a donkey. Both the beating and the riding position signified a husband’s subservience to his wife, one in need of correction through public humiliation.²⁷ As Michael McKeon observes in his study of domesticity, the skimmington punished “the unbalanced household by the shameful spectacle of the husband and wife.”²⁸ Clearly, husbands were expected to take charge of their households.

The Wiltshire Quarter Sessions record one particularly vivid account of a skimmington in the village of Quemerford near Colne in 1618. According to reports, a

group of three to four hundred men gathered outside the house of Thomas Wells, where they forced their way

into his entrye, & thence into his hall, & brake open his chamber doore upon his wife & she offeringe to escape from them by climbinge a paire of staires to goe up into an upper roome, Wm. Wellwin plucked her downe by ye heels, being halfe up ye staires and then he and the rest took her up by ye armes & the legges, and had her out through the hall into ye entrye, where being a wett hole, they threw her downe into it & trod upon hir & beried her filthily with durt, & did beate hir blacke & blewe in many places wth an intent, as these examinants have credibly heard, to have had hir, viz, Agnes, out of their howse to ye horseman & to have set hir up behind him to carry hir to Callne & there washe hir in the cuckinge stoole, & if she would not be still & sitt quietly, then to stuffe hir mouth wth greines.²⁹

According to the neighbors, neither Thomas nor Agnes Wells was behaving properly, and both were thus in need of correction. While, as Underdown has suggested, skimmingtons were festive events, often attracting participants from neighboring villages, such incidents likewise underscore the overlap between the public and private spheres.³⁰ Schneider insightfully notes that “there is a paradox in that when women transgress bonds associated with the private (adultery, husband scolding, or shrewishness), they are punished by being exposed to public humiliation; they are not shoved more deeply into the private, but carted, cucked, bridled.”³¹ Historian Martin Ingram supports this assessment, suggesting that “skimmington rides derided extreme violations of the patriarchal ideal, and thus set firm boundaries on the range of acceptable behavior.”³² While such involvement in domestic matters, however questionable, was undertaken in the name of good neighborly practice, it likewise suggests a less than clear demarcation between the private sphere and the world at large. As historian Anthony Fletcher rightly concludes in his study of patriarchy, such events “destroyed the privilege of privacy, a privilege in early modern society which rested on men’s willing and energetic conformity in enforcing control at home.”³³ That “privacy” was dependent upon conformity to communal standards, I would add, essentially negates it. Under such a system, privacy may only exist under the watchful eye of a public enforcer.

The intersection between the public and private is perhaps most evident in a study of early modern economic networks. As social historians have demonstrated, the domestic unit functioned within the larger economic network, engaging in trade to acquire the most fundamental of life necessities, including clothing, food stuffs and household goods.³⁴ Wrightson, for instance, notes that “households were interlocked in all manner of ways: rendering practical assistance and support; borrowing and lending; engaging in small scale buying and selling; arbitrating quarrels; visiting the sick; celebrating the rites of birth, marriage and death.”³⁵ Because of a shortage of coin, however, credit was important to the completion of the most basic of economic transactions within the early modern marketplace.³⁶ Indeed, as Wrightson further notes, “in much of England and Wales money played only a marginal

part in their day-to-day dealings, which were often conducted on credit between known and trusted individuals: it was a unit of reckoning, rather than a regular means of exchange.”³⁷

Because credit was based upon trustworthiness, reputation proved essential to transactions within the marketplace. As Craig Muldrew argues in his economic history of early modern England, “the establishment of trustworthiness became the most crucial factor needed to generate and maintain wealth.”³⁸ Moreover, the reputation of wives, children, and servants directly influenced household credit. Curtis Perry observes in his study of *The Comedy of Errors* that because “wives and dependents were involved in a great deal of day to day buying and selling, the perceived intemperance of a wife could have serious financial consequences for her husband’s ability to conduct business on credit.”³⁹ Joseph Swetnam betrays this economic concern in his 1615 diatribe against “lewd, idle, forward and unconstant women.” As Swetnam declares, “if thou marriest a woman of evil report, her discredit will be a spot in thy brow.”⁴⁰ While Swetnam’s rant is directed against the unchaste woman whose disreputable behavior could mar a husband’s reputation, its application to any behavior which could damage household credit seems evident.

Shrews and scolds were also considered damaging to the household because they negatively impacted men’s ability to obtain credit. Richard Brathwaite’s 1620 diatribe against shrews illustrates the power of this negative characterization. The shrew, he declares, is “a continuall dropping, whose activitie consists principally in the volubilitie of an infatigable tongue . . . Shee goes weekly a catterwauling: she is a Bee in a box, for she is ever buzzing: . . . a nest of *wasps* and *hornets* are not comparable to her for spite, nor may equall her in splene; and in this they principally differ, she hath her sting in her tongue, they in their tayle.”⁴¹ That a husband’s reputation within the marketplace depended on such a wife must have proven a frightening prospect. As the Puritan preacher Henry Smith declares, “if she [a wife] be a shrew her troublesome jarring in the end will make her honest behavior unpleasant, as her over-pinching at last causeth her good housewifery to be evil spoken of.”⁴² A wife’s bad reputation, whether for lewd or shrewish behavior, meant more than mere mockery on the streets; because it impacted credit, bad reputation threatened the economic viability of the household as a whole.

Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, I would argue, is very much concerned with amassing the credit necessary to achieve and maintain economic prosperity. Although traditionally read as a play in which a flamboyant husband seeks to acquire domestic peace by taming his unruly wife, the text is every bit as much about Petruccio’s acquisition of wealth in the world. I would argue, in fact, that this bridegroom’s economic future is crucially dependent upon a successful modification of Kate’s behavioral excesses. While her dowry seems motivation enough for his rather abrupt acquisition of this recalcitrant bride, I would argue that it is only the beginning of Petruccio’s effort to establish his fortune in the world. Not only must Petruccio acquire wealth through inheritance and/or marriage, but he must be able to preserve the good fortune he has fortuitously acquired.

Our first introduction to Petruccio is grounded in economics. In response to Hortensio’s “tell me now, sweet friend, what happy gale / Blows you to Padua here

from old Verona?" (1.2.45-46), Petruccio declares:

Such wind as scatters young men through the world
 To seek their fortunes farther than at home,
 Where small experience grows. But in a few,
 Signor Hortensio, thus it stands with me:
 Antonio, my father, is deceased,
 And I have thrust myself into this maze
 Happily to wive and thrive as best I may.
 Crowns in my purse I have, and goods at home,
 And so am come abroad to see the world. (1.2.47-55)

Although he goes on to embrace the challenge of subduing one who roars like a lion, Petruccio's primary motivation remains increasing his fortune. Indeed, it is not versification alone that aligns "wive and thrive." Although financially well-endowed at the death of his father, Petruccio clearly intends to increase his wealth through a well-placed marriage. Korda links Petruccio's enterprises to early modern socio-economic practice, arguing that his "fortune-hunting bombast together with his claim to have 'better'd rather than decreas'd' his inheritance, marks him as one of the new gentry, who continually sought to improve their estates through commerce, through forays into business or overseas trade, and by contracting wealthy marriages."⁴³ While Kate's twenty thousand crown dowry should perhaps be adequate for the fortune-seeking Petruccio, he does have a problem. Historian Susan Amussen provides useful insight here, noting that in the early modern period

the equation of wealth and worth was effected through reputation. The key concept in this process was 'credit'. The term is ambiguous: from its Latin root meaning 'to believe' comes its use in court testimony referring to the truthfulness of witness; but it had also long been used in trade, where letters of credit assured merchants of buyers' ability to pay. By the late sixteenth century 'credit' described both honesty and solvency; wealth and virtue were joined.⁴⁴

Given the importance of credit in early modern England, I would argue that Petruccio faces an uncertain economic future unless he can somehow bring his "wild-cat" under control (1.2.191).

Kate's impact on the marital economy has, not surprisingly, been the subject of considerable recent discussion by scholars, who have examined the role of the early modern wife in the preservation as well as consumption of household commodities. Korda, reading against the established view of wives as producers of household goods, argues that "Petruccio's taming strategy is accordingly aimed not at his wife's productive capacity—not once does he ask Kate to brew, bake, wash, card, or spin—but at her consumption. He seeks to educate Kate in her new role as a consumer of 'household cates.'"⁴⁵ While such understandings of the wife's role in the household economy find considerable support in the conduct literature of the early modern

period, I believe that another dimension of the early modern wife's impact on the marital economy has yet to be adequately addressed. Indeed, it is equally important that we examine how an early modern wife's reputation affected her husband's credit and thus the household's ability to transact within the world at large. The second of the "Six Honest Husbands" from the early modern pamphlet, *A whole crew of kind Gossips, all met to be merry* (1609), voices pronounced frustration over the influence his wife's shrewish behavior is having on his credit:

She sweares she will go brave, I shal maintaine her,
 Or 'tis an argument I do disdaine her;
 And that her onely care to go so fine,
 Is but for credit both of hers and mine.
 Indeed by this my credit sure is tride,
 For I owe much to maintaine her in pride.
 With Mercers Bookes I am acquainted still,
 And large I furnish out the Taylors Bill.
 This is the onely credit that I get,
 For bravery to run my selfe in debt.⁴⁶

While it is clear that excessive spending is depleting precious household resources, it is likewise evident that this husband's credit is sorely compromised by his inability to correct his wife's behavior. The wife may argue that her fine array enhances the household's reputation; in reality the husband's purchasing power is hurt by accumulating debt. Not only are his economic resources being squandered, but his credit suffers due to his wife's reputation as a spendthrift. Likewise, Kate may well be, as Petruccio notes, "my goods, my chattels . . . my anything" (3.3.101; 103), but her shrewish behavior impacts Petruccio's reputation, rendering him a poor credit risk.

While Petruccio's plan to remake Kate begins even before the wooing process commences, it is his wedding day shenanigans that prove most intriguing in terms of behavior modification. Riding into town on a broken-down horse in ratty, mismatched apparel, this groom-to-be announces to the startled, bemused onlookers that

to me she's married, not unto my clothes.
 Could I repair what she will wear in me
 As I can change these poor accoutrements,
 'Twere well for Kate and better for myself. (3.3.110-113)

Abate argues that "when Katherine's wedding finally takes place . . . it provides the first heavily populated venue at which Petruchio can showcase his disregard for public opinion and, using himself as an example, continue to promote this disregard in Katherine."⁴⁷ While Petruccio certainly challenges expectations here, I would disagree that it is meant to discount public opinion about his domestic life. On the contrary, Petruccio's bizarre appearance is very much a staged, public performance; he intends those witnessing this event to take notice. As Schneider observes, "what

appears to be private is, in fact, frequently a function of the public.”⁴⁸ Petruccio’s performance sends a clear message to the world at large that he is seizing control of his goods, his chattels, in short, his reputation as a sound fiscal manager. Certainly, it may be argued that his bizarre behavior seems antithetical to positive reputation building; he does burst upon the scene like a madman. I would argue, however, that this scene is less about demonstrating Petruccio’s scandalous violation of wedding day protocol than it is about broadcasting to the witnessing public that he is firmly in charge of his household.

Petruccio’s bizarre behavior continues well beyond this wedding day performance. Pulling Kate from the expected wedding day feast, he delivers his bride to a chilling domicile, depriving her not only of the usual festivities, but also of food and sleep. Informing the audience that he intends to withhold meat, sleep and peace to “curb her mad and headstrong humour” (4.1.190), Petruccio begins a program of behavior modification that may be likened to Stockholm Syndrome, where psychological terrorism is deployed to gain a captive’s trust, affection, or at the very least, cooperation.⁴⁹ While I do not discount the abuse Petruccio inflicts, another reading is possible regarding this horrific domestic scene. Without a doubt, this scene, like the one at the church, is a staged performance before his bewildered wife and servants. Petruccio calls for food, only to declare: “’Tis burnt, and so is all the meat” (4.1.142). To Kate’s insistence that “the meat was well” (4.1.150), Petruccio declares: “better ’twere that both of us did fast” (4.1.154). A similar scenario is repeated two scenes later, when first a haberdasher and then a tailor offer up commissioned caps and gowns, only to have Petruccio summarily reject them, quite literally at Kate’s yearning, outstretched hands. His concluding response perhaps says it all. As he notes,

Well, come, my Kate. We will unto your father’s
Even in these honest, mean habiliments.
Our purses shall be proud, our garments poor,
For ’tis the mind that makes the body rich,
And as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds,
So honour peereth in the meanest habit. (4.3.163-168)

Honor, perhaps, but not credit. While Petruccio’s overriding intentions are clear—“to kill a wife with kindness, / And thus . . . curb her mad and headstrong humour” (4.1.189-190)—the method he employs, one that emphasizes loss and want, speaks to the importance of protecting the household economy. While it may well be argued that Petruccio is wasting precious domestic resources to stage this lesson (as well as subjecting himself to the same level of deprivation), it likewise serves as a vivid demonstration to a yet defiant Kate of the consequences of a household deprived of credit. Indeed, there is no food, no sleep, no fashionable clothing. There is, instead, “mean habiliments” and “garments poor.” As one rather self-pitying seventeenth-century woman complains, the ideal wife should be a sacrificing one. In a 1604 letter to her husband, Thomas, Maria Thynne notes:

I have never yet craved anything of such great importance as hath ever been prejudicial to your reputation or profit . . . Alas I sit home and let thy dogs eat part with me, and wear clothes that have worn out their prenticeship a year and half sithence.⁵⁰

While it may well be argued that ragged clothing negatively impacts one's credit in the marketplace—a visible sign that a husband is a poor provider—overly fine attire signals extravagant spending and thus questionable household management. In the world of the play, however, the “mean habiliments” and “garments poor” that Petruccio forces Kate to don for their journey to her father's house reveal something quite different. We may, in fact, compare this mean attire to that worn by this groom on his wedding day. What Petruccio's public performance communicates is not an impoverished household, but rather the success of this husband in subduing his strong-willed wife. Kate the shrew has been rewritten as Kate the obedient wife.

Petruccio's method of spousal behavioral control would have elicited mixed responses in early modern England. As legal historians B. J. Sokol and Mary Sokol observe in their study of Shakespeare and marriage, “in the prevailing theory a man's role in public and private life was to govern his household peaceably and well. This meant controlling the actions of his wife and children and servants by the use of physical force if necessary.” However, there was little consensus on how such discipline was best accomplished.⁵¹ Numerous examples from early modern behavioral literature address the issue of spousal discipline, offering differing perspectives on how or even if it should be undertaken. While misogynist early modern writers such as Joseph Swetnam advocate wife beating, declaring, “As a sharp bit curbs froward horse, even so a cursed woman must be roughly used,”⁵² others, such as the Puritan preacher William Perkins, called for a more restrained approach to spousal correction. His *Christian Economy* (1609) favors the word over the rod as the most effective method of discipline:

Here question is moved, whether the husband may correct the wife? Answer: Though the husband be the wife's head, yet it seemeth he have no power nor liberty granted him in this regard. For we read not in the Scriptures any precept or example to warrant such practice of his authority. He may reprove and admonish her in word only, if he seeth her in fault . . . But he may not chastise her either with stripes or strokes. The reason is plain. Wives are their husbands' mates, and they two be one flesh. And no man will hate, much less beat, his own flesh, but nourish and cherish it.⁵³

Perkins presents a troubling rationale, yet one shared by many of his contemporaries. In his *Apology for Women* (1609), William Heale likewise argues that when a husband beats his wife, he beats himself. And, as Heale asserts, “no man did ever willingly hurt himself: or if any man hath, certainly he may justly be held a mad man.”⁵⁴ Yet, if this is the case, many early modern husbands may have been considered mad men. While this kinder, gentler alternative to wife beating seems a more humane treatment of erring spouses, it ultimately proves every bit as unsettling as

the rod. Even if the “patient” husband withholds physical punishment, any verbal admonishment he inflicts is arguably every bit as abusive as that delivered through “strikes or strokes.” Indeed, I would argue, there is the thinnest of lines between discipline and abuse.

The difficulty in distinguishing between discipline and abuse is most evident in surviving Consistory Court depositions, which record numerous cases of husbands brought before the law on charges of spousal abuse. William Lacie insisted that he had “never beat neither struck the said Elizabeth his wife, but at one time in his own house, and then he gave her 6 stripes and no more with a stick as big as his thumb, for that she sitting by the fire, and being moved by his maidservant to set this respondent unto supper, she said she would not, but she answered that she would tarry, well the longer to anger this respondent.”⁵⁵ Was Lacie guilty of beating his wife? There is no record of the court’s decision, but based upon this testimony, it is doubtful that it would have found him guilty of wife beating. According to the deposition, Lacie’s six stripes with a stick no bigger than his thumb were used to correct a disobedient wife, not to harm her. Although the *Homily of the State of Matrimony* (1563) declares that if a man beat his wife, he “shalt increase her evil affections,”⁵⁶ Vives asserts that “in all races of animals, the female obeys and follows the male; she fawns upon him and allows herself to be beaten and punished by him, and nature has taught that this is the way things should be.”⁵⁷ Clearly, from an early modern legal perspective, the underlying questions are 1) what was the purpose of the beating, and 2) did the husband inflict bodily harm or death as the result of the beating? According to the deposition, Elizabeth Lacie was a disobedient wife and, as such, in need of correction if the household was to function effectively. That the number of stripes was limited and administered by a thumb-sized stick would seem to indicate that the correction did not result in bodily harm or, obviously, death. Therefore, according to existing laws, William Lacie was merely exercising sound husbandly authority when he struck his wife six times with a stick! *The Law’s Resolution of Women’s Rights* (1632), which offers commentaries on the early modern statutes affecting women, provides useful insight here. As T.E., the text’s legal commentator, observes,

if a man beat an outlaw, a traitor, a pagan, his villain, or his wife, it is punishable, because by the law common these persons can have no action: God send gentlewomen better sport or better company. But it seemeth to be very true that there is some sort of castigation which law permits a husband to use; for if a woman be threatened by her husband to be beaten, mischiefed or slain, Fitzherbert sets down a writ which she may sue out of Chancery to compel him to find surety of honest behavior towards her, and that he shall neither do nor procure to be done to her [mark I pray you] any bodily damage otherwise than appertains to the office of husband for lawful and reasonable correction.⁵⁸

It would appear that the burden of proof rested upon the wife, for under early modern English common law, husbands could use physical force “for lawful and reason-

able correction.” While T. E. registers obvious sympathy, “God send gentlewomen better sport or better company,” the law clearly sided with the husband. No doubt Simon White acted reasonably when he disciplined his wife Elizabeth “for her misusage and intolerable misbehavior towards him which he did in honest reasonable and moderate sorte as he beleeveth.”⁵⁹

While under early modern law, Petruccio’s program of behavior modification would most likely have been considered “lawful and reasonable correction,” necessary to the creation as well as maintenance of an ordered household, it nevertheless seems bizarre. John Taylor’s 1639 misogynist, somewhat “tongue-in-cheek” advice on how to tame a shrew proves, in fact, surprisingly akin to Petruccio’s plan. Written during the pamphlet war over the “woman question” which emerged in the 1630s, Taylor’s tract advises that “if she [the shrew] scolds, rather seem to slight her by doing some action or other, as singing, dancing, whistling, or clapping thy hands on thy sides, for this will make her vex extremely, because you give her not word for word.”⁶⁰ Compare Taylor’s suggested behavioral digressions to Petruccio’s plan of attack:

Say that she rail, why then I’ll tell her plain
 She sings as sweetly as a nightingale.
 Say that she frown, I’ll say she looks as clear
 As morning roses newly washed with dew.
 Say she be mute and will not speak a word,
 Then I’ll commend her volubility,
 And say she uttereth piercing eloquence.
 If she deny to wed, I’ll crave the day
 When I shall ask the banns, and when be married. (2.1.168-178)

What Taylor’s antics seek to accomplish is bewilderment in the shrew to the extent that her offending rhetoric is, at least for the moment, silenced. While Petruccio does not literally sing, dance, whistle or clap his hands to divert this shrew’s attention, his plan to misread her words produces much the same effect.⁶¹ In rewriting Kate’s anger, Petruccio effectively disempowers her.

Not only does this plan “correct” Kate’s shrewish behavior, but it ultimately provides evidence to a watching world that Petruccio has gained control over his household. The public performances he subsequently stages become visual proof of this control. The first of these performances occurs as Kate and Petruccio make their way to Baptista’s house. Declaring “Good Lord, how bright and goodly shines the moon” (4.6.2), Petruccio attempts to provoke Kate into contradicting his patently absurd observation. When she declares, “I know it is the sun that shines so bright” (4.6.5), Petruccio threatens to return her to his house of horrors for further correction: “Go on, and fetch our horses back again. / Evermore crossed and crossed, nothing but crossed” (4.6.9-10). It is noteworthy that not only does Kate fail this test of obedience, but she does it publicly, for Hortensio is present during the exchange. It is not until Hortensio warns Kate to “say as he says or we shall never go” (4.6.11) that she finally agrees to Petruccio’s bewildering observations. As she notes:

Forward, I pray, since we have come so far,
 And be it moon or sun or what you please,
 And if you please to call it a rush-candle
 Henceforth I vow it shall be so for me. (4.6.12-15)

Petruccio's taunting does not, of course, end here. When the three encounter Vincentio on the road, Petruccio again assays Kate's obedience to his authority. It is only after she agrees to his convoluted observations that she is allowed to proceed to her father's house. That Kate agrees to call the sun the moon and the aged Vincentio a "young budding virgin, fair, and fresh, and sweet" (4.6.38) serves to demonstrate to the witnessing community that Petruccio has seized control of his household. She has become the ideal wife Vives praises in his early modern behavioral treatise. As Vives admonishes, "[a wife] will put faith in his [a husband's] words even if he tells her things that seem improbable or incredible. She will take on his facial expressions, smile at him when he smiles, and be sad when he is sad, maintaining always the dignity of virtue and integrity befitting a married woman."⁶² Such behavior compellingly affirms to the world at large an apparently unquestioned submission to a husband's authority.

Other tests, of course, await Kate before she arrives at her father's house. After witnessing the return of the clandestinely married Lucentio and Bianca, she mischievously declares her desire to follow the couple into her father's house, to witness first hand the "ado" that is sure to follow. Petruccio insists, however, that Kate first kiss him in the street. When he threatens to return home should she fail to comply, Kate promptly concedes: "Nay, I will give thee a kiss" (5.1.129). That Petruccio compels a very public kiss speaks to his desire to quash a potentially disruptive outcome. Kate's request to eavesdrop on the "ado" sure to ensue over Bianca's clandestine marriage positions her as a potential gossip, behavior at odds with the early modern behavioral model. Abate suggests that this very public kiss "lays to rest any lingering doubts that she [Kate] cares more about the public sphere and her reputation in it than the private consideration and esteem between themselves."⁶³ I would argue, however, that Kate's reputation within the public sphere is precisely what Petruccio seeks to manipulate here; his unexpected demand seeks to curb Kate's propensity toward gossip as well as to demonstrate to the world that he is in control of his wife's behavior and thus of his household.

A perhaps even more compelling performance occurs a short time later. As the newly married couples gather to celebrate the marriage of Lucentio and Bianca, Hortensio's bride, the Widow, challenges Petruccio's reputation as a man in charge of his domain. To Kate's "'He that is giddy thinks the world turns round'— / I pray you tell me what you meant by that" (5.2.27-28), the Widow replies: "Your husband, being troubled with a shrew, / Measures my husband's sorrow by his woe" (5.2.29-30). That the Widow invokes the word shrew shows the power of reputation in the public realm. Petruccio has been remaking his bride since before their wedding day, yet the perception of Kate as shrew still holds sway. Petruccio's proposed wager a short time later constitutes an opportunity not only to prove the Widow wrong, but

perhaps more importantly, becomes a means by which to establish his reputation as one in charge. As he proposes,

Let's each one send unto his wife,
And he whose wife is most obedient
To come at first when he doth send for her
Shall win the wager which we will propose. (5.2.67-70)

In many respects, the outcome of this wager is predictable. Bianca "is busy and . . . cannot come" (5.2.86). The Widow "will not" come when summoned by Hortensio (5.2.103). Kate, however, promptly responds to Petruccio's demand, dragging the bewildered Bianca and Widow behind her. That she responds on cue to her husband's demands seems very much staged. In her analysis of performance in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Amy Smith argues that "Kate performs subjection" to gain some measure of control over herself within the marriage.⁶⁴ Perhaps, but I would argue that from dropping her cap under his foot to instructing the other wives on proper wifely behavior, Kate's performance affirms Petruccio's authority as head of his household. As she declares,

Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign, one that cares for thee,
And for thy maintenance commits his body
To painful labour both by sea and land,
To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe,
And craves no other tribute at thy hands
But love, fair looks, and true obedience,
Too little payment for so great a debt. (5.2.150-158)

That he brings such a "wildcat" under control earns Petruccio incomparable credit in the world at large. Korda suggests that "by the end of the play, or so it would seem, Kate has successfully learned to manipulate status objects and, in so doing, to bolster her husband's credit in a way that 'makes capital go to capital.'"⁶⁵ I would argue, however, that Kate's contribution to the household economy is measured less by her manipulation of status objects than by her altered reputation. She is no longer a wife who squanders her husband's credit because of her own ill humor, but instead at least appears to support his household authority. That the proverbial court of public opinion agrees can be evidenced in Baptista's generous addition to the betting pool. It is worthwhile noting that at the conclusion of the wager, Baptista awards Petruccio an additional "twenty thousand crowns, / Another dowry to another daughter, / For she is changed as she had never been" (5.2.117-119). This second dowry, I would conclude, provides proof of Petruccio's thriving credit within the marketplace, and, ultimately, of his increasing fortune.

Clearly, as this essay has demonstrated, an early modern wife's reputation directly influenced her husband's credit within the public domain. Within the world

of the play, Kate as shrew threatens Petruccio's ability to capitalize on his fortuitous inheritance and matrimonial potential. One should therefore ask what effect Bianca's clandestine marriage has upon Lucentio's credit. If, indeed, credit is dependent upon trustworthiness within the public domain, how does a courtship and marriage undertaken sans public or paternal approval impact household rating within the community at large? While Kate's shrewishness is foregrounded as a major obstacle to Petruccio's economic prosperity, Bianca's brief behavioral lapse proves a less significant indicator of Lucentio's future success.

Throughout most of the text Bianca is represented as a figure of obedience. From the dutiful daughter who readily complies with her father's requests, whether it be to get into the house, to study with her tutor, to marry the man of his choosing, or to render obedience to a man who declares he will steal her away "despite of all the world" (3.3.15), Bianca readily accedes to patriarchal authority. Her only real moment of rebellion occurs, I would argue, not when she clandestinely elopes with Lucentio, but rather when she adopts the attitude of shrew, refusing to come at her husband's bidding. Yet, as the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield would somewhat cryptically advise in his letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury in 1590, "there is one shrew in all the world and every man hath her."⁶⁶ Every wife, in other words, is a shrew. While it may well be argued that Bianca defies her father's authority when she clandestinely weds, Baptista does, ironically, arrange a marriage between his daughter and the man he believes to be the son of Vincentio. While it is problematic that Baptista is duped by Tranio and Lucentio, the end result is nevertheless the same. Bianca, "the prize" (2.1.334), is contracted by her father to Lucentio. Moreover, Baptista ultimately blesses the union, thus lending it patriarchal support. When Bianca does momentarily refuse her husband's request, she is quickly reeled in by a shrew reformed through patriarchal authority. Indeed, one may argue that this test of Bianca's obedience merely asserts to the watching world that Lucentio is in control of his household.

William Gouge's 1622 treatise, *Of Domesticall Duties*, urges that "the provident care of husbands and wives ought further to extend it self to the credit and good name of one another."⁶⁷ Indeed, good name proved crucial to the economic well-being of the household in early modern England. While, as numerous early modern scholars have noted, domestic prosperity was linked to a wife's prudent management of domestic assets, household solvency was likewise dependent upon reputation. Households perceived as out of control, especially those where husbands lacked authority, were seen as poor credit risks within the marketplace. Although by the early modern period, women had ostensibly yielded their medieval position in the marketplace, their domestic reputation continued to hold sway within a public world somewhat artificially deemed the dominion of men. As the text of *The Taming of the Shrew* demonstrates, Petruccio's achievement of fortune within the world, which translates as economic prosperity, is as dependent upon Kate's reform into an ideal wife as it is on the sizeable dowry she brings to the marriage. Such "taming" not only brings peace to this disordered household, but perhaps more importantly, ensures its continued economic prosperity.

Notes

1. All Shakespeare citations are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: Norton, 1997).
2. Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 2000), 30.
3. Elizabeth Mazzola and Corinne S. Abate, "Introduction: 'indistinguished space,'" in *Privacy, Domesticity, and Women in Early Modern England*, ed. Corinne S. Abate (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 1-17, 2.
4. Jessica Slights, "The 'Undividable Incorporate': Householding in *The Comedy of Errors*," in *Domestic Arrangements in Early Modern England*, ed. Kari Boyd McBride (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univ. Press, 2002), 74-102, esp. 79.
5. See Wrightson, esp. 51-68.
6. Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002), 25.
7. Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 19.
8. Korda, 25.
9. Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories* (London: Routledge, 1997), 28.
10. "Instructions of Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland to his son Algernon Percy," quoted in Alice T. Friedman, *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989), 50.
11. As Friedman observes, "the lives of women, and of gentlewomen in particular, appear to have been more circumscribed, both spatially and in terms of the activities in which they participated," 47. This assessment of the seclusion of women is supported by Miranda Chaytor, "Household and Kinship: Ryton in the Late 16th and Early 17th Centuries," *History Workshop* 10 (1980): 25-50, who notes women "inhabited a separate culture parallel to but concealed behind the more powerful official male culture," 50.
12. Juan Luis Vives, *Education of a Christian Woman*, trans. and ed. Charles Fantazzi (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000), esp. 125-138.
13. See, for example, Pamela Allen Brown, *Better a Shrew than a Sheep: Women, Drama, and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 2003); Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighborhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003); and "Custom Is an Idiot": *Jacobean Pamphlet Literature on Women*, ed. Susan Gushee O'Malley (Urbana and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2004).
14. Gary Schneider, "The Public, the Private and the Shaming of the Shrew," *Studies in English Literature* 42 (2002): 235-258, esp. 235.
15. For an account of Essex's intrusion, see Carole Levin, "*The Heart and Stomach of a King*": *Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), esp. 149-156. See also G. B. Harrison, *Life and Death of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex* (London: Casell and Co., 1935) and Robert Lacey, *Robert Earl of Essex: An Elizabethan Icarus* (London: Weidenfeld

and Nicolson, 1971).

16. Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1978), 30.
17. Russell West-Pavlov, *Bodies and Their Spaces: System, Crisis and Transformation in Early Modern Theatre* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006), 31-32.
18. West-Pavlov, 32.
19. Edmund Tilney, *A Brief and Pleasant Discourse of Duties in Marriage, Called the Flower of Friendship* (London, 1571), quoted in Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988), 43-44.
20. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 45.
21. David Cressy, "Response: Private Lives, Public Performance, and Rites of Passage," in *Attending to Women in Early Modern England*, ed. Betty S. Travitsky and Adele F. Seeff (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1994), 187-197, esp. 187.
22. Brown, 37.
23. Quoted in Brown, 35.
24. Quoted in Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 209.
25. Brown, 16.
26. Quoted in Brown, 126.
27. David Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 100-102.
28. Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2005), 171.
29. Quoted in B. Howard Cunnington, "A Skimmington' in 1618," *Folklore* 41 (1930): 287-290, esp. 289-290.
30. Underdown, 110.
31. Schneider, 246.
32. Martin Ingram, "Ridings, Rough Music, and the 'Reform of Popular Culture' in Early Modern England," *Past and Present* 105 (1984): 79-113, esp. 98.
33. Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), 272.
34. See, for example, Wrightson; Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave, 1998); David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997); Fletcher; and Amussen.

68 *The Upstart Crow*

35. Wrightson, 78.
36. For more on coin shortages, see Muldrew, esp. 95-103.
37. Wrightson, 52.
38. Muldrew, 148.
39. Curtis Perry, "Commerce, Community, and Nostalgia in *The Comedy of Errors*," in *Money and the Age of Shakespeare: Essays in New Economic Criticism*, ed. Linda Woodbridge (New York and Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 39-52, 46.
40. Joseph Swetnam, *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women*, in *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640*, ed. Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus (Urbana and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1985), 198.
41. Richard Brathwaite, *Essaies upon the five senses, with a pithee one upon Detraction* (London, 1620), quoted in Habermas, 101. Brathwaite's language here seems to echo that of Shakespeare. During the "wooing" scene, Petruccio says: "Who knows not where a wasp does wear his sting? / In his tail" (2.1.211-212), to which Kate responds: "In his tongue" (2.1.213). The respective dates of publication—*The Taming of the Shrew* was not published before the folio edition of 1623—argues a common, likely folkloric, source.
42. Henry Smith, *A Preparative to Marriage* (1591), quoted in *Renaissance Woman: Constructions of Femininity in England*, ed. Kate Aughterson (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 83.
43. Korda, 62.
44. Amussen, 152.
45. Korda, 54.
46. "Sixe Husbands," *A whole crew of kind Gossips, all met to be merry* (London, 1609), quoted in O'Malley, 85.
47. Abate, "Neither a Tamer Nor a Shrew Be: A Defense of Petruchio and Katherine," in Abate, 31-44, 34.
48. Schneider, 238.
49. The term Stockholm Syndrome, first coined in 1974 by Daniel Lang to describe the affective bond between bank employees and their captors during a failed robbery attempt in Stockholm, Sweden, has subsequently been used to describe the emotional ties between battered women and their male abusers. See Dee L. R. Graham, Edna I. Rawlings, and Roberta Rigsby, *Loving to Survive: Sexual Terror, Men's Violence, and Women's Psychology* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1994).
50. Maria Thynne, "Letter to Thomas Thynne" (after August 1604), in *Personal Disclosures: An Anthology of Self-Writings from the Seventeenth Century*, ed. David Booy (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 42.
51. B. J. Sokol and Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003), 131.
52. Quoted in Henderson and McManus, 119.

53. William Perkins, *Christian Economy*, in *Daughters, Wives and Widows: Writings by Men about Women in England, 1500-1640*, ed. Joan Larsen Klein (Urbana and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1992), 172.
54. William Heale, *An Apology for Women*, quoted in Aughterson, 152.
55. *Winchester Consistory Court Depositions 1561-1602*, Court book 24, 8 March 1566, ed. Arthur J. Willis (Winchester: Warren and Son Wykeham Press, 1960), 61.
56. *Homily of the State of Matrimony*, in Klein, 23.
57. Vives, 193.
58. T. E., *The Law's Resolution of Women's Rights*, in Aughterson, 154.
59. *London Consistory Court Depositions, 1589-1611: Lists and Indexes*, ed. Loreen Giese (London: London Record Society, 1995), xxiv.
60. John Taylor, *A Juniper Lecture*, in Henderson and McManus, 291-304, 303-304.
61. It is tempting to locate a connection between Petruccio's taming strategies and Taylor's rather unorthodox advice. Taylor's *Juniper Lecture*, published in 1639, could arguably have been influenced by Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, which as noted above, was first published in 1623. In the absence of a more definitive connection, however, such a link proves speculative at best.
62. Vives, 215.
63. Abate, "Defense," 38.
64. Amy L. Smith, "Performing Marriage with a Difference: Wooing, Wedding, and Bedding in *The Taming of the Shrew*," *Comparative Drama* 36 (2002-2003): 289-320, esp. 307.
65. Korda, 71.
66. Quoted in Friedman, 56.
67. Quoted in Muldrew, 158.

**“I WOO'D THEE WITH MY SWORD, / AND WON THY LOVE DOING THEE INJURIES”:
THE EROTIC ECONOMIES OF *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM***

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In a footnote to his introduction to the 1979 Arden edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Harold Brooks notes of the Bottom/Titania subplot that:

. . . though the humour resides partly in contrast between his animal form and her 'airy spirit', even a controlled suggestion of carnal bestiality is surely impossible: jealous Oberon would not have cast his spell to cuckold himself. Her dotage is imaginative and emotional.¹

Brooks' dismissal is understandable; the idea that “jealous Oberon” might “cast his spell to cuckold himself” as a means of punishing his wife is jarring, and potentially troubling in the extreme. Indeed, the mere suggestion has the potential to undercut the play's comic effect, at least for a modern audience. Of course, whether it would have done so for an early modern audience is by no means certain.

In this essay, I propose that Oberon has indeed “cast his spell to cuckold himself,” using erotic desire as a weapon to humiliate his rebellious wife and enforce her submission. He does this in order to reassert his position at the head of his family and, by extension, the state as embodied in the fairy kingdom, while at the same time restoring order to the natural world by remedying the domestic and political chaos which has infected it with “contagious fogs” and “progeny of evils.” In his chastising of Titania, and Titania's acceptance of it, we see a clear example of the erotic dominance and submission which underpin the domestic, social, and political economies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a play famously concerned with the nature of erotic desire, and perhaps for this reason it is one of Shakespeare's most perennially popular comedies, performed in various (sometimes truncated) forms since the late sixteenth century.² The play's engagement with that desire has been central to critical inquiry for nearly as long. Even Samuel Pepys, one of the play's earliest (and harshest) critics, remarked in his diaries that it showcased “some handsome women.”³ More recent criticism, while no less engaged with the play's treatment of erotic desire, has also tended to comment upon the play's gender dynamics, reading the play in the context of gender relations of the late Elizabethan period in which it was written. Shirley Nelson Garner notes that despite the “renewal” which is promised in the conclusion, the play “recognizes the tenuousness of heterosexuality.”⁴ Critics such as David Marshall have noted the ways in which the comedy's female characters are marginalized,⁵ while Louis Montrose reads the play as a kind of cultural artifact whose treatments of gender and social relations must be understood in relation to the Elizabethan court.⁶ Jonathan Crewe built upon this reading, arguing that *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* “sexual politics” were both complex and “historically specific.”⁷ In *Things of Darkness*, Kim Hall reads the comedy as a gyno/xenophobic study in which

“threatening female sexuality and power” are displaced into the literal and rhetorical darkness of the forest.⁸ More recently, Bruce Boehrer has undertaken a study of the play’s “economies of desire,” noting the parallels between the play’s “bestiality motif” and its “various references to same-sex communities.”⁹

While all of these studies are informative and illustrative in various ways, Boehrer’s study is particularly to my purpose. I propose here a new reading of the play’s “economies of desire,” or “erotic economies,” as I term them.¹⁰ As critics have long noted, the play is focused on the power dynamics of gender relations, and all of the play’s representations of erotic desire emanate from this focus. Arguably the most conspicuous feature of erotic desire as it is depicted in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is its close linking with control. Indeed, in the Oberon/Titania/Bottom plot, erotic desire is inextricable from control; it is, in fact, a form of control.

The erotic economies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are predicated upon gendered dominance and submission, upon (to paraphrase Theseus) love won by the doing of injuries. Pointedly, however, it is not only the male characters, or dominants, who eroticize their roles. The female characters of the comedy, who are chastened, humiliated, and forced to submit, eroticize their own roles as well. To find humor in the degradations visited upon Hippolyta, Titania, and Helena, and their willing acceptance of them, requires a present-day audience to suspend, in the best comic tradition, virtually all notions of equality and decorum. This is perhaps not suprising; comedy has always been engaged in the business of subverting notions of equality and decorum, from the comedies of Aristophanes to the comedies of Judd Apatow. In early modern comedy, however, and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in particular, this comic subversion works not to undermine traditional domestic, social and political systems, but rather to reinforce them. Indeed, the comedy in the play works because the characters eroticize their roles in the domestic, and by extension the social and political, economies.

The gender dynamics of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the degradations visited upon the young lovers in this comedy, are very much of a piece with its time. As Montrose notes:

Idealizations of married love tend to downplay the authoritarian and misogynistic aspects of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that have proven an embarrassment to enlightened modern sensibilities. The play’s dominant—although by no means uncontested—perspective on wedded bliss is in harmony with prevailing Elizabethan doctrines regarding marriage and the domestic economy: the household is a hierarchically organized social institution, analogous to the body politic, and based upon the reciprocal obligations of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants; harmonious marital partnership is predicated upon the wife’s obedience to her husband.¹¹

The comedy serves to reflect the larger culture of Elizabethan England, specifically those “doctrines regarding marriage and the domestic economy.” Pointedly, “marriage and the domestic economy,” governed as they were by erotic desire, were not

only “analogous to the body politic,” they also bled into the body politic, or political economy. The Virgin Queen famously used erotic desire, and the domestic possibility which it represented, as both a weapon (in her negotiations with foreign powers) and as the preferred currency of exchange at her court, where courtiers were encouraged (to a point) to flirt and play the role of suitor.¹²

Erotic desire is privileged in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a currency of exchange in the various economies, domestic, social, and political, because the play's characters exchange power through the experience of that desire. In turn, the integrity of those various economies, that is to say, the acceptance by the play's characters of their roles, is dependent upon how they eroticize them. Indeed, if the characters did not eroticize their inequalities, the play could not function as comedy. The eroticizing of roles provides the characters with motivation to fulfill those roles, even when those roles require them to relinquish power or submit to humiliation. The domestic economy, and by extension the social and political economies, thrive on, indeed require, the eroticizing of roles, as closer examination of the comedy will demonstrate.

Elizabeth was the head of the English state, but she was also potentially a bride and a mother, and these various roles, embodied as they were by the same woman, were inextricable from one another. Thus, in the early modern monarchy, the domestic economy not only reflected the social and political economies, it subsumed them. The practical result of this was that all three economies were defined, at least in part, through erotic desire. This bleeding together of the domestic and political economies, eroticizing as it does the appurtenances of state authority, generated considerable anxiety in the period. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* evinces some of this anxiety over gender relations and their bearings on the political economy in the reign of Elizabeth, particularly in the later years of that reign when it had become obvious that the monarch's aging body would never produce an heir, and that her impending death would necessitate a breach in succession. The play presents a collection of characters of various statuses seeking to resolve their erotic, and by extension social, conflicts. It presents a transition from conflict to resolution, and that resolution is predicated upon notions of erotic exchange and submission.

The play begins with a clear articulation of the role of power in both the domestic and political economies in the exchange between Theseus, the reigning Duke of Athens, and his wife-to-be, Hippolyta, the defeated Queen of the Amazons. Immediately, the playwright represents the lingering conflict between conqueror and conquered, superimposed upon the erotic union of betrothed lovers. The Duke opens the play with a reminder to his “fair” betrothed that they are to be married within four days, lamenting “how slow / This old moon wanes.” He underscores his impatience in the language of right and inheritance, noting how the moon “lingers my desires / Like to a step-dame or a dowager / Long withering out a young man's revenue.” Hippolyta answers her conqueror/betrothed with (faint) defiance, telling him that “Four nights will quickly dream away the time” until “the moon, like to a silver bow / New bent in heaven” will “behold the night of our solemnities” (1.1.1-10).

From the opening lines of the comedy, our characters are defined. Theseus is the conqueror/lover who recognizes his conquered betrothed as “fair” and is eager

to consummate his desire for her. Hippolyta is the conquered Amazon who, while grudgingly accepting of her new role, has not entirely abandoned her martial nature. She retains a lingering devotion to the hunter goddess Diana and, implicitly, the chastity which that goddess represents. This, as much as her military defeat, places her in opposition to her husband and the new role which he has imposed upon her.

These two identities, of queen/virgin and prisoner/wife, are forcibly conflated in the Duke's address to his betrothed:

Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And won thy love doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, and with reveling. (1.1.16-20)

In these lines Theseus brings the erotic economy of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into sharp relief and foreshadows the action which is to follow. The political and domestic economies of this comedy hold as their currency of exchange power that is wrought through erotic violence. They are economies in which "woo[ing]" is undertaken with the sword and "love" is achieved through the "doing [of] injuries." Erotic desire and martial conquest are collapsed into one another in the Duke's language. Even when the impending wedding changes the "key" to "pomp" and "reveling," the notion of "triumph" remains central. This is a comedic universe in which marriage, and the society which it supports, is inextricably linked with erotic dominance and submission.

This case is made even more plainly later in the same scene when, lamenting her own impending marriage to Demetrius, Hermia discusses the nature of "true love" with her beloved, Lysander, who famously declares:

For aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth;
But either it was different in blood –
.....
Or else misgraffed in respect of years –
.....
Or else it stood upon the choice of friends. (1.1.132-37)

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the course of true love cannot "run smooth," because opposition is what gives it its force. From a dramatic standpoint, this is obvious; if there was no impediment for the lovers, the comedy would cease to be. In the dramatic universe of this particular comedy, however, it is also true from a thematic standpoint. The play repeatedly demonstrates inequality to be a central component of erotic desire, as well as of the unions, both domestic and political, that result from it. In this comedy, inequality is the natural order of "true love"; in order for true love to flourish, in order for marriage and, in the world of the play,

the state, to exist in harmony, one party must dominate and one party must submit.

Helena provides an object lesson in this inequality in 2.1 when, having followed her own beloved, Demetrius, into the forest, she entreats his favor in language that cannot but strike a present-day audience as masochistic. After Demetrius has commanded her to “get thee gone, and follow me no more,” Helena persists, referring to him as a “hard-hearted adamant” who “draw[s]” her toward him. Demetrius’ “hard-hearted” (2.1.194-95) nature compels Helena to follow him; pointedly, the playwright shows us that this compulsion is not against her will.

Demetrius underscores the inequality of his relationship with Helena when he asks her, “Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair? / Or rather do I not in plainest truth / Tell you I do not, nor I cannot love you?” (2.1.199-200). Helena builds upon this inequality to explain her attraction to Demetrius when she replies:

And even for that do I love you the more.
 I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,
 The more you beat me, I will fawn on you.
 Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
 Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
 Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
 What worser place can I beg in your love—
 And yet a place of high respect with me—
 Than to be used as you use your dog? (2.1.201-10)

The nature of love in this comedy is made clear in Helena’s response. Helena loves Demetrius not in spite of his cruelty, but because of it. His cruelty is central to his attraction. She is drawn to his cruelty to the extent that “the more he beat[s]” her, the more she “fawn[s] on” him. It is Demetrius’ cruelty, in his “spurn[ing]” and even his physical violence, his “strik[ing],” which entices Helena. She finds her fulfillment in degradation.

In most contemporary productions of the play, Helena’s lines are either glazed over or played for absurd comedy.¹³ This is perhaps understandable for a twenty-first century audience, but for a sixteenth-century audience, there is no reason to assume that the lines would be treated in such a way. In a social world in which men aggress and women submit, it is not difficult to understand Helena’s reaction to Demetrius’ abuse. She not only accepts the role of victim, she eroticizes it.

Garner says of this scene that “[Helena’s] masochism undercuts her power.”¹⁴ This is true, and it is troubling if one assumes that the character desires power or is entitled to have it. It is unlikely that the play’s original audience would have made such an assumption. In the rigidly hierarchical world of sixteenth-century England, Helena’s role is to submit, and for her to eroticize that role is perfectly natural and appropriate insofar as that world is concerned. Indeed, almost all of the characters eventually end up eroticizing their social roles, be they aggressors or submitters.

Demetrius is thus also not immune to the pressures of his social role. He eroticizes his own aggression in response to Helena’s entreaties when he warns her to “tempt not too much the hatred of [his] spirit” and declares:

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

Demetrius' threat is clear; if Helena will not obey him, he will rape her, literalizing his power over her in the most brutal way. Once again we see erotic desire conflated with power, although in this instance the erotic desire is essentially an afterthought; the proposed rape would be more an act of violence than an act of sex. Demetrius' threat has little if anything to do with erotic desire; he confesses to Helena that he "loves [her] not." His rape of her would be an act of pure aggression, but one that is pointedly wrapped in the trappings of erotic desire. He will dominate her and she will be forced to submit, and once again we see the power economy constructed in erotic terms. Helena, for her part, is not terribly frightened by the prospect, declaring to her would-be attacker that "Your virtue is my privilege" (2.1.220). She accepts totally his role as aggressor and her own role as submissive.

Of course, for any audience, the lovers' inversion of their expected social and domestic roles is what makes the comedy effective. Demetrius is an apparently reluctant aggressor in this scene, while Helena desperately wants to submit to him. Demetrius flees and Helena pursues; they play against their gender roles in much the same way as do Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis, and their playing has much the same effect on an audience. The scene, then, is superficially subversive (the lovers are playing against expected gender roles) while, at the same time, fundamentally normative (Demetrius eroticizes aggression while Helena eroticizes submission).

Each of these instances, illustrative as they are of the comedy's erotic economies, are essentially preludes to the centerpiece of the play in which Oberon bewitches his queen, Titania. Their conflict is established earlier in 2.1 when the two meet in the forest and quarrel over the ownership of the "little changeling boy." While their quarreling is nominally over the child, the language in which they express their quarrel is charged with erotic aggression and recrimination. Titania announces in 2.1.62 that she has "foresworn his bed" and Oberon condemns her in the following line as a "rash wanton," with the implication that she is sexually inconstant. Titania meets this accusation with a similar charge against Oberon, accusing him of "playing on pipes of corn, and versing love / To amorous Phillida" and having only returned to "fairy land" so that he might bless the wedding feast of his "buskin'd mistress," Hippolyta. Oberon meets this final accusation with the declaration that "I know thy love to Theseus," a declaration which Titania dismisses as "the forgeries of jealousy" (2.1.67-81).

The source of these erotic recriminations is, of course, the changeling boy, who is himself an object of exchange in an economy of erotic desire. As Garner writes:

Titania's attachment to the boy is clearly erotic. She "crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy," according to him the same attentions as those she bestows on Botton when, under the spell of Oberon's love potion, she falls in love with the rustic-turned-ass. She has "foresworn" Oberon's "bed and company" (II.i.62). Whatever the child is to her as a "lovely boy" and a "sweet" changeling, he is ultimately her link with a mortal woman whom she loved. Oberon's passionate determination to have the child for himself suggests that he is both attracted to and jealous of him.¹⁵

The root of the conflict between Oberon and Titania, a conflict that has cast the natural world into chaos, is erotic jealousy. This is perfectly logical when we consider that erotic desire is the ordering principle for the domestic, social, and political economies in this play. Titania's transgression involves denying erotic satisfaction to her lord ("foreswear[ing] his bed") and establishing herself as a rival to him by her usurpation of a phallus.¹⁶

We see in Act 2 the stage set for Oberon's vengeance, which will restore order to the disordered world of the comedy. Indeed, Oberon ends the exchange with Titania with the ominous declaration that "thou shalt not from this grove / Till I torment thee for this injury" (2.1.146-47). The torment which Oberon inflicts is poetic; he punishes Titania's unnatural erotic denial through the enforcing of an unnatural erotic desire. His incantation while applying the juice of Love-in-Idleness to Titania's eyes underscores the nature of his punishment:

What thou seest when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true love take;
Love and languish for his sake.
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear.
Wake when some vile thing is near. (2.2.26-33)

Oberon makes his intentions clear in these lines. He wants to control Titania's erotic desires as a means of enforcing her obedience to him. He wants her to "love and languish," suffering the erotic torment that he has suffered. At the same time, however, Oberon wants to inflict a further injury on his wife. He specifically entreats her to "wake when some vile thing is near," so that her desire will be not only unnatural, but also degrading. There is little doubt in these lines that, contrary to Brooks' assertion, "jealous Oberon" has indeed "cast his spell to cuckold himself." It is the price he is willing (and, it seems, eager) to pay to avenge his wife's disobedience.

The enforcing of obedience through erotic humiliation was not without precedent. Boehrer cites as a precedent of the comedy's "bestiality motif" 2:10 of Aelian's *De Natura Animalium*, which describes the process by which the horse might be mated to an ass so as to produce a mule. According to Aelian, the horse is "a proud creature" who "scorns to be covered by an ass." Accordingly, she must be humiliated

before she will allow the ass to mate with her. This humiliation is achieved by shearing the mare's mane (the supposed source of her pride) "in a haphazard fashion," after which, "though ashamed at first," she will submit to "her present ignoble mate."¹⁷ As Boehrer writes:

More than merely a practical act of animal husbandry, the process of cross-mating emerges from this description as something like an exercise in attitude adjustment: a calculated "humiliation" that corrects the mare's prideful contempt for otherness. Given the equine metaphors that occasionally apply to Shakespeare's feminine characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the correspondence between this act of corrective humiliation and the embarrassment of Titania's infatuation with Bottom may almost seem deliberate.¹⁸

We see strong evidence of the "equine metaphor" in this plot. Ass-headed Bottom is a prodigy; he is a hybrid monster, an image of man degraded by bestial appetite, a harbinger of a disrupted state. Why, then, does Titania embrace him? She has been bewitched, but there is also a tradition of reading the character as drawn to Bottom of her own volition. The case for this reading is perhaps most famously made by Jan Kott, who declares that in Bottom Titania has "the lover she wanted and dreamed of." According to Kott, "in this nightmarish summer night, the ass does not symbolize stupidity," since from "antiquity up to the Renaissance the ass was credited with the strongest sexual potency and among all quadrupeds was supposed to have the longest and hardest phallus."¹⁹ Bottom represents raw sexual energy. While Kott suggests that Titania achieves liberation through her congress with Bottom, however, the text suggests that this is only part of the story. She finds her true liberation in the acceptance of her social role. After the magic night (or "nightmare," to borrow Kott's phrase) in the forest, "Jack [has] Jill" and "naught [is] ill" (3.2.461-62) because inequality, which is essential for exchange of power, has been eroticized. However, it has not been eliminated.

Bottom represents degradation, and Titania is drawn to degradation in the embrace of her social role. Whether or not the "equine metaphor" which Boehrer points out is deliberate, it speaks to a specific understanding of the natural world, an understanding in which even animals are prone to rebellious pride and must be humiliated in order to preserve the natural order. The fact that the mare's pride, and subsequent humiliation, are delineated in sexual terms only serves to underscore the extent to which that humiliation could be, and was, eroticized. This was true in the third century when Aelian authored the *De Natura Animalium*, and it was true in the rigidly hierarchical society of sixteenth-century England, in which the visual signifiers of class status were ubiquitous. Public punishments of the sixteenth century, such as the stocks, brandings and mutilations, exploited this ubiquity as a means of preserving the social order.

The means by which the aggressors of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* enforce order through dominance and humiliation is certainly interesting from a historical perspective, but perhaps even more interesting are the ways in which their victims

react. In 4.1, Oberon consents to remove the charm from Titania, addressing her tenderly as his “sweet queen.” Titania awakens as if from a nightmare, crying out for her husband and declaring “My Oberon! What visions have I seen! / Methought I was enamoured of an ass.” Oberon responds to her calmly, without exclamation, “There lies your love” (4.1.74-77), thus bringing the full force of his vengeance to bear upon her.

Titania’s response is significant. She offers no recrimination to her husband, but speaks in harmony with him, finishing his line with her question: “How came these things to pass?” and underscoring her own punishment with the declaration: “O how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!” Oberon, for his part, is in no hurry to answer his wife. Rather, he commands Titania to “music call,” and she obeys. He follows this with another command to “take hands with me / And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.” Titania obeys this command as well, prompting Oberon to declare them to be “new in amity” (4.1.78-86).²⁰ Titania’s degradation has chastened her and, as the dance indicates, re-installed her in the social world.

Titania’s obedience, her willingness to join with her husband in the immediate aftermath of his humiliation of her, is thematically of a piece with the rest of the comedy. This is not only a play about erotic aggression, it is also a play about willing submission and the eroticizing of social roles. Titania does not resist her husband’s dominance of her; rather, like Helena in 2.1, she accepts and, as her joining in the dance indicates, eroticizes it. This eroticizing of submission would have been perfectly natural for a sixteenth-century audience, however a twenty-first century audience might perceive it. Titania’s experience is, to borrow Theseus’ observation of 5.1.58-60, “Merry and Tragical,” depending on one’s viewpoint.

We see the parallel of the Oberon/Titania relationship in the interactions between Theseus and Hippolyta later in the same scene. As the pair approaches the sleeping lovers, Theseus offers entertainment to his betrothed, declaring that “My love shall hear the music of my hounds” and directing his “fair queen” to the “mountain’s top” where she can mark the “musical confusion” of the baying dogs. Hippolyta’s response here is telling; like her fairy counterpart, she too has submitted to her husband. She follows his declaration with a reminiscence of the “gallant chiding” of the hounds of “Hercules and Cadmus” which made “So musical a discord, such sweet thunder” (4.1.105-117).

This “musical discord” and “sweet thunder” is an apt metaphor for her relationship with her lord, and indeed for the other relationships in the comedy’s erotic economies. The world of this comedy is rigidly ordered, and that order is brutally enforced. Men dominate women in the comedy, and women not only accept this domination, they eroticize it. The dominance which Theseus imposes upon Hippolyta, like the dominance which Oberon imposes upon Titania, is a “musical . . . discord,” a “sweet thunder.” From this point in the play until its conclusion, the lovers are “in amity” (4.1.86), jesting together at the rude mechanicals’ pageant as they prepare to consummate their marriages.

This reconciliation of the lovers, this masochistic acceptance and even embracing of humiliation, can leave contemporary audiences, and critics, unsatisfied. Indeed, Boehrer notes:

If Hippolyta is reconciled to Theseus, one feels that it can only be by the same mechanism that reconciles Titania to Oberon and Demetrius to Helena: the gratuitous and super-rational intervention of magic. In this sense, one could say that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ultimately lacks faith in its own festive conclusion, suggesting, thus, the darker tone of Shakespearean comedies to come.²¹

There is a real difficulty in accepting the female characters' masochism, their cheerful embracing of degradation. It flies in the face of all contemporary, twentieth and twenty-first century notions of equality and appropriate gender relations.

The strict domestic order of this comedy, enforced as it is through humiliation and implicit violence, is potentially troubling for a contemporary audience, but we ought to note that this is not necessarily the case. There is (perhaps surprisingly) a critical tradition of condoning the play's social vision. Brooks writes of Oberon that "what he does is benevolent from the first in intention, and eventually in result." He describes Oberon as "a mentor" to his wife, one who "takes charge of her experience in order to guide her into a change of attitude," and declares that Titania "is principally at fault" and that "her obstinancy has to be overcome." He explains in a footnote that "the parallel with Hippolyta directs" that the fairy queen "ought to be judged as a rebel wife."²²

Given the contributions made by feminist (and other gender-based) criticism in the past several decades to our understanding of the comedy, Brooks' sentiments may strike a discordant note. Nevertheless, his understanding of the play is much closer to the ways in which its sixteenth-century audience would have likely understood it. The political economy under Elizabeth bled into the social and domestic economies, and all of them were colored, indeed underpinned, by erotic desire. The application of that desire in the service of the pitilessly hierarchical world was a commonplace in early modern England, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reflects this commonplace. The play is a reflection of the Elizabethan state and it offers a commentary on the erotics of power, but it does so through the privileging of dominance and submission. The erotic economies of the comedy are all power-based. Love, such as it is, is constructed in this comedy expressly in terms of power relations.

We see in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that erotic desire has become both the foundation of conflict and its resolution. It permeates the action in the forest, where Titania uses erotic desire as a weapon, and Oberon in turn uses it as his weapon of vengeance. The end result is the resolution of their conflict and the restoration of the harmony of the natural world, which had been violently disrupted by the breach in their relationship. The wilderness is, or becomes, a reflection of the patriarchally ordered court. The conflict between Oberon and Titania has cast the natural world into chaos. The natural world reflects the disordered family, and by extension the disordered state. Pointedly, when order is restored, the submissive parties are cheerful in their submission. We see in this comedy none of the bitter defeat of Katherine's final speech in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Rather, we see here Titania joining her husband in a dance and Hippolyta sharing a jest with her husband over a play. *A Midsummer*

Night's Dream concludes with an image of erotic inequality through which order is preserved and the state is set in harmony.

Notes

1. Harold F. Brooks, Introduction, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Arden Second Series, ed. Harold F. Brooks (Suffolk: Methuen, 1979), xxi-cxliii, cxv. All references to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are taken from this edition.
2. For a more thorough unpacking of the play's early performance history, see F. E. Halliday, *A Shakespeare Companion 1564-1964* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1964).
3. Quoted in Dorothea Kehler, "A *Midsummer Night's Dream*: A Bibliographic Survey," in *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Critical Essays*, ed. Dorothea Kehler (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 3-76, 6.
4. Shirley Nelson Garner, "A *Midsummer Night's Dream*: 'Jack shall have Jill: / Nought shall go ill,'" *Women's Studies* 9 (1981): 47-63. Rpt. in Kehler, 127-144, 127.
5. David Marshall, "Exchanging Visions: Reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *English Literary History* 49 (1982): 543-75, 550.
6. Louis Adrian Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 151-178.
7. Jonathan Crewe, "Epilogue: The Way Forward," in *Hidden Designs: The Critical Profession and Renaissance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1986), in Kehler, 130-151, 139.
8. Kim E. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 22.
9. Bruce Bohrer, "Economies of Desire in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Studies* 32 (2004): 99-117. For a more detailed overview of the play's critical history, see Kehler, "A Bibliographic Survey."
10. The economies with which I am concerned involve not only matters of desire, but also matters of domestic and civic authority. For this reason I term them "erotic economies," referring to the various economies of the play which are governed by erotic desire.
11. Montrose, 110-111.
12. On the eroticism of power at the Elizabethan court, see chapter 10 of Montrose, "The Imperial Votaress," 151-178.
13. Witness the 1999 film of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, dir. Michael Hoffman (Fox Searchlight Pictures), in which Calista Flockhart's delivery of the line never fails to draw an incredulous laugh from my students.
14. Garner, 138.
15. Garner, 129.
16. This usurpation has long been a common concern of psychoanalytic criticism of the play. See also Gerald F. Jacobson, "A Note on Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*," *American Imago* 19 (1962): 21-26.

17. Boehrer, 112.
18. Boehrer, 112.
19. Jan Kott, "Titania and the Ass's Head," *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (New York: Doubleday, 1964). Rpt. in Kehler, 107-126, 118.
20. While neither the Quarto nor the Folio provides a stage direction indicating a dance, I hold with Dover Wilson and Harold Brooks that the characters must logically dance together at this point in the play. See *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, New Cambridge Shakespeare, ed. Dover Wilson and Arthur Quiller-Couch (London: Cambridge UP, 1924).
21. Boehrer, 114-115.
22. Brooks, cvi-cviii.

Rosemary Dunn Moeller

THE FAULTS OF FAIRIES

So we can blame it all on Oberon,
 the heat, the storms, the warming world of floods,
 and hurricanes, the droughts and hail, the dry
 ice days when winter fog invades the house.
 I envy those who lived when answers came
 as simply as a faith in fairies' faults,
 for now our summer bakes our fields to dust
 and rumors of worse winters are the norm.
 Perhaps Shakespeare was right to blame this fate
 on excess of frivolity and greed.
 Like Oberon, Titania no restraint
 would show in travel, taste or meddling.
 They fought about a pet like squabbling parents
 while all around their world was withering.
 Like us they didn't focus on the need
 for measured conservation of their powers.

“DUBLE VANTAGE”: TENNIS AND SONNET 88

Fred Blick, *Stafford, UK*

When thou shalt be dispode to set me light,
 And place my merrit in the eie of skorne,
 Upon thy side, against my selfe ile fight,
 And prove thee virtuous, though thou art forsworne.
 With mine owne weaknesse being best acquainted,
 Upon thy part I can set downe a story
 Of faults conceald, wherein I am attained:
 That thou in loosing me shall win much glory:
 And I by this wil be a gainer too,
 For bending all my loving thoughts on thee,
 The injuries that to my selfe I doe,
 Doing thee vantage, duple vantage me.
 Such is my love, to thee I so belong,
 That for thy right, my selfe will beare all wrong.¹

Tennis metaphors and allusions were popular in English poems, plays and other writings between 1400 and the 1600s.² Shakespeare exploits tennis metaphors and allusions in no less than nine of his plays. These are as follows: King Henry V's famous "tennis balls" rage (*King Henry V*, 1.2.259-297); "these balls bound, there's noise in it" (*All's Well that Ends Well*, 2.3.297); "the old ornament of his cheek hath already stuff'd tennis-balls" (*Much Ado about Nothing*, 3.2.46-47); "tennis-court keeper," "racket," "linen" [of tennis shirt] (*2 King Henry IV*, 2.2.18-19); "A man . . . / In that vast tennis-court, hath made the ball / for them to play upon" (*Pericles*, 2.1.59-61), "well bandied both, a set of wit well played," (*Love's Labour's Lost*, 5.2.29); "She would be in motion as a ball / My words would bandy her" (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2.5.13-14); "There was he gaming . . . There falling out at Tennis" (*Hamlet*, 2.1.56-57); "The faith they have in tennis and tall stockings" (*King Henry VIII*, 1.3.23-30).

Just as tennis appears in the plays, so there is an allusion to the game and its scoring in the Sonnets. This essay examines its important role in Sonnet 88. In the light of historical evidence, I argue that there is in the phrase "duple vantage," apart from the obvious meaning of "double benefit" or "double satisfaction," a parallel meaning of a "double advantage in a contest," specifically a win in the contest of tennis. Such a win could be achieved after reaching a score of deuce, say, at 8 games each. It is likely that the Sonnet's number, 8 and 8, reminded the poet of this possible score in a game of tennis. Such a number and theme relationship support the suggestions of Alastair Fowler, Thomas P. Roche and Katherine Duncan-Jones, among others, that the Sonnets of the 1609 Quarto are ordered as Shakespeare intended.³ Further, the "to and fro" of the game may have brought to his mind the volatile "to and fro" of his emotions towards the Young Man which he had already

displayed earlier in the sequence. The resulting metaphor includes the words “set,” “faults,” “fight,” “loosing,” “win,” “gainer,” and “vantage.” They are all of them terms which could arise in a legally fought case of slander, but they are also tennis terms.⁴

The noun “Vantage” is defined by *OED* sb. 1, as “advantage, benefit, profit, gain,” a definition supported by sixteenth-century examples, including Abraham Fleming’s *Panoplie of Epistles* (1576): “I receyved two several letters from you . . . Out of which . . . I reaped double commoditie and vauntage.” Further, in *King Richard the Second*, Gaunt complains: “He shortens four years of my son’s exile, / But little vantage shall I reap thereby” (1.3.217-218). In his plays Shakespeare uses the words “vantage” and “advantage” in their various meanings many times, largely as synonyms.⁵

Clearly, such advantage or benefit may be not only material but also, metaphorically, “all in the mind,” including mental “satisfaction.” Therefore, “duble vantage” can in one sense mean “double benefit” or “double satisfaction.” The usual gloss on “duble vantage” was exemplified by Thomas Tyler’s note on the phrase in 1890: “The poet, it would seem, claims that his affection to his friend is so strong, that, whatever satisfaction his friend may find in setting forth his faults, this satisfaction will be doubled to himself.”⁶ This is the prevailing sense in which “duble vantage” in the Sonnet has until now been interpreted. But the *OED* also defines “vantage” at sb. 3 as having the sixteenth-century physical meaning of “an advantage in a contest” (particularly a military contest, as the *OED* examples demonstrate) and defines the word at sb. 4 as “a state of superiority.” These further definitions tend to support the metaphor of a tennis win. In 1591’s *Second Frutes*, Giovanni Florio confirmed beyond doubt that the scoring call of “advantage” in tennis was used in Shakespeare’s time:

Henr y. You have fortie then, goe to plaie.
Thomas. And I a de wes then.
Henr y. I have the advantage.⁷

The French Rules of tennis of 1592⁸ provide corroboration of the “winning” meaning of “duble vantage,” for example, winning two games in succession to win a set at a score of, say, 8-8.

The identification of a previously unrecognized metaphor in Sonnet 88 amongst a multitude of metaphors in *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* would be of limited interest were it not for the fact that the suggestion of tennis playing is unique in the sequence and that it is of psychological and systematic relevance to the whole, as well as being crucially relevant to the Sonnet itself. Reading the winning tennis metaphor modifies the subservient tone of the Sonnet itself, as well as forecasting the speaker’s challenge to his subservience later in the sequence. Psychologically, Sonnet 88 provides evidence of the deployment in the Sonnets of what Freud might have called a defense mechanism for the speaker’s Ego. This strategy may unsettle the reader, but it is one by which Shakespeare anticipates modern psychology in a demonstration of the defense mechanisms of the Ego, seen here to mediate between the motivational drives of Sex and Aggression. The double meaning and the symbolism of Sonnet 88 have an unsettling

yet ultimately rewarding effect upon the reader which brings the poem into line with the well-recognized ambiguities and contradictions of many of the other sonnets.⁹



Image extracted from Emblem XLI of Guillaume de la Perrière's *Theatre des bons engins* (Paris: Denis Janot, n.d. [1544]). By kind permission of Glasgow University.

“Si tu te metz à jouer à la paulme” (If you set about playing Tennis)

Trans. Thomas Combe, in *The Theater of Fine Devices* (London: Richard Field, c.1593).

From one t'another taunts do go,
 As doth a ball tost to and fro,
 The ball flies back to him that first did strike,
 In as great haste, with like great force of arme:
 So words for words, and blowes for blowes alike
 Men shall receive, wher they bring good or harm.
 As merchants rich great wealth that scrape and pike,
 Whereby they sit at ease and lye full warme,
 Give ownc for ownc and like for like again:
 So for one mocke another still we gaine.

On the face of it, the speaker of Sonnet 88 is contemplating a slanderous devaluation of his own merits by a beloved friend, one so beloved that he will side with him in such slander and even take double satisfaction in the subservience of

doing so, because his own debasement will seem to benefit the friend. The speaker remains in subservience. This we may call the primary theme of the Sonnet. The self-wounding paradoxes of Sonnet 88 which arise out of the primary theme are superficially preposterous, even to the point of seeming to be a joke, because they leave the speaker permanently and doubly satisfied with being debased. It is not easy to give such a state serious consideration. However, in his edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Martin Seymour-Smith did indeed give this depressed state serious consideration. He accepted, surprisingly, that in 88 Shakespeare meant quite literally what he said: "Not only does Shakespeare intend to love to the bitter end, but also he proposes to demolish the edifice of his own ego by this process of identification with the Friend." This proposition is difficult for a reader of the Sonnet to accept completely, but Seymour-Smith asserts that if we cannot do so, "we have little chance of understanding the Sonnets as a whole."¹⁰ I submit that such an interpretation is simplistic and erroneous.

A recognition of the parallel, adversarial tennis metaphor leads to a more psychologically valid way of digesting the poem. By recognizing the tennis metaphor, the reader does not have to accept, simply, that the speaker proposes to "demolish the edifice of his own ego," nor anything like it. In fact, as previously explained, the speaker's "duble vantage" means not only double satisfaction in subservience but also a covert, ego-preserving, psychological victory in the feeling of being "one up." The slick, unconvincing couplet, "Such is my love, to thee I so belong / That for thy right, my selfe will bear all wrong," is already undermined by the speaker's covert victory. One feels that the speaker is now a deceitful, potential traitor in the Young Man's camp. The difference in effect between the speaker's self-demolition of Ego on the one part and his covert victory on the other is enormous, especially as the word "vantage" had violent, military resonance (*OED* sb. 3) as well as adversarial tennis associations in Shakespeare's time. The tennis reading results in the reader being able to perceive a new, more equal kind of "fight" (line 3), one more physical than mental and, therefore, more vivid in the imagination. The "flatness of tone" sensed by Helen Vendler¹¹ is broken by the speaker's surprise and moral, ego-preserving counter-victory in "duble vantage." The change is subtle, but it reveals the defense mechanism by which the speaker is a "gainer too." If the poem is a defensive joke, the joke is certainly on the young Man, with the "duble vantage" punch line placed near the end, as with all good jokes. All that follows is the joker's straight-faced, concluding couplet.

Once alerted, the reader may observe that the "to and fro" of the game of tennis is poetically enacted in the almost balancing punctuation and the doubled alliteration of the last three lines of the Sonnet:

Doing thee vantage, duble vantage me.
Such is my love, to thee I so belong,
That for thy right, my selfe will beare all wrong.

Whether the punctuation is authorial or not, the commas are appropriately placed to suit the meaning and rhythm of the lines. In the "duble vantage" line the comma occurs at the end of the fifth syllable, leaving five syllables to achieve equal balance

after the comma. In both of the couplet lines the comma occurs at the end of the fourth syllable, leaving the advantage of six syllables on the side of "I" and "selfe." Either deliberately or instinctively, this subjective, poetically enacted advantage in syllables reinforces the victory of "me," "I," "selfe," in gaining the "duble vantage." Apart from the punctuation, alliterative doublings occur in these last three lines in "Doing" and "duble," "vantage" and "vantage," "Such" and "so," "love" and "be-long," "That" and "thy" and in "right" and "wrong." The almost balanced punctuation and the doubling alliteration within each line suggest the to and fro of rallies in a tennis match.¹²

As to symbolism, it can now be observed that the Sonnet not only has a double digit number 88, but also a double meaning, signaled by the word "duble." For Shakespeare, the number 8 is symbolic of the musical Octave or Eight (OED, sb. B. 2) and thereby of the unison, or desired union, of "Love" (see Sonnet 8).¹³ The doubled 8 of 88 symbolizes the dual, paradoxical aspects of "Love"; that is, in the heart of the lover, to love is to give sacrificially (and so to lose a part of oneself), and yet still to be able to win by having the satisfaction of loving and giving, even if unrequitedly – "Such is my love." In the key line, "Doing thee vantage, duble vantage me," this dual symbolism is reinforced by the heavy rhythmic and metrical stress which Shakespeare places on "duble" and "me." Therefore, the number of the Sonnet, the tennis metaphor, and its manner of expression combine to emphasize the adversarial aspect of the paradox of losing yet winning while loving, i.e., "loosing me" and "gainer too." The symbolism of the scoring of tennis at 8 - 8 and the love symbolism of unison/union in the musical "Eight" come together in this Sonnet. Sir John Betjeman exploited, more blatantly and humorously, a playful and satisfying loss to his loved one in a tennis tournament in his *"A Subaltern's Love-song,"*¹⁴ three and a half centuries after the composition of the Sonnets: "How mad I am, sad I am, glad that you won." This coincidence of the emphatic doubling of the internal rhymes "mad," "sad," "glad" in Betjeman's poem illustrates nicely part of the function of the doubled "vantage" in Sonnet 88.

The conflicts and contradictions of Sonnet 88 turn out to be of a surprisingly aggressive, physical nature. The Young Man appeared, up to this point, to be largely immobile (stirring only as a potential procreator of issue (1-17), as a thief of the speaker's woman (40-42), as one looking into his mirror (3 and 77), and as one who is seen, exceptionally, to "pace forth" (55); but he is now shown to gamble in a "set" (OED sb. 26) and to "fight" in the vigorous game of tennis against a not so docile speaker. This vigorous change in the speaker's tone about the Young Man persists, as we shall see.

In relation to other sonnets of the sequence, recognition of the tennis metaphor in Sonnet 88 (with its adversarial "injuries," "loosing" and "gainer," and yet the speaker's winning in "duble vantage"), also leads the reader to understand more clearly its connection with, and similarity to, the deceptively servile tone of the three adjacent Sonnets (87, 89 and 90) which, with 88, make up a quartet. 89 features violent, physical "halt"ing "Lameness," "debate" and "hate," while 90's "hate" is accompanied by some compensation for "losse." In 90, in a metaphor parallel with that of the speaker's loving "griefes" and "losse," the Young Man impliedly assumes

the role of a violent, military aggressor towards the speaker, with a play on “crosse” and “bow,” and “rereward” attack and “overthrow.” This military imagery echoes the military resonance of “vantage” in 88. Taken together with the “sterne Wolfe” towards the “Lambs” in 96, these aggressive metaphors are the only suggestions of adversarial violence on the part of the Young Man in the whole sequence. Only “Devouring time” in 19, and unmentionable Time prowling silently to “render” and to be rendered unto in 126, can compete with such metaphorical aggressiveness.

The subservience to superior violence felt by the speaker provokes his retaliation against the Youth. The covert tennis counter-victory of Sonnet 88 prepares the reader not only for more violent, physical imagery but also for the slightly threatening, accusatory tone which the speaker adopts almost immediately in Sonnets 92 to 96 (after the quartet mentioned above). This group culminates in reports of gossip about “faults” in the Youth and in a possessive, almost blackmailing threat, “As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.” (96). The disguised, ironic resentment of “Being your slave,” bottled up since the “faults,” “mud” and “blots” of Sonnets 33 to 42 and further expressed in 57 and 58, reveals itself openly in a more independent and resistant stance of the speaker from Sonnet 88 onwards.

Eventually, after having established a much more worldly stance from Sonnets 106 to 125, the speaker in the crucial 126, as one of the lovers whom the “lovely Boy” has shown “withering,” stands well back. From on high, almost spitefully, certainly objectively, he gives him a very direct and uncomfortable piece of advice about mortality. The address of “Boy” combined with “thou minnion” is surely here a deliberate put-down, so that the mortal poet-speaker (see 71) of the Sonnets is suggested to be at least the equal of the “Boy,” and even a moral victor by seeming to have the last word in the Young Man Sonnets. The speaker’s defense mechanism shakes the Young Man’s superiority, as in 88, but this time quite openly.

For readers concerned with potential biography in the sonnets, the tennis metaphor of Sonnet 88 offers some support to the proposition that Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton was at least some inspiration for the role of Young Man. He is certainly known to have played and gambled at tennis.¹⁵ Giovanni Florio, who had close connections with the Earl of Southampton and was in his employ in the 1590s, wrote dialogues about tennis in his *Firste Fruites* and *Second Frutes*. The metaphor may well have been recognized not only by Southampton, but also by any other tennis enthusiast of his time. Although the metaphor assists in an identification of the Young Man as one who is familiar with tennis, on its own and without supporting evidence, it would make a fragile prop for Southampton’s special candidature, for there were many other young men familiar with tennis when the Sonnets were composed. However, such supporting evidence does, in fact, exist.¹⁶

This new reading of Sonnet 88 throws light upon the deceptive self-abnegation displayed by the poet-speaker in other Sonnets of this sequence. It helps to demonstrate that throughout, in spite of his repeated, seemingly conventional, Renaissance stance of vassalage to the loved one, the poet-speaker’s concupiscent Ego or Will¹⁷ in fact remains powerful, Prospero-like, unobtrusively pulling all the varying, metaphorical strings of his poetry. Indeed, “Will” as a person as well as a quality occupies a dual role as both an abject victim and a defiant poet-victor.

Notes

1. Sonnet 88. The text of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* that I use is the 1609 Quarto. My references to Shakespeare's plays are keyed to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1974).
2. Geoffrey G. Hiller, *The Bandies of Fortune* (Oxford: Ronaldson Publications, 2009) is a valuable and scholarly book which includes a comprehensive index of literary tennis allusions as well as tennis metaphors. The poem by Edward De Vere, Earl of Oxford, entitled "Love compared to a tennis playe," set out in Hiller 104 and Thomas Combe's Emblem 41 on Hiller's 90-93 are particularly relevant to the arguments of this essay.
3. Alastair Fowler, *Triumphal Forms* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970), 183; Thomas P. Roche, Jr., *Petrarch and the English Sonnet Sequences* (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 415-424; *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Nashville: Nelson, 1997), 16.
4. To "set" is to put down a betting stake (OED, v. B. trans., 14). As to "fault," Randle Cotgrave's *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Adam Islip, 1611), defines "bisque" as "a fault at Tennis." The words "loosing me" mean "defeating me completely" (OED, lose, v. trans. 2 and see *King Lear*, "lost," 1.1, 231-233). To "gain" is to win in a contest (OED, v. 5).
5. Martin Spevak, *The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973).
6. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Thomas Tyler (London: David Nute, 1890), 247.
7. See Hiller, 12 -13, where he quotes John Florio's *Second Frutes* (1591) and his note on 13 on the use of "sette" in *Firste Frutes* (1578).
8. J. Forbet. *L'Utilité qui provient du jeu de la paume* (1592, and Paris: Thomas Sevestre, 1599).
9. These bewildering elements have hindered the popularity of the Sonnets as a whole, so that their reputation rests mainly on selected samples. Gerald Hammond in *The Reader and Shakespeare's Young Man Sonnets* (London: Macmillan, 1981) deals with the changeful phenomena of the Sonnets very adequately, as does Colin Burrow in his editorial Introduction to the Sonnets in *The Oxford Shakespeare, Complete Sonnets and Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 116-22.
10. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Martin Seymour-Smith (London: Heinemann, 1963), 156.
11. Helen Vendler, *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 385-386.
12. Although she does not note the tennis metaphor, Vendler does observe that the "doubling vantage that is the theme of the sestet of 88 helps to organize the whole Sonnet," 385-386. She notes the play of "set" (twice, in lines 1 and 6); "place" with "dispose," (ponere, "to place"); "upon thy side" and "upon thy part"; "I" and "eye"; "though," "thou" and "thoughts"; "loving" and "love"; "being best"; "will" and "will"; "all" and "all"; "to," "too," and "to"; "thee" and "The"; "Do," "doing" and "duble"; and finally "right" and "wrong." I suggest that these technical effects reinforce neatly, by their doubling, the vigorous, adversarial tennis metaphor of the whole Sonnet and the symbolism of its number, 88.
13. Fred Blick, "Shakespeare's Musical Sonnets: Numbers 8, 128, and Pythagoras," *The Upstart Crow* XIX (1999): 152-168.

14. See Sir John Betjeman's "A Subaltern's Love-song," *John Betjeman's Collected poems* (London: John Murray, 1958; pbk 1962), 105.
15. C. C. Stopes, *The Life of Henry, Third Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare's Patron* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1922), 128, and quoting Chamberlain, 131. See also A. L. Rowse, *Shakespeare's Southampton* (London: Macmillan, 1965), 128.
16. See C. C. Stopes, and G. P. V. Akrigg, *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968).
17. For an analysis of the speaker of the Sonnets as "Will," see Roche, 380-414.

James B. Nicola

SYLVIVS

He and his love were fictional, of course.
 And anyhow by now I'm sure they're dead!—
 And yet, in the performance, real: The source
 Of true love never can run just the head
 Even if prison'd in the imagination.
 An audience might gape if not guffaw
 At his delight in willing degradation.
 Yet his will seems to fill mine own with awe,
 Inspiring with the depth of his prostration
 If not his love for—Phoebe, was her name?—
 And how, enrapt, he found some words to say
 Unchecked by unsurpassed exasperation.
 Were I to love I might well act the same.
 Meanwhile I have two tickets to the play. . . .

Sean Lause

SHAKESPEARE OF WESTINGHOUSE

Factory janitor, summer job,
money for college.
He cleans all his rooms well,
then hides in N Building by the woods.

Big Little Books,
Shakespeare in a pocket,
perfect for secret readings
and sub rosa dreams.

He sits on the polished floor,
back pressed to the cool wall,
beneath crosswords, baseball scores,
and yellowing pornography.

Outside the high window
the factory spires, shafts
and smoke become
castles, kingdoms and plumes.

How slenderly he knows
in his sunlit joy
how swifter than the moon's sphere
it will come:
the whole fateful folio,
to make him fortune's fool.

The kicks and pricks of time.
Sent to wars unglorious,
taught to sacrifice, not butcher,
but to drive the blade deep, and sure
with palms that can never unblush themselves.

How could he see,
for all this rhythmic wisdom,
thoughts beyond his strongest reach,
those things to be—
savaged love and ravaged hopes,
pillowed rage of jealousy,
thankless children,
all the props kicked out,
the spent wisdom of abandoned coins,
the curtain dropped down
on some final folly,
and all the petty paces
of unhallowed days?

The unreadiness is all.
But for today, he grins,
and plucks his heart in innocence,
balancing the globe on one knee.

Dolores Stewart

ENVOI: A KITCHEN IN VERONA

It's some years after their escape.
 The feuding families have forsworn
 fierce banners for the future of

those promising grandchildren. Juliet
 stands at the window, wondering where
 he's gone, that moon-mad youth.

The husband sitting at her table now
 holds a tankard of wine so full, one touch
 of its cool sweaty sides would spill

a froth of excuses and accusations.
 The green spring air brushes her mouth.
 She is still in love with possibilities.

But what about him? What words
 is he tracing with a wet finger
 on the scoured table. Juliet is dead.



PERFORMANCE REVIEWS





Troilus and Cressida: Back Row: Genevieve Wilkins, Phil Hopkins, Jon Banks. Center: Matthew Kelly. Middle Row: Ania Sowinski, Ben Bishop. Front Row: Toby Parkes, Joseph Scatley.



THE 2009 SEASON AT LONDON'S GLOBE THEATRE

Peter J. Smith, *Nottingham Trent University*

This is the second season running upon which I have reported on the Globe for *The Upstart Crow*.¹ I entitled my first report last year, "Looking up." While it may appear unnecessary to unpack the stuffing of my joke, it rather cleverly, if I say so myself, referred to a new optimism (as in "things are looking up") inspired by the succession of Dominic Dromgoole as Artistic Director following the moribund reign of Mark Rylance, while also suggesting the arched necks of the yard's spectators. While the latter remains a tiring reality for the groundlings (we press are seated in otherwise prohibitively expensive seats as detailed below), the former, to judge by the 2009 season, was a case of me speaking too soon. Of the four Shakespearean shows staged at the Globe this season, *As You Like It*, directed by Thea Sharrock, was reasonable, *Troilus and Cressida*, directed by Matthew Dunster, was weak, and *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Dromgoole, was unconscionable. The press night of *Love's Labour's Lost* was canceled.² In addition, there were three new plays, none of which need detain us here.

Entitled "Young Hearts," the repertory brought together the pastoral ebullience of Rosalind's pursuit of Orlando, the tragic star-crossed lovers of Verona, and the jaded pessimism of love's betrayal during the Trojan wars. The plays did speak nicely to each other across genres and across a variety of dispositions from the juvenile nescience (rather than innocence) of *As You Like It* to the knowing cynicism of *Troilus*. Had individual productions been up to scratch, this could have been, overall, a compelling season. Unfortunately, as will become clear, the optimism I expressed last year was both premature and ill-founded.

In an effort to preempt a mass exodus during Rosalind's final speech, our theatre programs bore a post-hoc sticker: "Please note that the epilogue for *As You Like It* has been included in this production. However, in the spirit of experimentation, it will feature after the traditional Globe jig. We hope you will stay on to catch it." Implicit in this piece of special pleading is the recognition that a large portion of the Globe audience uses the jig as a cue to exit and get clear of the theatre's courtyard before the general crush. The sticker is indicative of both the Globe's obduracy in retaining such an apparently extraneous "tradition" (Thomas Platter has a lot to answer for) as well as its haughty subtlety in its conspicuous declaration of its own originality—much virtue in that "spirit of experimentation." In the event, it proved redundant on both counts, for not only was the presence of Naomi Frederick's Rosalind sufficient to hold the audience, but Sharrock's interpretation of the play needed no justification. It was a clear, competent, and in many ways, innovative production and, without doubt, the best thing at the Globe this season.

Dick Bird designed a court in which display was central. A pair of drummers flanked the upstage wall, which was hung in black, and half a dozen or so narrow columns as well as the main pillars supporting the stage canopy were draped in cloth of the same color. Frederick (Brendan Hughes) entered through the pit as though

on a royal progress before climbing up the central stairs to the stage to be crowned. The pageantry was deliberately overpowered by the somber setting. (Frederick was wearing doublet and hose of black as were his surrounding courtiers.) Celia's Elizabethan cream dress and Rosalind's blue gown set them apart visually. There was a clear sense of foreboding in the setting, which was pointed up by Frederick's arrogant grin and his supercilious progress back through the groundlings. Even before the script proper had commenced, Sharrock and Bird had instilled an atmosphere of anxiety perfectly suited to the context of usurpation and fraternal betrayal with which the play opens.

This prologue provided a resonant setting for the fraternal conflict of the play's first scene. Jack Laskey's Orlando proved to be a viciously effective wrestler, and the extent of his physical violence against his elder brother (Jamie Parker played Oliver) made complete sense of his subsequent "surprise" victory over Charles. Usually, it is Orlando's youth and tenderness, and his position as the bout's underdog, which arouse Rosalind's sympathetic support, but here it was clear that he was well able to fend for himself. Oliver's "Let me go I say" (1.1.61) was delivered as his younger brother pinned him aggressively to the floor.³ Outrage and fury at his dispossession had replaced the more usual respectful submission at this point. Both Frederick's interpolated coronation and this brotherly brutality darkened the tone of Shakespeare's pastoral comedy in interesting and inventive ways. (At the opening of her production of *Julius Caesar* playing simultaneously at the RSC's Courtyard Theatre, Lucy Bailey had Romulus and Remus, as two lupine savages with bare knuckles, fight to the death. Sibling rivalry is clearly fashionable at the moment.)

This sinister tone was maintained in the court's smallest details. As Le Beau (Gregory Gudgeon) announced the wrestling, he dropped Touchstone's "sceptre" on the floor in a gesture of contempt; and as Charles summoned his opponent with his intimidating question: "where is this young gallant that is so desirous to lie with his mother earth?" (1.2.188), Orlando replied with a high-pitched and insolent "Ready sir," in the manner of Mustardseed from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as though to brush off with derision Charles's threat. The effect was darkly comic.

As we moved to the forest of Arden, this tense quality was replaced with a more playful tone. The black shrouds covering the columns were pulled up into the heavens, revealing, unsurprisingly, so many tree trunks. Rosalind entered in a brown leather doublet and hose, identical in every way to what we had seen Orlando wearing earlier. There was a neat double-take here: questions were being asked not merely of sexual identity (in Rosalind's reincarnation as Ganymede) but about the narcissism of love (in Rosalind's reincarnation as Orlando). The wooing scenes were insistent on this self-regarding quality; and Rosalind functioned as a mirror to Orlando rather than his equal and opposite. An unfortunate side-effect was the eclipsing of Rosalind's independent identity and the creation of her as a kind of sounding board for Orlando's self-indulgence. He it was who excitedly ran around the theatre, standing on the banisters of the yard's lower story and relishing the confetti of his poems sprinkled over the upper gallery. In comparison, Rosalind was relatively static and some of her most poignant lines—"Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love" (4.1.101)—unfortunately went for very little.

Following Ganymede's fainting, Oliver bent down behind "him" to hoist him back to his feet. As Oliver put his arms around Ganymede in order to lift him, he was clearly surprised to feel Rosalind's breasts and his challenge, "You a man?" (4.3.165), came out as a bewildered question. When we next saw Orlando, Oliver had clearly brought him up to speed and Orlando's reply to her inquiry, "Did your brother tell you how I counterfeited to swoon?," was pointedly knowing: "Ay, and greater wonders than that" (5.2.27). By the time she came to declare her magical powers: "I can do strange things" (57), his broad grin suggested he was well aware of her cross-dressing, and his humoring of her betokened an affectionate indulgence. He attempted to kiss her before the sudden entry of Silvius and Phoebe (Michael Benz and Jade Williams) interrupted them. The price of this extra layer of intrigue is obviously that her final revelation is surplus to requirements, at least in Orlando's case.



As You Like It: Naomi Frederick as Rosalind and Jack Lasky as Orlando. Photo by John Trammer.

Tim McMullen's sonorous Jaques was a dysfunctional public-school boy. His sense of his own superiority meant that Orlando's gibes bounced straight off him. His relationship with the audience was especially interesting. He entered through the groundlings but, unlike Frederick, he was cognizant of them. His glossing of the term "duc dame"—"Tis a Greek invocation to call fools into a circle" (2.5.56)—was delivered not to Amiens (Peter Gale) but to the Globe's audience, and his panoramic sweep made explicit our circular configuration and his scorn for us. His speech on the seven ages of man was delivered directly to us with great aplomb and was tremendously moving.

Dominic Rowan's Touchstone was less stimulating and provided the production's vulgarly comic interpolations which are all too characteristic of the Globe's populism. After the interval, he played a game of "Spot the Goat" with a puppet goat whose head appeared from the stage trap like a pantomime apparition; I was half expecting chants of "He's behind you." He turned to us and, apparently ad libbing, remarked cornily, "It's just a stage I'm going through." Again his speech on the degrees of the lie was punctured by a rather weak ad lib: "Your If is the only peacemaker—not pacemaker." Of the two relationships with the audience, Jaques's was by far the more compelling.

Summer 2009 saw the election of two Members of the European Parliament from the British National Party (the UK's fascist-leaning contingent). In such fraught circumstances, and in such a cosmopolitan city as London, to see the only

black actor in the company cast in the “exotic” role of Hymen was startling. Ewart James Walters emerged from the pit and presided over the multiple marriages (there was a nice echo of Frederick’s opening entrance). His performance was competent, though unremarkable, while his casting (what is the opposite of color-blind?) was anything but.

Rosalind’s epilogue—the speech advertised ahead of time by the program stickers—was delivered from the stage-right walkway which ran into the pit. At her “If I were a woman . . .” (5.4.212) she lifted her skirts to expose her brown leather hose beneath. The genital confusion of the moment was more than any sticker could do to keep the rapt attention of her audience. Would that the level of engagement in this *As You Like It* had characterized the other Globe productions this season.

I was unable to attend the designated press night of *Romeo and Juliet*. As a result the customary press tickets which carry the price tag £00 were unavailable and I was given a pair of tickets each costing £33. Had I actually paid £66, the Globe would by now be the recipient of a sheaf of letters from my legal team demanding a full refund and compensation for wasting three precious hours of my drinking time. The case for the prosecution would be legally unarguable: I would have expected to pay (and frequently do) a reasonably high price to see actors who are professionally qualified, but on this occasion I had foisted on me only marginally more than amateur dramatics. Ukweli Roach’s complete c.v.: “Ukweli trained at RADA [Royal Academy of Dramatic Art] and this is his professional debut.” He played Tybalt. Jack Farthing’s complete c.v.: “Jack trained at RADA and this is his professional debut.” He played Benvolio. Adetomiwa Edun appears to have been in just three professional theatre productions (with speaking roles?). He played Romeo. Ellie Kendrick hasn’t even been to drama school; in fact, she is still waiting to go to university: “Ellie is currently on her gap year before going to study English Literature at Cambridge.” She played . . . Juliet! A proud day for the Kendrick family—Ellie getting into Cambridge—and I wish her all the best with her studies. After she has been involved in the student drama club there for three years, trained at drama school, and done several seasons in minor roles, she’ll be ready to audition for Juliet. By then my hypothetical £66 would have racked up significant compound interest.

While it may be humiliating for them, there is a reason that newly qualified actors appear, if they are lucky enough to find an opening, as spear-carriers and waiting women. It’s the same reason that newly qualified roofers (for the first few months) get to make the tea for their experienced colleagues or that recent legal graduates spend several years as junior clerks. Would you really want your eyes operated on by a surgeon who qualified three days ago? Would you really want to fly to New York with a pilot who has only ever been on a flight simulator? Tybalt, Benvolio, Romeo and Juliet are not exactly minor roles in this play. What was Dromgoole thinking when he cast such under-experienced actors in such significant parts? One of the nice things about the Globe’s open plan is that it is so easy to get up and leave. One of the awful things about promising to write an essay on the Globe’s season is that, even in the case of a production as poor as this, one is forced to remain and, worse than that, return after the interval.

As Thumper, the baby rabbit, says in Walt Disney's *Bambi*, "If you can't say something nice . . . don't say nothing at all." But the theatre reviewer has to come up with the goods, come rain or shine. It is not enough merely to report on a season's successes while politely and tactfully drawing a veil over its disasters. I was optimistic about Dromgoole's tenure at the Globe. Well, to paraphrase Hermione, for expressing such optimism, I never wished to see me sorry; now I trust I am.

Alan Armstrong's brilliant "*Romeo and Juliet* Academic Theatre Review Kit" half-comically sets up a pattern according to which reviewers can evaluate productions of the play without actually having to write a word.⁴ The template he provides offers a series of multiple-choice boxes about the production which demonstrate the tendency of this particular play in performance to revert to default options—about the nurse, for instance, "young and bawdy" or "old and funny"? One of the choices Armstrong offers concerns costume. Can it really be true that directors of *Romeo* so frequently feel the need to color-code the Capulets and Montagues? Well, Dromgoole clearly did: Capulets in red, Montagues in blue, while the neutral gold, yellow, and green were used for Escalus, Mercutio, and Benvolio, respectively. As if this were not bad enough, the characters were forced, moment by moment, to announce their current loyalty with regular costume "updates." As Romeo attended the Capulet party he wore a red (Capulet) cloak over his blue (Montague) doublet and hose. (Oh! I get it—he's trying to look like a Capulet at their party while remaining a Montague under his disguise.) When we saw him subsequently in Lawrence's cell, he had assumed a pair of red sleeves and Juliet had swapped her red dress for a blue one, a sort of reciprocated matrimonial color-by-numbers. As Romeo arrives at the contention between Tybalt and Mercutio, the latter remarks: "I'll be hanged, sir, if he wear your livery" (3.1.56) but Romeo *was* wearing it! Following the death of Mercutio, Romeo's newly animated fury at Tybalt was preceded by the clumsily conspicuous tearing-off of his red Capulet doublet. These liveries were hardly subtly symbolic when deployed in such literal-minded ways.

The production was frequently marred by an obvious failure, whether on the part of director or actors, to understand the script. As Capulet humorously mourns his lost youth he remarked to his cousin, "I have seen the day / That I have worn a visor . . . 'Tis gone, 'tis gone, 'tis gone" (1.5.21-4), yet, even as he spoke these words, he was wearing a visor. If this was merely a minor slip, the muddled articulation of Juliet on the balcony or at "Gallop apace . . ." (3.2.1) implied that Kendrick really was not sure what it was that Juliet was saying; three years at Cambridge might help here.

Perhaps most culpable was the company's tendency to "act out" every single line. There was an inability to keep still and allow the words to do the work. Every single thought demanded a physical gesture or movement. Perhaps most egregious was Edun's Romeo, who seemed to skate around the stage, leaping and swerving like a cross between Michael Jackson and Errol Flynn. In places this obsessive movement pulled focus entirely away from what was being said. As Romeo read out the names on the Capulets' invitation list, Fergal McElherron's irritating Peter undertook a bizarre and distracting series of gestures—now a baboon, now a staggering drunk, now a whistling lecher and so on, ad nauseam. Lady Capulet's (Miranda Foster)

description of Paris was accompanied by a series of peculiar facial expressions, as though she were the odds-on favorite at some girning competition. Tom Stuart's idiotically beaming, public-school Paris draped himself absurdly around the shoulders of Capulet—it got a huge laugh but nobody seemed to know why Paris was behaving thus. As Mercutio apostrophized Romeo with his scornful catalogue: “Romeo! Humours! Madman! Passion! Lover!” (2.1.7), it was necessary on every term to perform an act of simulated violence upon Benvolio: electrocuting him, strangling him, bugging him on all fours. As he knelt downstage center fantasising about Rosaline’s “quivering thigh, / And the demesnes that there adjacent lie” (2.1.19-20)—here unaccountably changed to “domains”—Mercutio put his tongue out full length and mimicked the act of cunnilingus to huge audience applause. The Globe seems unable to resist appealing to the lowest comic denominator.

Rawiri Paratene managed to make one of the most exciting roles in the play, Lawrence—an intriguing Catholic disciplinarian mixed with Machiavellian pragmatist—simply boring. His flat expression suggested he was running through his script in order to learn it rather than perform it, and his final summary of the preceding



Romeo and Juliet: Ian Redford as Capulet, Ellie Kendrick as Juliet, and Penny Layden as Nurse. Photo by John Haynes.

plot (a difficult speech since it is entirely redundant: we have already seen what has happened) was torturous in its protraction. The only saving grace amid all this carnage was Ian Redford's Capulet. His fury with Juliet (3.5) and threats to disown her drew a deserved spontaneous round of applause. It is surely not coincidental that Redford's biography mentions that he trained at Bristol Old Vic drama school and has a number of professional engagements under his belt, including appearances at the National and Manchester Royal Exchange. I know these remarks sound waspish but, as the actors' union, Equity, would be the first to insist, there is no shortcut to professionalism and experience. I just keep thinking of those poor(er) spectators who parted with £33. It would be nice, having slated *Romeo*, to finish this season's report on a high note, but alas the Globe's third production rules this out.

Troilus and Cressida, like *Twelfth Night* and unlike *Macbeth*, for instance, is an ensemble piece. Its large cast and its several leading roles embed its love story within a broadly political plot populated by a significant number of prominent characters. In *Romeo and Juliet* the feuding is confined to Verona and the contextual characters (with the obvious exception of Mercutio, who is famously killed off, according to Dryden, to stop him taking over the play) are somehow "smaller" than those which surround Cressida and Troilus. *Romeo* does not demand a Thersites, a Pandarus, or a Ulysses; its tragedy is more domestic. The inclusion of both *Romeo* and *Troilus* in the Globe season offered the opportunity to compare these thematically similar but structurally diverse plays, or it could have done to a much greater extent had the *Romeo* been a more effective production.

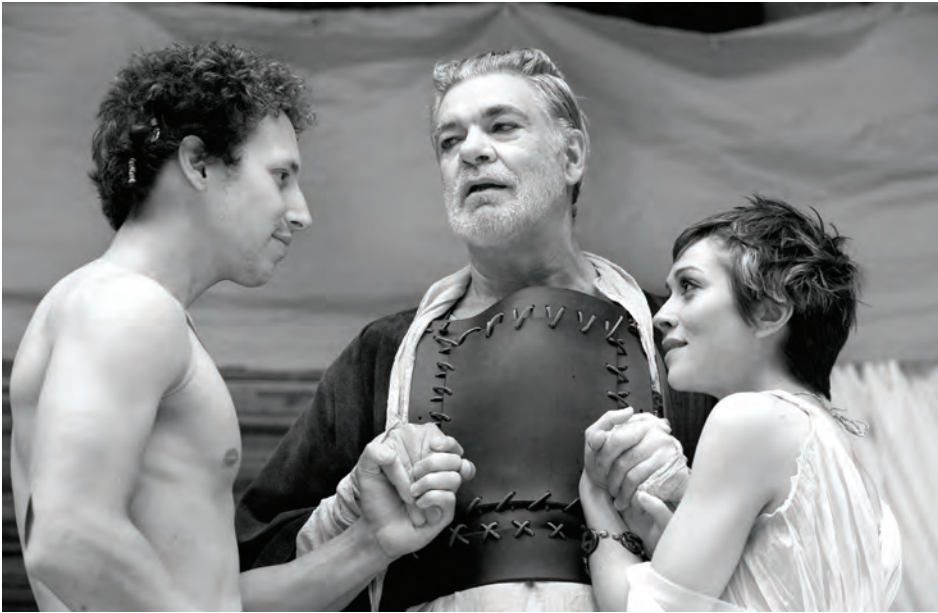
One annoying echo of the Globe *Romeo* was evident, though it seemed too minor to be a deliberate allusion. Just as the Capulets and Montagues were color-coded, so the Trojans were in purple and the Greeks were in blue. Whether this "Shakespeare for dummies" explication is to do with the Globe's popular appeal or not, it is still a clumsy device and illustrates the tendency of design to do the jobs that acting should.

Like those in *Romeo*, the actors in *Troilus* were not uniformly strong, and indeed, some of the key performances had been woefully misconceived. Paul Hunter's misshapen Thersites, for instance, who quite reasonably was given the Chorus, became, in next to no time, a cackling intrusion. Hamlet warns the players, "let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them" (3.2.39). Would that Dunster had taken heed. Hunter's constant interpolated ad libs were lame and infuriating: "Stay at Thersites' bed and breakfast complete with off-street chariot parking," and so on. There is a difference between working with a crowd and obsequiously seeking their approval. As he cursed Patroclus with his hyperbolic catalogue of afflictions: "the rotten diseases of the south, the guts-griping, ruptures, catarrhs, loads o' gravel i'th' back" (5.1.18), each of these illnesses was accompanied with a daft expression or an odd leap. The plethoric madness of Thersites' list was lost in this crude spelling-out. During the battle sequence, Thersites stalked in slow motion around the stage holding up to his eyes a pair of binoculars, but his presence here, as so often elsewhere, added little.

Nor was Trystan Gravelle's characterization of Achilles readily comprehensible. Separated from the other Greeks by virtue of his broad Welsh accent, he was

effectively portrayed as an outsider but, costumed in a long white wrap-around dressing gown and with black panda bear eye make-up, he looked as though he had wandered in from a production of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Chinna Wodu's Ajax was Mr. T from *The A Team* complete with Mohican strip of hair and unfeasibly bulging muscles. Unfortunately, the depth of his characterization was also comparable to that of Mr. T.

Paul Stocker's Troilus was a workmanlike performance but failed to ignite the smoldering misogyny of the text. Stocker was one of the many physically endowed actors who clearly had been cast as much for his muscular physique as for his acting



***Troilus and Cressida*: Paul Stocker as Troilus, Matthew Kelly as Pandarus, and Laura Pyper as Cressida. Photo by John Trammer.**

abilities. Indeed, there were more “six packs” on show than at a frat party! Opposite Troilus was Laura Pyper's Cressida, played mysteriously as though she were out at a drunken bachelorette party. She flung herself, screeching at the script without recognising its varieties of pace or tenor, and the painful scene in which she is kissed/assaulted by the Greek generals resembled the bride-to-be having a last fling with a group of male strippers—a travesty indeed.

Fortunately, the ensemble nature of the play threw several successful performances into high relief. Chief here was Matthew Kelly's Pandarus. Kelly is best known for presenting *Stars in Their Eyes*, an obtuse and embarrassing UK television competition in which members of the Great British public pretend to be Buddy Holly, Kylie Minogue, or Frank Sinatra. Needless to say, the program is a mixture of dull-wittedness and utter insincerity on Kelly's part as he tells each contestant

that she has brilliantly out-Madonnaed Madonna. What a pleasant surprise to find that Kelly is actually a fine actor, his Pandarus both an imposing, statuesque figure with an authoritative stage presence and a clear firm command of the subtleties of Shakespeare's language, and a sniggering old queen whose ostensibly innocent question—"Know you the musicians?" (3.1.19), when delivered to a semi-naked teenage servant boy, sounded like the most disgusting of propositions. Pandarus' lewd metaphor of "grinding [and] boulting" (1.1.17) was delivered with all the engaging unsubtlety of a Benny Hill sketch. Yet elsewhere, as when describing Troilus' dimpled chin and attractive smile (1.2.115), there was a genuine adoration in his voice which was counterbalanced and counterblasted by his eventual sickly fury at the play's end. This was a confident and nuanced performance which illustrated the Protean quality of Shakespeare's complex characterization.

The same could also be said of Jamie Ballard's Ulysses. During the council of Greek generals (1.3), the actor playing Ulysses has a number of very long and complicated speeches. It was testament to Ballard's adroit penetration of these speeches that he made them both completely comprehensible and compelling. Physically dwarfed by those around him, this was a general who had clearly arrived at his position of authority by living on his wits, and his lean political acumen was both stimulating and terrifying. These senior politicians were like putty in his manipulating hands and his Machiavellian aptitude nicely prepared us for the deliberate snubbing of Achilles (3.3.38ff). Effective too was John Stahl's Nestor, grizzled but still physically and vocally powerful: the Greeks may have been down but they were definitely not out.

Anna Fleischle's set design was effective without being distracting. The stage pillars and upstage wall of the Globe were clad in a clay-colored wash. A rectangular balcony was suspended above the stage and functioned variously as a separate room or, with a canopy lowered down onto it, the roof of a tent. Occasionally there were rather crude attempts to "contemporize" the production. Antenor (Stevie Raine) appeared before the trading of prisoners in a Guantanamo jump suit, his head unbagged to reveal a bloodied nose and mouth. The Myrmidons entered from the pit as four urban youths in hooded tops, a trivializing short-hand for unprompted violence. As the death of Hector was announced, black streamers were dropped from the upper gallery of the theatre, but the spectacular moment was short-lived as the production moved immediately on to its conclusion. Pandarus entered dishevelled and weak, and expired in a fit of misanthropy. As he did so, the full company entered beating drums slung over their shoulders. It is refreshing to have jettisoned the customary jig but the decision to replace it with a sequence from the percussive musical *Stomp* raised more questions than it answered.

Having last year falsely prophesied the Globe's emergence from its slough of despond, one can only keep the faith. The Globe experience, on a warm summer evening, watching the engaging *As You Like It* in a theatre packed with enthralled spectators is still inspiring and proves that there is a place for popular Shakespeare in the center of London which can converse effectively with a diverse audience of native and non-native speakers, Londoners and visitors, younger and older. But the success of only one out of the three productions reviewed here is not enough

to warrant such affection and Dromgoole cannot assume that just because the previous Globe Board was misguided enough to reappoint Rylance that he is safe in his job. Finally the success or failure of the whole theatre must stand squarely on the quality of the work being done here: 33% is not a pass mark.

Notes

1. I would like to offer my usual thanks to James Lever of the Globe's Press Office for organising tickets for me.
2. The press night (scheduled for 30 September 2009) was canceled without explanation. The production of *Love's Labour's Lost* was a reprise of Dromgoole's production which played at the Globe between 1 July and 7 October 2007, my review of which appeared in *Shakespeare Bulletin* 26 (2008), 188-91.
3. Quotations are from *The Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).
4. *Shakespeare Bulletin* 26 (2008), 109-24.

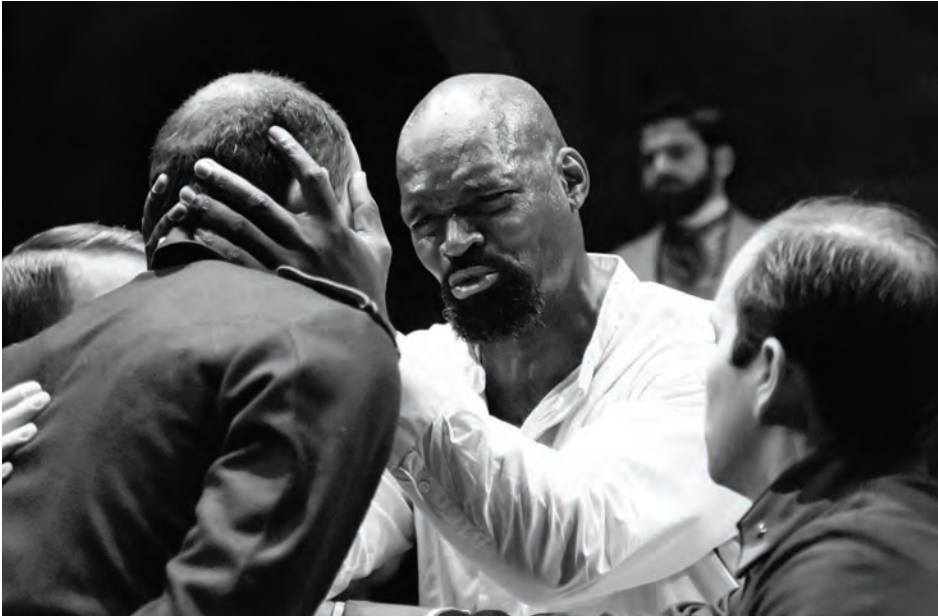
THE 2009 ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL: *OTHELLO*

Craig Barrow and Bryan Adams Hampton,
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The Alabama Shakespeare Festival has done four previous productions of *Othello*, in 1978, 1987, 1994, and 2003, but the production for the 2009 season may be the best. Much of the tragedy's success depends, of course, on the casting of Othello and Iago. In 1978 and 1987, the best actor in the company, Philip Pleasants, played Iago. In 1978, the role of Othello was played by the pudgy Sidney Hibbert, whose melodic Jamaican voice seemed inappropriate for the tragedy, and in 1987 the role was played by a slight, short David Toney, whose primary acting credit was *All My Children*. Neither of these could create the unsailable presence the role requires. For example, when Brabantio and the officers try to arrest Othello in Act 1, for Desdemona's sake Othello does not want to harm his father-in-law no matter how badly Brabantio abuses him. Exercising restraint when others do not is dangerous, but not so for a strong Othello. Without a commanding presence, the line "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them" (1.2.60) falls flat.¹ Similarly, in Act 2 Othello has to stop a drunken brawl with only a sword while opposing well-armed men. Hibbert and Toney could not establish the needed gravitas; their actions and words did not convince. The tall, athletic Derrick Lee Weeden in 1994 was a more dominating presence than his predecessors and hence successful in conveying Othello's strength of character, especially when opposed by Richard Elmore's Iago. Elmore had an uncanny resemblance to a bald, plump Danny DeVito selling used cars or aluminum siding. Weeden's strength and charisma as Othello were not matched or tested by Elmore's Iago. The 2003 production was unfortunately laughable; the only person who performed well was Greta Lambert, the Festival's best actress, portraying Emilia.

Esau Pritchett, the 2009 Othello, is an even more imposing figure than Derrick Lee Weeden. Physically, Pritchett is formidable and appears strong enough to play middle linebacker for the Chicago Bears; he dwarfs the other actors in the production, and he has a baritone voice that matches his size. His voice can be tender and delicate in the early scenes with his beloved Desdemona, but his commanding voice is real; it is to be believed. Matt D'Amico as Iago is a relatively thin man who has the look of a Renaissance Vice. In size, face, and stature he appears better suited as a servant than an officer, and one could hardly believe that such a figure would have fought campaigns "At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds / Christened and heathen" (1.1.30-31) with his superior. Philip Pleasants's portrayals of Iago in the 1978 and 1987 productions were the spirit of evil, an intelligent Mephistopheles who left gaps for Othello to fill with Desdemona's imagined infidelity; D'Amico seems just a cunning rascal in the same exchanges. The contrasts between Pritchett and D'Amico are no doubt intended, and there is merit in that casting decision. The audience witnesses the destruction of a general and man without a peer—an outsider who has become an insider by virtue of his virtue—brought about by an inferior without a conscience, for whom virtue's "A

fig!” (1.3.322). However, without a charismatic presence behind the mask of Shakespeare’s slyest villain, who wields language with more potency than a poisoned blade, the production could not fully capitalize on the meaning of those contrasts. Nor could it capture Iago’s uncanny ability to seduce the audience as well as the Moor. Director Geoffrey Sherman’s production gives D’Amico’s Iago and Caroline Strong’s Emilia the social class of servants. In no previous production of *Othello* have we seen so many



***Othello*: Matt D’Amico as Iago, Esau Pritchett as Othello, Jeffrey de Picciotto as Lodovico, and Jarrod Yuskas as soldier. Photo by Phil Scarsbrook.**

actions by both Iago and Emilia that suggest service, whether these acts be carrying luggage by Iago or dressing Desdemona’s hair by Emilia. Blake Kubena’s Cassio looks more like an officer and a gentleman than D’Amico, and thus the audience’s eyes and ears agree with Othello’s choice of officer; the audience truly pitied Kubena’s Cassio after his drunken brawl with Roderigo and Montano, as he collapses into Iago’s arms, weeping “Reputation, reputation, reputation!” (2.3.256). Nathan Hosner portrayed Roderigo as a meticulous fop, hopelessly fawning over Desdemona at a distance, and his performance compelled the audience alternately to chuckle, sympathize, and believe that he gets what he deserves.

All of these casting choices are very important to the genre of *Othello*, for without a dominant Othello Shakespeare’s play can easily become a fascinating melodrama of intrigue, or a revenge play, where a clever, courageous, unscrupulous Iago victimizes a hapless Othello.² Only a strong actor playing Othello can keep the play a tragedy by focusing attention on his suffering and dilemma; the latter is framed in Othello’s response to Iago: “I think my wife be honest, and think she is not; / I think that

thou art just, and think thou art not" (3.3.400-401). By casting his faith in honest Iago, in a scene with vows and actions that resemble marriage (3.3.478-89), Othello chooses his suffering; he chooses his moral decline, his killing of Desdemona, his recognition of Desdemona's innocence, and his final guilt and self-judgment that lead to his execution-suicide. Esau Pritchett keeps the focus on the protagonist's dividedness, which Robert Heilman sees as the emotional core of tragedy, as Othello negotiates between the values of Iago and those of Desdemona.³

For a Montgomery audience still accustomed to seeing Confederate flags flying nearby, as we saw on Interstate 65 less than 50 miles from Montgomery, the match of Desdemona and Othello is racially coded. Kaytie Morris's portrayal of Desdemona is decidedly pale and blonde, while the features of Esau Pritchett align with Shakespeare's provision of African features for Othello, such as Roderigo's "thick-lips" (1.1.68) or Brabantio's "sooty bosom" (1.2.71). But Pritchett captures Othello's ability to transcend the external signifiers of Venetian barriers to social advancement, and he achieves the Duke's internal assessment that their general is "more fair than black" (1.3.293).⁴ In a southern context, this Desdemona and this Othello are almost an advertisement about miscegenation that is not supposed to happen. Perhaps



***Othello*: Kaytie Morris as Desdemona and Esau Pritchett as Othello. Photo by Phil Scarsbrook.**

making a racist even more infuriated, Kaytie Morris is the oldest Desdemona we have seen—old enough in such a worldview to know better. Morris's age works to advantage in the scene with the Duke and senate at the end of Act 1 where she must explain herself to her father, Othello, and a large, powerful male onstage audience. Morris's Desdemona is a woman with a role to play in the world. She is struck hard and knocked down by Othello in 4.1, which brought a gasp from the audience, and she is shocked by Othello's treatment of her as a whore in the next scene. Like a top, she is then forced to "turn, and turn, and yet go on / And turn again" (4.1.261-62) in public by her powerful, angry husband, yet only comes upon a secret meaning of being love's victim in her singing of "willow" (4.3.45-54) at the end of her song. Morris's Desdemona has considerable strength. She is less caught in a lie about the missing handkerchief than stunned by Othello's passion about it.

All roles were capably played in this 2009 *Othello*, but some special praise needs to be given to two actors. Rodney Clark was superb as Brabantio. His outrage at the loss of Desdemona and his racist attack on Othello would provoke anyone, so they become a way to measure Othello's strength in his mild, reasonable response to his

attacker. Clark helps build the audience's dominant image of Othello. One role that we have not seen in previous productions of *Othello* is the Clown, well played by the sassy David Stewart Hudson. The puns on "lie" and "lying" (3.4.1-21), his lecherous views up Emilia's skirt, and his many uses of his crotch-purse tie into the debasement of love by Iago.

James Conely wrote the music for the production, which introduced the play and followed the intermission near the end of Act 3. Trumpets at the beginning of the play announced the Renaissance fanfare, but the violins that followed in a minor mode muted the brightness of the trumpets' theme. After the intermission, violins announced the theme, and the modal brass accompanied in dim agreement. The music seems to follow the action, particularly the divided feelings of Othello once Iago's "medicine" (4.1.45) begins to work. The stage design of Robert Wolin featured a two-story structure with round arches that recalls major buildings in Venice. Overhead lighting blocked off aspects of the structure at different parts of the play, making it seem as if the actors are sometimes in an interior space. At the opening of the play between the battlements was a large rectangular blue cloth with a winged lion on it, the symbolic icon for St. Mark in Venice. The image is adapted from one on St. Mark's Basilica.⁵ Whether intentional or not, the image is rich with symbolic possibilities. Perhaps the wings on the cloth represent the dove-like Desdemona and the lion Othello; alternately, the unnatural creature could be an emblem of Iago's denial of a stable essence ("I am not what I am," as he puts it in 1.1.67), or a representation of Othello's bifurcated identity as Christian Venetian and Muslim Turk, as he articulates in his suicide speech (5.2.361-66).

The costuming design by Elizabeth Novak was generally late-Victorian, although the puttees worn by the soldiers on Cyprus seemed more like World War I vintage. Especially in light of their red, white, and blue uniforms, the soldiers conjured up images of colonialism, since Venice and Turkey both desire to have Cyprus as a colony. Moreover, Othello is a successful colonial who has risen to the powerful position of general and Christian defender of Venice, a prominent Italian city-state in the Renaissance whose population was diverse because of its international commerce, but whose patrician governing body zealously guarded matters of citizenship.⁶ When Othello executes "the malignant and turban'd Turk" who has "traduc'd the state" (5.2.363-64), he does so with an Oriental scimitar. Othello's garb and Desdemona's dresses are color coded to suit the action of the play. Desdemona first appears in a yellow dress with green vines as decoration; in the middle of the play she appears in earthy tan clothing, and at the end in white. Othello is gradually stripped of his uniform in the process of losing his occupation and honor. His costume changes from the red, white, and blue of a Venetian soldier, to beige, and finally to white buttoned linen to mirror Desdemona in Act 5. This final coincidence of color suggests Othello's deluded aspirations to the roles of confessor and judge, as well as Desdemona's martyred fulfillment as a christic figure. The lieutenant tabs of Cassio's uniform almost become a prop, as they are torn off by Othello in Act 2 after the drunken mutiny, are worn by Iago later, and then histrionically torn off by him in the process of convincing Othello about his disinterested service to him. Othello's lamp in Act 5, scene 2 is tied to Othello's "Put out the light" (5.2.7-13) speech which foreshadows Desdemona's murder by a

husband who is alternately confessor, judge, and executioner.⁷ The prop links Desdemona's deeds of light and Iago's deeds of darkness. Of course, the handkerchief with strawberries and magic in the web is much on display as the ultimate test by Othello of Desdemona's veracity and honor. Since no person in the 750-seat Festival Stage is far from the stage, everyone can see the strawberry design as it is handled by Desdemona, Othello, Emilia, Iago, Cassio, and Bianca. It seems to test ethically every character as it passes from hand to hand.

Director Geoffrey Sherman has given Montgomery audiences a fine production of *Othello*. In this domestic tragedy, we feel the tearing of allegiance, loyalty, and love by their opposites. The demonic scope of Iago is reduced in this production, as the shame is evident on Iago's face in the final scene, and the focus on Othello's divided values is front and center. When listening to Othello's shift from faith in love to faith in Iago's contrived appearances, the audience aches, for we know that one can only have faith that one is loved; proof is really impossible. And when Othello, after listening to Iago's racist theories of behavior, utters to himself, "And yet how nature erring from itself ..." (3.3.243), we recognize Othello's absorbed racism in his doubts about being loved, doubts that the audience from time to time shares. Better, like Desdemona, to have faith in love, even when she experiences curses, blows, and murder. The production is a triumph.

Notes

1. All references to the play text are from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 6th ed., ed. David Bevington (New York: Longman, 2009).
2. While Lawrence Danson's *Shakespeare's Dramatic Genres* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) does a fine job describing the dramatic genres in Shakespeare's time, an older book, Robert Heilman's *Tragedy and Melodrama* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1968), more clearly delineates tragedy and melodrama. According to Heilman, melodrama has victims and victimizers and features plots of intrigue, whereas tragedy explores the character of the hero through the divided, contradictory values that focus his error of choice, fall, and final recognition.
3. See Heilman, 3-31.
4. Tangentially, and despite Othello's exotic appearance, early modern English audiences would have been more accustomed to the household presence of black servants than earlier criticism has led us to believe. See Walter H. S. Lim, "Representing the Other: *Othello*, Colonialism, Discourse," *The Upstart Crow* XIII (1993): 57-78; see especially 71-75.
5. From where we were sitting, we could not see the entire image of the winged lion. Professor Susan Willis, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival Dramaturge, sent us this information.
6. See Ludivine-Julie Olard, "Venice-Babylon: Foreigners and Citizens in the Renaissance Period (14th-16th Centuries)," in *Imaging frontiers, contesting identities*, ed. Steven G. Ellis and Lud'a Klusáková (Pisa, Italy: Pisa University Press, 2007), 155-74.
7. Winifred M. T. Nowottny, "Justice and Love in *Othello*," *Essays in Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 459-472.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE'S *THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY* AND
THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY'S *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* (2008)

John R. Ford, *Delta State University*

Central to both Melly Still's 2008 production of *The Revenger's Tragedy* for London's National Theatre and Gregory Doran's 2008 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a revival of his 2005 production, for the Royal Shakespeare Company, were the mixed energies of audience complicity. Both of these productions required something from the audience. Gregory Doran asked us to use our imaginations to create a world of magic and metamorphosis, a green world from an urban trash heap. Melly Still asked us to create a world of simultaneous guilt and pleasure. Finally, both productions created a frame within which to take the measure of the magic and the guilt that the audience experienced.

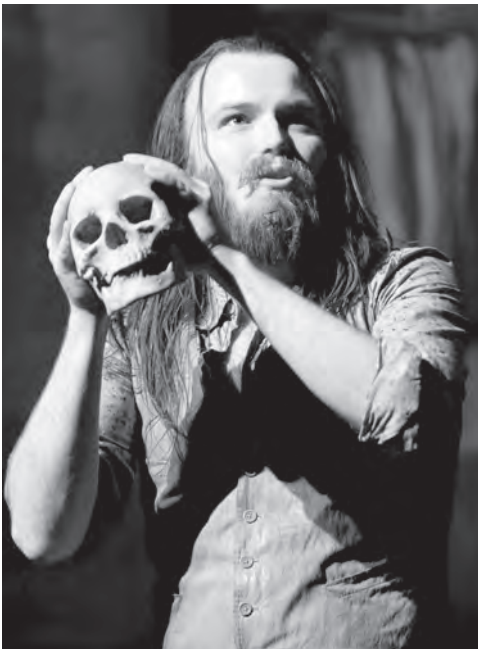
One of the first details audience members might have noticed on taking their seats at the National's Olivier Theatre for *The Revenger's Tragedy* was a Caravaggio painting, upstage right, of St. Jerome at work. This bookish scholar, the translator of the Bible, framed by massive and untidy piles of well-worn and presumably well-read books, seemed to concentrate on two texts: the sacred book on the desk before him and the memento mori at the edge of his desk, two texts that collectively frame a good life, circumscribing our understanding of life and death.

But in the plays, these structures of faith and moral coherence were inadequate to the surges of desire and violence they sought to contain. Even the waiting stage gave hints of this failure. The scattered collection of scholarly books seemed more significant for its disarray than the power of their ideas. Many paintings had apparently been taken down from the walls, sold or stripped of their frames, leaving behind ghostly reminders of now absent forms. Indeed, even St. Jerome's text became a disturbing emblem for this play, serving to license the violent misogyny that is at the heart of female suffering.

Suddenly there was a deafening blast. The revolving stage lurched into motion as the space darkened, nervous spotlights searching for something in random areas of the whirling circular space. Behind the dancing, we glimpsed sexual acts and violence as what sounded like castrati sang offstage. Some of the male dancers wore antlers. Other revelers were dressed in early twenty-first century fashions, just as we were. All was motion, the accelerated heartbeats of revenge and desire. The fiercely bright spotlights moved with increasing speed to one violent or sexual scene after another. Because the circular stage was divided into sections separated by corridors, those sudden illuminations also implicated us. We were teased by glimpses of sexuality and violence as we voyeuristically strained to see. Amid this sexual theater, one moment stood out. The dance culminated in a rape, after which, almost obscured by the frenetic actions around her, a figure (later identified as Antonio's wife) moved awkwardly across the stage, repeatedly losing her balance as she attempted to dress herself, unnoticed by the revelers and, perhaps, by some of the audience.

The revolving stage thus became the means for our uneasy participation in the world of the play. We were invited to judge. The induction scene Still had invented provided a sharp portrait of a world marked by overwhelming lust, characterized not so much by sexual attraction as sexual violence. Later, the court procedure—at which Junior Brother was tried for rape—had its own ceremony and theater as the dual narratives of evidence and titillation became increasingly difficult to distinguish. As Vindice put it, “[t]here’s juggling of all sides” (2.2.137).¹ The turning stage offered the audience momentary opportunities to spy into the resources of the staging, implicating us in those same voyeuristic glimpses afforded Vindice and others, whose moral disgust was framed by sexual desire. As a result, this production implied an odd interanimation of performances that grew increasingly compulsive, as the stage kept turning, the interior walls moving like pages in a book. These scenes and narratives mirrored one another, sometimes parodically, by framing one theatrical moment in another. Vindice’s immersion in lust echoes Macbeth’s bloodlust: “Attend me; I am past my depth in lust, / And I must swim or drown” (1.3.88-89).

For Melly Still that complicity served to remind us that we live in a world not considerably distant from that of the fictional characters, both they and we adjusting to one another in a world of violence. Sometimes this effect was enhanced by the mixing of modern dress and early modern design. Other mixed codes were visible, for example when Still borrowed from the conventions of gangster movies, as Vindice, in disguise as Piato, attempted to procure his sister, Castiza, for Lussurioso’s pleasure.



The Revenger's Tragedy: Rory Kinnear as Vindice. Photo by Johan Persson.

Carefully—and silently—Vindice/Piato placed an attaché case next to his sister, then, again silently, raised the lid of the briefcase to reveal stacks of money, before retreating and waiting for the silent temptation to work. Or there was the moment, after nine years of waiting, when Vindice began his ceremony of revenge. He took from a drawer a box that looked like a forgotten wedding present but, in fact, contained the skull of Gloriana, his betrothed. Our discomfort could be measured in the surprised and quiet laughter throughout the audience.

A more radical discomfort, such as the unease that attended the suffering and isolation of Antonio’s wife, allowed Melly Still to interpret *The Revenger's Tragedy* as a satire on the male supremacy that structures revenge tragedies. For Still, Thomas Middleton “is satirizing male-assumed supremacy.

You get the feeling with Middleton that justice is a woman.”² The evidence to support such a satire, as Still was quick to admit, is ambiguous, especially if, at the play’s end, we interpret Antonio as the force behind yet another cycle of revenge rather than as the leader of a more hopeful regime. For Melly Still, what hopefulness there was resided in women.

From the opening dance of the play, where the formal conventions of dance erupted into a performance of rape, to the masque at the end, where the ceremony of moral revenge broke down into multi-dimensional violence, the meaninglessness of lusty revenge, or vengeful lust, as offstage drumbeats pounded like a dangerous pulse, created a theatrical energy that could not be reversed. For Still the play was the “fill” between the two masques, one at the beginning, the other at the end. The first masque eroticized vengeance; the second politicized lust. Indeed, from its opening moments the play kept returning to two questions: What is real? What is painted? And a third question helped mediate the distance between the first two questions: how does the frame we impose on what we experience both order and dissolve our participation in what we create? Do the near allegorical figures we interpret, and help to create, insulate us from our guilty pleasures?

Audience complicity was also at the heart of Gregory Doran’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, although what we were complicit *in*, the collaborative creation of magic, was something more mysterious. Doran created a genuine feeling of discovery and renewal, yet hardly out of thin air. This production was, after all, a revival of the 2005 production furbished by some of the same cast members and pieces of set, particularly the gigantic moon and light bulbs metamorphosed into stars, perhaps a nod to Adrian Noble’s sky in his 1996 film of the play. There was even a shopping cart, again borrowed from the 2005 production, used to wheel Bottom across the stage and out of which Puck awakened. You can never bring in a shopping cart! So the Snouts within us might wail. And yet, thanks to the skilful collaboration of director, set designer, actors, and audience, something remarkable occurred. That constructed imaginative space full of surprises was invented by old hands, audience members who knew their cues and recognized their allusions. Such a production should have fallen under the weight of its own expectations. Instead, it soared.

Like Still’s *Revenger’s Tragedy*, Doran’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* relied heavily on an implicated audience. In the case of *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, Melly Still sought to seduce both onstage and offstage audiences into areas of recognition, where honor, revenge, and erotic violence all entangled one another like the confused threads of incest. Doran’s goal was different: not so much to expose our guilt as to enlist our help. As Doran noted in an interview with Paul Edmondson, anyone working in the RSC’s Courtyard Theatre needs to acknowledge and exploit the peculiar opportunities of that theatre’s thrust stage. It is a stage, after all, *designed* for complicity.³

One of the most interesting features of Doran’s 2008 production was its use of darkness, not only in the woods but in the court as well, and especially among the fairies. The effect of that darkness, though, was not merely to conform to productions of *Dream* that in recent years have become increasingly dark. Instead, this production *used* darkness as a way to illuminate our multiple transformations into a mixed light that remembered the darkness that preceded it. We saw through foggy

light and starry darkness a massive, ever-changing moon, which only a parted eye can see. The darkness also enveloped other characters, especially the fairies, who were quite numerous and tended to cluster together. Collectively, the fairies became a kind of womb, out of which the lovers, or Puck, or Oberon, would make their "entrance." The fairies, who could become menacing in this production, also embodied a world of emotions. As a natural chorus, they echoed the cries of human fear. "Bosoms" would receive an echo, as would "Lysander," "Lord," "Where are you?" "Speak of all cures!" "no," "not?"

At the same time, the dark fog became a kind of lens through which the ordinary could become wondrous. Even Puck was affected. When Titania explained the causes of the "season's difference," Puck looked up, engaged, spell-bound. When Lysander spoke of love as "a shadow, short as any dream" (1.1.144), Hermia looked to the heavens as if she were discovering the experience for the first time. Even the changeling boy, in this production a puppet, seemed struck by the wonder of the skies and of himself.

One of the strategies Gregory Doran used to allow the audience a larger role in this play was to have characters speak their lines not to other characters but directly to the audience, as asides shared in confidence. For example, Helena confided to us rather than to Lysander and Demetrius that Hermia "was a vixen when she went to school; / And though that she is little, she is fierce." And when Helena shouts, "Precious, celestial?" and later, "This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled," she is again speaking to us (3.2.227, 241). The effect is not just to enhance our role by re-distributing quotes our way. We also became much more involved in the comic attack on Hermia.

Throughout Gregory Doran's production, we were in a world of metamorphosis. Its opening moments, scored by Mendelssohn's melody, give way to two shadowy figures on the darkened stage. The sudden presence of the composer long associated with sweet performances of the play, followed by his equally sudden erasure, seemed a parody of the rise and fall of a style of performing the play that has long fallen out of favor. But this production eludes expectations. Two figures, dressed in armor, were locked in fierce swordplay; but just as quickly the fighting melted into a competitive embrace, the kind of intimacy shared by great athletes, or actors. The two combatants could now be identified as Theseus and Hippolyta as Theseus began his opening speech: "Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword, / And won thy love doing thee injuries" (1.1.16-17). The production gathered its energy from both Mendelssohn's music—even in parody—and those "injuries," now transported to the stage: both were "translated," our dramatic expectations drifting out of reach like a dream.

As a result of this inclusiveness, the entire imaginative experience was doubled. That doubleness was in part created by a huge mirror, designed by Francis O'Connor, erected at one end of the stage. Not only could the audience see itself duplicated in the mirror's reflection, but the reflected image allowed us to "see" both ourselves and the actors inhabiting the same space. And yet there was something illusionary in the "reality" of that dreamy recognition, as if we were our own, and not our own.

Notes

1. All textual references are to *The Revenger's Tragedy*, ed. R. A. Foakes (New York: Manchester UP, 1996), or to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).
2. Melly Still, interviewed by Heather Neill, National Theatre, 13 June 2008. Recording available at theatreVOICE. http://www.theatrevoice.com/listen_now/player/?audioID=579.
3. Transcription of "Director Talk," Courtyard Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 14 May 2008, 2. http://www.rsc.org.uk/explore/multimedia/mnd_0508_01_transcript.pdf.

THE 2008 OREGON SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL SEASON

Michael W. Shurgot, *Seattle, Washington*

For reviewers concerned with the omnipresent phenomenon of “director’s Shakespeare,” 2008 was a difficult season at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. The Festival mounted two early comedies and two mature tragedies: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in the Angus Bowmer Theatre; *Coriolanus* in the New Theatre; and *Comedy of Errors* and *Othello* on the Elizabethan Stage. Both comedies were heavily “conceptualized”; Penny Metropulos’s *Errors* was set in the old west, and just barely followed Shakespeare’s plot; Mark Rucker’s *Dream* adhered closely to Shakespeare’s script, but was so over-laden with multiple settings, especially its futuristic dream-forest, that one’s sense of the poetic nuances of the play and its overarching vision of romantic harmony was confused. Conversely, Lisa Peterson’s Renaissance *Othello* was an incisive study in black and white of corrosive sexual jealousy, while Laird Williamson’s Fascist era setting brilliantly enhanced *Coriolanus*.

One sensed in new Artistic Director Bill Rauch’s selection of plays and directorial approaches a desire to attract younger spectators. Like other festivals, OSF is attempting to counter the aging of its audience, and Rauch and Executive Director Paul Nicholson realize that OSF simply must attract new spectators if it is going to remain economically and artistically viable. The Festival’s operating budget for 2008 was \$25,900,000, and amazingly 78% of that figure came from earned income. During the 2007 season the Festival had a financial impact on southern Oregon of \$163,123,808, and still employs approximately 450 theatre professionals for eleven plays during its eight month season.¹ These statistics are amazing, and emphasize the Festival’s overall economic and artistic health. However, they also emphasize how hard the Festival must work to maintain current audience levels. Hence, perhaps, the directorial choices of Penny Metropulos in *Errors* and Mark Rucker in *Dream*: way over-simplify an early comedy by setting it on “the western frontier,” an icon of Americana; or blast spectators into a mind-bending journey to a futuristic fairy-world populated by gay fairies and a Captain Oberon whose love potion #9 ignites human sexual desire and leaves young couples nearly naked on stage. Great fun, to be sure. And while such “concepts” may lure younger spectators to the OSF, seasoned playgoers, and reviewers, might genuinely wonder at what cost to Shakespeare’s poetry and even his plots.

Sheryl Harmon, a student in my OSF class, remarked after seeing *Comedy of Errors* that the production was “60% *Blazing Saddles* and 40% Shakespeare.” Indeed, the playbill lists *Errors* as “Adapted by,” not “Directed by,” Penny Metropulos. Ms. Harmon’s observation was astute: the set was the multi-level Shady Pine Saloon in “A town west of the Pecos,” complete with a hanging pole, rope, and pulley suggesting that lynching occurred frequently at Shady Pine. The town was inhabited by a rambling assortment of folks one might expect to find in such a locale, either shifted from Shakespeare’s Ephesus to the wild west or added for local color. Thus Shakespeare’s Duke Solinus became the town’s sheriff; Emilia, Shakespeare’s Lady Abbess, became the “proprietress of the saloon” and the “Madame” for several sleazy

“dancehall gals” (named Starr and Grace) who “worked” upstairs; Doctor Pinch, Shakespeare’s schoolmaster, became the “snake-oil” salesman Doctor Antonio Pitch; and Angelo the goldsmith became Li Wei, a Chinese merchant played by Cristofer Jean with surprisingly stereotyped diction and gestures. Other denizens included several cowboys, a mine owner, a sheriff’s deputy, and Jose Luis, played by Rene Millan, a troubadour in Spanish leather and splendid sombrero who strummed his guitar as he crossed the stage singing love songs in English and Spanish and narrating the twists of the plot even when they had little to do with Shakespeare’s play. The entire production was highly farcical, with numerous beatings of the bewildered Dromios; cowboys pursuing the dancehall gals up and down the stairs; Nell, wide as a VW Bug, lurking everywhere and lustily chasing Dromio of Syracuse all over the set; Jake, the sheriff’s deputy, lassoing them thar bad uns whenever necessary, including both Dromios and in 4.4 Antipholus of Ephesus; and a ludicrous riot with everyone, guns a-blazing, chasing as noisily as possible everyone else all over



Comedy of Errors: The ensemble in the Shady Pine Saloon. Photo by T. Charles Erickson.

the saloon for no discernable reason connected to either Shakespeare’s plot or Metropulos’s adaptation thereof.

The 60% of the script that was cut was replaced by songs and additional dialogue, written by Metropulos and her assistants Sterling Tinsley and Linda Alper, that had no connection to Shakespeare’s Ephesus. Millan also sang several songs popularly associated with the American west, such as “Oh My Darling, Clementine,” as well as some lovely Spanish ballads. Egeus gambled upstairs next to the hanging pole with three locals trying to save his neck as coyotes howled in the background, and Adriana and her sister Luciana debated husbands’ loyalty and the shrewishness

of wives in calico dresses, cowgirls' riding boots, and leather skirts. In the midst of this bizarre cacophony some of the play's deeper concerns with self-knowledge and identity, including Antipholus of Syracuse's "I to the world am like a drop of water" and "Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell?"² were lost. David Bevington is right that "In such a mad world, the characters assume a license to embark on Saturnalian holiday,"³ and while the sense of maddening confusion in Shakespeare's plot may have inspired Metropulos's adaptation, nonetheless her concept overwhelmed rather than served the play.

Metropulos's setting in a town "west of the Pecos" suggested a metaphor that the production might have intended. The Pecos River runs southeast from central New Mexico to meet the Rio Grande in west Texas, and according to Wikipedia, the phrase "West of the Pecos" referred to the "rugged frontiers" of the American West.⁴ West suggests, of course, a journey towards death, which is where Egeus is headed until the nearly miraculous discoveries in Act 5. Perhaps the "frontier" setting suggested a border situation in one's life, or within one's mind, where one can feel lost on a journey that defies reason. Perhaps. But the wholesale abandonment of so much of Shakespeare's language in the raucous saloon hindered rather than helped spectators grasp this potentially engaging metaphoric link to Shakespeare's comedy.

Walt Spangler's set for Mark Rucker's 1970s era *A Midsummer Night's Dream* utilized thoroughly the multiple technical resources of the Bowmer Theatre. Spanning the stage was a huge arc attached to which were different sized circles of light that illuminated the opening and closing scenes in Athens. The "green world" of the fairy kingdom was a psychedelic fantasy realm where androgynous fairies frolicked under large metallic stars that dangled from the ceiling and reflected shimmering lights around the entire theatre. Giant, hollow steel "trees" sprouted and curled upwards, suggesting rocket ships that might take one to a distant world but also resembled erect phalli. An erotic garden, indeed. Here, amid the brilliant, dancing lights, the lovers chased each other and their romantic fantasies, while Oberon and Titania feuded and later danced voluptuously.

Act 1 opened in the garishly lit, blue-tiled living room of Theseus and Hippolyta, a don and his lady straight from the Sopranos. They sat stiffly in white leather chairs as if posing for a production photograph, afraid to disturb a hair. Theseus, dressed in formal, spangled white dinner jacket, black silk pants, and sporting heavy, black-rimmed glasses, spoke with a pronounced and stylized Italian accent that suggested a caricature rather than a character. Buxom Hippolyta, wearing a classy evening gown and adorned with diamonds and pearls, sat equally still, moving only her lips as she spoke, her body rigid with formality if not fear of her betrothed, who brusquely reminded her that he had won her doing her injuries. Hippolyta shivered slightly at this reminder of their violent past. Linda Alper's Egeus was an "Athenian citizen," and the mother, not father, of Hermia. The play thus established three, and with Titania four, different female attitudes to human sexual relations. Egeus wanted to control Hermia's marital destiny, while Hermia, here a younger version of Egeus, insisted that with her eyes she saw only Lysander, who himself provoked laughter when he comically insisted that since Demetrius has her [i.e., Hermia's] "[mother's] love," Demetrius should marry "her," i.e., Hermia's mother. Casting Egeus as a mother

created a sexually complex moment and recalled OSF's production of *The Tempest* in 2001, in which Demetra Pittman played Prospera, Miranda's mother, and created an enduring, tender image of a woman trying to teach her only daughter the treacheries of male sexuality amid a violent Italian court. Though Egeus was quite severe, nonetheless her care for her daughter's sexual future seemed genuine, especially given the extreme eroticism of the fairy world. Likewise Hippolyta; when Theseus condemned Hermia to "death or to a vow of single life" (1.1.121), Hippolyta stormed offstage well before her scripted exit at 126, leaving the autocratic Theseus floundering, arms akimbo, at "Come, my Hippolyta. What cheer, my love?" (122) that he spoke to her back. It was a hilarious moment.

The mechanicals, led by the marvelously hairy and round-bellied Ray Porter as Bottom, were hippies in workmen's hand-me-downs who drove onstage in the same star-splattered VW Bus that Porter as Autolycus had used in OSF's 2006 *Winter's Tale*. Bottom, of course, drove the bus, which stopped in the midst of the large metallic shapes that would be awash in swirling lights during the central scenes in fairy land. Bottom thus drove the actors *into* the dream world of the confused lovers where he would "play" Titania's lover. Dressed in red bell-bottom pants and yellow paisley shirt, he completely dominated his fellow thespians, who stepped aside every time Bottom pranced mightily to center stage to deliver yet another imposing impersonation.

The rambling monotones of the mechanicals' rehearsal yielded to the sparkling dialogues of John Tufts's Puck, Kevin Kenerly's muscular Oberon, and the wild gyrations of the gay fairies whose vivacious dancing to thumping 70s disco music exuded sexuality. Now in blue bodysuits, leather boots, and grass skirts as they dissed Bottom, now naked to the waist as they danced with and stroked the seductive Titania, the fairies embodied the vibrant eroticism of the play's dream world that included both jealousy of Titania's attention to Bottom and the sexual prurience of adolescence. As the four young lovers careened around the enchanted dream-forest outside the rigorous law of Athens, the fairies gradually stripped them of their clothing, until by the end of Act 4 they lay together wearing only underwear, suggesting the lovers' surrender to the desires of the flesh. Combined with the giant space-ships/phallic symbols and the dazzling lights that reflected crazily from the metallic stars that hung from the "sky," the entire theatre became a throbbing image of human lovers trapped in a dream become nightmare that stripped them of not only their clothing but also their identity. As the lovers chased each other about, wearing less and less, Oberon, the denizen of this entangled dream, perched inside one of the forest's strange metallic trees, grinning.

The most enduring image of the production was Bottom perched giddily on top of a giant metal platform, strewn with purple and orange pillows, that moved up and down and served as Titania's bower. Here she escaped to avoid Oberon's anger and cuddled her hairy lover. This was a dream indeed: a mere mortal "raised up" to the skies in a fairy kingdom and beloved of a very sexy queen in a tight black bodice, stroking his chubby body and winding him in her arms. Surely this dream was past the wit of mortal man to say what dream it was. Though Bottom's journey to a lover's meeting is whimsical, and he is not a wise man's son, still his goofy, grinning

face reminds us that we journey repeatedly to see this play because for a few brief moments it tells us that men's and women's romantic dreams can indeed become—or at least seem—true, despite our faulty vision.



A Midsummer Night's Dream: Kevin Kenerly as Oberon and Christine Albright as Titania. Photo by David Cooper.

For the final scene, Rucker separated the men and women as they watched Bottom's fumbling company perform Pyramus and Thisbe: Hippolyta, Hermia, and Helena sat atop the stage right vomitorium, while Theseus, Lysander, and Demetrius sat atop the stage left vomitorium. Like the theatre patrons, they faced the stage, and so became part of us. When they laughed at the silly performance—Moon balancing a large chunk of cheesecake on his head and Bottom roaring more than any lion could as he died, died, died, thus, thus, thus—so did we. This blocking isolated and emphasized the somewhat cruel remarks of the men and implicated us in their responses. We too, if we are to deserve the fairies' blessings at play's end, must show patience and tolerance for those who labor at festivals such as OSF to "make new" productions of Shakespearean plays that have been performed frequently.⁵ For the final tableau the three couples walked to center stage, turned toward the audience, and hoisted their champagne glasses, as much a toast to their weddings as to us. Egeus, whose matriarchal rule had been overturned by Theseus in 4.1 as he hears of strange metamorphoses from the young lovers, stood far upstage, drinking alone from a bottle.

Puck's farewell includes four variations of "amend": "mended" at 419; "mend" at 425; and "amends" at 429 and 433, the last word of the play. Unlike Metropulos's *Errors*, Rucker's *Dream* deserved our own amends. Whereas Metropulos bent *Errors* into an unrecognizable shape and cut heavily to make what was left fit her concept, Rucker used an evocative set to enliven his characters' erotic dreams. While both directors aimed to please, and both were trying to appeal to younger spectators, *Errors* was ultimately more about the director than the play. The OSF will appeal

to younger spectators only with productions that respect Shakespeare's scripts and challenge spectators to appreciate his dramatic poetry. Metropulos's *Errors* obscured that poetry; Rucker's *Dream* enhanced it.

Lisa Peterson's *Othello* was a stunning dissection in black and white of sexual jealousy. Rachel Hauck's set was brilliant in its simplicity. The expansive Elizabethan stage was divided into three rectangles painted white: two large squares downstage were divided by a thick black stripe, with a smaller, slightly raised rectangle further upstage. Two white doors upstage led into various interiors, both in Venice and on Cyprus. White steps led to the dark interior of the upper stage, from which Desdemona appeared to elope with Othello. Attached to the posts of both the lower and upper stages were powerful tubular lights that glowed during several scenes, including the council scene in Act 1 and the celebration on Cyprus in Act 2. The black stripe down the middle of the white platforms was wonderfully symbolic. It symbolized Othello himself, who had literally entered into and split white Venetian society by marrying Desdemona; and also the divide within him as he struggled to resist his growing conviction that his wife is unfaithful. During several scenes the black stripe symbolized the actual divisions emerging in the play: Othello stood on the stripe as he delivered his tale to the council of his adventures and wooing of Desdemona, and Desdemona strode from one side of the divide to the other as she moved from her father to her husband in 1.3. Othello and Desdemona danced across the symbolic divide as they celebrated their reunion on Cyprus, and Iago and Othello exercised on either side of the divide at the beginning of 3.3. During his soliloquies, especially his first, Iago stood right on the stripe as he explained his hatred for the Moor and his plot to destroy him. Because there were very few props, the simple black and white of the set was a constant reminder of the racial dichotomies and blistering hate at the center—literally and metaphorically—of this play. The black and white of the set also highlighted the lush colors of Christopher Acebo's Renaissance clothing.

Desdemona emerged from the dark interior of Brabantio's house in a simple white smock at the top of the white stairs, holding a candle to the darkness, a visual image of white and black. Othello whistled from the vomitorium stage right, and she hurried down the stairs and across the black stripe towards her black lover; they embraced, then exited laughing. This silent, passionate moment—what need love for words?—was shattered by the loud, angry voices of Iago and Roderigo who, throughout the play and in stark contrast to Othello and Desdemona, dressed solely in black leather. From his first words, Dan Donohue, an exceptionally gifted actor, announced clearly that his Iago was driven by hate and sexual jealousy that Donohue made palpable. He spat out Iago's lines with a high-pitched, almost quaking tension in his voice, as if unable to draw sufficient breath to speak all that he felt. Monosyllables like "zounds" and "hate" split the air, and his vocal power enabled him to speak Iago's sentences with no end stops, thus building the urgency of Iago's cascading anger as he articulates why he hates the Moor. Especially during Iago's soliloquies, one appreciated how a brilliant actor, alone on the stage, could amaze spectators' eyes and ears with his command of Shakespeare's verse. The defining moment for Donohue's Iago was his second soliloquy, 2.1.287-313: "That Cassio loves her, I do well believe 't," where he says he

suspects the “lusty Moor” has leaped into his seat. At 298—“Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my innards”—Donohue grabbed his gut and suddenly bent over for several poignant seconds. Sexual jealousy thus clearly motivated his revenge. Although some of Iago’s misogynistic lines in 2.1 that might indicate his latent homosexuality were cut, nonetheless Donohue chose a clear path to the enormously complex question of Iago’s motivation: he feared two other men with his nightcap, and he had to destroy them both.

Peter Macon as Othello and Sarah Rutan as Desdemona were obviously deeply in love. Macon—bald, muscular, and commanding—stood before the senators in



***Othello:* Sarah Rutan as Desdemona and Peter Macon as Othello.
Photo by Jenny Graham.**

1.3 in a flowing gold robe that boldly proclaimed his self-confidence. Macon told Othello’s tales of wooing and adventure in measured, balanced phrases that captured Othello’s sense of his own nobility; surely Macon understood Othello’s insistence that he came from “men of royal siege” who demanded respect. Desdemona, in a floor-length green dress, stood exactly on the black stripe as she explained emphatically and joyfully to Brabantio why she loved the Moor and wanted to enjoy the “rites” for which she married him. Their reunion on Cyprus was visually and emotionally compelling; Desdemona leaped into Othello’s arms as he hurried onstage, as if eager to make “love’s quick pants” (2.1.82). As Othello proclaimed the celebration after the destruction of the Turkish fleet, he and Desdemona in matching black and gold—she in a low-cut, vivid red dress with gold sleeves, he in black pants, white shirt, and a floor length robe of sparkling gold with criss-crossed red embroidery—danced on and then across the black dividing stripe, obliterating the color differences that would soon poison Othello’s imagination.

Iago engineered the fight between Cassio and Roderigo very quickly after Othello and Desdemona exited in 2.3 to savor the “fruits” of their marriage: “That profit’s yet to come ‘tween me and you” (10). This line may be interpreted to mean that they have not yet consummated their marriage, and Peterson emphasized this interpretation when, after the fight, Othello and later Desdemona emerged still wearing the clothes they had worn during their dance moments before. As Othello says that he will be Montano’s surgeon, one can speculate that this line again suggests that Desdemona and Othello do not now have time, or leisure, given Othello’s rage at the altercation, to be alone together. Although one can certainly speculate on their having consummated their marriage at the Sagittary in 1.1, Peterson’s staging here strongly suggested that the love for Desdemona that Othello abandons so quickly in 3.3 has never been physically shared.

Othello surveyed the battlements from the upper stage that in 1.1 was Brabantio’s house and that was now Othello’s last place of power. Desdemona, again in red and gold, pleaded earnestly and playfully with Othello about Cassio’s reinstatement; she danced around him as if pleading while also teasing him, so that when Othello fervently cried: “Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul / But I do love thee! And when I love thee not, / Chaos is come again” (3.3.98-100), one sensed not only the absolute dichotomies that characterize Othello’s mind, but also the depth of his love that when destroyed would herald the terrible chaos yet to come. During 3.3 Othello and Iago cast black shadows on the white rectangles as they too danced about each other, sparring with long pikes in a mock combat that soon became psychologically all too real. As in Iago’s earlier soliloquies, so in this scene Iago’s destruction of Othello’s self-confidence moved in noticeable stages, marked by the rapid increases in the rhythm and intensity of Iago’s speech as his quarry weakened. The verbal and physical sparring escalated quickly, as the increasingly loud clashes of their pikes symbolized the increasing tension of the scene. At 178ff, Iago’s “O, beware, my lord, of jealousy,” he and Othello stood face to face across the black stripe as Iago spat out the word whose thought had bent him in half in his second soliloquy and gnawed at him still. At 224, where Iago reminds Othello of Desdemona’s “seeming” that sealed “her father’s eyes up close as oak,” Iago grabbed Othello’s pike, symbolically taking from him a symbol of his manly (and possibly sexual) power and his “occupation.” When Iago returned a moment later, on “My lord, I would I might entreat your honor / To scan this thing no farther” (260-61), Iago touched Othello’s shoulder from behind, as if gently counseling him, then smirked as he walked slowly offstage. Othello spoke the following soliloquy: “This fellow’s of exceeding honesty,” where he laments being black, “having not those soft parts of conversation / That chamberers have,” and being “declined / Into the vale of years” (274-95) while straddling the black stripe that now symbolized the rift between him and Desdemona.

The remainder of 3.3 and 3.4 complicated Iago’s character and his relation to Emilia, and again featured several clear directorial choices. Desdemona, wearing a black and white embroidered dress and smiling broadly, more bounced than walked towards Othello at 3.3.295: “How now, my dear Othello?” When he complained of a headache and she offered him her handkerchief, he, not she, dropped it, so that he

was partly at fault for not knowing how it was lost. Vilma Silva as Emilia, as attractive a woman as Rutan's Desdemona, was very pleased with finding the handkerchief and certainly saw it as a way to garner her wayward husband's favor. Iago treated Emilia gently, despite the cynicism of "common thing," taking the handkerchief from her as he stood behind her and gently stroked her breasts. While his language hints at misogyny, his gestures suggested either a genuine care for Emilia or, perhaps in keeping with the gnawing pain of sexual jealousy, a willingness to tease Emilia with caring because he knows that approach will work on her. To the extent that one sees *Othello* as the tragedy of Emilia, Silva's performance indicated a gentle woman desperate for her husband's love but also, until the final scene, completely unaware of his evil. Iago's narration of lying with Cassio, in which many critics find significant evidence of Iago's deeply suppressed homosexuality, seemed for Donohue more a sordid tale of women's infidelity than Iago's desperate cry of homoerotic desire for Othello and/or Cassio. Yet as they knelt together in the mock marriage that ends 3.3, Iago grasped lovingly Othello's hands and proclaimed loudly: "I am your own forever" (495) while centered above the black stripe, as if obliterating the racial differences between them. Conversely, the differences between Othello and Desdemona became painfully evident in 3.4, as her innocent pleading for Cassio and her attempt to substitute another handkerchief for the one with "magic in the web" (3.4.71) clashed with Othello's sudden anger that now emphasized his powerful physique. Here Macon hinted at the terrifying violence that his rage would ultimately produce.

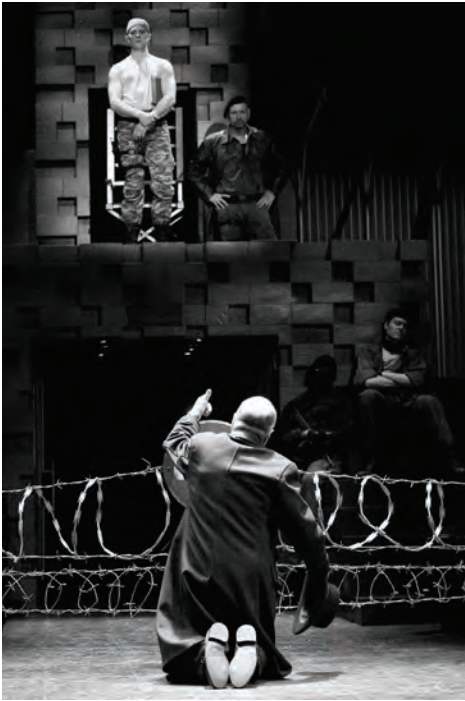
Iago and Othello entered 4.1 wearing, respectively, long black and white coats, yet another image of the racial divide of the play. As Othello collapsed into a trance, Macon's superb command of his body signified his fall into a frightening, brutish being, hardly the supremely commanding figure of 1.3 and 2.2. After the eavesdropping on Bianca and Cassio, which Othello observed ironically from above, the place from which Desdemona had descended and from where he had confidently surveyed the battlements in 3.2, Macon unleashed a physical and verbal violence that led to a terrifying finale. His slap of Desdemona at 4.1.243, "Devil!," sent her sprawling to the ground. His questioning of Emilia in 4.2 was so furious that Othello seemed liable to strike Desdemona even before they spoke. Again, Peterson's direction and actors' choices created a profoundly terrifying scene. On Othello's "Ah, Desdemon! Away, away, away" (4.2.43), which includes an affectionate abbreviation of her name, Desdemona, still wearing the black and white embroidered dress, rose and gently kissed his cheek even as he wept at the impossibility churning within him: "If she be false, O, then heaven mocks itself" (3.3.294). For a moment one sensed that Desdemona and Othello might rewrite their script, so powerful was Desdemona's gentleness. Yet even as he wept, Othello's rage returned, and in his probable reference to Desdemona's genitals as a "cistern for foul toads / To knot and gender in!" (4.2.63-64) one realized that Othello had fully imbibed Iago's poison; the probable sexual pun on "cunning whore" only sealed her fate.

The willow scene was unusually poignant because of the huge chasm now open between the jocular Emilia and the dazed Desdemona. They were attended by a small boy, perhaps symbolizing the child Othello and Desdemona might have had,

until Emilia shooed him away as Desdemona sang Barbary's tale of "couching" with more men. Emilia enjoyed being naughty, seeming to relish committing a small vice for a "great price" and making her husband a monarch, thus hinting perhaps at there being some justification for Iago's jealousy, despite her sternly denying it to him in 4.2. She spoke her lines about husbands' and wives' infidelity standing behind Desdemona and thus addressing spectators, as if lecturing us about why women "fall." This Emilia would have walked a long way for a touch of Lodovico's nether lip.

Desdemona's bed, framed by four posts, rose from below; flute music drifted over the stage. Othello entered from the stage left vomitorium, which meant that he had a long walk to the bed. Wearing a white shirt that matched Desdemona's smock he spoke of putting out lights as he unsheathed his sword and approached the bed. He bent painfully, again evidently crying, over "that whiter skin of hers than snow" (5.2.4), an image suddenly reified because of the production's constant emphasis on the play's black/white dichotomy. Upon Desdemona's awakening, it was a terrifyingly brief moment between her gentle "Will you come to bed, my lord?" (25) that she speaks lying on her wedding sheets and her furious struggle to save her life. Othello finally picked her up, flung her upon the bed like a "cunning whore,"

and suffocated her. As Emilia knocked and screamed at the door, Othello covered Desdemona's body, as if covering his crime. Iago first tried to quiet Emilia with a kiss, and then, as his latent misogyny finally exploded at calling Emilia "filth," he stabbed her, becoming, like Othello, a man who has killed his wife. Emilia crawled painfully to Desdemona's bed, dying with the woman whom she could have saved had she but told her of the handkerchief's journey. In yet another stunning visual image, Cassio entered carrying the magical handkerchief. (Why does it simply disappear from so many productions after Bianca's exit at 4.1.161?) Having lost his sword moments before, Othello pulled from under Desdemona's bed a small knife which he wrapped in the handkerchief that Cassio, Desdemona's supposed lover, now gave back to Othello in a striking reversal of Othello's having given the handkerchief to Desdemona. Thus, the handkerchief, which makes the play turn on the slightest of circumstances,⁶ traveled ironically back to Othello from the man who so fervently



Coriolanus: Richard Elmore as Menenius, kneeling. From left above: Danferth Comins as Coriolanus, Michael Elich as Aufidius, and Christopher Michael Rivera as Adrian. Photo by Jenny Graham.

hoped in 2.1 that Othello would “Make love’s quick pants in Desdemona’s arms” (82). Othello stood at the head of the bed, narrating yet another version of his heroic self in the balanced tones of his council speech in 1.3, and then stabbed himself. Wanting desperately to “die upon a kiss” (370), and terrifyingly aware of his folly, Othello struggled agonizingly to get onto the bed. Shedding his blood on the wedding sheets that in this production we apparently were to assume were never spotted with Desdemona’s virginal blood, Othello embraced Desdemona. Macon’s physical agony made words useless. “All that is spoke is marred” (5.2.368).

Director Laird Williamson and set designer Richard L. Hay, both OSF veterans, combined to produce a stunning production of *Coriolanus* that maximized the acting space and technical features of the New Theatre. The circular seating focused the action on the center stage. The actors used four different entrances, creating a sense of rapidly developing political and military action. During the battle scenes, soldiers also emerged from “below” through trap doors to deliver weapons, suggesting both the Elizabethan theatre’s symbolic location of hell and the eternal hellishness of war. Political banners hung from the rafters and above two upper doors, from which several characters, including Coriolanus, Menenius, Brutus, Volumnia, and Aufidius, emerged to speak. The circular seating also implicated spectators in the play’s actions, especially the violent battle scenes but also scenes of political manipulation, as in 2.3 and 3.1. As the generals, soldiers, thugs, enraged citizens, and politicians emerged onto the circular stage, they came from among us, the spectators, to do our bidding and to fight our wars; as Pogo remarked, “We have met the enemy, and he is us.” Though ostensibly set in fascist Europe of the 1940s, the production transcended both its classical origins and its modern setting while also unavoidably reminding spectators of the war in Iraq, especially when a group of citizens emerged after the peace with Corioles carrying shopping bags full of stuff they had bought at the mall. One recalled President Bush’s cynical response to the American people after 9/11: “Go shopping.”

Shakespeare’s “mutinous Citizens,” modern “insurgents” of Rome dressed in battle fatigues, carried banners, baseball bats, pole axes, shovels, and guns; here was a rabble every bit as unruly as the professional soldiers of Coriolanus or Aufidius. Into this mob walked Richard Elmore as the stately Menenius in a dark suit, white shirt and tie, black overcoat, and fedora, a peripatetic philosopher explaining confidently the tale of the belly as he strode amid the hungry. The visual contrast was stunning: The overturned benches and chairs, weapons, and trash littering the stage suggested that reasonable arguments, however nobly expressed, matter little when deprivation has driven people into mobs willing to bash heads for food. Accompanied by soldiers in Nazi-era uniforms and jack-boots and speaking into cell phones, Danforth Comins as Coriolanus vented his contempt for the “fragments” and “rats” (1.1.223, 250) of Rome, thus establishing the enormous pride that animates his character and the enmity that would propel Coriolanus towards his fatal alliance with Aufidius.

In 1.3 Williamson brilliantly focused the central place of war in this play. At opposite entrances to the stage stood cardboard human figures full of holes that soldiers and policemen use in target practice. At the base of the targets were several trophies that adults or children might today win at sporting events. These were

presumably shooting trophies won by Coriolanus. However, as Volumnia, Virgilia, and later Valeria spoke, Williamson introduced Virgilia's son, dressed in his own Nazi uniform, holding a machine gun and pointing at the targets, as if practicing shooting; perhaps then these were *his* trophies, awarded for his young marksmanship. In raising this boy, Volumnia's lust for yet another Hector in the family had obviously dominated. From the boy's shooting practice to the sights and sounds of war in 1.4 was but a short step; the child is father to the man. Sounds of machine guns and choppers filled the theatre; soldiers, screaming violently, poured onto the stage from all directions, including hell's mouth; one thought of Francis Ford Coppola's battle scenes in *Apocalypse Now* (1979). Facing Michael Elich's Aufidius in 1.8, Comins raged with bestial glee at the battle. While the *mano a mano* fight is certainly necessary for the play, it suddenly seemed anachronistic in a battle filled with machine guns and helicopter gunships. Reporters using laptops and cell phones, in the style of NPR, relayed Caius Martius Coriolanus's victory to the tribunes and citizens of Rome, again suggesting a contemporary connection. Volumnia's "Oh, he is wounded, I thank the gods for 't" (2.1.120), while celebrating her son's physical war wounds, also suggests the deep psychological wound in his character.

Coriolanus's attempt at humility and then his surrender to the wound of self-destructive pride were superb. Comins commanded well the range of emotions through which Coriolanus travels in the middle of the play, and his excellent diction articulated clearly Coriolanus's complex arguments for why he apparently wishes to serve the citizens of Rome even as his own insolence betrays him. He appeared genuinely humble in 2.2, his injured arm in a sling, not wishing to show his wounds. Appearing in 2.3 in a torn gown tattooed with maps and names of revolutionary guerilla leaders such as Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, Comins's voice and gestures yet evinced contempt for those whose favor he claimed to court. As political chaos threatened in 3.1, again suggesting a populace unable to govern itself, the contemporary clothing suggested the urban riots of the late 1960s in American cities, and emphasized the play's questioning of the possibility of citizens' self-rule and the dilemma caused by leaders more interested in their own power than in the well-being of their citizens. Comins and Robynn Rodriguez as Volumnia brilliantly captured this dilemma in their confrontation in 3.2. In a floor-length, blood-red dress, Rodriguez urged her son towards a compromise with himself that she knew he could not sustain. Turning her back on Coriolanus as she spoke, she deftly forced him to follow her across the stage, as if he were falling into the vacuum she created by moving away. Coriolanus's resignation, head bowed, in "Well, I must do 't" (3.2.112) signaled his fatal capitulation not only to Volumnia's power over him, but also to the cynical manipulation of his appearance at the marketplace by Sicinius and Brutus. In 3.3, standing center stage behind a podium, Coriolanus condemned us, the spectators, as he ripped the military medals from his uniform and finally banished us to our ignorance, too easily manipulated by the very forces that Coriolanus despises yet sought to control. As from us came the soldiers that made hideous war, so now from us also came the ignorance that drove away the one man who could have saved the city.

Wearing rags, Coriolanus crawled to Aufidius's house in Antium. Michael Elich as Aufidius clasped him heartily, emphasizing visually the eroticism of their shared

love of violence. Here the wolf loved, not the lamb, but another wolf.⁷ The presumed peace afforded by Coriolanus's departure from Rome prompted construction workers in hard hats and their wives to go shopping, and citizens greeted Sicinius and Brutus with popcorn on their way home. The news of the Volscians' advance upon Rome came via cell phone messages, and the sense of panic in Menenius and Cominius caused by news of Coriolanus's league with Aufidius heralded Williamson's brilliant conclusion to the play.

Barbed wire, suggesting the confines of a military compound, stretched across the stage, separating the combined armies of Coriolanus and Aufidius from Rome's citizens. Menenius, who had approached the mob in 1.1 to quell them with rhetoric, now wore the same clothing as he walked nimbly towards the wire, only to be greeted by thugs with machine guns. Coriolanus and Aufidius emerged above, wrapped in insolence. As he knelt, Menenius's passionate plea to Coriolanus as "O My son, my son" (5.2.72) elicited only anger from Coriolanus, and Menenius wept as he struggled to his feet, only to be kicked before he stumbled away. When Volumnia, Virgilia, Valeria, and the young Marcius (released from target practice?) entered in clothes soiled by war to plead for Rome, Williamson added a powerful stage image: Virgilia was visibly pregnant. Thus, were Coriolanus to destroy Rome, he would destroy not only his son and wife, but also his unborn child. Standing now with Virgilia in front of the hideous wire, his kiss was passionate and long, suggesting the final irony of Coriolanus's character: his fatal, human susceptibility to claims of "nature" in what he calls an "unnatural scene" (5.3.184). Rodriguez's delivery of Volumnia's final speech was brilliant, a finely balanced appeal during which she maintained excellent control of her rhythm and diction even as the poignancy of the imagery and urgency of her appeal constantly increased. Comins cried as he fell to his knees on "O Mother, Mother! / What have you done?" (5.3.183-84). Volumnia ironically welcomed her son back into his family even as she certainly knew, given the culture of the play's world, the consequences of her son's capitulation; he could not tread upon her womb, or his wife's.

Coriolanus's death was cannibalistic. In the supreme irony of the play, the code of honor into which Coriolanus is born and which his mother nurtured in him demands his death: "I am glad thou hast set thy mercy and thy honor / At difference in thee. Out of that I'll work / Myself a former fortune" (Aufidius, 5.3.200-02). As if seeking satanic resolve to murder Coriolanus, Aufidius stared into the hellish light beneath the stage as he debated with the conspirators in 5.6. The Second Lord's appeal to Coriolanus's nobility could not save him from mob violence; Aufidius's thugs stabbed him savagely.

At 4.5.232-34, the First Servingman asserts that "Peace is a very apoplexy, / lethargy; mulled, deaf, sleepy, insensible; a getter of / more bastard children than war's a destroyer of men." One sensed that Williamson's contemporary staging of Shakespeare's classical play about a decorated general who tragically sought peace at the cost of military "honor" and bowed to the demands of love was uncomfortably accurate. The human community's appetite for war, and its savage violence, seems unlimited.

Notes

1. Production information courtesy of Amy Richard, Media Relations Manager, Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Reviewer's Packet, 2008. In the 2008 season, the OSF, reacting to the recession, cut about \$5,000,000.00 from its overall budget.
2. 1.2.35-40; 2.2.211-15. All textual references are to *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 4th ed., ed. David Bevington (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).
3. Bevington, Introduction, *Comedy of Errors*, in *Complete Works*, 4.
4. On this phrase, see Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pecos_River
5. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been performed at OSF in 1949, 1955, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1979, 1987, 1993, 1998, 2003, and 2008.
6. On this aspect of *Othello*, see especially Bernard McElroy, *Shakespeare's Mature Tragedies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 89-144.
7. See Stanley Cavell, "Coriolanus and Interpretations of Politics," in *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 143-77. Cavell writes: "The circle of cannibalism, of the eater eaten by what he or she eats, keeps being stretched out, from the first to the last. You might call this the identification of narcissism as cannibalism," 152.



BOOK REVIEWS



Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. Pp. xii + 277.

Reviewed by Aaron Kitch, *Bowdoin College*.

In her previous books—*After Oedipus* (Cornell, 1993) and *Afterlives of the Saints* (Stanford, 1996)—Julia Reinhard Lupton has juxtaposed early modern literature and religious thought with contemporary theoretical concerns. In a similar vein, and building on her religious interests in *Afterlives*, *Citizen-Saints* tackles neoliberal aspirations of universal citizenship and a modern interest in political theology, a topic that has recently been taken up by Deborah Shuger and Oliver Arnold, among others. Drawing on what she terms the “messianic materialism” (5) of Walter Benjamin’s *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* (1927), Lupton tracks citizenship’s “attempt to rezone the complex landscape of religious, ethnic, sexual, and economic differences in terms of formal equality and due process” (10). As we might expect, the results are not always pretty. Beginning with St. Paul’s defense of his rights as a Roman citizen in the process of revising the covenant of circumcision as a foundational idea for the new religion of Christianity, citizenship is baptized in blood and sacrifice.

Lupton’s “citizen-saint” encompasses the modalities of civic naturalization, religious fellowship, executive states of emergency, and what Heidegger calls “mere life,” or extra-political and extra-social existence. She offers readings of St. Paul, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Tempest*, as well as chapters on *The Jew of Malta* and *Samson Agonistes* (plus a reading of Sophocles’ *Antigone* in her *Twelfth Night* chapter). In her opening chapter on St. Paul, perhaps the best in the book, she traces the effect of Paul’s new covenant, which elevates internal spirit over external law, on understandings of Judaism as merely particular and tribal. Paul’s covenant, by contrast, constructs Christianity as a “naturalized . . . purely legal . . . identity” (37). She then turns to Marlowe’s *Jew of Malta*, which she reads as a discourse on the fragmentary nature of civil community: Jews live in a state of internal exile but they are also allowed to cultivate new forms of association based on the model of the theater itself (71). Barabas must “die out of citizenship,” scorning the Christian community that has refused him entrance. Shylock, by contrast, is pressured to leave his particular religion behind for the promise of Venetian mercantile society. Shakespeare’s depiction of the Jew in *Merchant of Venice* confirms the Pauline discourse that situates Jews as historical precursors who make space for the later community. Shylock rebels within the play to the degree that his literalism in his bond with Antonio—his insistence on the pound of flesh rather than the money that is owed to him—reasserts the literal nature of circumcision (92).

Shylock emerges as the (anti)hero of *Citizen-Saints*, an “exemplar of modern citizenship and its discontents” (9). Lupton views his conversion to Christianity as not “forced” so much as nominal and empty, a mere procedural offer of corporate privilege (101). Portia’s Christian universalism cannot reconcile this loss of self evident in Shylock’s response to the court, suggesting that Shakespeare himself must employ a rather conventional mode of romance in order to reconcile the multiple communities—and varied citizen-saints—in the play. She reads *Othello* as a converted Turk

whose suicide ironically fulfills Paul's directive of circumcision through the heart. This reading puts her at odds with recent accounts of the play by Ania Loomba, Kim Hall, and Emily Bartels, whom Lupton regards as too reductive in their view of religion. Ironically, Lupton's revision aligns her more closely with the position of G. K. Hunter in his famous essay on the play. But she suggests that Othello, like Shylock, highlights the tension between *ethnos* and *dēmos*, between nativism and legal identity. Both plays emphasize the costs of citizenship rather than their benefits.

In chapter 5, Antigone is the prototype of the heroine who must die into citizenship, one answered by the figure of Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, who marries into it. Yet Antigone seems a bit out of place in this discussion, as do Caliban and Samson Agonistes in later chapters. Lupton claims a "new universalism" in *The Tempest* in which all humans are "creatures" or non-human, thus posing an exception to their own species identity. But this is perhaps to stretch the concept of citizenship in unhelpful ways. She reads Milton's *Samson* as an outline of non-state forms of sovereignty since Samson, a biblical judge, acts outside of any political jurisdiction (184). But to compare his status as "creature" to that of Caliban requires us to diminish Samson's specificity as a character.

In her epilogue, Lupton affirms the idea of citizenship as a more promising hermeneutic than "culture" for approaching the links between literature and society. She offers a "manifesto for the humanities" that urges universities to make a space for literature and citizenship as a theme for collaborative projects and seminars to remedy an "insufficiency of civic discourse" (208) (in America, presumably, though she doesn't say). No one who is committed to the study of literature can afford to ignore Lupton's manifesto, yet this reader at least remained unclear how the bulk of the book achieves the kind of resynthesization of humanities that she praises. I share her desire to wrest the discourse of citizenship away from politicians and technocrats in order to emphasize the civic dimension of literary study, but questions remain about the relationship between the literature of citizenship and the citizenship of literary study, including questions of authorial identity, canonicity, and the complexities of the manner in which a "literary" work represents itself to the broader world.



Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. (Paperback edition with corrections, 2008.) Pp. 363.

Oliver Arnold, *The Third Citizen: Shakespeare's Theater and the Early Modern House of Commons*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. Pp. 308.

Reviewed by Jason E. Cohen, Berea College.

Andrew Hadfield's *Shakespeare and Republicanism* and Oliver Arnold's *The Third Citizen* present two excellent political approaches to Shakespeare and his intellectual milieu, which taken together shed light on the methodologi-

cal and epistemological affinities as well as important conceptual distinctions between recent literary and historiographic work in the field of early modern English scholarship. These examinations of political ideas follow from parallel traditions in historical and literary studies that have lent substantial heft to historical scholarship in political thought and culture since Pocock and Skinner, on the one hand, and to new historical literary criticism since Greenblatt and Goldberg, on the other. As Hadfield and Arnold remind us, the institutional trajectory determined by these narratives remains crucial, and their books meditate on the states of their disciplines at the same time that they provide scholarly investigations of their complementary topics. For this reason, the pairing illuminates the current conditions of and challenges for historicized approaches to political and ideological criticism in literature.

Differences of scope and method distinguish Hadfield's approach from Arnold's, though each author brings new material to bear on the role of political history and culture in Shakespeare scholarship. In Hadfield's critique, Shakespeare and his contemporaries represent the many frames within which republican political theory may be illuminated; his book's strongest readings suggest how Shakespearean texts (along with discussions of Marlowe, Spenser, Jonson, and Greene) were engaged in and formative of a written conversation with republican ideas derived from classical sources such as Lucan, Tacitus, Livy, and Cicero, as well as the more proximate discourses of Buchanan, Knox, Machiavelli, and a host of English statesmen. Oliver Arnold's project, by contrast, conceives its argument principally through close readings of Shakespeare, and its claims combine psychologically nuanced insights, theoretical discourses, and historically grounded readings. Arnold's work is at its best when he is attuned to the psychological or performative implications of the archival matter with which he supports his work on the role of the Commons in Shakespeare's plays and poems, and of course, in the papers of late Tudor and early Stuart parliamentarians.

Hadfield's deeply comparative treatment promises to frame the concept of "literary republicanism" by discovering how "literary texts adopt and adapt stories from republican history and literature" (80, 58), but while it presents an admirable scope of continental and English polemical tracts as well as classical sources and their translation, the study's limitations become evident when it comes to *reading* the literature it digests. Because it relies on thematic and lexical clusters or traces of influences to characterize events, people, or situations as republican, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* places its emphasis on a high cultural historiography and looks at political conversations of the educated elite, focusing just below the level of the monarchy and House of Lords. The focus on generally high cultural sources, however, raises the problem of marginalizing intellectual instruments like performance history, and it gives short shrift to forms of evidence such as illustrations, popular broadsides and ballads, and manuscript sources. Nevertheless, its organization explains some of these choices, and certainly its documentary merits outweigh such small reservations. The first part of the book fleshes out the historical and conceptual stories upon which literary republicanism was constructed. Hadfield shows convincingly here that republicanism itself, as both a literary term and social formation, is best characterized by an evolving set of concerns rather than as a static

object of attention. This groundwork supplies the basis for subsequent readings of grouped texts, including chapters on the First Tetralogy, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Julius Caesar*, and a stand-alone treatment of *Hamlet*. His analysis maintains as its center of gravity the late Tudor moment; however, the final chapter synthesizes his brief assertions about the potential effects of Stuart monarchical policy on later republican associations. The best chapter features a persuasive discussion of the First Tetralogy, which takes as its point of departure the recent argument that the composition of *1 Henry VI* dates after the second and third parts, and which drives the claim that a potent mix of republican discourses and recent republican activities shaped Shakespeare's choices in revisiting the events that gave rise to the Cade rebellion and the War of the Roses. Surprisingly, at the conclusion of this chapter and at several other moments in the book, Hadfield's analysis turns away from historical data in order to make space for a formal reading of rhetorical figures (in the Tetralogy chapter, he treats *anaphora* and *antimetabole*).

The difficulty implicit in Hadfield's methodology is highlighted, at least to my mind, by the occasional turns to rhetoric: *Shakespeare and Republicanism* leads its readers explicitly to the troubling conclusion that early modern literature is best understood as remaining subsidiary to and dependent upon historical and classical sources, and in his view, historically driven readings have already won the day. The hubris he shows in claiming "that new historicist modes of scholarship have more or less triumphed in literary departments, dominating the forms of study in universities and the ways in which the curriculum is decided" (8) makes clear that the control he believes history exerts over literary analysis carries with it institutional and ideological resonances. His claim to have uncovered a new area of discourse in early modern republicanism is thus tied to his claim that he reveals how best to conduct the type of historiographic explorations that will lead to substantial contributions in this scholarly field. Hadfield's scholarship is exemplary but his view of the disciplinary functions his work serves is misguided, especially in light of recent fiscal pressures that have forced many colleges and universities to reinvent departments and even divisions along lines that may no longer adhere strictly to historical periods or disciplinary areas.

Scholarship in early modern literature is ameliorating the often arthritic strictures of new historicism, using methods that range from close reading to phenomenological inquiry, while often still maintaining a foothold in historical formations and ways of thinking. *The Third Citizen* undertakes one such departure. Arnold's wry declaration of historiographic innovation transforms Hadfield's statement of his discipline's primacy and his topic's novelty into a *bête noire*: "The rhetoric of the 'strangely neglected,'" Arnold chides lightly, "always invites sneering" (26). In *The Third Citizen*, Arnold has found a combination of scholarly rigor and self-awareness that frees his work to be smart without sounding imperious. Further, Arnold's view of the work literary analysis should perform returns to new historicist practices with a fruitfully iconoclastic understanding of the critical heritage.

The Third Citizen replies to the possibility raised by *Shakespeare and Republicanism*: that a republican moment rose with the Tudor court and passed with the Stuart accession. It does so by asserting that the presence of the common citizen on

stage, and with him the representation of the Commons and its political shadows, suffused the whole of Shakespeare's career and thus continued to influence English minds and culture beyond any arbitrary moment. Arnold takes as his point of departure the question of how to assess Shakespeare's sophisticated engagement with the Commons, given the absence of historical data about his personal exposure to Parliamentary procedures or rulings, and further, without a definitive knowledge of his involvement with the Lower House. In response to this initial question, Arnold's text couples the widely recognized problem of coercion (staged and political) with a simple and direct answer: consent. Insisting on the staged and political force of consent, *The Third Citizen* complicates Foucauldian investigations of power by linking the historical place of the Commons to stage productions by means of representational politics. Nevertheless, and here is where Arnold's analysis reverts to a less bold position, the relationship between coercion and consent replays the transgression-containment binary almost to the note, and in the repetition of Greenblatt's formulations (which bookend Arnold's introduction and conclusion) the argument sometimes tends toward encomium. But if this is the book's principal fault, far worse could be suffered, and it is offset by a sense of humor that comes through in a phrase like "the politics of halitosis" (161); the book generally communicates more freshness than stale air.

Arnold's treatments cover some of the same ground as Hadfield's—including a chapter on the First Tetralogy and partial chapters on *Titus* and *Lucrece*—but the book also yields original readings of *Caesar* and *Coriolanus*. As its theoretical cornerstone, the book takes seriously the self-negating claim of the titular Third Citizen in *Coriolanus* that the common citizen has potential power but not inertial power: "We have the power in ourselves to do it, but it is a power that we have no power to do" (2.3.4-5). From this apparent paradox, *The Third Citizen* moves easily among theoretical models and historical moments, though the engagements with Habermasian public sphere theory and Althusserian ideological criticism are the most pronounced. A notable and tight reading of the Clown in *Titus* shows Arnold at his brightest; he reads the Clown's execution as peculiarly English (as the only man hanged in the play) and, in his role as Titus's impromptu messenger to the Emperor, peculiarly ill-fated. In this instance and several others, Arnold forgets his Greenblattian heritage to excellent ends, and one can only see that this approach reaches beyond new historicism. The epistemological critiques of the last generation will continue to open ways, as *The Third Citizen* does, to ontological critiques, and therefore, to set the older questions of what literary knowledge means into a contemporary context, wherein the fundamental question has become how political and ideological material may be put to critical and, at least in this case, theatrical use.



Paul Kottman, *A Politics of the Scene*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008. Pp. xii + 260 pp.

Reviewed by Philip Lorenz, *Cornell University*.

Paul Kottman's *A Politics of the Scene* sets out from a "remarkable paradox" (4): political philosophy, from Plato through Hobbes, and perhaps to the present day, emerges from what Judith Butler might call a constitutive exclusion. On the one hand, it "expel[s] a broad horizon of dramatic representation . . . from the domain of politics, while at the same time, [it relies] upon precise figurations culled from the same horizon through terms like 'mimesis' (Plato) and 'representation' (Hobbes), in order to perform this expulsion" (4). Desiring to exclude what it simultaneously requires, politics "disavows" even as it depends on drama. The implications of this historical dance of exclusion-inclusion are serious for the relationship between theater, politics and philosophy, and Kottman explores some of them through insightful, nuanced, and original readings of Plato and Hobbes, works of Shakespeare, and an early Greek tragedy, on the road to developing a productive and promising way of thinking about the still unexplored potentialities of political life.

While the philosophical-critical problem of the constitutive exclusion in political theory may be familiar from the work of Butler (one of Kottman's teachers), Giorgio Agamben, Ernesto Laclau, and others, *A Politics of the Scene* does much more than identify constitutive exclusions. Instead, this original and challenging book asks us to think about human interactions *not* in terms of appearances or exclusions, but rather as "scenes." But what is a "scene"? While etymologies and dictionary definitions lead us to the stage, the architectural structure around it, the action, the "play," or a particular activity ("to make a scene," "the scene of the crime"), Kottman takes us to where the "dictionary loses control of the term" (10). For him, a "scene" is "any particular horizon of human interaction, inaugurated by the words and deeds of someone or some group, here and now, with the result that a singular relationship or web of relationships is brought into being, sustained, or altered among those on the scene" (10-11). This does not mean that only eyewitness testimony of singular events counts, but rather that all witnesses are singular, as is their interaction and its unforeseeable results. An expansive, flexible, and dynamic definition, to be sure—the "scene" is particularly fruitful for thinking about political relations precisely because of its resistance to neat definitional encapsulation. The "value of the 'scene'" as a theoretical category for politics lies in the extent to which scenes do not allow themselves to be apprehended "theoretically" (9), a phenomenon Kottman wants to avoid for its danger of lending itself, in turn, to new foundations (with their own implicit exclusions). One of the scene's crucial preconditions is its "anticipatory temporality—whereby a scene begins presently only insofar as the relation that it inaugurates here and now is, from the start, oriented (beyond all intentions and desires) toward a future testimony among witnesses from the 'original' scene" (11).

The book's philosophical framework, including references from Kenneth Burke to Hayden White and Heidegger, rests primarily on two principal thinkers: Hannah

Arendt (along with Adriana Cavarero's readings of Arendt), whose notion of "Action" provides one orientation for Kottman's "scene," and Jean-Luc Nancy, whose own concept of the *scène*, which Kottman transports from the realm of ontology to that of politics, gives another.

The book has two parts. In the first section, "Political Theory and the Expropriation of the Scene," Kottman follows the trajectory of the key terms, "mimesis" and "representation," in Plato and Hobbes, in order to show that while both thinkers rely heavily upon those terms, they do so in a way that attempts to restrict and ultimately banish their more contingent, interactive, and spontaneous aspects in order to ground politics "in an ontology that has nothing to do with the sharing of words and deeds between singular people or the relationships that result from these interactions" (5). If the first section focuses on the conceptual expropriation of drama from political philosophy, the second, "Toward a Politics of the Scene," attempts to "recuperate from the dramatic canon . . . a different theoretical articulation of politics . . . that understands human interaction in terms of the singular webs of scenes and relations from which political life is spun" (6). Here Kottman offers original readings of *Hamlet* (on witnessing), and *Romeo and Juliet's* balcony scene (as a manifestation of singularity beyond the name), before returning to a consideration of the literalization of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor in Richard Edwardes's *The Excellent Comedie of the two most faithfullest Freendes, Damon and Pithias* (1565) and Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

What is at stake in these readings (a question the book never loses sight of) is "not simply the form or contextual import of the actions that are performed, but rather the way in which they bring into being new relationships whose sense and meaning arise between those agents on the scene" (108).

In the book's fifth chapter, a close engagement with Arendt, Heidegger, and Nancy, and arguably the book's theoretical center, Kottman carefully and clearly lays out the project's philosophical stakes, even as these lie in part (paradoxically) in the theoretical advantages of *not* defining political relationships philosophically (106). Here, among other things, Kottman takes on one of the central questions/problems of any theory of drama: the body. Kottman's treatment of the body and embodiment in drama is one of the most innovative features of the book. Contra to much performance theory, for Kottman (again, following Arendt's conception of "action"), "the physical capacities of the body are necessary but not sufficient" for thinking about theater in terms of "scenes" (108). Action—"the indispensable activity of both the theater and political life" (108)—presents the body with a limit. "One can sing alone, but one cannot act without others" (108).

Some will certainly object to this view of the body and its limitations as far as political relations go. If for performance theorists like Peggy Phelan, the question of "bodily life" is unavoidable in any serious account of theater, for Kottman, "although this capacity for beginning or inaugurating political communities is at a certain level made possible by the actor's embodied uniqueness, it is not yet not fully *conditioned* . . . by that actor's unique body . . . My actions are . . . performances through which my body . . . enters into a relation that is more than ontological" (110-111).

The sixth chapter turns to Herodotus's account of Phrynichus's *Fall of Miletus*, the earliest performance of a tragedy on record, staged only two years after the Persians' actual defeat of the Milesians. Focusing on that early audience's reaction—namely, their bursting into tears—Kottman challenges Aristotle's understanding of the relation between mimesis and politics, insofar as *these* tears are not a manifestation of *Katharsis*. Nor are they the effect of the imitation of action. Instead, they seem to be the result of a shared recollection of something which only *that* audience could have experienced. This leads Kottman to add a "second modality" to his sense of "scene." In addition to being the result of a sharing of words and deeds, a politics of the scene here ensues from "the living affirmation of a shared memory" (119). Along with the praxis that has the power to establish wholly "unforeseen" relations, this "second type" now emerges, "which occurs in memoriam [and] affirms a relation whose character depends upon some memory that is already shared, or binding" (121). This notion will lead to an interesting attempt, if not to invert, then at least to complicate the "predominate view" (128) of tragedy that rests on the bond between dramatic experience and politics.

Again, whether Kottman is successful in "narrating the political significance of mimesis in a way that might function as a counterhistory to the Platonic declension" (134) or not will be open for debate. What is clear is that his emphasis on praxis and on an enacted mimesis over a Platonic version of "a *poetic* mimesis, understood as a derivative mode of fabrication" (134) coherently and convincingly supports the book's overall argument for both a political and a theatrical praxis of means without ends.

The seventh chapter follows the formation of politics in *Hamlet* through the relation of one witness to another. Focusing on Arendt's distinction between speech and classical narration, Kottman points out that if in classical narration, "it does not matter . . . who is listening—since the tale of the hero, told posthumously, ought to be capable of touching everyone" (143)—in *Hamlet*, on the other hand, Shakespeare "offers virtually nothing but scenes of speaking wherein it matters deeply who is listening . . ." (143). The result is that nascent politics form not only around Barnardo's interrupted narrative testimony, but also, most surprisingly, in response to a "nonsemantic, noncommunicative sense of speech [that] seems to lie at the heart of what brings Horatio, Barnardo, and Marcellus together" (160).

Similarly, in the eighth chapter, "A Scene of Speaking: Convocation and the Suspension of Tragedy in *Romeo and Juliet*," what's at stake in the balcony scene consists less of the communication of semantic content (the meanings of the lovers' words) than of the value of their vocal exchanges. Focusing on the singularity of Romeo's voice, Kottman argues that Shakespeare's transposition of the story to the stage subverts both the story and its tragic politics of identity based on the name (183). In the end, the singularity which the lovers' exchange makes visible resists inscription.

Finally, the Epilogue returns to the *theatrum mundi* metaphor to see how (in the words of Kottman's Introduction) "a Shakespearean ontology of the world stage might help us to gauge the limits of the political-philosophical tradition from which it inherits the *theatrum mundi* image" (7). This claim raises what could be a recur-

ring question/confusion. While the focus of the book is clearly on the way that “scenes” help us understand how politics can emerge away from any ontology, and while the bulk of the theoretical argument is designed to “shift the emphasis from the question of ontology as such” (102) and to show, precisely, how the “ontological authority of otherworldly principles” has restricted the opportunities of the “scene,” it may seem counter-intuitive, then, to return to a “Shakespearean ontology” (7), or to “ground politics in an ontology that grasps the world as stage” (7), or to “*rearticulate* the ontological horizon from which a politics of the scene might emerge . . .” (187).

Yet despite these formulations, in the end *A Politics of the Scene* is less interested in rigorously formulating new ontologies (although it clearly prefers one of plurality or what Arendt calls an “antimetaphysical ontology”), than in the question of how drama helps us think of the emergence of a polity out of an “ontological horizon of interrelatedness” (106). Kottman’s writing not only elegantly synthesizes (without ever reducing) complex philosophical concepts, such as Arendt’s “action,” Heidegger’s *mitsein* [“being-with”] or Jean-Luc Nancy’s “mimetology,” but also creatively explores their implications in the course of proposing his own, original category of the “scene” as a site for reflection on the relationship between theater, politics and philosophy.

Finally, and to return to the paradox with which the book begins: despite its rigorous and informed engagement with political philosophy, *A Politics of the Scene* does not, in the end, pretend to be a work of philosophy—or even merely to be “philosophical.” Rather, it is an attempt to rearrange the conceptual as well the metaphorological field in which we think about politics. Apart from an ontology, the world-stage metaphor seems to present something like a paradigm shift within a metaphorological history that structures the theater of thinking, as well as thinking about theater. Thus, whether the *theatrum mundi* image offers an ontology or not matters less in the end than what the category of the “scene” provides us with.

The real strength of Kottman’s book is that it takes seriously the relationship between political philosophy and theater. *A Politics of the Scene* successfully describes what gets produced in the interaction of the “scene” in theater, as opposed to what politics struggles to contain and can’t. Its achievements include providing a novel, compelling, and conceptually coherent description of what theater enables us to do theoretically vis-à-vis political philosophy. To be sure, some psychoanalytically minded readers, speech-act theorists, testimony scholars, and those interested in various theories of performance will have much to say about Kottman’s “scene.” And in this sense, in a way confirming the very category he constructs, *A Politics of the Scene* will itself have entered the critical scene of philosophically informed writing on theater, politics, and Shakespeare.



Paul Griffiths, *Lost Londons: Change, Crime and Control in the Capital City 1550-1660*. Cambridge Social and Cultural Histories. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xvii + 555.

Reviewed by Adam H. Kitzes, *University of North Dakota*.

Among the thousands of recorded documents that tell us about daily life in sixteenth-century London, the following incident, taken from Paul Griffiths' new study, is particularly illuminating. In 1540, local aldermen attempt to confront the growing vagrancy problem by creating, of all things, a census. In writing down a comprehensive survey of the city population, and in focusing particularly on the local vagabonds and their whereabouts, officials presumably would find themselves in a better position to deal with them, or rather with the problems they were believed to bring with them. Their records are incomplete, however, and Griffiths speculates on the most likely reason, noting that "the clerk might well have given up in despair, quickly realizing that it was a pipe-dream to think that the full extent of vagrancy could be captured between the same covers" (402). This episode does not appear until the final chapter of *Lost Londons*, though it would have done well to appear on the first page, as it brings to light several dimensions of Griffiths' subject. A municipal problem is discovered, namely a vagrant population growing too quickly for anyone to know just what to do about it. Officials turn to increasingly sophisticated technologies of surveillance, in the hopes that better information would lead to better management. The dream of quantitative knowledge is undermined by a problem too massive to quantify, while those who make use of the instruments grow conscious of their own limitations. And a documentary account emerges, which offers us a great deal to observe about city conditions, but which at the same time leaves still more to the imagination.

In some ways the 1540 census corresponds with Griffiths' own project, though the historian ultimately is more concerned with the techniques that City officials used to address the problems they faced throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During this period, London's population began to accelerate at an astonishing pace. Along with the growth in numbers came an equally rapid growth in social problems. We are hardly surprised to read about overcrowding, heavy traffic, and constant headaches for whoever was shouldered with the unfortunate burden of sanitation duties. We also come across widespread accounts of poverty and vagrancy, along with a host of crimes such as thieving, streetwalking, and brawling. Bodies of all ages could be found everywhere, at any time of day or night, and city officials inevitably raised questions about who they were, what they were up to, and what their presence suggested about the reputedly handsome city that once was London. As Griffiths argues, although citizens and officials complained loudly and incessantly about the sense of loss, the municipal records tell a different story. In fact, the history of early modern London is a history of the City learning how to deal with its evolving conditions as well as it could.

Griffiths observes this history largely through the massive collection of records contained in the Bridewell and Bethlehem hospital court books. While these docu-

ments are extensive (nearly a million words), they are also incomplete in several critical ways. Nearly all the information is official, but even official information requires careful rhetorical analysis. Most was written down with unspoken objectives in mind, such as obtaining additional operating funds. Conversely, there is virtually nothing that gives the historian a direct sense of any “off-the-record” activity, which undoubtedly was the rule of the day in most cases. Griffiths is under no illusion that his book can offer a complete account of the City in all its fluctuations; instead he describes his approach as a series of impressions.

Since these impressions are drawn largely from the hospital books themselves, it is perhaps not surprising that they lean heavily in favor of law enforcement. Griffiths devotes a section apiece to the physical and demographic changes that the city underwent, as well as to the crime that residents had to endure. These chapters certainly give pause. Each report is brief. Most consist of no more than two or three sentence snapshots, in all likelihood taken down by officials who had little time to indulge on any single case. As they accumulate, they suggest an unsettling picture of individuals ranging all ages and backgrounds, many of whom were actually employed and blessed with permanent residences, all struggling for existence. Some of the names are recognizable; the famous Moll Cutpurse makes several cameo appearances. But it is far more illuminating to observe Moll Cutpurse among the hundreds of less known and less illustrious thieves, prostitutes and beggars. For such cases, name recognition was hardly a matter of distinction, but rather a sign of increasing recidivism. To be well known was not to enjoy celebrity; it was to increase the risk of being pulled aside for questioning.

But Griffiths is more concerned by far with the extensive network of control that the City established in effort to “reform” its members. More than half the book discusses the techniques of record keeping and surveillance. Strategies included a massive undertaking to comprehend anew the geographical conditions, and identifying and patrolling neighborhoods known to be dangerous. At times they involved actively redefining the look of the city, such as occurred when streetlights were introduced. Naturally, they also included more invasive approaches, such as shadowing and interrogating suspicious individuals, building up an active archive of known offenders, and, famously, implementing systems of “correction,” which could run the gamut from conscription to forced labor and forced deportation, to short stays in one of London’s various hospitals.

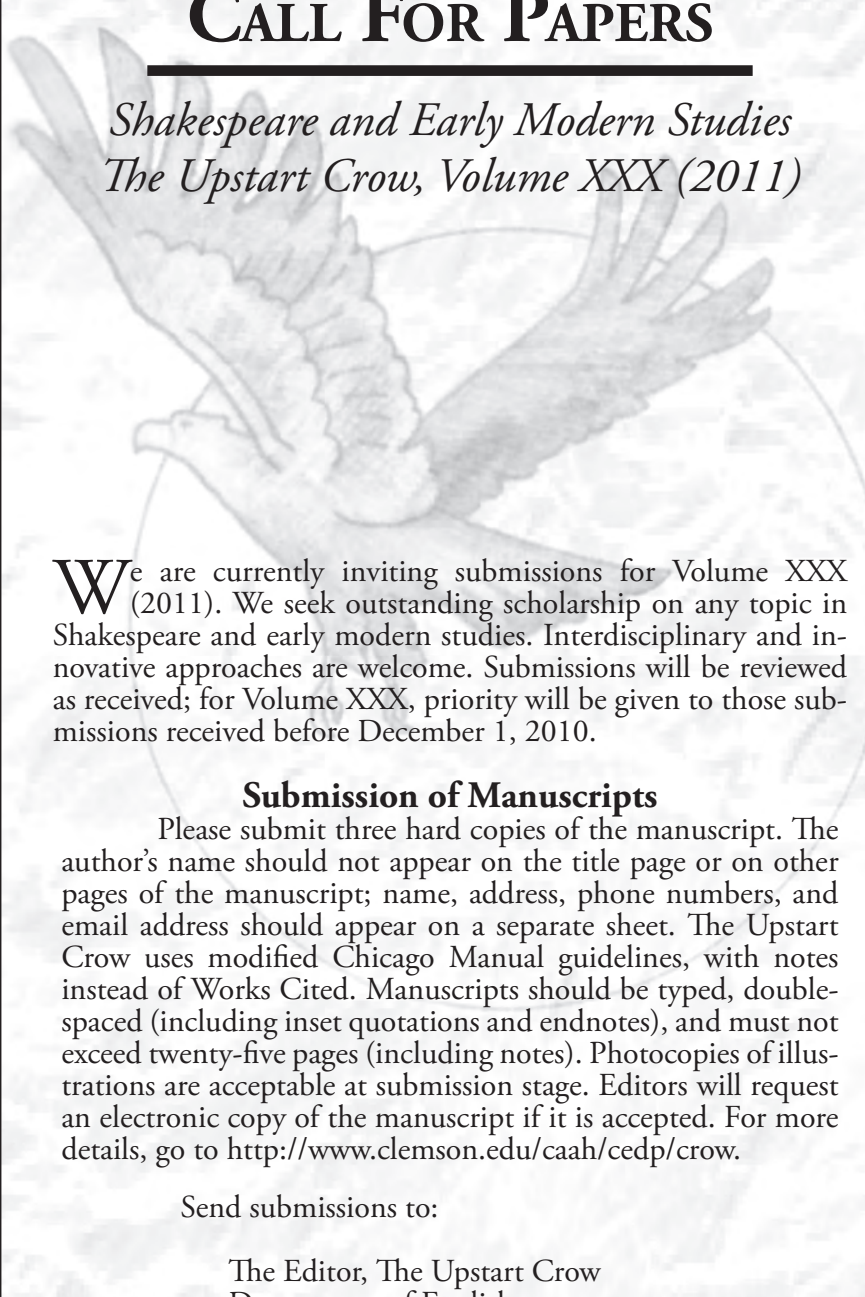
Four of the eleven chapters focus directly on police work, which Griffiths argues was far more sophisticated and competent than previous histories have recognized. While it would not be until the mid-nineteenth century that the first official metropolitan police force was established, officials and residents took great pains to see that London’s inhabitants were more or less protected from violent crimes. Determined to sweep away long-lasting false impressions that constables were bumbling fools—one of his subsections is titled “Getting Rid of Dogberry and Elbow”—Griffiths seeks to show that officers were serious and often quite resourceful in carrying out their responsibilities. In fact a large association of virtuous neighbors, constables, beadles, bellmen, watchmen, and warders helped create an extensive, if sometimes clashing, network of civic engagement. While corruption and incompe-

tence certainly could be found everywhere, so too could genuine commitments to jobs, which individuals often risked life and limb to perform.

Undoubtedly, the strength of Griffiths' book is the quantity of material that he brings in, which impresses on us the sense of an ongoing and long-lasting concern. Although it does not pretend to be a comprehensive survey, *Lost Londons* does go a long way toward giving us a vivid impression of just how City officials understood and addressed the problems that stemmed from a rapidly growing population. It is an important study for anyone interested in who the residents were in early modern London; for those interested in the various specific ways these residents were governed, it is essential.

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— Robert Greene, *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592)



For those persons who have become subscribers this year, I want to welcome you and extend my personal thanks to you, as well as to continuing subscribers, for your support. I know I speak for the journal’s editors, staff, and advisory board. Your help makes a great difference as the Center for Electronic and Digital Publishing (CEDP) endeavors to maintain high standards and strives to do new things with this publication for Clemson University Digital Press (CUDP). The two shoulders of our publishing house are *The South Carolina Review* and *The Upstart Crow*. The latter is one reason Clemson is associated with William Shakespeare’s good name (and Greene’s epithet). *The Upstart Crow* continues its transformation in the new millennium. Outwardly, the annual has generated a new appearance—starting with volume XXI (2001). Inwardly, its organization, policies, and operating procedures are also new. In memory of Jim Andreas, late editor and co-founder (in 1990) of the Clemson Shakespeare Festival, we decided to change the cover and include a special section each year to match the theme of the festival. Although, alas, the Clemson festival had its last season in spring 2008, we plan to stick to the format for the journal, with themes announced in advance. This year’s theme is cognate with that of the spring 2008 festival.

In January 2009, Elizabeth Rivlin returned to duty as Editor from her maternity leave. We congratulate her on the addition to her family and welcome her back.

Another change to acknowledge is that, due to an austerity measure, our university print shop was closed in June 2008 so that all printing for Clemson University could be outsourced to private vendors. This has been especially challenging as we at the digital press have had to shoulder work formerly performed for us by full-time graphic artists at the defunct Clemson University Printing Services. We welcome Standard Register of Columbia, South Carolina, a commercial printer that utilizes a plant in Greensboro, North Carolina, with a slightly smaller page format than earlier volumes, to maintain essentially the same printing costs. I think you will observe some compensating, qualitative improvements, as well.

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Wayne K. Chapman
CEDP Director / CUDP Executive Editor