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SYMPOSIUM

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The *Shawangunk Review* is the journal of the English Graduate Program at the State University of New York, New Paltz. The *Review* publishes the proceedings of the annual English Graduate Symposium and literary articles by graduate students as well as poetry, fiction, and book reviews by students and faculty. The views expressed in the *Shawangunk Review* are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of English at SUNY New Paltz. Please address correspondence to *Shawangunk Review*, Department of English, SUNY New Paltz, New Paltz, NY 12561.

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From the Editors

Volume XVIII of the *Shawangunk Review* features the proceedings of the 2006 English Graduate Symposium, “Shakespeare and the Paradoxes of Political Tragedy,” which was directed by Thomas Festa. On behalf of the Graduate Program, and the entire English Department, the editors would like to thank Professor Festa for arranging an excellent program of graduate student papers and for inviting the distinguished scholar Kimberly W. Benston (Haverford College) as the keynote speaker. Professor Benston has generously granted us permission to publish his remarkable essay on *Lear*, and has also provided a written response to the student papers and symposium theme. We are deeply appreciative of his contributions to last year’s symposium and to this volume of the *Review*.

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt will direct the 2008 symposium, which she has entitled “The Literature of the Holocaust: History, Memory, Representation.” Please contact Professor Schmidt for information about the symposium and watch for her posting of a call for papers.

We are happy to announce that for the first time the *Review* contains critical essays by master’s level students from other academic institutions. In response to our electronic posting, we received over thirty submissions from students across the country, and indeed around the world. Of these, we selected three for publication, and we congratulate Logan Connors (Louisiana State University), Lynda L. Hinkle (Rutgers University-Camden), and Constance L. Woodard (Salisbury University) for their fine work.

The submission deadline for Volume XIX of the *Review* is December 15, 2007. We welcome poetry, short fiction, book reviews, and critical essays concerning any area of literary studies. Students writing theses (41590) are encouraged to submit an abstract. Please see submission guidelines on page 155.

We ask readers to provide information regarding achievements of our current and former graduate students for the “News and Notes” column. For example, we would like to know the details of conference participation, publications, grants, and honors, as well as news regarding progress of our MA graduates in PhD programs and reports about teaching and employment activities.

Thanks to Jason Taylor for layout, typesetting, and production supervision, and to Jason Cring for the cover art.

I Introduction

Shakespeare and the Paradoxes of Political Tragedy

Thomas Festa

Nearly a year later, it is a pleasure to revisit and reflect upon the topic of the Eighteenth Annual SUNY New Paltz English Department Graduate Symposium, “Shakespeare and the Paradoxes of Political Tragedy.” I agreed to organize the symposium before I had started teaching here, and so, thinking back on my initial idea for the topic, I naturally recall the event as a unique if peculiar moment of convergence in which my expectations about the discipline of Shakespeare studies collided with what seemed to me the brave new world of our graduate program. My Shakespeare teachers in graduate school having been leading figures in the New Historicism and its even more historicist aftermath, my own training taught me always to see Shakespeare doubly, “seeming parted / But yet an union in partition,” as Helena says to Hermia in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (3.2.210-11). That is, Shakespeare’s plays give voice to a thoroughly engaged conception of political relationships, even where they seem, as in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, perhaps most innocent of the burden of ideology. This sense of relation—between characters as much as between the author and the contexts in which, for which, and about which he wrote—informs recent critical writing that wants above all to think historically about the Elizabethan and Jacobean playwright in his world. Yet such critical acts, the practitioners of the New Historicism reminded us, cannot be segregated from the motives of our own times, regardless of our intention (or pretension, as the case may be) to produce historical accuracy.

As I began to think about the two major plays whose anniversaries would coincide with the symposium—*Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra*—the pressures exerted by large-scale politics on the private, “individual” subject stood out, and I recalled that several of the conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot had been publicly executed with great relish and horrific aplomb in 1606. What I did not know about our students, however, is how elastic their understanding of the political would be, something that the symposium essays in this volume of the *Shawangunk Review* eloquently attest to: the domain of politics is itself a contested ground, one that will not settle neatly into a convenient historical definition any more than it will be circumscribed by the narrow concerns of the present. It was a pleasure to work with our students in the preparation of their outstanding work. They presented it marvelously in person, and now it is here for further

contemplation in print.

Just as our students intelligently resisted the constraints I initially set upon the topic, so I, looking for a way to rethink the topic of politics and Shakespeare myself, sought out a speaker who would nicely differ in critical outlook from the representation of Shakespeare studies that I had encountered in graduate school. I thought I would seek out the most capacious and generous mind, the least hidebound scholar and critic I knew at another institution who worked on Shakespeare. Therefore my friend and former colleague Kimberly Benston, the Francis B. Gummere Professor of English at Haverford College, seemed the perfect choice. Professor Benston has authored two prize-winning books on African-American literature—*Baraka: The Renegade and the Mask* (winner of the 1976 Callaloo Award) and *Performing Blackness: Enactments of African-American Modernism* (winner of the American Society for Theater Research's 2001 Errol Hill Award for outstanding book in performance studies)—in addition to numerous articles on an incredibly diverse range of authors, including Marlowe, Shakespeare, Webster, Wheatley, Wright, Morrison, Wordsworth, Trilling, and Beckett.

Professor Benston told me that he had been thinking about *King Lear* recently in relation to ethical and political thought. I am pleased to say now that I could not then have known just what he meant by this. Exceeding all expectation, the paper he presented was called, “The Unbearable Learnness of Being; Or, Why Should a Dog, a Horse, a Rat Have Life?” For the remainder of the brief space of this introduction, at risk of speaking out of turn, I will attempt to frame the symposium papers by recalling some of the remarkable theoretical ground Professor Benston’s talk uncovered as a way of thinking about the meaning of politics through Shakespeare.

“The art of our necessities is strange,” says homeless Lear to the Fool, “And can make vile things precious” (3.2.68-69). What Shakespeare’s great plays, above all his tragedies, make clear about the human condition is that we cannot know what it is until it confronts us with its surprising alterity, or what Emmanuel Levinas has called “a *traumatism of astonishment*” (73). In this passage, Levinas analyzes the estrangement from the self that he deems the necessary precondition for learning—“The absolutely foreign alone can instruct us,” as he goes on to say (73)—and yet to recognize this about oneself is to acknowledge the bare exposure of selfhood that such an interaction requires. This traumatic interchange, as Professor Benston argued, is the realm to which Shakespearean language and performance will take us if we reckon its force well. Unkinged Lear is brought empathetically to just such an awareness of his own failure of sympathy as a ruler. As he declaims in the face of his own “houseless poverty,”

O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;

Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just. (3.4.33-37)

But one could argue that Lear is still not fully present before the suffering of others, still not fully cognizant of his tragic estrangement from his former sense of self. After all, he still seeks to “show the heavens more just” than presumably they are. He comes nearer to the recognition that haunts the last scenes of the play when he sees Tom O’Bedlam—himself a displaced noble, Edgar, enacting or performing the role of an impoverished lunatic. Lear sees Tom/Edgar and realizes “Thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art” (3.4.98-100).

It is this confrontation with “the thing itself” that must occur in the intersubjective space of mutual recognition, and which forms the paradox of self-knowledge at the heart of Shakespeare’s great tragedies. For the primal reaction to such suffering would seem to be to bolt—one thinks here of Samuel Johnson’s claim, “I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia’s death that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor” (223). What Dr. Johnson records, many sensitive readers and playgoers have surely felt.

Professor Benston’s paper returned our attention to this response in order to ask us to evaluate our status as “a poor, bare, forked animal,” not least to reconsider the idea of the animal. In witnessing the tragedy of another human being, we bear witness to suffering and must reconsider what it means to experience another’s pain. What is our responsibility in the face of another’s suffering? How is our identity configured by our response in that moment? Is the “poor, bare, forked animal” itself a representation, not of some primitive human being, but rather of our political subjectivity?

According to Professor Benston, it is we who are put on trial, not just Lear. For in witnessing his pain, we must bear witness, and therefore come to terms with our own implication in the tragedy as ethical beings. That this problem has a profound political dimension is clear. The human being is, as Aristotle says in the *Politics*, a “political animal” (*politikon zōon*, 1253a4). Whereas for Aristotle the bare fact of life is strictly held distinct from the political, modern political theorists challenge the distinction. According to some thinkers, indeed, modernity begins in effect with state regulation and manipulation of bodies by means of the power of sovereign authority. As Giorgio Agamben has argued in his recent influential book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, the ordering principle of the classical polis is analogous to language in Aristotle. That is, just as the voice (for example, a cry of pain) is employed but also surpassed in order to produce articulate language, so the “bare life” or animal existence of human beings is regulated

and suppressed as the foundational act of the polis. The “inclusive exclusion” of bare life is the founding *aporia* of western metaphysics. Thus, Agamben wants to show that contemporary biopolitics gets founded upon a deconstruction of the distinction between the juridical and the biological. The exceptions prove the rule, and this exertion of power by the state and individual symbiotically defines both our subjection and the possibilities for a new politics, perhaps even greater emancipation. Sovereignty, as Agamben sees the concept developing out of Hobbes’s thought, is predicated upon an exception to the rule; law is thereby created on this threshold of exclusion. The sovereign is the fundamental localization of this “zone of indistinction,” suspending the rule of law in order to constitute the rule that is rigorously enforced by contrast to that exception (18-19).

What Agamben shows us so vividly about our current world may very well enable us to understand another aspect of Shakespearean politics differently: the exception to the rule is, as Lear was, both sovereign and subjected—both the person in a position of governmental authority and the person on life-support machinery function as the limiting cases by which we define our inclusion in a political arrangement. “The relation between man and animal, between world and environment,” says Agamben, “seems to evoke that intimate strife between world and earth which ... is at issue in the work of art” (*The Open* 71). This “intimate strife,” as Professor Benston’s paper showed, is the very stuff of Shakespearean tragedy. Ultimately, as our students’ essays show, the multiplicity of approaches to the problem of politics in Shakespearean drama produces manifold conceptions of the political as a category of human thought and experience. And it is with great pleasure, paradoxically, that we open ourselves to the “intimate strife” of political negotiation, whether we regard the outcome as comedy or tragedy.

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II Keynote Address

The Unbearable Learnness of Being: Or,
“Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life, and thou no
breath at all?”

Kimberly W. Benston

For the fate of the souls of men and the fate of beasts is the same; as one dies, so die the others. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts . . .

—Ecclesiastes 3:19

Rife as it is with scenes of terror and brutality, few moments in Shakespearean drama are as dreadful and haunting as: *Enter King Lear, with Cordelia [dead] in his arms*. Like Hamlet’s wan and chatty passage through Denmark’s graveyard and Macbeth’s hypnotically grim bloodletting on the fields outside Dunsinane, Lear’s bearing Cordelia offers a climactic symptom of its work’s persistent anxiety in the face of being and death. And yet, as commentators from Bradley to Berlin have variously noted,¹ what difference is there between Lear’s confrontation with death and those of his tragic predecessors!—while the meditative melancholic, Hamlet, stands among the long-decayed debris of death, reconstructing the features of casual acquaintances and drawing from this memorialization a philosophical reflection on vanity’s inevitable passage into dust, and while the ghost-plagued Scottish usurper, Macbeth, re-enacts his lack of political agency in a burst of mechanical violence, Lear, pressing to himself the still-warm flesh of his self-exiled daughter, simply *howls*. Upon Lear’s entrance, his faithful servant, Kent, moans, “Is this the promis’d end?” evoking in unvarnished but mordant terms the “horror” of apocalyptic violence that has hovered over the play from its inception (V.3.265-66). If not unique among Shakespeare’s work for its intensity of carnage and anguish (the early *Titus Andronicus* is, notoriously, far gorier, while the later *Coriolanus* is, arguably, a more concentrated *thematic* exploration of destructive grief), *King Lear* presents to its audience the dramatic canon’s most challenging confrontation with scenes of pain and loss, concluding with moments of shocking ruin that seem irredeemable by any cultural or metaphysical hermeneutic, inassimilable to any consoling fiction or recuperative ideal.

The exploration of Lear that I’d like to undertake here emanates from this instant of nearly unfathomable anguish, for it brings us to the very verge of those questions that propel the play’s narrative, political, existential, metaphysical, and

ethical struggles: What is a human being, why does it suffer so, and what does its suffering mean? In the very design of the play—whose expressive impulse progresses with its titular hero from declarative resolve (“Hence and avoid my sight!” [I.1.126]) to interrogative openness (“Is man no more than this?” [III.4.105])—we find that these questions give rise immediately not to explicit clarification but to fresh inquiry: Can we actually know the suffering of another? Does suffering yield compensations amidst the rubble of its deprivations—and, if so, for whom? Who decides what suffering bodies matter, and with what consequences? And why would we voluntarily sit before the spectacle of another’s pain, absorbing at the safe distance of our aesthetic remove “the image of that horror” (V.3.266)?

The cruelty of *King Lear* is, indeed, radical, and intentionally so, for Shakespeare has taken elements of calamity from each of his sources—familial discord from the anonymous *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* (published twelve years before the first recorded performance of Shakespeare’s play); social displacement from *A Mirror for Magistrates*; exilic bafflement from Book II of Spenser’s *Faerie Queen*; political upheaval from Holinshed’s *Chronicles*—and rendered them harsher, while adding fresh afflictions (such as Lear’s madness) and withholding these earlier versions’ resources of redemption and recompense.² Shakespeare’s play is, notoriously, a work of such sustained torment that even so staunch a reader as Samuel Johnson could not set his eyes upon the last scene for years (until forced to do so when editing the play); its harshness is so little allayed by conventions of tragic recompense that Nahum Tate’s sanitized redaction (which, harking back to pre-Shakespearean accounts, saw a restored King Lear looking happily upon the newly-wedded Edgar and Cordelia) pleased the English viewing public for nearly a century and a half (from the late seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries); and indeed, its image of horror is so insistent as to seem almost distracting, leading Charles Lamb to argue altogether against its performative presentation:

But the Lear of Shakespeare cannot be acted.... The greatness of Lear is not in the corporeal dimension but in the intellectual: the explosions of his passion are terrible as a volcano: they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom of that sea his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare. The case of flesh and blood seems too insignificant to be thought on; even as he himself neglects it. On the stage we see nothing but corporeal infirmities and weakness ... while we read it, we see not Lear, but we are Lear,—we are in his mind.... What has the voice or eye to do with such things? But the play is beyond all art, as tamperings with it show: it is too hard and stony; it must have love-scenes and a happy ending.... Tate has put his hood in the nostrils of this Leviathan ... to draw the mighty beast about more easily. (107)

Whatever we might think today of Lamb’s anti-theatrical vision of Shakespeare—

and I will suggest that we cannot too complacently dismiss its resistance to enactment as mere textual idealism or physical skittishness—the urgency with which he dismisses the play’s material realization testifies to an intimate relation of violence and representation at its symbolic and imaginary core. And indeed, the very concussive ferocity of Lamb’s rhetoric, its implacable hunger for “significance” in an excess of thought to the rough meanness of “art,” attests to the drama’s capacity to register what we might call, in a phrase of Emmanuel Levinas, the *traumatism of astonishment* (*Totality and Infinity* 73), whether such shocks be the effects of sublimity or the debris of calamity.

In citing Levinas alongside Lamb, I mean to ask us to consider how *King Lear* forces us to contemplate the nature, ends, and limits of our place before its spectacle of horror, that is, to think of the play as a provocation and trial of our capacity to bear its pain as an act of *witness*. As the play’s narrative springs from Lear’s refusal to look upon his kingdom with steady acceptance of its often painful realities (LEAR. “Out of my sight!” / KENT. “See better, Lear” [I.1.159-60]), so is the play’s dramaturgy keenly cognizant of the strategies of conceptualization and deception by which we seek to avoid direct encounter with what Gloucester calls “the misery [others] bear” (IV.1.78). Thus we experience the drama’s unfolding through a series of scandalous intensifications of brutality that insist upon our viewing calamity that might have been otherwise mitigated by the interventions of metaphor, on-stage reaction, or indirect report: Lear’s wrath against Cordelia mounting in the opening scene from renunciation to curse and finally to a wish for her being’s very erasure (“Better thou hadst not been born” [I.1.235]); the King’s daughters progressively stripping their father’s retinue until he himself runs unprotected into the raging storm; Cornwall’s gouging of Gloucester’s eye only for Regan to demand “Th’ other too,” followed promptly by her rough order to “thrust him out at the gates, and let him smell / His way to Dover” (III.7.72, 93-94); and, of course, Cordelia’s very death, coming on the heels of Edmund’s hastily delivered “token of reprieve” for her life (V.3.247-52) are merely the most salient instances. Even after Tate’s revision was in turn replaced on the English stage by Shakespeare’s reinstated text, productions of *King Lear* often displayed a desire to moderate, if not avoid, its austere demand for unrelieved witness, whether through emphasis on domestic folly as the foundation of Lear’s tragedy, celebration of the nation’s restoration despite the spectre of death, or strategies of cross-gendered casting and modern setting that localize or delimit the play’s economy of aggression and injustice. By contrast to these perhaps tepid strategies of adaptation and appropriation, Johnson’s lugubrious avoidance, Tate’s romantic revision, and Lamb’s histrionic anti-theatricalism register the drama’s unremitting challenge to the curious crossing of perception and percipience.

And yet I believe that the play insists upon our suffering subjection to its spectacles of suffering in order precisely to liberate us from pure violence into

a radically new relation to pain, death, grief, and survival—a dialectical relation of intimacy and distance with respect to another’s suffering whose import is at once political and ethical, critical and transformative. By presenting us with extremities of horror that are demonstrated, even within the dramatic narrative, to elude theorizations they provoke, *King Lear* forces us likewise to confront what Kant termed the “abyss of the imagination” from which issue, potentially, fresh representations seeking to present what they “know,” the registrations of disturbing excess, to be unrepresentable. This demand for expression that marks, like a wound in language, inexpressible suffering—rather than moderating or veiling suffering’s defacing of normative consciousness—continually thrusts itself upon spectatorial judgment through a recurring rhythm of explained grief followed by grief’s renewal in physical loss: Hearing that the Duke who ordered the attack upon Gloucester has been slain, Albany affirms, “This shows you are above, you justicers,” only for him to exclaim “But O, poor Gloucester” upon registering the harsh fact that the victim lost not one but both eyes in a gesture of gratuitous sadism (IV.2.78-81); or again, Edgar avers with the complacent certainty of a closural rhymed couplet, “When we our betters see bearing our woes / We scarcely think our miseries our foes” (III.6.101-2), only to surrender this happy vision of the spectator’s gain before tragic woe upon seeing the grotesque misery of his father, whereupon he offers a sober reappraisal of pain’s calculus: “O gods! Who is’t can say ‘I am the worst’? ... I cannot daub it further ... And yet I must” (IV.1.24-25, 52, 54).³ Here Edgar, upon suffering what Lyotard, revising Kant, terms the differend—the incommensurate relation to sensation and sense, of seeing and saying, which constitutes the “sublime” or overwhelming spectacle—takes up the obligation to put words to the impossibility of discourse arising as anything but rupture, not rupture’s salve. Confronting the radical otherness of another’s misery while recognizing his implication in that figure’s crisis of defacement, Edgar, bodying forth our own predicament, accepts the responsibility of witness in all its hermeneutical frustration and ethical necessity.

That dialectical structure of spectatorial experience frames an implicit debate regarding the salutary and damaging effects of dis-illusionment and difference in our relation to the drama, a debate harboring large consequences for us as viewers, interpreters, and, finally, as social and personal actors. For to ask from what vantage we should interpret the drama’s distinctive blend of illusion and authenticity, its deployment of impersonation to plumb the possibilities and limits of personhood, is already to ask what it means to live among, look upon, judge, and act among others, questions that are simultaneously political and ethical, informed at once by historical, aesthetic, and phenomenological perspectives. Those who, like Johnson and Lamb, resist the play as spectacle provide indirectly the key insight that the play’s invitation to renovating, if restive, cultural and ethical alertness necessarily arrives at the intersection of thematic

and theatrical expression: we cannot grasp its philosophical and political import without engaging its material and formal method. I want now to suggest that an approach to the play's sprawling scenic continuum that makes sense of this crossing of explanation and event, idea and instantiation, is to view it as a provocative sequence of *encounters*, particularly of two characters who, forced into face-to-face confrontation, are exposed to a confusing but bracing drama of call-and-response that enacts their evolving views of authority, identity, possession, power, responsibility, love, and possibility. Kent boldly turning to the errant king to say, "See better Lear"; the Fool counseling his master to consider his devolution into a cipher of his own legitimacy; Lear awakening to Cordelia as if a soul in bliss; Lear and Gloucester smelling each other's wasting bodies on Dover beach; Albany dismissing Goneril as not worth the dust that blows in the wind; Edgar and Edmund opposed *mano a mano* like ragged remnants of chivalric romance in the play's penultimate scene of violence—these are just a few among many such sharp and illuminating engagements. In order best to focus the concern with witness and transformation to which the play's driving intensities dedicate themselves, I want to focus for the rest of this essay on a handful of the play's signal encounters: those of Lear and Cordelia in the opening scene; Lear and Edgar (disguised as Poor Tom) on the Heath; the double encounter at the end of Lear and Cordelia, first as prisoners, then in that climactic moment of Lear's terrifying burden; and finally, of Lear and the elusive referent of his final "Look there, look there," a referent which we might, if only heuristically, imagine as our own suffering beings.

But first, a detour, to one of the strangest encounters not just in this play, but in all Shakespeare: that one between Gloucester and Edgar at the cliffs of Dover (IV.6), which is also an encounter of Gloucester and the impossible vision of the verge, an encounter between bodies and space, an encounter of language and imagination, of theatrical fancy and empirical reality, of mimesis and deception: that is, of encounter with the phenomenological and representational logic of encounter itself. Gloucester, you will remember, plunged into despondency and disintegration by his figurative misperception of Edgar and his literal blinding by Lear's enemies, asks his son, now disguised, to lead him to the "very brim" of a precipice from which he plans to hurl himself in suicidal desperation. Generally thought close to unstageable, the imaginary leap engineered by Edgar often enough brings directors to the edge of their own despair. As if wishing—even daring—us to cancel our investment in the simplest contract of suspended disbelief, Shakespeare confronts us with the image of a man who cannot discriminate limitless expansion from perilous precipice, foregrounding (as it were) the staging's material and conceptual perversity. Peter Brook—whose cinematic rendering of this remarkable performative trial contends vigorously, and instructively, with its mixture of engaging pathos and alienating absurdity—

spoke of this scene as showing us both a man and an actor “doing a meaningless jump” (“Shakespeare on Three Screens” 68), a double tension in which purpose and emptiness intermingle. Cueing to Shakespeare’s language what film theorist Lorne Michael Buchman terms a “dynamic of theatrical and cinematic space” (104), Brook orchestrates shifts of focus, tone, perspective, and proximity that establish an interplay of self-reflexive irony and mimetic seduction. The scene begins with indistinct figures moving toward us, present as much by sound as by their dim outlines, inviting us to occupy a position like Gloucester’s, for whom the world is a blurry mass without detail; as the darkness is punctuated by the blinding light of a sun that is suggestive, in the visual pun, of the filial protection of which he is not aware, we begin to see not just with but beyond Gloucester, though to uncertain ends. Guided by Edgar’s voice, Shakespeare’s language collaborates with the camera to produce the illusion of rising gradation, an illusion suddenly shattered, at the moment Gloucester pronounces “Methinks the ground is even” (IV.6.3), by a shift from cinematic to theatrical space, as we’re shown a wide-angle view of the men fully situated in the extensive space of level terrain. Paradoxically, this Brechtian “alienation effect,” accomplished by a shift in representational registers, sustains our identification with the character: awareness of the medium becomes the very means by which we are absorbed in it. By a further, and related paradox, this moment of shared misgiving is prologue to Gloucester’s yielding to Edgar’s fiction of strenuous ascent: skepticism is established as integral, not opposed, to imaginative investment. Aptly enough, Brook then completes the scene by shifting the camera between filmic and theatrical space, situating Edgar and Gloucester in a dialectic of mystification and demystification that finally blends the two representational modes in a mid-air shot of the collapsed Gloucester that confirms the yawning “reality” of theatrical space from a godlike perspective made possible only by cinematic technology (and, I think, it is part of Brook’s dark wit that it is theatrical space that seems to us finally the medium of the real, in opposition to cinema’s delusional, or at least exorbitant, orbit of the “reel”).

Altogether, then, Brook grasps, in terms specifically suited to his presentational medium, the complex workings of Shakespearean dramaturgy through which critical distance and imaginative participation are not so much conflicting as cooperative agents of existential and perceptual inquiry, just as our critical apprehension of the characters’ experiences is made possible by what Buchman terms “our creative participation” in those experiences (106). Fittingly, the characters’ own experiences in this scene involve precisely a staged contest of skepticism and conviction, detachment and identification, at the core of which, I want now to propose, is a similarly counter-intuitive relation of body to space, a relation that ultimately evokes the play’s central epistemological and ethical concerns through a bravura performance of complex witnessing. Of central importance here is the

full passage of Edgar's description of what Gloucester anticipates as a frightful look into "the confined deep":

EDGAR. Come on, sir; here's the place: stand still. How fearful
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles. Half way down
Hangs one that gathers sampire, dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
The fishermen that walk upon the beach
Appear like mice, and yond tall anchoring bark
Diminish'd to her cock, her cock a buoy
Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge,
That on th' unnumber'd idle pebble chafes
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong. (IV.6.11-24)

Like the scene it describes, the passage is at once alluring and distracting, a speech that totters on the brink between precision and incertitude, seeming either a showy diversion or a sudden, toppling immersion in the real itself. At once immediate in their keenly etched detail and distant in their persistently marked status as mediation ("Shows scarce so ... as"; "methinks ..."; "appear like ..."), Edgar's words seem at once immersed in and alienated from the objects of their attention, leading us to ask, what is Edgar witnessing, or fashioning, with his representation? The object of Edgar's depiction is not, as we might expect, an interpretive evocation of awe-inspiring space—the literal chasm into which Gloucester contemplates his fatal leap—but rather the release of space itself as pure condition, an abysmal medium of consciousness that is simultaneously, but also diacritically, a mode of phenomenological reception (insofar as we feel ourselves in the immediate presence of objects uncontaminated by reflection) and traumatic registration (insofar as perception re-marks itself in the failure to fully represent those objects: "almost ... cannot ... no more ..."). That is, it is not the scene that is arresting—the scene itself does not actually act upon us: it simply *is* in the presence of the gazer's affectively charged apprehension—but the looking. As Bert States puts it, the scene itself is purely "the medium in which the world's extensiveness is revealed" (421), which is what makes it a world that seems entirely beyond us, though relevant because we live amongst its recognizable (if also elusive and faintly anomalous) elements: hence that odd feature of Shakespeare's diction that apprehends at once the objects' familiarity and otherness—the crows and choughs, the pebble and sampire, the bark and cock.

Conjuring the verge equally for Gloucester and for us, Edgar bears wit-

ness to a palpable terror of what lies beyond our perception, something at once sublime and void, both stimulus and limit of the twinned imperatives to understand and to testify. For the greater part of Edgar's speech, its objects seem, in the crystalline exactitude of their visibility, to displace the passions and hyperactive intelligence of the perceiving subject: it is not the look but the thing that seems authoritative in its "idle" in-difference. States aptly points to the "care-lessness" of the odd Shakespearean "idle," its grasp of the world's fundamental indifference to one's own desire; one might extend the insight by noting the term's capacity to merge the objects' *pointless* independent being with the subject's self-forgetful absorption into that very alien existence: it is essential to our ontology that the Other's being presents itself to perception as an end in itself, rather than as a device by which our own being is confirmed and measured. Here, the authority of witness appears to inhere from its disinterested attentiveness, its capacity not to *over*-look by imposing conceptual design or subjective measure (perhaps even Edgar's hesitations—"methinks," "almost," etc.—which I earlier suggested were signs of a mediating awareness, are also cognate with this self-effacing scrupulosity). Seeing thus fully, without any evident residue of narrative or hermeneutical supplementation redolent with suspicion of hidden meaning, Edgar-as-witness gives the scene the quality of an "event": a radically im-mediate presence, like divinity or torture, that is the product of mutual exposure by seer and seen. Indeed, it is not so much Edgar's observational capacity that moves us as his openness, his receptivity, which in turn brings him into a surprising fellowship with the suffering man whom he superficially beguiles. For Gloucester—oblivious and deceived in his own home; bound and blinded in Cornwall's shop-of-horrors; bewildered and abandoned to the storm—has even more than Lear embodied naked susceptibility: like Edgar's figurative eye, the disfigured Gloucester has not so much taken measure of his world as been taken up by it. Notwithstanding the epistemological gap between father and son established by Edgar's conceit, their shared presence materializes the cognate relation of traumatic experience and imaginative witness.

Edgar's "vision," then, differs from ordinary instrumental seeing not because it is deceitful but because it enacts a mode of event-ful exposure to the world's originary otherness (an entwining of pain and perception conspicuously distinct, for example, from his later act of reportage near play's end, the protracted "brief tale" of autobiographical travails which so completely detaches discourse from being that, in narrative terms, his testimony contributes in its lingering enumeration of personal history to Cordelia's murder [V.3.183-201]). Fittingly, Edgar speaks here not precisely in propria persona, but rather in his guise as the mad beggar, Poor Tom, himself a creature displaying the horrid accumulated markings of a body exposed to constant affliction. Edgar's displacement of self into role (in which the evidently mad sees all with receptive precision) mirrors Gloucester-

ter's dissolution of sightedness into blindness (in which benightedness yields to discernment); and both, in turn, reflect our own condition, in which ambiguous knowledge of the stage's irreality dissolves into ambivalent immersion in the ambiguous ontology of mimesis. Each look, the speaker's and the auditor's, is caught up in the other's; each view is, as befits traumatic witness, both impossible and irrefutable, mutually dependent and unique. And if for the onstage characters the crux of seeing's relation to being materializes in a scene that is counterfeit but communicable, for us—as for Lear holding a dead daughter, howling—the parallel crisis of knowledge's relation to meaning will appear when the actual seems literally unimaginable.

Like the space between Edgar and the view he renders, between the characters, and between them and us, an aporia opens that is also a vinculum, a relational paradox that Lear, above all, will learn is the unfathomable “bond” from which derives our fragile capacity for love and ethical action. Just as Edgar's speech provides a release from the fictions of place that uphold us and upon which, as conventional social and psychological creatures, we stand (offering thereby fresh witness to a more fundamental conjunction of presence and value), so the episode at Dover Cliffs teaches us that the self is a structure composed dialectically of difference and affinity: a structure, moreover, fluctuating between, on the one hand, the yearning for intimacy that is also a fictive identification with the world's otherness (even as Gloucester finds fellowship with his guide by mistakenly imagining him “happier that I am wretched” [IV.1.67-68]), and, on the other hand, the impersonality of knowledge that holds us at a distance from the world and from others (even as Gloucester is here aided by a son whom he thinks a stranger). Subjectivity, that is to say, arrives in the form of an exacting, if sometimes indefinite, responsibility toward otherness that allows it fully to be other—just as we learn through Edgar that space is a neutral arena of objects, including our own bodies, rather than a plastic medium molded to the demands of our desires. Subjectivity thus conceived is, finally, like Gloucester's fall, something that no one but oneself can undertake, though others can bear witness to our assumption of it. What's more, the self—and here again I take my cue from Levinas—is not an autonomous entity that precedes, and then puts into motion, its relation to others, but arises in the moment when the Other—Gloucester to Edgar; space to our eye and body; Shakespeare's fantastic dramaturgy to our critical consciousness—makes its claim upon us. Our being *is* then our capacity to be released into the capacity for recognition; our selfhood *is* already an encounter.

Lear's theatricality at the play's opening—in which he seeks his daughters' submission to a view of the self as a ritualized economy of prescribed performances, a despotic, one might say feudal, economy in which the self-releasing exchange of self and world gives way to a harshly parodic mode of reciprocity—enacts his refusal of the lessons we learn with Gloucester at the virtual cliff's virtual verge.

By staging a contest of filial affection in the interests of freeing himself from the obligations of existence so that (as he says) he may “unburthened crawl toward death” (I.1.43), Lear seeks to deny the space between father and child, language and authority, self and nature; he thereby dramatizes his refusal to recognize the claim of the Other—including the otherness of his own being (and the inevitably intrinsic relation of that being to death)—upon him. More immediately, as Stanley Cavell put it in his brilliant reading of the scene, he seeks to avoid the “claim” of Cordelia’s love upon him and the corresponding limits of his claims upon her:

LEAR. ... what can you say to draw
 A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.
CORDELIA. Nothing, my lord.
LEAR. Nothing?
CORDELIA. Nothing.
LEAR. Nothing will come of nothing, speak again.
CORDELIA. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
 My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty
 According to my bond, no more nor less.
LEAR. How, how, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little.... (I.1.85-94)

In abrogating both public and private bonds, and in seeking ceremonially to control all discourse about “love” and “care” in a manner that conflates consciousness and sovereignty at the extremity of their expression, Lear unsurprisingly doesn’t want to hear a lecture from his “last and least” about that odd tangle of affiliations, expectations, and affections that “bind” us in limited yet mysterious ways. One of those key terms—like *nature*, *worth*, and *man*—through which Shakespeare’s play figures its status at the boundary, the verge, of a self-consciously emergent modernity, Cordelia’s “bond” can be heard simultaneously as conventional (an inheritance of tradition), utilitarian (a production of contract), and yet also excessive to either customary or instrumental economies (beyond “reason” or “need,” as Lear will later phrase it; see II.4.264-66). Speaking through her “bond” of that which simultaneously joins and limits, a condition of necessity and constraint, Cordelia at once summons the play’s intricate thematic crux—what gives value to human life? who determines that value? how can it be sustained? should it be sustained?—and stings Lear into confrontation with “all” that he would abdicate, including the “necessities” or “burden” of his being.

That confrontation, of course, propels Lear on the long arc of his searing journey from a fantasmatic *all* to a horrifying *nothing*, though we have, I hope, already learned that it is the interpenetration of all and nothing, not merely their disparity, that founds subjectivity as an affective, social, and ethical possibility. Cordelia’s call for Lear to be answerable to that possibility is both political (as, for example, Hamlet’s refusal to yield his mourning to Claudius’s national

narrative—first articulated, like Cordelia’s resistance, in an aside—is an act of political as well as emotional defiance) and personal, placing upon her king-father a demand—and it is a severe demand—to go beyond the measure of prevailing modes of exchange, including even the logic of reciprocity, toward the far edge of responsibility founded on a pure acceptance of the Other’s being. Suitably, the most conceptually rich embodiment of Lear’s undesired enactment of this demand comes in his encounter with Edgar/Poor Tom on the heath, that place of unmapped, abysmal extension where Lear’s progress from confidence in mechanisms of social and metaphysical legitimation to a sense of pervasive unsettling indeterminacy brings him to an abysmal psychic chasm with no defining margin or brim. Beyond the false mastery of the opening scene’s divided map, the heath is the place where Lear, no longer able to avoid bearing witness to the other’s suffering, learns newly to look upon himself. Again, Peter Brook’s film provides our entry to the concentrated powers of the scene in performance, an immediacy that Brook cannily grasps as key to the episode’s conceptual challenge. Unrelenting in its physical intensity and visual density, Brook’s rendering of the storm seeks to map Lear’s self-fragmentation and perceptual reimagination onto the spectator’s experience. Rapidly alternating partial closeups, zoom-fades, and suddenly alienating long shots, his camera challenges our eye to reassemble Lear’s struggle to make sense, placing the king before us in analogy to Poor Tom’s position before him. Punctuating Tom’s speech with thunderclaps while shifting our distance from his image, Brook orchestrates a cinematic assault upon the body while making that body both an image and a material substance, both real and (like Tom’s histrionically articulated “fiend”) an imagined phantom. In effect, Poor Tom shivers his body wholly body, and yet, as Buchman notes (61), he emerges as a collaborative fabrication of Lear, Edgar, the clashing sensations of the storm, and our own often confounded perceptions (for it is, finally, we who must integrate, even as we interrogate, these productive agents). Edgar’s Poor Tom thus appears as a representational embodiment of Levinas’s relational model of personhood, in which identity arrives as an encounter between the substantiality of a “thing” and that thing’s equivocality as “image.” Levinas might as well have had Edgar’s Tom in mind as he wrote:

Here is a person who is what he is; but he does not make us forget, does not absorb, or cover over entirely the objects he holds and the way he holds them, his gestures, limbs, gaze, thought, skin, which escape from under the identity of his substance, which like a torn sack is unable to contain them. Thus a person bears on his own face, alongside of its being with which he coincides, its own caricature.... There is then a duality in this person, this thing, a duality in its being. It is what it is and it is a stranger to itself, and there is a relationship between these two moments. We will say the thing is itself and its image. (“Reality and Its Shadow” 6-7)

Here, then, at the drama's structural center, a moment that laminates disclosure upon disguise, Lear confronts at once a histrionic contrivance and "the thing itself":

LEAR. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow'st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha?... Thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, fork'd animal as thou art. (III.4.101-09)

As underscored by Brook's direction (which includes extravagant defiance of point-of-view convention in which Lear speaks across the split picture-image to himself), Lear thus experiences the heath's linguistic, cultural, and ecological dislocation as an emergence and not merely a shattering of identity. Loss of identity is likewise its discovery, establishing a dialectical mode of self-realization in which the irreducible core of being is found when the self is mirrored in something approaching the absolute Other. "Edgar, I nothing am" cries Gloucester's son at the very moment of his self-displacement into Poor Tom (II.3.21), and so, too, for Lear, self-apprehension begins with the abdication of sovereign identity; speaking to the other as though to oneself, Lear and Edgar alike find precisely that it is from reduction of the self to nothing that the subject's something will come. On the heath, this paradoxical dialectic of release and realization yields "unaccommodated man," the condition of which is what Giorgio Agamben has termed, felicitously for our purposes, *bare life*:

Contrary to our modern habit of representing the political realm in terms of citizens' rights, free will, and social contracts, from the point of view of sovereignty *only bare life is authentically political*... Sovereign violence is in truth founded not on a pact but on the exclusive inclusion of bare life in the state. And just as the sovereign power's first and immediate referent is, in this sense, the life that may be killed but not sacrificed, and that has its paradigm in *homo sacer*, so in the person of the sovereign, the werewolf, the wolf-man of man, dwells permanently in the city. (106-07)

Against classical political philosophy's characterization of political community as essentially a common "belonging" in a shared national, ethnic, religious, or moral identity, Agamben argues that the original political relation is the *ban* in which a mode of life is actively and continuously excluded from the state or polis. On this view, politics—and the foundational authority of sovereignty that secures the operation and continuity of the political public sphere—is a form of what Michel Foucault terms "biopower," that is, the exercise of practices upon living bodies that separate properly political subjects from what Agamben here calls *homo sacer*, or that form of life which, cut off from what qualifies as political and moral life, remains *bare life*. Lear's "bare forked animal," then, is not by Agamben's account

a *pre*-political figure, but rather, the *pre-eminently* political being insofar as its reduction to an absolute biological condition, a condition of pure survival (rather than the “more than nature needs” of cultural “addition” for which Lear argues in II.4), makes possible the State’s authority to transform its own bare life into what Aristotle in the *Politics* called the “good life” of the polis and its “higher aims.” In his encounter with “unaccommodated man,” Lear has not abandoned sovereignty anymore than his identity has been stripped to a vacuous nothing; rather, he looks upon the root of his being as a form of both political and existential potential.

That being is revealed here to Lear as established within what Agamben calls a “zone of indistinction,” a threshold established specifically between the human and nonhuman, between the figure who speaks and the figure spoken of, between the one who has cultural life and the one who has mere life. To “expose thyself feel what wretches feel” (III.4.34; and notably, the term *wretch* evokes etymologically and historically both the exile and the animal) opens Lear onto his own identity as a mode of *exposure* that interrupts an ideology of “the human,” bearing witness to that ideology’s construction as twofold political and metaphysical process: first, our separation from our own bare, or animal, life, in the interest of producing the sovereign ideal of the human; and then, the opposition of that ideal to forms of life termed bare—the mad; the criminal; the foreign; the animal—the Other who must be exiled and who can be killed with impunity (Agamben, 71-74).

Such is the productivity of what Agamben terms “the anthropological machine,” which, though its project is the isolation of the human from the nonhuman, inevitably retains traces, or residues, of that abjected otherness: “fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness,” screams the dissimulating/mad person/character Edgar/Tom (III.4.94-95), reminding us in vivid terms that the human is not a pure cultural being but rather, as even Aristotle admitted, a “political animal.” Like Agamben’s Sovereign/werewolf, Lear’s “unaccommodated man” is constitutively a liminal, or “forked,” being, a figure of instability and indistinction, a form of endlessly ambiguous encounter between culture and nature, character and caricature, fabrication and legitimacy, self and other, estrangement and thingness, humanity and bestiality . . . life and death.

Unprotected by the designs of moral, religious, or social mediation, Lear on the heath brushes against madness with this austere view of naked humanity, a *poor thing* unbuttoned from its mystification as a being set apart from its wretched, unhoused condition.⁴ We can easily forgive, I think, his subsequent impulse to translate this loss of a mythified humanity into a misprized vision of *contemptus mundi*, seeking the intimacy with Cordelia denied in the opening scene by imaginatively situating himself and her beyond the spectacle of worldly suffering. Now literally *bonded* as political captives within the rubble of the actual land and the symbolic order that land underwrote, father and daughter stand together at a crossroads of recognition and disacknowledgement. “Shall we not see these

daughters and these sisters,” says Cordelia, inviting Lear again to encounter “the thing itself” in all its unaccommodated immediacy, to which the old man replies, with perhaps a mixture of self-admiring relief and self-pitying fear:

No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison:
We two alone will sing like birds i'th cage;
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too—
Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out—
And take upon's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies; and we'll wear out,
In a walled prison, packs and sects of great ones
That ebb and flow by th'moon. (V.3.8-19)

Echoing the first scene's anaphoric “nothings,” Lear's repeated denials lead to a vain vision of that scene's correction, the old king kneeling, asking, and listening, seeking absolution rather than affirmation. Projecting himself and Cordelia into an “allegorical *tableau vivant*” (Linville 313), figures within a kind of pictorial enclosure emblemizing a timeless (but socially sanctioned) verity, Lear imagines them engaged in a redemptive reenactment of the authentic exchange suppressed in his refusal to hear about living “bonds,” standing far above the terrestrial strife of mortal *vanitas*. As Cordelia was earlier called upon to confirm his exemption from the burden of being, so here she is conscripted as an agent of curative absolution. In thus projecting Cordelia as a perfected icon of generosity, Lear comforts himself with the prospect of an entombed, or “walled”-in, idealism whose faux “mystery” is as empty as is his sentimentally retrospective future tense. Though in narrative terms this factitious inversion of maimed familial rites serves as prelude to the wrenching reversal of Cordelia's death, I would suggest with R. Clifton Spargo that Lear's dream of atemporal solace is already suffused with an elegiac aura, as though Lear's wishful fiction were already an effort to retrieve and contain the lost daughter (Spargo 144).

Thus seeking a commemorative compensation for his suffering, Lear misrecognizes here the stripping of sovereign illusion experienced on the heath as an invitation to exit from the agonies of political and ethical struggle. But there can be no such exit. And so: *Enter King Lear, with Cordelia [dead] in his arms:*

LEAR. Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones;
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever.

I know when one is dead and when one lives;
 She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass;
 If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
 Why, then she lives....
 This feather stirs; she lives....
 I might have saved her; now's she's gone for ever.
 Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha,
 What is't thou say'st?...
 And my poor fool is hanged: no, no, no life?
 Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
 And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
 Never, never, never, never, never.
 Pray you undo this button. Thank you, sir.
 Do you see this? Look on her. Look, her lips,
 Look there, look there. (V.3.259-64, 267, 272-74, 307-13)

Holding she whom he had so violently banished, fulfilling in bitter irony his promise to “kneel down” with attentive care, seeking again a “little” more than the given—now not with the imperative “speak again,” but with a solicitous, “what is't thou say'st?”—hoping that she will again breathe forth something—perhaps even again that frightful but quickening “nothing”—Lear trembles like the turned feather, revolving between visions of repair and ruin, acceptance and denial, recuperation and dejection. For him, Cordelia occupies that indistinct zone of the *homo sacer*, the figure excluded from sacrifice if not from impunity, the persona who, while miming yet also inducing suffering, herself bodies forth neither the inert finality of earth nor the transcendental possibility of redemption. Why must Cordelia, a body provoking memory of voice, be dead—how think that (im)possibility? *Never, never, never, never, never*—again: the paratactic surge of negation, here even augmented by one extended expression (from four to five), the throbbing trochees reversing the iambic norm of Shakespearean blank verse, thumping home the irreversible, if baffling, finality of death, a fathomless negation that seemingly offers, like the unaccommodated immediacy Lamb could not face, nothing beyond itself.

After all, as Jacques Derrida well remarks of death, “Fundamentally, one knows perhaps neither the meaning nor the referent of this word” (22). Unable to follow Cordelia into a knowing occupation of that indeterminate condition, Lear's conflict witnesses the struggle to bear witness, to heed the call that comes from the Other, the call sent, in the form of non-articulation, from a space that establishes an irreparable breach, an abysmal caesura, between the two orders of (non)being. In that space between Cordelia's silence and Lear's failed translation of traumatic recognition into a language of consolation or even consistent

anger and resistance, lies the problematic ethos of witness as acknowledgement of what has been excluded from authorized language: not silence or speech, not the sonic articulation of “nothing,” not “howl, howl, howl, howl” but the character/actor’s piercing ululation (realized with haunting power and pathos in Brook’s film by Paul Scofield)—expression at the verge of madness or animality: *the cry*. “We came crying hither,” Lear admits, and hence, too, shall “endure / [Our] going hence” (IV.6.180, V.2.8-9). With Lear’s cry, then, we face a challenge at the limit of expectation and logic: having learned to “see better,” having accepted fortune not as a “circle” of logical effects but as a terrifying “wheel of fire” (IV.7.46-47), having lost all and learned to kneel in forgiveness where once we stood in tyranny, having learned to love and be silent—having, that is to say, undergone the kind of educative trial that should occasion, according to the classic paradigm (be it Aristotelian or Humanist, pagan or Christian), authentic tragic awareness—we begin with Lear *truly* to suffer, as the play opens the most profound gash between order and violence, language and experience.

With Lear, we ask, “Why does Cordelia have to die?” It’s a bad question, really, a trick question without a trick answer. She dies because Edmund and Edgar cause a ludicrous delay in attention to her circumstances, luring us with the kind of falsifying traditional closures that Shakespeare has been subverting since at least *Romeo and Juliet*; because Lear, having continued to press upon Cordelia the contaminating appropriations of incest (that terrible lie against time), leaves death as her only remaining mode of purification;⁵ because Lear more generally still must face “the thing itself,” the necessity to confront our perpetual susceptibility to shock, reversal, and horror, notwithstanding all that we’ve withstood, learned, or pledged against the future’s mystery. For all these reasons—which collectively suggest that Shakespeare’s resistance to conventional narrative ideology is prerequisite for a new kind of tragic perception—Cordelia “must” die, thrusting Lear to the “edge” of consciousness where madness meets insight, where the feather stirs because the hand turns it, where once-ignored lips utter the something, nothing of the world beyond our own.

But these still are “reasons,” and we ask again, why that “must”?! That’s what Tate and Lamb and Johnson all cannot accept—they remind us how appeasing (and secretly complacent) even our most ingenious and cogent interpretive acts can be when looking into the abyss of irrational violence and inexplicable loss. Perhaps we have to accept our place with Lear at the brink, unaided by any trusty Edgar to (mis)guide us back into someone’s clear idea of life, tottering between belief and despair, release and repression, grief and joy: the fullness of Cordelia’s lips, and their irredeemable stillness.

So let us, toward a conclusion, ask not “why must Cordelia die,” but instead the question Lear more precisely poses: “Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life, and thou no breath at all?” Martin Heidegger—in an essay whose title,

“The Nature of Language,” suggests a mild form of Lamb’s celebration of cultural production through the imagery of pathetic fallacy—offers Lear a revealing answer: “Mortals,” Heidegger writes, “are they who can experience death as death. Animals cannot do so. But animals cannot speak either. The essential relation between death and language flashes up before us, but remains still unthought” (107). As Matthew Calarco observes in an illuminating reading of Derrida’s critique of Heidegger, what’s at stake in the latter’s differentiation between men and animals is “the distinction between *sterben* and *verenden*, dying and perishing.” Lacking consciousness of their own relation to time and hence to existential closure, the condition of possibility upon which rests a potentiality for Being (Heidegger’s *Dasein*), animals cannot achieve the limit-case of consciousness by dying, simply perishing instead. But to cite Derrida once more: “Who will guarantee that the ability to name death does not participate as much in the dissimulation of the ‘as such’ of death as in its revelation, and that language is not precisely the origin of the nontruth of death” (76). Indeed, the very marking of Lear’s anguish *as a question*, and the emergence of that question from the incomprehensibility of his initial *cry*, already open the gap, the cognitive and affective aporia, that makes impossible discrimination of proper from inauthentic death. Lear’s anguish shatters the anthropological machine through which Heidegger manufactures his division, a shattering that not so much equates human and animal as contaminates the arena of their relation, pressing them toward that zone of indistinction where human and animal—like actor and character, and character and audience—become intimate precisely in their non-coincidence.

Derrida’s “nontruth of death” does not point toward a mystical continuum—he stirs no feathery illusion for us in the face of loss, for he, too, knows when one is dead and when one lives. Rather, it points to the complicity of our metaphysics and our politics through which we participate in that fundamental sovereign gesture of biopolitics, deciding what does and does not count as life. For us, the heath is the factory farm, the slaughterhouse, the ice floe, and the university laboratory, where life is measured, immured, wounded, and extinguished on a scale that renders the sublime truly traumatic (in the time it has taken you to read this essay, nearly half a million animals have been slaughtered for human consumption). These are the spheres of exception and negation that, pulsing and bloody but pushed far beyond our collective witness, found the consumptive rage of our civil life. These are our poor naked wretches, of whom we have taen too little care.

“*Look there, look there*”: Lear’s words and gesture, in the very indeterminacy of their apostrophic reference, transmit to us the burden of being as this act of witness and care. In thus acknowledging both the world’s presentness to us and its separateness from us, we accept the otherness of being as *our* responsibility. Looking upon the brim of Shakespeare’s spectacle, we partake of Lear’s doubled

injunction: to restrain ourselves from reductive naming in the dedicated attention to an exorbitant and elusive otherness, while acknowledging the compulsion to register traces of that agitated observance in some form of necessarily insufficient expression. Thus lodged in the terminal gap, the grammatical and gestural rupture, of Lear's indeterminate testimony, our uncertain looking, our acceptance of this encounter with Lear's encounter with the inevitability and nontruth of death, holds us accountable for knowing what we do and do not know: let us say, for example, that Cordelia is not a rat, but that we do not know the reason either, bare life as they are, should die. Each life is a unique and unknowable event, and it is precisely such singularity that precludes us from assuming either occupies an exceptional place vis-à-vis the other: their incommensurability (which in human imagination is as often cause for fear and loathing as for delight and wonder) is ontological, but therefore not admissible to any moralistic hierarchy. By virtue of their fatal encounter in Lear's act of witness, Cordelia and rat together evoke what political theorist Hwa Yol Jung terms an "ethics of proximity as an embodied phenomenon" (168), stirring a drama of exposure and encounter that is at once theatrically heuristic and materially provocative.

Here, Lamb, for all the limitations of his resistance to bearing *King Lear* as an act of witness, himself gives witness to the play's profound provocation as what he terms a "mighty beast." That conspicuously corporeal and creaturely figure—*mighty beast*—offers us a telling image for the play's essential interruption of our normative "humanity," for the drama's capacity to demand from us an ethic of response by materializing before us an imaginary place of being at the threshold of human discourse. At once sublime—"beyond all art," in Lamb's phrase—and brutally inhuman, *King Lear* is itself *homo sacer*, the representational presence of *bare life*. As such, it becomes the medium of recognition through which Cordelia and rat testify equally to the aporia of perishing and dying, and the challenge to hold them equally precious in the effort to redeem the world's relentless horror.

Taking on the burden of such recognition, we experience our spectatorship not as a protected pleasure but as an implicated necessity, understanding, in Levinas's words, our witness as "awakeness to the precariousness of the other, the other as face" ("Peace and Proximity" 167). And so I close at last with a poem that, despite the Hamletean leanings of its references, roused me from my decades' slumber in reading *King Lear*, stirring me to a wakeful willingness to look there, look there:

Wake

.....

II

My head swims, wreathed in a rapturous fatigue.
Once, it was meet to say: *I swoon*.
But swoons—and souls, indeed—are syncopal
antiquities, lost with the *hark* and *list*
of guards on midnight parapets, conning a dark
strait, paused for the advent of a ghost.

So then: I wake,
dazed, in the crassness of a blazing noon
by whose unblest luminosity it seems
that we are an unintended consequence, a swarm
of deoxyribonucleic asses.

.....

a thought which cometh from afar,
and, though we fail to heed,
stalketh the heart:

A ghost is trapped in every sad machine.
A petty material dragnet
has ensnared the figure wandering dark Elsinore.

A membranous plexus (merely carbon, chained)
binds in its web a dolor; tightens, makes it knell:
each skin-clad mechanism rings
with fear,
jangles in head and sinew,
clatters in hoof. Hark! List
to a grief pitched only for the vigilant,
heard by the auricle of dread
that strains with care.
We know this tolling, sense the advent
of this face enjoined to fast in fires—
cover lest its mouth a tale unfold
to harrow!

—Soft, now: *see*
who it is that speaks,

this neural prisoner:
nothing rare,
no singularity of shape
defined by a thumb, an upright spine,
a wagging tongue—no king
or sovereign entity above the mass:
simply any desperately wretched thing
that, damned, cannot lay itself to rest.

I've seen a horseshoe crab,
nailed like Christ to a board,
moving the pendulum of its tail:
tick ... tock⁶—the second-hand of pain.
I've seen a calf's face peer through the slats in a tractor-trailer
stuck in the toll lanes at Niagara Falls,
crying for escape....

Hark.

List.

Our elders erred. We suckled verities
curdled with waste. Our winsome toddler cheeks,
our sanguine glow in the holiday candlelight,
our blush at the wedding feast
were all the spoils of wrong.....
You sweet babies,
milk-fed veals yourselves:
you feed
on nerves
that felt.
That felt the knife.

III

But soft: the mists recede.
To the stars' enclosing mesh
a sentry's cry:
what art thou?

—Susan Benston

Notes

1. I'm particularly indebted to Berlin's canny formulation, "A young prince is holding his dead past, and philosophizing. An old king is holding his dead present, and howling" (87).
2. See Felperin on Shakespeare's "alteration . . . away from poetic justice" (87).
3. Goldman explores these and similar instances of the audience's need to be "cautious . . . about resolving on the 'meaning of suffering'" (98-100).
4. Barker, in his detailed reading of the Shakespeare's deconstruction of contemporary structures of power, speaks of the play's evocation of "figures of the masterless, the displaced, the dangerously unfixed populace, which troublingly populated the anxious imagination of early modern power" (16).
5. Cf. Freud's (in)famous association in "The Theme of the Three Caskets" of Cordelia and her silence with maternal affection, love, and death, a conjunction that perhaps influenced Cavell's reading of the play as exploring the unavoidable "avoidance of love."
6. Ellipsis points in the original.

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III Symposium Papers

“Of Woman Born”: Infanticide in *Macbeth*

Ann-Marie Carmody

Approximately four hundred years after William Shakespeare wrote his great tragedy *Macbeth*, American poet Anne Sexton published a book entitled *All My Pretty Ones*. The book begins with an epigraph that quotes Macduff after he hears the news that his wife and children have been brutally killed. His emphatic speech of grief and mourning for his family serves as the turning point for the play’s audience:

All my pretty ones?
Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?
What, all my pretty chickens, and their dam,
.....
At one fell swoop?
I cannot remember such things were,
That were most precious to me. (4.3.216-19, 222-23)

That Sexton chooses to focus on this moment from *Macbeth* to introduce and title her work implores one to look at *Macbeth* from a child-centered perspective. From this point on, Macbeth is no longer seen as the tragic hero who battles his conscience, but rather as the tragic hero who has lost all conscience. His guilt over killing Banquo has shifted to an obsession with killing his political rival’s offspring, Fleance. The death of children, then, becomes equated with the accumulation of power.

Cleanth Brooks calls the image of the child in *Macbeth* “perhaps the most powerful symbol of tragedy” (39). This image shapes the characters in the play, as well as the play itself, beginning with the witches’ prediction that Banquo’s children will serve as future kings of Scotland. The effects of child rearing run subtly throughout *Macbeth*, but become more significant if seen through a lens that supposes that Lady Macbeth suffers from postpartum depression as a result of giving birth. My assumption stems from Sexton’s *Macbeth*-inspired poem “Ghosts” as well as from evidence throughout the play.¹

Shakespearean women often display more reason or sense than their male counterparts—a trait that seems uncharacteristic for a writer of Shakespeare’s time to bestow—unless they suffer from a psychological ailment. Shakespeare

uses Lady Macbeth's character to show how psychological effects can evoke strange and out-of-character "manly" actions to counter-balance Macbeth's own irrational "female" behavior. In the early stages of the play Lady Macbeth takes control of their plot for political power, telling her husband to follow her lead and "Leave all the rest to me" (1.5.73). Eventually the couple trade places and regress into their more stereotypical gender roles that are like hyper versions of the male and female. Macbeth readies himself to kill whoever gets in his way, asserting his no-holds-barred aggression and power, while Lady Macbeth loses herself in irrationality and delusion, succumbing to her feminine fragility.

Lady Macbeth is a complex figure who rebels against society's views of pregnancy and motherhood. In her famous "unsex me here" speech, Lady Macbeth summons spirits to "Come to my woman's breasts, / And take my milk for gall" (1.5.47-48). She wants her breasts to become poisonous weapons that will murder, not nurture. She desires no part of the duties of mother or female, for that matter. She addresses the feminine parts of her body because they are what cause her pain and suffering, and by scorning them she acts against the postpartum depression that has been holding her captive. Stephanie Chamberlain argues that Lady Macbeth's speech does not represent a wish to turn into a masculine version of herself but rather "deconstructs[s] gender categories, unfixing the rigid cultural distinctions as well as attributes which define male and female" (79). She continues that Lady Macbeth "craves alternative gender identity, one which will allow her to slip free of the emotional as well as cultural constraints governing women" (80). This psycho-sociological interpretation supports the assumption of Lady Macbeth's depression since it shows her urge to escape from the designated gender role that has confined her. "Unsex me here" results from Lady Macbeth's intuitive self-diagnosis and serves as a self-healing process.

Lady Macbeth expresses her gruesome and violent thoughts on how she professes to honor her word through rhetoric that ultimately urges the reluctant Macbeth to execute their plan of regicide:

I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this. (1.7.54-59)

Not only do these lines display Lady Macbeth's overzealous desire for power, but they demonstrate how women are not strangers to violence, especially to the violence of childbirth. The women of Shakespeare's time and earlier did not have many options or medical help when giving birth. In 1612 James Guillimeau recounted in the ironically titled *Childbirth, Or the Happy Delivery of Women* the

popular notion that a Caesarean section should not be administered unless a woman is already dead (366). John Sadler described his belief in 1636 that “milk is nothing but the menstruous blood made white in the breasts; and I am sure woman’s milk is not thought to be venomous, but of a nutritive quality” (357). Even though he disclaims a poisonous quality of breast milk, the fact that Sadler addresses the idea shows the common skepticism and ignorance of the age in relation to the bodies of women.

If medical evidence was scarce during the Jacobean era, psychological expertise was even less available. A portion of Reginald Scot’s 1584 book, *The Discovery of Witchcraft*, helps to link the mystery of women and supposition of witchcraft to melancholy. He notes a difference between the two, however, when he states that melancholy does not only manifest itself in witches, but in other women. Melancholy “occup[ies] their brain ... deprive[s] or rather deprave[s] their judgments, and all their senses ... not of cozening witches, but of poor melancholic women, which are themselves deceived” (352). While Scot bases his argument upon a misinformed belief that attributed witchcraft to abnormal behavior by women who did not fit into accepted female norms, he does make a relevant point about how melancholy, or what is currently diagnosed as depression, can affect the psyche. Brooks views the respective influences of Lady Macbeth and the witches on Macbeth as ones of rationality versus irrationality (44), but I contend the opposite: that in the surreal landscape of *Macbeth*, where “Fair is foul and foul is fair” (1.1.11), Lady Macbeth herself is the irrational, psychologically altered influence on Macbeth.

Just as the central child figure pervades *Macbeth*, so do the remnants of the blood of birth. Blood is everywhere: in speech, on the battlefield, on murderous daggers, on victims’ bodies, and on the hands of the murderers, literally and figuratively. As Macbeth worries over what to do with his bloodstained hands, Lady Macbeth takes charge, suggesting, “A little water clears us of this deed” (2.2.64). Not only will water wash off the blood, but she suggests it will clear their consciences. She says to Macbeth: “My hands are of your color; but I shame / To wear a heart so white” (2.2.61-62). Just as she transposes her femininity with Macbeth’s masculinity, the red color of their hearts trades with the white color of their hands. Here, “heart” and “hands” are used as figures of synecdoche. “Heart” represents their consciences draining of morality, and “hands” reflects their evil actions, bloodied with murder.

As Macbeth becomes immersed in his bloodthirsty thoughts, he eventually grows to trust the prophetic wisdom of the witches and the apparitions. Because his reality has ceased to exist within the ordinary world, he now lives in the supernatural. When they finally confront each other, Macbeth tells Macduff: “Thou lovest labor ... I bear a charmed life, which must not yield / To one of woman born” (5.8.8, 12-13). “Labor,” in this instance, holds polysemic meaning. Macbeth

tells Macduff that he should not try so hard to fight him, but “labor” also foreshadows Macduff’s secret that he “was from his mother’s womb / Untimely ripp’d” (5.8.15-16). Therefore, “labor” signifies the labor of childbirth, when Macduff’s mother lost her own battle of natural delivery. As Guillimeau describes, she had to die before Macduff could be born. Similarly, Macbeth has to die in order for Scotland (a country, as Rosse laments, that “cannot / Be call’d our mother, but our grave”) to be reborn (4.3.165-66).

That Macduff was not born from a woman and serves as the play’s truly honorable hero might lean toward a misogynistic critique of the play, since the witches and Lady Macbeth represent havoc-wreaking female figures. What is more significant about Macduff is that his mother’s womb represents the source from which the evil actions of the Macbeths are upended. The womb is the source of blood on the vengeful “bloody child” apparition. Blood in the play, therefore, is blood of the womb, the source of life. Because of her negative experience associated with blood and childbirth, Lady Macbeth turns against blood’s healthful, positive qualities, choosing instead to draw blood through murder in order to compensate for the loss of her own blood as well as her loss of sanity.

The bloody child serves as the most significant image of a child in the play. It appears as the second apparition Macbeth witnesses, after he has seen an armed head that warns him to “beware Macduff” (4.1.71). The second apparition represents Macduff’s “unnatural” birth, and warns Macbeth to “Be bloody, bold, and resolute” (4.1.79). This warning occurs again in threes, a combination that does not prove to be lucky for the Scottish king, since it is a manifestation of Macduff warning him that he will kill him, “for none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth” (4.1.80-81). If this is all trickery on the witches’ part, they are highly successful, for Macbeth now unequivocally believes in the supernatural.

The third apparition appears as a child crowned with a tree in his hand, signifying Malcolm. Malcolm is the murdered Duncan’s son, and although he is a man, he remains a child in comparison to the legacy of his father, looking for retribution for his father’s death. This pervasive child image will not leave Macbeth, haunting him like Banquo, and fooling him with puzzling prophesies. The apparition does not chant Macbeth’s name in threes, but its inherent third placement makes it effectively unlucky. Brooks says that the reason why two of the apparitions appear as children comes from Macbeth’s “hopes for his own children and his fears of Banquo’s that he has returned to the witches for counsel” (45).

The psychological state of postpartum depression lurks throughout the poem “Ghosts” from Sexton’s *All My Pretty Ones*. The poem parallels elements of *Macbeth* so uncannily that it begs for an interpretation of Lady Macbeth as speaker. “Ghosts” occurs in three stanzas, mirroring *Macbeth*’s omnipresent theme of threes. Three witches, apparitions, murders, and Macbeth’s successive titles all appear. The Macbeth family also exists as a trio if one answers affirmatively to

the elusive question as to whether Lady Macbeth has or had a child. While this idea continues to meet challenges, some productions of *Macbeth* have included a crib and infant cries, while others portray an increasingly pregnant Lady Macbeth from scene to scene (Willbern 111).

The speaker of "Ghosts" likens all of the humans in the poem to ghosts because they are transparently worthless and ineffectual. The women's "breasts [are] as limp as killed fish" (3). Their life-giving nurturing is compared to something that is not only dead, but murdered. David Willbern discusses the "[p]erversions of ... dual unity," such that breastfeeding is a "primal relation ... wherein mother and infant are bound 'symbiotically' in nurturance and trust (the ideal paradigm)" (103). This relationship is shattered in the poem because the women ghosts are unable to breastfeed and make futile attempts to act as "forsaken servants" (6) instead. Lady Macbeth ultimately descends into servitude to her husband, prompting him to do the evil deeds that will grant him greater power. The theme of women as servants, equipped with "useless" body parts, seeps into *Macbeth* and consequently alters the major events within it.

The speaker also addresses but quickly dismisses these melancholic women as possible witches, almost as if she has just read Scot's *The Discovery of Witchcraft*. Women who do not behave as they "should" raise suspicions that call for explanation. If they are not witches, then surely they are dead, or at least not their former, vital selves.

Just as "Ghosts" discounts women as witches, the speaker similarly negates the concept of men as satanic entities. In stanza two they are "Not devils, but ghosts" (11). They are bloated and "fat" (9), "thump[ing] and lurching" (12) primitive beings acting instinctively rather than rationally. They plod their way through life, like the impressionable Macbeth, whose submission to the supernatural makes him a sort of living, "lurching," ghost. Finally, the speaker discusses children. She does not sanctify children as "angels" (15), but characterizes them as frilly, superfluous, "innocent" (18) beings that inevitably direct themselves and their caretakers to "Lucifer" (19), or evil.

The conclusion to be drawn from "Ghosts," then, is that children lead their parents towards various forms of uncontrollable misbehavior, including infanticide. Lady Macbeth is one such parent. Because of her position of authority, the consequences of her actions have not only personal but public impact. Chamberlain concludes that Lady Macbeth must fantasize the sacrifice of a beloved child for empowerment and to avoid a prescribed "maternal agency" (82). No evidence of Lady Macbeth's loving nature exists beyond her "fantasy" of breast-feeding before she imagines infanticide. The play maintains ample evidence, instead, of her actual conniving ways that stem not from sheer viciousness, but from her desire to seek vengeance for the loss of self she has suffered through the process of childbirth. Lady Macbeth ultimately converts her personal, internal pain into

power-hungry aggression, altering national politics by causing her nation to suffer through regicide and political upheaval.

Notes

1 Ghosts

Some ghosts are women,
neither abstract nor pale,
their breasts as limp as killed fish.
Not witches, but ghosts
who come, moving their useless arms
like forsaken servants.

Not all ghosts are women,
I have seen others;
fat, white-bellied men,
wearing their genitals like old rags.
Not devils, but ghosts.
This one thumps barefoot, lurching
above my bed.

But that isn't all.
Some ghosts are children.
Not angels, but ghosts;
curling like pink tea cups
on any pillow, or kicking,
showing their innocent bottoms, wailing
for Lucifer.

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Destined for Incomprehensibility: The “Unreadable”
Realities of William Shakespeare’s *The Rape of Lucrece*
and *Hamlet*

Marissa Caston

The Rape of Lucrece (1593) and *Hamlet* (1600) show internalizations of gender roles silencing people and shaping individual definitions of happiness. Even though Lucrece and Ophelia lack abilities to communicate their emotions, the intensities of their silenced sensations continue to increase while illuminating a defenselessness of not only women’s condition, but also the human condition. In *Shakespeare’s Tragedies: Violation and Identity*, Alexander Legatt observes that “the ghost” of old Hamlet is “similarly unreadable” to “a woman being raped—like Lucrece, in fact—he was attacked while lying prone and vulnerable, his body invaded. It is not so easy to separate male and female, and throw away the female” (75). My argument concerns vulnerabilities that result from accepted social norms affecting personal thought processes since in both *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Hamlet* people cannot exist in worlds that disregard their thoughts.

Lucrece’s actions at the opening of *The Rape of Lucrece* demonstrate the determining operations of gender roles: with polite submission, Lucrece gives a “reverent welcome to her princely guest / Whose inward ill no outward harm expressed” (90-91). The first line of this couplet contains an extra unstressed syllable that calls attention to the word “guest,” thereby implying the existence of social principles that condition Lucrece not to suspect evil in her husband’s companion; also, Lucrece cannot notice the “shining secrecies” behind Tarquin’s eyes. The oxymoron “shining secrecies” implies secrets may not always shine to those who “never before coped with stranger eyes” (99). Lucrece epitomizes the standards of a world more willing to see than hear women. Likewise, the social conditioning of women obliterates perceptive capabilities in *Hamlet*, for Gertrude “[hopes] [Ophelia’s] virtues / Will bring [Hamlet] to his wonted ways again, / To both [their] honours” (3.1.42-44). Ophelia responds to Gertrude with: “Madam, I wish it may” (3.1.45). In *Women’s Worlds in Shakespeare’s Plays*, Irene Dash argues that Ophelia and Gertrude’s conversation “reveals the flaws in the patriarchal system where women’s compliance to the directives of men overlooks the humanity of the women themselves” (119).

Through their silencing, both women come to equate happiness and virtue with chastity. Before raping Lucrece, Tarquin threatens Lucrece’s reputation and life when he tells her: “so thy surviving husband shall remain / The scornful mark of every open eye” (519-20). Tarquin appeals to Lucrece’s internalization of codes that force women to place their happiness in the hands of others by reminding

her that her husband, as well as her offspring, will forever bear the burden of her tarnished reputation. Tarquin cuts to the heart of Lucrece's psyche, since after the rape she believes: "she hath lost a dearer thing than life" (687). Just as Tarquin conquers Lucrece's voice and tears away her fidelity, Polonius refuses to allow Ophelia the luxury of words.

Ophelia becomes a political pawn in an intense game of chess that her father seems determined to win when he tells her: "Ophelia, walk you here.—Gracious, so please you, / We will bestow ourselves.—Read on this book, That show of such an exercise may color / Your loneliness" (3.1.45-48). Polonius, Lord Chamberlain of the Court of Claudius, insists that Hamlet's seemingly erratic behavior stems from Ophelia's denial, yet Ophelia's denial is not her own, for her loyalty to Polonius takes precedence over her loyalty to her heart. As Claudius and Polonius hide behind a tapestry, Polonius trades his daughter's integrity for a chance to strengthen his political position by showing the king the apparent validity of a theory that disregards the thought processes of men and women since both Ophelia and Hamlet soon begin to wonder: "Whether 'tis nobler in mind to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, / Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, / And by opposing, end them" (3.1.59-62).

The contemplations of people hold little relevance when acquisitions of political power suppress innate needs for internal satisfaction, but Lucrece's complaint to time emphasizes a private longing for Tarquin to feel pain equivalent to the shame he forces her to endure, a shame that according to Ewen Fernie sanctions "not only the death of the self, but also the terrible experience of being wholly disfigured and deformed, of recognizing oneself as somebody else, and someone horribly inferior" (225). Lucrece appears helpless and trapped within her shattered sense of self, while the words "let him have time" form an epizeuxis and lend a persistent strength to her desire for revenge. In *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, J. A. Cuddon defines "epizeuxis" as "a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is repeated emphatically to produce a special effect" (283). Cuddon also points to the Greek origin of the term, highlighting the fact that it denotes a "fastening together" of various entities. Lucrece's poignant musing, "let him have time to mark how slow time goes" (990), illustrates not only sheer desolation, but indubitably fastens together perceptions lingering between boundaries of truisms and falsities and life and death.

During moments of extreme pain and doubt, both Lucrece and Ophelia seek consolation within themselves. Lucrece longs for her attacker to submit himself to agony equivalent to her own as she muses: "Let him have time against himself to rave, / Let him have time of time's help to despair, / Let him have time to live a loathèd slave" (982-84). She desires to take psychological revenge on Tarquin and see his spirit suffer, yet she cannot deny the notion that "This helpless smoke of words doth [her] know right; / The remedy indeed to do [her] good

/ Is to let forth [her] foul defiled soul" (127-29), for Tarquin may never feel the distressing heartbreak of a woman's body defiled. Lucrece's emphatic repetition of the phrase "let him have time" and Ophelia's of "good night" represent inescapable horror. Ophelia repeats the phrase "good night" (4.5.69-70) while trying to cope with her father's death, but her words point to deep despair that eventually forces her to say "good night" to the world.

Ophelia describes herself as "most deject and wretched" (3.1.154) after Hamlet asks her: "what should such fellows as I do crawling between heaven and earth? We are arrant knaves, all. Believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?" (3.1.127-30). Ophelia, saying, "Blasted with ecstasy, O woe is me, / T'have seen what I have seen, see what I see" (3.1.159-60), emphasizes a silent, but undeniable correlation between public personas and private disintegrations. Irene Dash suggests: "The conflict besetting Ophelia in the nunnery scene leads to a choice of father rather than self. Having forsaken self-identity, she then loses all when she loses her father, for she has adopted his perceptions of her and of women" (152). After the death of Polonius, Ophelia faces a piercing isolation; her repetition of the phrase "good night" illustrates a dangerous desperation from which no woman can gain immunity. Unable to express the pain associated with Hamlet's treatment of her and the death of her father, the protector of her chastity, Ophelia is found with "her clothes spread wide ... one incapable of her own distress" (5.1.146-49). Ophelia is not "incapable," for her death draws attention to her ignored wisdom and points back to her unheard comment to Claudius after the death of her father. Between verses of her "mad song" the silenced heroine declares to the king: "Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table!" (4.5.42-43). In *Hamlet* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, knowledge of "what we are" conflicts with "what we may be," given that the unknown glory of self-expression can tear down the deadly walls of isolation and provide humanity with a glimpse of "what [it] may be."

Since Tarquin steals her fidelity, Lucrece views her body as a prison instead of a fortress and stabs herself in the chest; she believes the rape dismantles the only purpose for her existence. In her final moments, Lucrece struggles to communicate: "Here with a sigh as if her heart would break / She throws forth Tarquin's name. 'He, he,' she says— / But more than he her poor tongue could not speak" (1716-18). She remains unheard, and after Collatine vows to avenge her rape, Lucrece "sheathed in her harmless breast / A harmful knife, that thence her soul unsheathed" (1723-24). In the moments following Lucrece's final breath, her husband and father argue over who has a "right" to grieve more, wondering "who should weep most, / For daughter or for wife" (1791-92). Lucrece becomes "the mistress of [her] fate" by separating her body and spirit. Ophelia also embraces a long sleep that outlasts loneliness and pain as she resolves to discover "in that sleep of death what dreams may come" (3.1.68). While lamenting the loss of Oph-

elia, Hamlet and Laertes have a heated conversation similar to that of Collatine and Lucrece's father. Hamlet tells Laertes: "I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers / Could not, with all their quantity of love, / Make up for my sum. What wilt thou do for her?" (5.1.254-56). In death, Lucrece and Ophelia seize "a face where all distress is stelled" (*Lucrece* 1444) as they escape realities that thwart their abilities to develop and express passion, but both women remain "unreadable."

Passion longs for an outlet. While interpreting a painting of the fall of Troy, Lucrece wonders: "Why should the private pleasure of someone / Become the public plague of many moe?" (1478-79). Lucrece's ruminations create a radiant and dull light that forms an indirect correlation to her destiny. She internalizes the tapestry, and in *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*, Lisa Jardine emphasizes broad implications of Lucrece's identification with Hecuba, presenting the notion that "Male lust and female suffering unite Lucrece and Hecuba in a compelling composite image of extreme guilt: the ultimate posture for the female hero. And behind that image lurks the guilt imputed by the patriarchy to the female sex for the lust they passively arouse" (193). But passivity does not restrict itself to the female sex, for Hamlet also subsists in an environment that trivializes his emotions; amid Hamlet's intense dejection, Claudius tells his nephew that the lamentation of sorrow "shows a will incorrect to heaven, / A heart unfortified, a mind impatient, / An understanding simple and unschooled" (1.2.95-97). In Hamlet's world, survival requires the human heart to numb itself to the emotions that make life worth living, but Hamlet's psyche cannot prepare itself to endure the pain that comes with that silencing.

Even though women become muted victims when patriarchal paradigms frustrate their thoughts and emotions, an undeniable commonality between genders presents itself since Lucrece's grief-stricken response to the fall of Troy begs comparison to Hamlet's response to hearing one of the players speak of the fall of Troy, for "as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood, / And like a neutral to his will and matter, / Did nothing" (2.2.460-62). A "painted tyrant" has neither capacity for action nor experiences apprehension, thereby encouraging Hamlet's decision to "catch the conscience of the King" (2.2.582). In *Hamlet* and *The Rape of Lucrece* during paralyzing moments of grief and indecision, people cannot read one another, but they can read art. The fall of a city that once glittered glamorously comes to symbolize the forgotten glory of the sincerity and compassion only found in expression and communion.

Hamlet appears trapped within the same patriarchy that silences Lucrece and Ophelia, but unlike Lucrece and Ophelia, Hamlet is given the opportunity by his environment to attempt to dismantle the fetters binding his existence. Even though Lucrece and Ophelia may never experience Hamlet's freedoms, none of the three characters can escape vulnerability. When Hamlet approaches the gravediggers, a digger considers Ophelia: "One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul,

she's dead" (5.1.124-25). The "unreadable" enigma surrounding Ophelia's suicide draws attention to a defenselessness from which no human being can gain immunity, for susceptibilities to despair and isolation exist at the center of tragedy. In *Shame in Shakespeare*, Ewan Fernie reminds us that "the poetic totem of *Hamlet* is a grotesquely deformed body, recollecting the imagery of disfigurement and loss of purity in *The Rape of Lucrece*" (113). If he is right, this correlation illustrates brutal actualities of patriarchal paradigms for both genders and points to the frail potency of discourse between private and public territories.

Just as Ophelia becomes her father's political pawn in *Hamlet*, Brutus makes the decision to "show [Lucrece's] bleeding body through Rome, / And so to publish Tarquin's foul offense" (1850-51), thereby gaining public support for the banishment of Tarquin and the creation of a republic; likewise, the murder of Hamlet's father serves as a reminder that even those who appear powerful and safe can offer little defense against a world that pays no heed to the complex needs of the soul. In death, Lucrece, Ophelia, Hamlet, and Hamlet's father all surface as "unreadable" while shedding light on the shortcomings of a competitive humanity that encourages people to suppress their own longings in pursuit of accepted conceptions of happiness and victory. Lucrece's emphatic desire for more "time," Ophelia's resounding repetition of "goodnight," and Hamlet's "dull revenge" put forth striking comparisons to an "unreadable" ghost searching for serenity, but destined for incomprehensibility.

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Ethics and Tragedy: A Study of *King Lear*

Kelly Marron

Ethics is an old stomping ground for many critics of Shakespeare's plays. It is one of the most complex and interesting topics when discussing the works of the father of English drama. The philosophy of ethics is continually evolving, searching for an answer to the question "What defines an ethical action?" This question has long been debated from Aristotle to present-day critics concerned not only with Shakespeare's plays, but other works as well. In his essay on ancient ethics, Richard Parry explains that Aristotle's theory focuses on the relationship between happiness and virtue. He asserts that happiness "is the one supreme good as the aim of human actions." Happiness is superior to all other emotions because it is the primary motivation of ethical behavior. Thus, as Parry points out, Aristotle correlates happiness with moral virtue because "[moral virtue] is concerned with feelings and actions (to which feelings give rise)." Virtuous behavior results in feelings of peace and contentment. The emotional gratification achieved through true happiness is inherent to all human beings, and is demonstrated by many characters in Shakespeare's play *King Lear*. However, because each person defines happiness in his or her own way, inevitably, conflict arises.

Additionally, the motivation behind unethical actions plays an important role. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "ethics" as "the science of morals; the department of study concerned with the principles of *human duty*" (emphasis added). While it is difficult to define a theory that is under continual debate, for the purposes of this paper, the *OED's* definition will be applied. The question of human duty is an important one concerning the play, where personal and political ethics are consistently juxtaposed. Several characters question the constituents of duty in relation to the different roles they fulfill. In the attempt to distinguish between the two arenas, the reader is actively engaged in determining these boundaries. This study aims to discover the ethical characters and their actions that propel the plot toward its conclusion.

King Lear commences with the introduction of Kent, arguably one of the most ethical characters in the play. The audience is immediately privy to the king's most loyal subject questioning his actions: "I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall" (1.1.1-2). In his analysis of the opening scene, critic William Dodd asserts that Kent's statement "immediately evokes the personalized politics of Elizabethan absolutism" (482). Like Queen Elizabeth, Lear employs his personal affection and anger as political tools; generally, where the former fails, the latter succeeds in aiding the king. His emotional manipulation is evident in the division of the kingdom among his three daughters. Lear initiates

the ceremony by asking, "Which of you shall we say doth love us most?" (1.1.49). The polysemic character of his question illustrates the assumed equation between the political and the personal. The ensuing protestation of love and duty by Lear's two eldest daughters, Goneril and Regan, illustrates the superficial nature of their affection. Like their father, Goneril and Regan do not distinguish between affection and politics; both are devices employed for fulfilling their materialistic needs. Consequently, their disingenuous speeches earn them equal divisions of the kingdom when Cordelia refuses to publicly proclaim her love for Lear. Her unexpected response demonstrates her refutation of political role-playing, initiating the explosive action that propels the plot forward.

In the tradition of abdication, the love test is generally accepted as the king's final act of power. Thus, none of the characters question Lear's motives. However, as Dodd warns us, "by attempting to politicize the personal, Lear rashly exposes the political to the contingency of the personal" (488). Although Lear demands a simultaneously personal and political interaction in the love test, Cordelia is both unable and unwilling to comply. She claims, "I love your majesty / According to my bond; nor more nor less" (1.1.91-92). "Bond" is defined by the *Norton Anthology* as "filial duty" (1112). Cordelia does not define her love in political terms, and therefore she cannot produce a satisfactory answer to Lear's question. She perceives her duty as a daughter to be superior to that of a subject; her filial duty lies in telling the truth, not in melodramatic flattery. Dodd notes how "the love test explores the risks inherent in the confusion of the political with the personal" (486). Because Lear is incapable of separating the two, his politically motivated actions negatively affect his personal relationships until the end of the play when, left with nothing, Lear is forced to acknowledge the difference. By confusing Cordelia's personal affection for him with her political disobedience, Lear loses both his daughter and his land. In his essay "The Avoidance of Love," Stanley Cavell contends that Lear "wants exactly what a bribe can buy: (1) false love and (2) a public expression of love. That is, he wants something he does not have to return in *kind*; something which a division of his property fully pays for" (61-62). Lear is unable to comprehend the depth of Cordelia's love and is therefore incapable of returning it. His attempt to compensate her affection with materialistic wealth results in political unrest.

Another character that questions his duty is Kent, the king's most loyal subject. As the voice of ethical behavior in the play, Kent protests Lear's avowal of hatred for Cordelia. He asks, "Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak, / When power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's bound, / When majesty stoops to folly" (1.1.147-49). In his indelible honor, Kent accuses the king of imprudence. Like Cordelia, he explains his behavior "in terms of role relations as opposed to personal relations" (Dodd 496). For Lear, the personal and the political are one and the same. Appealing to his personal affections is futile; therefore, Kent pres-

ents his interference as the objective concern of a dutiful subject. He suggests that honor, inseparable from duty, lies in telling the truth; thus, he commends Cordelia's silence as a symbol of her love. Consequently, his respectable reproach earns him his own banishment (1.1.176-77). Cavell explains Lear's reaction as an attempt to "avoid being recognized" (46). He suggests that many of the characters' actions are motivated through their need to avoid recognition. Lear's rash expulsions illustrate his "darker purpose" (1.1.34): Cordelia's "nothing" (1.1.86) threatens to expose the shallow nature of his love, and Kent's objection discovers his unethical decision. Lear's self-righteous attitude, carried to the extreme, becomes what Parry terms a "vice." Ashamed of his behavior, Lear avoids his dissenters by dismissing them; their absence protects him from the truth about himself.

Evidence of darkness, and all of its connotations, is riddled throughout the play. The avoidance of recognition, a figurative form of darkness, is also demonstrated by the blinding of Gloucester. When Lear retreats into the storm, Gloucester follows him against the will of Goneril and Regan (3.3.10-12). When confronted with his actions, he is punished with the removal of his eyes (3.7.68-86). Regan does not want her betrayal of Lear revealed. Thus, when Gloucester names her deeds, she eliminates the medium of recognition. Cavell asserts that the "physical cruelty [in this scene] symbolizes . . . the psychic cruelty which pervades the play. . . . It literalizes evil's ancient love of darkness" (47). The question of ethical behavior inevitably turns to darkness, which is inherently associated with evil. Although Regan's initial intentions may have been good, her shame and embarrassment precipitate her unethical behavior. The servant's uprising on Gloucester's behalf complicates the drama: Regan is obligated to eliminate all means by which she can be recognized; thus, she takes the servant's life (3.7.83). She veils herself in darkness in order to avoid the insight that self-recognition inevitably brings. By avoiding those that are able to expose her, Regan can hide from the truth about herself.

Cavell discusses the avoidance of recognition at some length. He suggests that "the failure to recognize others is a failure to let others recognize you, a fear of what is revealed to them, an avoidance of their eyes . . . it is exactly shame which is the cause" (49). This failure instigates Lear's anger at the start of the play. He does not want others, particularly Cordelia, to perceive his shallow nature. He masks his superficiality with the title of king in an attempt to avoid recognition. His shame derives from his inability to adequately compensate for Cordelia's faithful love. Thus, he employs the love test as a means of allowing her to draw "a third more opulent" in recompense for her more steadfast affection (1.1.85). However, Cordelia looks through his transparent illusion, refusing to submit to it. Consequently, because Lear's love is perched upon this peaked dependence between darkness (i.e., avoidance of recognition) and duty (i.e., denial of recognition), Cordelia's identification implodes his fantasy. Predictably, the king is left to wal-

low in his shame.

Lear's indignity persists through the end of the play. Although he endows his daughters with the kingdom, he is unable to dethrone his psychological kingship. When the Fool suggests that his abdication was unwise, the king asks, "Dost thou call me fool, boy?" (1.4.129). The Fool's seemingly treasonous suggestion ironically fulfills Kent's requirements for honor. The Fool tells the king the truth: "All thy other titles thou hast given away" (1.4.130). Similar to the effect of abdication in *King Richard II*, Lear is reduced to nothing without his defining title. He assumes the mask of madness in a desperate attempt to delay recognition. But, as Cavell points out, Lear knows that "recognition of himself is imminent. Even madness is no rescue" (52). This insight comes when Lear is reunited with Cordelia. The forgiveness she bestows upon him is necessary for his self-insight. Cavell describes the scene as "climactic," suggesting that "Lear's dominating motivation to this point . . . is to *avoid being recognized*" (46). (Notably, Lear's impatience to be alone with Cordelia in prison could also be seen as a further desire to avoid recognition by others; he is desperate to remain hidden.) Lear overcomes his shame because Cordelia allays his fear of exposure with her mercy. His acknowledgment of her begins the rapid descent of action in the play. When Cordelia is hanged for treason, he is forced to reveal himself: "I might have saved her; now she's gone forever" (5.3.269). Tragically, Cordelia's death marks the moment Lear gains self-knowledge. Her sacrifice is imperative to his breakthrough: although Cordelia forgives Lear, his shame renders him incapable of acknowledging his mistakes until the moment of her death. Afterwards he is able to do so only because his shame expires with her life.

The theme of recognition is paralleled by the Gloucester-Edgar subplot. Cavell explains: "we have the great image, the double mirror image, of everyman who has gone to every length to avoid himself" (52). Both Gloucester and Lear risk the hazards of madness in order to delay self-recognition. But when confronted with one another, their madness becomes exponential as a consequence of the distress of seeing the other suffer, and each man seeing himself reflected in the other's madness. The difficulty of this interaction, which again confuses the personal (i.e., friendship) with the political (i.e., class), forces both men to confront the truth about themselves; they are no longer able to disguise themselves in darkness. Furthermore, this scene exemplifies the difficulty in determining the boundaries of duty: both Lear and Gloucester are obligated to acknowledge one another, and this acknowledgement fulfills the requirements of duty as determined by Kent.

The unanswered question, "What is duty?" (as relevant to ethics), persists in its exasperating nature. There is a strong correlation between duty and ethics, as the individual's definition of ethical behavior inevitably defines the boundaries of duty. Unfortunately, the basic principles of human duty, whether filial

or otherwise, are often times learned too late. Throughout the play, the reader is guided by Kent's firmly grounded wisdom. His initial objection to Cordelia's banishment anticipates Lear's downfall. Nonetheless, Lear acquires self-knowledge only after Cordelia's death; only with this is she able to fully execute her filial duty. This demonstration of true love demands reciprocity: the equation is tragically completed with the loss of Lear's life. Edgar closes the scene saying: "The weight of this sad time we must obey; / Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (5.3.322-323). Ironically, Cordelia's attempt to do just this, to separate the political and the personal, initiates the tragic action of the play. The political roles we fulfill unavoidably permeate our every day lives. The key to finding the happiness that is the focus of Aristotle's theory is striking a balance between the political and the personal. It is a balance we are all searching for, one that we hope to find somewhere between the first and final act of our lives.

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Isabella as the “Unravished Bride” in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*

Irene McGarrity

We consider *Measure for Measure* one of Shakespeare’s problem plays for the very reason we also considered it “one of Shakespeare’s greatest plays” (Price 181). The frustrating ambiguity of the characters annoys and intrigues us. What exactly is the Duke up to? Is Isabella as virtuous as she seems? Or is she hiding her vicious humanity? John Keats coined the term “negative capability,” which “Shakespeare possessed so enormously” (Keats). This “being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (Keats) is the quality of *Measure for Measure* that makes it such a problem for critics; moreover, “Shakespeare might have written a character’s passion with all the contradictoriness of real emotions” (Price 181). Perhaps this is what is so disconcerting to us. We are not allowed to escape from our own humanity during *Measure for Measure*; we run right up against it. Life and art are fused in a way that makes it difficult to know how to read the play.

Isabella, along with all the other characters, poses herself as a work of art, creating a hollow sculpture of virtue to hide inside of, like the “still unravish’d bride” (line 1) the perpetual virgin, of Keats’s Grecian urn—never caught, and always lusted after. We never know her true motives because “Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter” (11-12). Of all the characters in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*, we might ask “What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?” (8). They are all part of the “mad pursuit” and also “struggle to escape” (9), as the Duke so eloquently professes to Claudio: “. . . thou art death’s fool, / For him thou labour’st, by thy flight to shun, / And yet run’st toward him still” (3.1.11-13). The godlike paintings they attempt to make of themselves peel away during *Measure for Measure*, revealing glimpses of their mortal imperfection to us; but rarely do we see an entire portrait of a human being. What Shakespeare has conveyed to us in *Measure for Measure* is a kind of urn, the characters frozen in conflict and the chase; they all experience their humanity to some extent, but spend most of the play swinging from one extreme to the other.

Isabella’s role as “the unravished bride” reveals the deep conflict of the characters and the play itself. In her first meeting with Angelo to plead for her brother’s life, she is able to transform this seemingly holy man into a helpless sinner. It is her portrait of virtue that is so irresistible to Angelo. He realizes: “Most dangerous / Is that temptation that doth goad us on / To sin in loving virtue” (2.2.185-87). Like a fine piece of art, she is intriguing to Angelo in a way that no mortal woman is; yet strangely, his reaction is to make her human by making love

to her. He is not content to worship her from afar.

Critics of *Measure for Measure* have similarly conflicted impressions of Isabella. They “can make nothing of her, or—which is worse—they make two opposite women of her, and praise or blame her accordingly” (Quiller-Couch xvii). Critics are as confused as Angelo, who asks: “What’s this? What’s this? Is this her fault or mine? / The tempter or the tempted, who sin most, ha?” (2.2.167-68). Isabella’s reputation with critics is not salvaged by Angelo’s admission that “Not she; nor doth she tempt; but it is I / That, lying by the violet in the sun, / Do, as the carrion does, not as the flower, / Corrupt with virtuous season” (2.2.169-72). The audience remains unsure of the true Isabella. She does not seem purely virtuous or purely sinful; she is perceived as a confusing mixture of both: “It is difficult to tell what Isabella is like, if we have only her speeches and actions to go by. The only way one could really track down exactly what she was like was to examine her motives” (Price 181). If there were such a term, she would be considered a problem character, negatively capable of revealing her truth to us.

Jungian scholar Marion Woodman discusses the relationship many women and literary characters have with the archetype of the “unravished bride”:

We try to make ourselves into works of art. Working so hard to create our own perfection we forget that we are human beings. On one side we try to be the efficient, disciplined goddess Athena, on the other we are forced into the voracious repressed energy of Medusa. Athena is chained to Medusa as surely as Medusa is chained to Athena. We are trapped in the extremes of the gods, territory that doesn’t belong to us. (10)

This vacillation between liberty and restraint exists in all the major character in *Measure for Measure*. They find themselves struggling towards an ideal virtue while acting on mythical Vice’s terms, forgetting about humanity, letting it slip away into unconsciousness. During the course of this struggle, “the one who is forgotten is the maiden Andromeda, chained to the rock, in danger of being sacrificed to a monster from the unconscious. She is the forgotten one—the ‘still unravished bride’” (Woodman 10). Isabella never reveals her true motives, but her inconsistent behavior from the beginning until the last scene illustrates her struggle.

When we first meet her, she admits to “wishing a more strict restraint / Upon the sisterhood” (1.4.4-5); the perfection demanded at the nunnery is not enough for Isabella. Woodman tells us: “It is in seeking perfection by isolating and exaggerating parts of ourselves that we become neurotic” (52). She dwells in a psychological prison as opposed to the real prison her brother is confined to. In her attempts at saint-like virtue, Isabella tries “to move out of life, or what is worse, never to enter it” (Woodman 52). Once she leaves the nunnery, Isabella is subjected to the harsh reality of her brother’s imprisonment and death sentence, along

with Angelo's hypocrisy. Suddenly, the oppression exists outside of her, bringing her own internal conflict to the surface.

In her opening speech to Angelo, she confesses: "There is a vice that most I do abhor, / And most desire should meet the blow of justice, / For which I would not plead, but that I must; / For which I must no plead, but that I am / At war 'twixt will and will not" (2.2.29-33). Her struggle is an ideological one, which she has internalized. She makes no separation between ideal morality and actual human morality: "Shakespeare characteristically translates sweeping moral questions into scrupulously personal terms" (Maus 2025). Isabella spends the play contending with her internalized concept of virtue, unaware that these are standards she could not possibly live up to as a human being.

Her struggle continues until Angelo offers his proposition: he will spare her brother's life if she will agree to a sexual encounter with him. She asserts: "Sir, believe this, / I had rather give my body than my soul" (2.4.55-56). Angelo is only asking for her body, but she cannot make the separation between her virginity and her soul. Like the other characters who "initially assume that their virtue is tied up with, perhaps even identical with, their chastity" (2022 Maus), Isabella "believes that sleeping with Angelo will defile her forever, even if she does so in order to save her brother's life" (2023). She is a figure on the Grecian urn, running from desire, attempting to keep hold of what she believes is her self, her soul; but in actuality this is nothing more than a myth, a piece of plaster shaped to appear beautiful.

Sleeping with Angelo would have led to "differentiation from her own deduced omnipotence" (Woodman 55). To admit humanity "is the first faltering step toward becoming human" (55), but Isabella cannot accept this. She clings desperately to the only sense of self she has; she is trapped in an over-identification with virtue. Her ego is not strong enough to differentiate herself from her sexual purity.

Critics often see her refusal to sleep with Angelo as "chilling or selfish" (Maus 2025). They do not consider the fact that "what looks like rebellion may be inner collapse. What appears to be a power tantrum may be a disguised cry of inner defeat" (Woodman 61). For the first time, Isabella is confronted with oppression that is not self-imposed. Her own internal prison is no longer the only authority she must answer to. It is natural that such a drastic change leads to a psychological crisis.

As Northrop Frye points out in *The Myth of Deliverance*, Isabella's "emotional development has lagged behind, and her intense desire to become a nun seems to be promoted more by an adolescent girl's fear of the world than by a genuine volition" (20). We see her fear of the world and inner conflict clearly when her brother asks her if she will agree to sleep with Angelo. She curses him and prays for his death. Her speech seems Christian in its insistence upon virtue,

but Frye points out:

... its giveaway is the line “I’ll pray a thousand prayers for thy death.” Nobody in the remotest shape of a Christian could start offering prayers for a brother’s death: a recluse nun who did that would have mistaken her calling. A real saint, whatever her course of action, would have shown some sympathy with the compassion for Claudio’s plight—in short, if we were to take such a line seriously we should have to regard Isabella as a somewhat sinister character. (21)

If Isabella believed her brother was only asking for her virginity, she would seem rather cold and selfish. But Isabella hears her brother asking her to give up her identity, her soul: “Better it were a brother died at once / Than that a sister, by redeeming him, / Should die for ever” (2.4.107-09). In her mind, sacrificing her virginity means eternal damnation as opposed to the less significant mortal death her brother faces.

Like all the characters in *Measure for Measure*, Isabella swings back and forth between the extremes of restriction and liberty. When the Duke suggests Mariana as a sacrificial stand-in for Isabella, she agrees to this plan without hesitation: “The image of it gives me content already, and I trust it will grow to a most prosperous perfection” (3.1.249-50). Her allegiance to virtue does not remain consistent. She shuns her brother’s sinful union with Juliet and refuses to sleep with Angelo on the basis that it will eternally damn her, but she offers Mariana’s soul without a second thought. She seems comforted by the plan, not appalled, seeing “perfection” in it and celebrating an “imperfection” she has shunned up until this point. She offers Mariana’s body and soul liberally, while maintaining her own at the cost of her brother’s life. The sacrifice of one person’s soul for another cannot disguise itself as a Christian act. She slips easily into the Medusa archetype and thoughtlessly offers another person’s salvation to save her own.

Yet Isabella seems completely unaware of this internal shift; “the devil is that part of God that has not yet entered consciousness” (Woodman 55). She is not conscious of the potential sinfulness that exists inside of her and can therefore rationalize her actions as virtuous. She can pray for her own brother’s death and sacrifice the virginity of another woman and still think herself virtuous. After contemplation, Angelo admits to his sinfulness and the inevitable sinfulness of humanity: “And in my heart the strong and swelling evil / Of my conception” (2.4.6-7). Although more sinful than Isabella, he is far more aware of his human nature. Isabella remains inside of her virtuous sculpture for most of the play. Her only way out is to recognize herself as human, to forgive herself and to forgive the other human sinners their flaws.

Near the end of the play, Isabella is able to experience charity, the true human virtue. She pleads for Angelo’s life, claiming: “I partly think / A due sincerity governed his deeds, / Till he did look on me. Since it is so, / Let him not die”

(5.1.437-40). Isabella prays for Angelo's deliverance "on the grounds that he is less villainous than self-deluded" (Frye 29). The virtue she struggled for transforms itself and she "expresses the genuine kind of love, the charity which is the supreme virtue, that Isabella had dimly in mind when she first wanted to be a nun" (Frye 29). For a moment in the play, Isabella no longer swings back and forth between the Athena archetype and the Medusa—she lands in the center. She "could not always live on the level of nobility that the speech represents, but there has been a moment in which her essential self spoke; and such moments may become foci around which all the rest of one's life may revolve" (29-30). By speaking from her true self on behalf of Angelo, she has discovered "that perfection belongs to the gods; completeness or wholeness is the most a human being can hope for" (Woodman 51). She lets go the neurotic exaggeration of her virtuous part, and acknowledges her self as whole, human, and charitable.

The Duke immediately challenges her newly discovered humanity with his marriage proposal: "Dear Isabella, / I have a motion much imports your good, / Whereto, if you'll a willing ear incline, / What's mine is yours, and what's yours is mine" (5.1.527-30). Isabella responds with silence, which indicates that she "remains like a figure on Keats's Grecian urn, with all her passionate loveliness frozen into marble immobility" (Woodman 10). She is negatively capable of revealing herself to us once again. The characters all resume their places on the urn, chasing and being chased without any end in sight. For the moment, Isabella returns to her role as the "unravished bride"; perhaps she will rediscover her humanity, rejecting perfection and instead striving for completeness. It is her silence that ends *Measure for Measure* as a work of art, not of life. The models have simply shifted position, frozen until the next struggle begins.

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Possessing Lavinia

Nicole A. Myers

The idea that a woman is a possession may seem absurd in today's society, but in literature, as well as in some very real places in the world today, it is reality. Members of the so-called weaker sex are often put into contexts where they belong to another, usually a father or husband. It must be a very frustrating and powerless life to live as someone else's possession. The character of Lavinia from William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* is a perfect example of this, right down to her passivity towards the men who try to own her. She is a powerless object, but she is much more. Lavinia's role in the play goes beyond just being a possession of various male figures; she is powerless, yet power itself; she is a Roman, yet also Rome. Lavinia's purpose in *Titus Andronicus* is to shed light on and be a representation of things that have been as silenced as she is.

Lavinia is first and foremost an object of power, her body the playing field for political rivalry (Ray 31). In the beginning of the play, Lavinia belongs to her father, Titus. She has consented to being his possession by remaining pure. Free of husband or lover, Lavinia is protected and owned by Titus, the only person who may allow access to his daughter sexually by giving her hand in marriage. At this point in the play, Titus is also the father figure to Rome. He has been away at war in order to protect Rome from invaders, controlling access to the country just as he controls access to his daughter. Rome has also consented to being ruled by Titus:

Know that the people of Rome, for whom we
A special party, have, by common voice,
In election for Roman empery,
Chosen Andronicus, surnamed Pius. (1.1.20-23)

Titus has Lavinia and Rome in his control, but not for long.

Just as Titus is getting too old to keep his daughter, he feels that he is too old to rule Rome. Titus passes Rome to Saturninus, who tried to claim the kingdom with his birthright as the play opened, and is asked to pass Lavinia to him as well. Saturninus tells him, "Lavinia will I make my empress, / Rome's royal mistress, mistress of my heart" (1.1.250-51), yet Lavinia is not what he is after, but the power she represents. By bonding himself with Lavinia, Saturninus would bring the prestige of her father into connection with himself. It would be a marriage to make him look better in the eyes of the people of Rome. Titus agrees to the union between the two without Lavinia's consent, as he gave Rome to Saturninus without its consent.

Lavinia may remain silent, but Bassianus, Saturninus's brother, who wished to have an election for emperor by the people, does not. He was unable to take control of Rome because the people elected Titus, and he will not have his bride taken away as well. Although Saturninus has royal prerogative and Titus's blessing, Bassianus's claim to Lavinia came previously and is therefore the legal and binding claim (Harris 386). The prior agreement or betrothal between Lavinia and Bassianus transfers possession of her from Titus to Bassianus. He takes ownership once it is seen that Titus intends to give her away to his unworthy brother. He saw his brother eyeing the prisoner, courting "*Tamora in dumb show*" (1.1.275, stage direction), and will not allow his woman to be stolen away by someone who is interested in her only to be affiliated with her father and her father's reputation (Ray 33).

Lavinia is passed as a "changing piece" (1.1.309) between her father, Saturninus, and Bassianus. When she is in Titus's possession, she holds the consent of the people of Rome and all of the power that they shall bestow upon their emperor. During her brief betrothal to Saturninus, she leaves him with the title of emperor. Bassianus takes her from his brother, but cannot also take the throne. However, Bassianus possesses the integrity and affiliation with Titus, which was coveted by Saturninus to begin with, once he has possession of her. Lavinia never says a word as she is passed between the three men, neither consenting nor resisting. She is a representation of the power the brothers want and her father holds briefly.

As long as Lavinia remains a virgin, she remains this symbol of power. The moment that she is sexually violated, she loses her connection to the power. She cannot be a vessel of power because of the shame and dishonor brought to her and her family by the rape. As a virgin, she is coveted for her purity and innocence. She is desirable because she is untouched and untainted by man. Virginal Lavinia is a vessel of power because no one has corrupted her with his own desires, sexually or politically. She is unexplored, a place where no one has ever gone before. From the colonization of the Americas to the original *Star Trek* series, it is in human nature to want to be first, whether in the discovery of a new galaxy, the conquest of new land, or the breaking of a young woman's hymen. This has not changed since Roman times or Shakespeare's day. Of course, once Lavinia is claimed and taken sexually by a man, or in this case men, she is of no use. No man would have wanted to have anything to do with her, much less possess her; she is used goods, not a representation of power. Lavinia's body is tainted by the sexual act and is no longer fit to be a vessel for power or a desirable possession. Her physical appearance mirrors the loss of power in the way that her means of communication have literally been cut away. She is not so much an empty shell, but rather disabled and incapable of one of the greatest sources of power that a human being has: communication. She is a bloodied stump. The power she once represented would still be desired, even though the person is not.

Lavinia is a victim of two separate incidences of rape in the play. The word “rape” comes from the Latin “raptus,” meaning “carrying off” or “abduction” (Cawley). Her first rape is this kind of figurative rape, a “carrying off by force” (*Webster*). Bassianus is the first to rape her, claiming Lavinia as his own and then seizing her, taking her offstage. Her second rape is in the more common definition: a “forcible seizing and violation; ravishing” (*Webster*) by Tamora’s sons, taking place offstage between scenes 3 and 4 of act 2. The second rape has a much more substantial effect on the rest of the play. Lavinia’s chastity is violated; the power she represented is no longer with her. She is an empty vessel, having all of the power she held taken by each man who passed her as a “changing piece.” The second rape leaves Lavinia powerless and silenced, with no hands or tongue with which to communicate with anyone.

The physical rape of Lavinia is about more than just sex; it is about revenge. Tamora and her sons are still upset over Titus sacrificing “the eldest son of the distressed queen” (1.1.102). By raping the daughter, Demetrius and Chiron bring shame to Titus and his family, avenging their brother’s sacrificial death. Going as far back as the thirteenth century, physical rape was considered a property crime (Detmer-Goebel 77). The daughter and her virginity were a possession of the father, and when someone threatened either, that person was threatening the family. There are still parts of the world today, such as Bosnia, where family members would rather kill a daughter, sister, or mother who was a victim of rape than live with the shame of what happened (Harris 384). This is why rape is often used as a weapon in times of war. By raping a woman of the country one is at war with, the soldier or warrior would be planting his own seed in the bloodlines of that country, as if conquering them through the future generation, as well as shaming the family of the woman. Lavinia is killed by her father at the end of the play for the same reason. Once it is known that she was raped, she could not live. “Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee” (5.3.46), Titus says as sacrifices his daughter in order to rid the family of the shame brought upon them and the possibility of his bloodline being tainted by the rapists.

Lavinia had to be kept alive for most of the play because the rape was not known to her family. Only when it was fully revealed to everyone and revenged could Titus kill her. Marcus Andronicus, her uncle, says upon first seeing her with no hands or tongue:

But, sure, some Tereus hath deflower’d thee,
And, lest thou shouldst detect him, cut thy tongue.
Ah, now thou tun’st away thy face for shame!
And, notwithstanding all this loss of blood,—
As from a conduit with three issuing spouts,—
Yet do thy cheeks look as red as Titan’s face

Blushing to be encounter'd with a cloud. (2.4.26-32)

He recognizes her physical wounds and the shame that she feels. It seems likely that he has some idea that she was raped by his use of the word “deflower'd,” commonly referring to taking a woman’s virginity, and by his noticing the blush of her face, signaling embarrassment or shame, and the burden, or “cloud,” that is hanging over her. However, he appears as oblivious to the crime as the rest of the Andronici when it is finally revealed. Demetrius and Chiron need her to be silent to conceal their crime, ensured by cutting off her means of communication, but the Andronici men need Lavinia to be able to communicate with them in some way (Detmer-Goebel 80). They cannot know the full extent of the crime against them and Lavinia until she can find a means of communicating what happened: the words in the sand that she writes with a stick and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, containing “the tragic tale of Philomel, / And treats of Tereus’ treason and his rape” (4.1.49-50).

The words that Lavinia writes in the sand reveal her rapists, but also the extent of what has happened to her. Her specific choice in words along with the Ovid text suggests that Lavinia is drawing upon what few resources are available to her in order to force her silent thoughts out into the open. Instead of referring to the crime with the English “rape” or the Latin “raptus,” she writes “Stuprum, Chiron, Demetrius” (4.1.77). “Stuprum” is the term for rape used in a second story of rape in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, the story of Callisto (Detmer-Goebel 86). Stronger than “raptus,” “stuprum” is “dishonor, disgrace by unchastity of any sort; lewdness, violation, always implying the infliction of dishonor on the subject, whether male or female” (*New Latin Dictionary*). The first story from Ovid, paralleling the crime against Lavinia and Philomel, uses the term “rape.” Shakespeare now places a connection, with his selection for Lavinia of the term “stuprum,” between her and Callisto. Callisto lost her chastity and became pregnant by her rapist, who was a married man. When the rapist’s wife found out that Callisto was carrying her husband’s child, she called her “Stupri,” using the term to mean “whore” (Detmer-Goebel 86). “Stupri” draws a close audible connection to the modern English word “strumpet,” also meaning a whore or “a prostitute” (*Webster*).

“Lavinia’s ‘Stuprum’ is suggestive not only of her sense of shame; it also testifies to the consequence of her defilement” (Detmer-Goebel 86). First of all, since the term also incorporates the dishonor of males with the disgrace of a female, its use would include the male Andronici as victims when she wrote it in the sand. Secondly, she may be feeling worthless, as she has lost the power once symbolized by her chastity; the crime against her has made her feel dirty and like a whore or a tool for sex. “‘Stuprum’ might [also] be read as naming her ‘transformation’ as much as it names what was done to her” (Detmer-Goebel 86); it conveys how she was once briefly a chaste wife to Bassianus and is now a victim

of unwanted sexual intercourse with more than one man.

The physical rape was a means by which Chiron and Demetrius regained their masculinity (Ray 36). They were led into Rome as prisoners, having lost the battle between the Romans and Goths. They were no longer mighty figures in the military, having been stripped of their masculinity and yoked like farm animals. Their mother, Tamora, avenges herself from inside the political system by marrying Saturninus, but the brothers need to find their own revenge in order to re-masculinize themselves. By taking Lavinia and satisfying “their lust” (2.3.80), they took control of something. She was the tool by which they took out their vengeful feelings towards her family and gained control of something after losing everything. Any effort by Lavinia to resist the Goths only made them angrier and fueled their thirst for revenge. Raping and mutilating Lavinia was an act of revenge against her family and the recapturing of the masculinity that was taken away from them by the Andronici and Rome.

The brothers desire Lavinia because she is “the emblem of imperial power” (Ray 35). Their revenge goes beyond just the Andronici to vengeance against Lavinia as a symbol of Rome for their capture and disgrace. By raping and mutilating Lavinia’s body, they are able to take out their aggression towards Rome. A city can be mutilated and stripped as a person can; it just takes more people. The use of the two brothers to victimize Lavinia instead of one man may be symbolic of the use of an army to victimize a city. Demetrius and Chiron are the army that conquers the city of Lavinia’s body.

The visual horror of Lavinia’s disfigured body dramatizes the horror of rape and political tyranny (Ray 36). Her loss of consent is dramatized by her injuries, which take away her means to consent. She loses the ability to speak, although she hardly used this ability prior to the rape. She was obedient and silent until just before the assault by Demetrius and Chiron, when she smugly spoke to Tamora. Lavinia pleaded at first, “O, keep me from their worse than killing lust” (2.3.175), and then uses the full extent of her verbal abilities when her plea is rejected, “No grace? no womanhood? Ah, beastly creature! The blot and enemy to our general name!” (2.3.182). Lavinia’s insults are the last fully voiced thoughts we have from her character, as well as the only opinions in the play that she voiced. Rome loses its voice when trying to use it as well. The Romans are first urged to select their own emperor, but are denied the choice when Saturninus is appointed. The people of Rome, having chosen Titus, are made as voiceless as Lavinia with Saturninus’s appointment as emperor.

Lavinia’s mutilated body represents the damage that has come to Rome and its people through Titus handing the throne over to a tyrant who chooses to keep the enemies of Rome close with his marriage to the former Goth queen. Lavinia’s presence as a fountain of bubbling blood spewing forth from her knobbed limbs and empty mouth is needed so that the bleeding and suffering of Rome remains

in the audience's mind. Her body and the power of Rome may be tainted by Saturninus, Chiron, and Demetrius and her means of communication may have been robbed of her, but Lavinia's mere presence speaks volumes against the patriarchy that believes itself to be in control. Her blood speaks against the patriarchy as it flows over the stage, tainting the ground of Rome and escaping the confines of men. Lavinia and her body are a monument to the pain and suffering of her people. The vengeance upon Rome is present in her wounds.

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A Performance Within a Performance:
The Roles Katherine and Petruccio Assume in William
Shakespeare's Play *The Taming of the Shrew*

Goretti Vianney-Benca

Considering the current social climate of political correctness and the continuing desire to break down gender barriers, it is often difficult to read Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* without chagrin. This dark and problematic romantic comedy has vexed readers, critics, directors, and audiences for centuries. It has been acclaimed as a "comedic roadmap" for "civilized dominance" over wives and reproached for its "legitimizing" and minimalizing of domestic abuse (Detmer 274). Although this paper is not meant to dismiss the presence of violence and abuse that is apparent in the play, I do suggest, however, that Katherine is the strongest and smartest character of the work, not a submissive victim of domestic abuse. Both Katherine and Petruccio use performance or acting as a demonstration of power. Katherine is simply able to do it better. It is the precise and keen depiction of performance within the play with regard to the characters' use of wit and rhetoric that expresses the true action of the plot. At first glance, Katherine may seem to be a shrew, or as the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term, a "scolding or turbulent wife," but on closer inspection she is really the tamer of the actual shrew, Petruccio, who falls into another part of the *OED's* definition of the term as a "mischievous or vexatious person." While Petruccio can be viewed as the quintessential abuser who threatens Katherine's survival "in the name of perfect love," I contend that her behavior throughout the play and her final speech fulfill a role she assumes not necessarily as an act of self-defense, but more as mockery of her husband—a role that ultimately allows her to outwit him. Ironically, Petruccio has vowed to do the exact same thing upon meeting Katherine in act 2, scene 1 with less successful results.

The first evidence we have of false appearances occurs immediately in the Induction scenes. The Induction sets the stage, literally, for the Katherine and Petruccio story. It encapsulates the themes of false appearance or role-playing and the need for a strong command of the language for those in positions of power. Christopher Sly's outward appearance as a "Lord" does not change his inward inability to know the language of the upper class. Sly's ignorance of the upper class's language makes him the object of amusement for the real Lord, while Katherine's command of the language leads to her true empowerment at the end of the play. This short precursor to the main plot clearly indicates the major thematic concerns of the play within a play.

The end of the Induction leads us to Katherine. She may at first appear to be

a “shrew,” but as the play progresses, it becomes clear that she is a strong and witty woman rather than a “hilding of a devilish spirit” (2.1.26). When reading the first two scenes that introduce Katherine, we notice the paradox between the men’s behavior and their description of her. Gremio is quick to compare her to a prostitute and declares that Katherine is “too rough for [him]” (1.1.55). In act 1, scene 2, Hortensio describes her as “a wife with wealth enough, young and beauteous,” but with a “fault”: she is an “intolerable curst” (1.2.82,84,85). Her ability to be verbally aggressive makes her “an irksome brawling scold,” and her “scolding tongue” makes her undesirable (1.2.85, 250). She obviously can use language against the men, and her demonstration of intelligence is deemed threatening, disobedient, and shrewish by the men. Meanwhile, their obvious admiration for Petruccio is based on the same qualities that these men find unacceptable in Katherine. Hortensio, Gremio, and Lucentio all commend Petruccio’s courage, boldness, and wit. Even though much of what he says is most likely exaggeration, they applaud his rhetoric: “this gentleman will out-talk us all” (1.2.244). The three suitors hope that, as Grumio puts it, Petruccio’s “rope tricks,” a pun on rhetoric, will subdue Katherine and more importantly woo her into marriage, thereby allowing them to pursue her sister, Bianca (1.2.107). Petruccio’s “rope tricks” are the prepared verbal games that he employs in trying to tame Katherine. His interactions with her are calculated performances that are extravagantly contrived instead of being plainly spoken. Upon his first meeting with Katherine, Petruccio tells the audience of his plan: “I’ll attend her here, / And woo her with some spirit when she comes” (2.1.167-68). His monologue is like an actor preparing for a scene or a “planned ... verbal assault” (Rebhorn 298). The attempted use of rhetoric to control Katherine reiterates that this is a performance and that Petruccio will use words to try to manipulate her into marrying him. He is sure that he will be able to subdue her through his scripted words. However, during their initial meeting it is apparent that Petruccio is extremely accurate when he claims that the two of them are like “two raging fires meet[ing] together” (2.1.130). He begins his act as planned, but quickly realizes that she is just as adept at this verbal sparring. The rapid exchange between Katherine and Petruccio is an extremely witty and intelligent play with words that demonstrates Katherine’s control over the language and her ability to defend herself in a battle of wits with her future husband. By the end of their exchange Petruccio is no closer to winning Katherine than he was at the start. His only means to save his reputation is to exert his masculine prerogative and demand marriage. When Baptista returns, Petruccio claims victory over Katherine by falsely recounting their interaction.

At this point we see that Petruccio is not the only one capable of masking the truth. Notice that when he sets the wedding date for Sunday, Katherine retorts: “I’ll see you hanged on Sunday first” (2.1.291). Conversely, though, when Petruccio tells her father, “She hung about [his] neck, and kiss upon kiss” “won

[him] to her love,” she says nothing. Why would such a willful woman, who has plainly displayed her wit and strength, sit idly by as he lies about her? The most sensible explanation is that she does want to marry Petruccio. This is not to suggest that she has fallen in love with him, but to a certain extent she has met her intellectual mate. Her rejection of Petruccio is merely a front. This is not the first time that we see the façade that Katherine has been putting forth to protect herself, either. In act 1, scene 1, she is told by Hortensio that no man would marry her unless she was of a “gentler, milder mould” (1.1.60). Her reply to this is that she would rather not be married at all. This is simply a reaction, though, to the insults that are being thrown at her by the suitors and to her father’s treatment of her as mere commodity. In other words, she is being traded off as the “unpopular goods” before her father can sell his prized possession, Bianca, “to the highest bidder” (Pearson 232). It is not until early in act 2, scene 1 that Katherine’s true feelings become evident. Although it may appear to be a passing comment to her father, Katherine expresses that she does not want to be an “old maid” and humiliated at her sister’s wedding: “I must dance barefoot on her wedding day, / And for your love to her lead apes in hell” (2.1.33-34). In other words, she does want to be married. This is also why she weeps in act 3, scene 2 when it looks like Petruccio may be leaving her at the altar. At first it might seem out of character for her since she calls him “a mad-brain rudesby” and a “frantic fool,” but it is the first line of that short speech that reveals how she really feels: “No shame but mine” (3.2.8, 10, 12). She does not want to be further embarrassed or ridiculed. She is affected by the slurs, and her unpleasant behavior is a pretense to hide her feelings.

As Katherine disguises her true feelings, Petruccio hides behind the façade of orator and cruel tamer. The difference between the two of them, though, is that Petruccio’s own overly exaggerated portrayal of dominance “equates [him] with [a] clown” and not with the dominate tamer he believes himself to be (Rebhorn 316). It is troublesome to see Petruccio as the more controlling figure throughout the play, with the exception of act 4, scene 1. This demonstration of cruelty has been the source of many critics’ disapproval of the play and of Katherine’s submission. At first glance, we have a man who mentally and physically abuses his wife. He denies her food and sleep while taunting her with gifts that he refuses to give to her. However, we also see that Petruccio’s actions represent another role that he is taking on. He appears to be acting cruelly towards her, though the text indicates that he denies himself the very same food and sleep that he refuses Katherine: “better ’twere that *both of us* did fast” (4.1.158, emphasis added). His behavior is another performance because although he acts callously, he says that he does it all out of “reverent care of her” (4.2.185). Undeniably, this scene is problematic because of its depiction of physical and mental abuse. However, Petruccio’s performance indicates that Katherine is not crushed emotionally. His closing monologue of that scene reiterates his boastfulness and inflated ego that reminds

us that he is not the malicious monster that many critics label him. Through his words we see that he is doing what he thinks is best for her so that she will fit the mold that society deems appropriate for a woman.

Even though Petruccio deprives Katherine of food and sleep, she is not a broken woman. Rather, she knows that the only control she has over Petruccio is through her words. She cannot tell him when to arrive or how to dress; she cannot force him to give her food or allow her to sleep. She can, however, manipulate him with her words and she does. One indication of her cleverness is during the trip back to her father's house. As she begins to argue with Petruccio when he insists that the moon is out during the daytime, Hortensio tells her to "Say as he says or we shall never go" (4.6.11). If Katherine were surrendering to her husband's inane claim because she has been tortured and worn down, then she would not be so quick to pick up on Hortensio's hint. As he pretends to be a loyal friend and fellow brute, "Petruccio, go thy ways. The field is won" (4.6.24), Katherine feigns the compliant wife:

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

Much like Petruccio's plan in act 2, scene 1, Katherine understands that she will have to put on a performance herself in order to control her husband. There is no submission. Katherine is not working out of a need for survival; she and Hortensio simply want to continue traveling. She obviously knows the difference and is humoring him, much as a parent would humor an argumentative child. This scene demonstrates that Katherine is not weak and easily conquered, but instead she is quick to know that she will have to play a role in order to get what she wants.

Katherine's final speech of the play is also a far cry from a final capitulation to Petruccio. He has not systematically destroyed Katherine's will, nor is she completely nullified (Detmer 288, 293). Her final monologue is so exaggerated that it cannot be read as a serious sermon on the woman's role in a marriage. Like her concession to Petruccio in the previous act, her words are a derisive overstatement of what the men, especially Petruccio, want to hear from her. She tells the Widow and Bianca that the men are their "lord, king, governor, husband, life, [and] keeper" (5.2.142, 150). Katherine's inflated passivity climaxes with her going to place her hand under her husband's foot. Although this final action convinces Petruccio that his wife is "tamed" and he proudly takes her home, in reality she has been patronizing him for forty-four lines. Ironically, Petruccio thinks himself to be the great orator because he believes that his command over Katherine is exerted through his use of words, but instead she uses the very same ammunition of language against him.

Petruccio's attempt at playing a rhetorician to tame Katherine is a "failure" (Detmer 296). While Katherine has performed so convincingly that her husband thinks that he is really superior, Petruccio poorly plays the role of tamer, and it is primarily his hubris that gets in his way. He asserts that he knows best "how to tame a shrew," but does not see that she never really changes (4.1.191). He deems himself a great rhetorician, and yet it is his wife who uses his own words against him. His performance as a "falconer" pales in comparison to his wife's ability to attack his masculine rule while seemingly confirming it at the same time. He believes that he has "politically begun [his] reign" (4.1.169), "suggest[ing] that Petruchio sees himself as a ruler and Kate as his subject" (Rebhorn 300), but it will not "end successfully" for him (4.1.170). The role of monarch that he tries to establish is only subverted by Katherine, who actually gains more power and control in their marriage.

She does not "bond" with her captor like a victim of the Stockholm syndrome, but instead her "verbal skill not only remains exactly the same throughout the play but proves indistinguishable from the skill which Petruchio displays" (Detmer 284; Rebhorn 324). She does not lose herself in any way because she never changes. Even though she chooses a less abrasive form of rebellion to the male-dominated social structure in which she must live, Katherine is by no means in a more subservient role—Petruccio only believes that she is. In actuality, both Petruccio and Katherine are well matched rhetorically, but in the end Katherine's intelligence overcomes Petruccio's physical as well as mental dominance. The inversion of the power structure existing between Petruccio and Katherine occurs because, as the servant Curtis puts it, "[Petruccio] is more shrew than she" (4.1.71). He may think that he has conquered the shrew because he convinces himself that his own performance throughout the action of the play has been successful, but the play itself suggests that the tables have been turned. Katherine outperforms her husband and ultimately is able to maintain the control Petruccio thinks he has obtained. Whether Petruccio believes it or not, he has ultimately been "Kated" (3.3.116).

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Once on This Island: Colonialism, Magic, and Power in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

Meri Weiss

The Tempest, first performed in 1611, presents a plethora of complex issues related to colonialism, such as land ownership in and of the New World, the power and ego of white European males, and, of course, slavery (Greenblatt 3047). Issues of freedom, dominance, and civilized behavior abound, and many scholarly efforts have posed contrasting views on what Shakespeare intended his characters to signify. It is evident and, I believe, inarguable that in addition to being a brilliant wordsmith, Shakespeare was a keen observer of his time. As such, he would have been acutely aware of the sense of entitlement and assertion of power exhibited by his male contemporaries. It is these average social mores that seem to most concisely characterize Prospero, the protagonist of *The Tempest* and, by contrast, Caliban. Thus it is not necessarily historical reports that inspired the troubled, and troubling, relationship between Prospero and Caliban, but rather common knowledge, common logic, and common sense.

Any analysis of Prospero must begin, quite rationally, at the beginning, with the backstory he offers his daughter Miranda in regard to how, and why, they arrived on the island. Prospero was a prototypical European white male with unlimited access to knowledge through books, grandeur through garments, and sustenance through food. He was entitled not only by virtue of his political position but also, importantly, by his very birthright as an aristocratic white male to lord over other people. As the member of an elite segment of society, he was accustomed to making, and maintaining, the rules. Prospero's sense of entitlement and the origin of his power, therefore, condition him to believe that he is not only among the most civilized of men, but also able to determine the very definition of the word "civilized." Thus it should not come as a surprise that once on the island Prospero feels both capable and permitted to establish sovereignty.

The fact that Prospero positions himself as ruler on the unnamed island does, of course, become more complicated by the presence of Caliban, since it is not a European Prospero relegates to servitude but a native, one who is on the island before he arrives. Since Prospero arrives *after* Caliban, the latter would seem, logically, to be more deserving of authority. However, Prospero immediately establishes himself in the position of power, as evidenced in act 1 of the play, "he, that Caliban / Whom I now keep in service," and he not only uses but also abuses the native (1.2.288-89). Interestingly, Prospero does not consider Caliban a subject but rather a slave; before the audience even sees Caliban it is clear, through Prospero's own words, what role he plays: "We'll visit Caliban my slave, who never

/ Yields us kind answer” (1.2.311-12). Prospero even outlines for the audience the many tasks he orders Caliban to complete: “We cannot miss him. He does make our fire, / Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices / That profit us” (1.2.313-16). As Frank Kermode states in the Introduction to the Arden Shakespeare edition of *The Tempest*, “Prospero’s assumption of his right to rule the island . . . is the natural assumption of a European prince” (xxxvii). It is in this same speech by Prospero that Shakespeare first distinguishes the white European male from the darker, native Other, when Prospero calls to Caliban: “What ho! Slave, Caliban! / Thou earth, thou, speak!” (1.2.316-17). It is clear that Shakespeare wants his audience to associate Caliban with the land itself, the “earth.” By linking the character of Caliban with the earth, Shakespeare accomplishes two important dramatic effects: he illustrates, even more noticeably than via the word “slave,” the social hierarchy Prospero has set up on the island, and he tightens the bond between Caliban and the actual island, forcing the audience to recognize Caliban not as a European subject but as a native Other.

Furthermore, by connecting Caliban to the earth, Shakespeare also sets up a dramatic contrast between Caliban and Ariel, who is associated with air, not only through the sonic effect of his very name (the “Ar” of his name is pronounced as “air”) but also through a disparity set up by Prospero himself: “And for thou wast a spirit too delicate / To act [Sycorax’s] earthy and abhorred commands” (1.2.274-75). Here it is obvious Shakespeare wants the reader to consider Ariel and Caliban as diametric opposites: one is of the air, the other the earth; one is a gentle sprite and the other a heinous monster; one is on good terms with Prospero and the other is not; and, importantly, one is freed from servitude while the other is merely left behind at the end of the play. As Reuben A. Brower states in his essay “The Mirror of Analogy: *The Tempest*”: “‘Delicate’ as the antithesis of ‘earth’ points to the opposition of Ariel and Caliban, and to the often recurring earth-air symbolism of *The Tempest*. ‘Monster’—almost another name for Caliban—balances these airy suggestions with an allusion to the ‘people of the island . . . of monstrous shape’” (184). Thus early in act 1 Shakespeare has made it abundantly clear that while both Ariel and Caliban may be “of” the island, it is only Caliban who should be considered “native,” perhaps because Caliban is characterized as human while Ariel falls into the category of “sprite.”

However, the fact that Ariel, too, was already on the island when Prospero arrived is a vexing one; it not only confuses ownership—to whom does the island belong? Ariel or Caliban?—but it also points more strenuously to the inevitable notion of colonialism. That is, why does Prospero treat Caliban like a slave, berating and belittling him, but regard Ariel more like an indentured servant, using more polite language when ordering him to perform his spritely magic? The rational explanation leads the audience to interpret Prospero’s behavior toward Caliban as the consequence of colonialism.

As both Miranda and Prospero remind Caliban in act 1, they have tried to educate, and thus civilize, him, to no avail. Prospero, in defense of Caliban's claim that he stole the island from him, says, "Thou most lying slave, / Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have used thee, / Filth as thou art, with human care, and lodged thee / In mine own cell" (1.2.348-51). This speech references the colonialists' efforts to "tame" the Native Americans, through both education and conversion to Christianity. Ronald Takaki's article "The Tempest in the Wilderness: The Racialization of Savagery" offers necessary and fairly concise historical context:

... the timing of that first performance of *The Tempest* was crucial: It came after the English invasion of Ireland but before the colonization of New England, after John Smith's arrival in Virginia but before the beginning of the tobacco economy, and after the first contacts with Indians but before full-scale warfare against them. In that historical moment, the English were encountering "other" peoples and delineating the boundary between *civilization* and *savagery*. . . . Indians seemed to lack everything the English identified as civilized—Christianity, cities, letters, clothing, swords. . . . Like Caliban, the native people of America were viewed as the other. European culture was delineating the border, the hierarchical division between civilization and wildness. (892-906)

While the activities of the colonists were, of course, taking place in the far-off New World, news of their experiences did reach England, both in the form of letters and returning colonists and even, in some cases, captive Indians (896-97). Thus, for white Europeans the notion of the Other was not just an abstract idea, but was actually a concrete image, one that was immediately recognizable in the character of Caliban. Even foolish Trinculo has a reference with which to compare Caliban; he recalls that, if he were in England, "there this monster make a man; any strange beast there makes a man: when they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian" (2.2.30-33). Trinculo's recollection of Englishmen spending significant sums of money in order to view a dead Indian echoes the historical evidence put forth by scholars and confirms that if Shakespeare himself did not view the dead Indian on display, at the very least he heard first-hand accounts of the vulgar presentation. Few things imply "colonialism" like the image of a dead Indian being marched through the streets of London for all to see.

One of Shakespeare's major plot points in the play—Prospero usurping the land and governance from a "devil" native (4.1.188)—would have appeared to his contemporaries as a direct parallel to current events in the New World. Likewise, Shakespeare does not seem to put Prospero on the defensive when Caliban accuses him of stealing his island. As Deborah Willis states in her essay "Shakespeare's *Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism," "Prospero makes no direct

response to Caliban's accusation. His implicit claim to the island rests on Caliban's degenerate nature. . . . Caliban can claim the title of King of the island by inheritance; Prospero's claim rests solely on superior virtue and fitness for rule" (265). Thus, because Prospero is educated and civilized, he automatically possesses the right to rule the island. This sense of entitlement is, to a contemporary student of Shakespeare, certainly evidence of Prospero's pre-conditioned ego leading him to believe that he, as a white European male, is more deserving of power than a dark, mysterious Other, who cannot hide behind an educated, civilized background. However, Prospero's view of Caliban as "A devil, a born devil, on whose nature / Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains, / Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost" (4.1.188-90) is plainly tainted by his privileged status as European royalty. That is, Caliban is quite aware of what facilities he lacks, and how the skills taught to him by these "tyrant[s]" have benefited him (3.2.40). After Miranda reminds him that "I pitied thee, / Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour / One thing or other. When thou didst not, savage, / Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like / A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes / With words that made them known" (1.2.356-61), Caliban, without missing a beat, famously replies, "You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is I know how to curse" (1.2.366-67). Here, Shakespeare's prescience is disturbingly apt: he understands that colonialism (and, by implication, imperialism and even missionary work) is merely an extension of the white man's ego and will not be successful, for either the colonizer or the colonized. Caliban is angry. Prospero has not only commandeered what Caliban considers his home but he has also continued to patronize him. Caliban is not unacquainted with the value his oppressor places on education or civilized behavior; he may not be a genius, but he is clearly smart enough to understand that Prospero is extremely intelligent and that the combination of acumen and magic allows Prospero to control him. In "Caliban, Savage Clown" John C. McCloskey states: "In the political sphere Caliban is also alert. He has wit enough to know that he is a slave and courage enough to fight for his freedom. Under the tyranny of Prospero he is surly and rebellious, and he curses the magician for having stolen the island from him" (356). In addition, Caliban's sarcastic reply to Miranda's self-aggrandizement illustrates that Shakespeare intends for Caliban to be aware of the irony in the situation: mere language does not necessarily imply civilized conduct. In fact, it is neither Prospero's civilized behavior nor his language that actually keeps Caliban in check; rather, it is Prospero's books that he fears.

Prospero's books are, on the surface, a straightforward symbol of knowledge, but Shakespeare positions them to carry an even heavier weight; that is, Prospero insinuates it is his books which are the source of his power, although he does not actually perform any magic in the play. He does reference his use of magic in freeing Ariel from the tree in which Sycorax had imprisoned him—"It

was mine art, / When I arrived and heard thee, that made gape / The pine and let thee out" (1.2.293-95)—yet throughout the play it is only Ariel who executes any acts of magic. Whether or not Prospero is actually capable of conjuring magic remains a mystery, but he certainly allows Caliban to think of him as a powerful magician. Caliban considers Prospero's books as a potential danger, and Shakespeare permits Prospero to exploit this notion. When Caliban does not jump at his commands in act 1, Prospero says: "If thou neglect'st or dost unwillingly / What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps, / Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar, / That beasts shall tremble at thy din" (1.2.371-74). This early in the play the audience, too, assumes Prospero's threats are real rather than idle; however, by act 5, when Caliban is worried that he will be "pinched to death" (5.1.279) by Prospero for planning an attempt on his life, the audience is no longer convinced Prospero has any real magical power. It is only Caliban who fears his master's magic; he has no idea, as the audience does, that Prospero's "art" is actually artifice (1.2.293).

This idea is plainly illustrated by Shakespeare throughout Caliban's drunken interactions with Stefano and Trinculo. After Caliban repeatedly offers to show Stefano the wonders of the island and become his subject, he tells him, "I am subject to a tyrant, a sorcerer, that by his cunning hath cheated me of the island," which indicates that Caliban truly believes Prospero is a potent magician capable of great sorcery (3.2.40-41). Prospero's magic, or "art," derives from Ariel, yet Caliban does not see this truth; rather, he incorrectly identifies Prospero's books as the source of his master's cunning trickery, and of course it is to Prospero's advantage to allow him to continue to believe this false perception. When Caliban proposes to Trinculo and Stefano that they kill Prospero in order to rule the island, he is careful to strategize in relation to Prospero's books: "There thou mayst brain him, / Having first seized his books.... / ... Remember / First to possess his books, for without them / He's but a sot as I am" (3.2.84-89). Caliban is literally afraid of Prospero's books, though they are nothing more than inanimate objects, merely symbols of the education and knowledge he lacks. Furthermore, it never occurs to Caliban that his own mother, Sycorax, was capable of great magic and so he, too, may possess at least some sort of similar power. He is so intimidated by the image of Prospero's books, and what he interprets as a sign of higher knowledge, that he never even considers a way to combat his master's (artificial) power, nor does he realize it is actually Ariel who is in control.

Shakespeare presents a compelling contrast between the magic of Prospero and Sycorax, thereby setting up another symbol that is undoubtedly related to colonialism, which his audience would have certainly understood. Prospero himself paints Sycorax's supernatural powers in a negative light; he calls her "the foul witch Sycorax" and characterizes her sorcery, in regard to Ariel, as angry and vengeful: "she did confine thee / By help of her more potent ministers, / And in her most unmitigable rage, / Into a cloven pine" (1.2.276-79). Yet he refers to his

own magic powers as “art.” The disparity between savage and civilized behavior is not only implied but almost explicitly obvious: Sycorax, the Other, practices *black* magic, while Prospero, the white European, practices *white* magic. As Frank Kermode states in the Introduction to the *Arden Shakespeare*, “[Prospero’s] Art, being the Art of supernatural virtue which belongs to the redeemed world of civility and learning, is the antithesis of the black magic of Sycorax” (xli). Here again Shakespeare aligns Prospero with his contemporary Europeans, in that he characterizes Prospero’s magic as the safe, light magic of a noble countryman, while the magic of Sycorax is the frightening, dark magic of an Other, “so strong / That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs, / And deal in her command without her power” (5.1.272-74). As the offspring of such a creature, Caliban is, by design, regarded by both Prospero and the audience as the progeny of dark, naturalistic evil and thus, by association, himself an example of natural evil. Consequently, Shakespeare illuminates yet another recurring metaphor in the play, that of Art conquering Nature. Art is associated with light, with knowledge and with restraint, while Nature is connected to darkness, to ignorance and to excess. Kermode states, “Art is not only a beneficent magic in contrast to an evil one; it is the ordination of civility, the control of appetite, the transformation of nature by breeding and learning, . . . Prospero is, therefore, the representative of Art, as Caliban is of Nature” (xlvi). Shakespeare must have discerned that his audience, for the most part, was as conscious as he of the rapid exploration of the New World and all it had so far revealed; establishing a light/dark, Art/Nature contrasting metaphor between Prospero and Caliban could only serve to further his theme of colonialism in the play.

Of course, the overriding irony in regard to Prospero’s magic is that for the duration of *The Tempest* it is Ariel who carries out Prospero’s demands and wishes for magic, not because he wants to help but rather because he is Prospero’s “slave,” much like Caliban. However, Ariel, unlike Caliban, must be aware that Prospero’s books are nothing more than a reflection of his egotistical master’s contrived power, a symbol of no more significance than a displaced European’s learned knowledge, yet he does not rebel or attempt escape; instead, he waits for Prospero to grant him independence: “Then to the elements / Be free, and fare thou well” (5.1.321-22). Is Shakespeare, then, implying that the colonialists were succeeding not due to the possession of power but rather to a sense of entitlement, the inherent ego involved in exploration and the artifice, the mere illusion, of power?

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Thinking Precisely on the Event: (Dis)Locating “Politics”
in Shakespeare
(A Response to Symposium Panelists)

Kimberly W. Benston

Instead of asking: what is the position of a work *vis-à-vis* the productive relations of its time, does it underwrite these relations, is it reactionary, or does it aspire to overthrow them, is it revolutionary?—instead of this question, or at any rate before this question, I would like to propose a different one. Before I ask: what is a work’s position *vis-à-vis* the production relations of its time, I should like to ask: what is its position *within* them?

—Walter Benjamin, “The Author as Producer”

A spectre is haunting Shakespeare Studies—the spectre of New Historicism, which, through a diversity of fresh reading practices that together transformed scholarly thinking about the relation between literary text and social context, dispelled both the Romantic dream of an autonomous subject asserting the primacy in culture of imaginative authority and the Modernist ideal of a unified poetic construct shored against the ruins of a world traumatized by imploding institutions and explosive violence. Viewing literary expression as a practice shaped in, against, and by a complex array of competing claims to authority, meaning, and efficacy, New Historicism recognized that politics could not simply be one thematic strand among others in the interpretation of literary history but was, instead, cognate with the foundational apprehension of literature as always already social in origin, purpose, and effect: it is not that, say, Renaissance drama was being politicized by a new hermeneutical imperative,¹ but, rather, that the contemporary critic, free from the shibboleths of aesthetic idealism, now grasped with critical realism the drama’s intrinsic implication in a struggle for cultural legitimacy. Just as the individual could no longer be consecrated as wielder of what Stephen Greenblatt termed, with a touch of wan stoicism, “authentic self-possession” (257), so literary expression should itself be understood as a “product” not a mirror of social forces, a symptom of the *desire* for agency, not a sign of its realization. Thus, for New Historicism poetics and politics wind around each other in the manner of a Möbius strip, just as the subject and its emergence through processes of “subjectification”² project self and culture into an intricate dialectic of transgressive assertion and recuperative domination.

While thus liberated from accounts of expressive identity that ironically serve institutionalized hierarchies by subscribing to a static mythos of unfettered intention, Shakespeare criticism remains nevertheless haunted by New Histori-

cism's vision of politics insofar as it depends, not unlike the "Humanist" ethos it so trenchantly displaced, on the systematic structure of its dialectic, in which a series of foundational antinomies—being and history; consciousness and culture; freedom and determination; resistance and repetition—ultimately balance, absorb, and annul one another in service to a closed narrative economy. Notwithstanding differing emphases between those championing possibilities of effective subversion against seemingly hegemonic power and those (perhaps made of sterner stuff) admonishing us to beware power's infinite capacity to reinscribe transgression within the encompassing command of its gaze—whether, that is to say, one sets up camp among "cultural materialists" under the banner of "resistance" or sides with a dour historicism that marches to a determinist beat of "containment"—the "political" in Shakespeare is calculated by a narratological logic regulated by laws of causality, exchange, variation, and teleology that ensure the interpreter's capacity to recognize and articulate significance, to trace in her activity of reading an unbroken trajectory from uncertainty to mastery, undisturbed by features or events that remain alien and extraneous to the presiding design. "Politics," that is to say, stays true to a strict, and predictable, grammar; whatever the subtleties of its performances, however clever the ruses by which its enactors seek to elevate the psychic impulse of self-authorization or to elude the sovereign demands of institutional imperatives, the "political" in Shakespeare will always confirm an assumed, steady state in which pleasure and power, psyche and structure, affect and effect, submit together to a restricted ethos of meaning that underwrites a stable view of what's at stake in the work's "politics": agency and insurrection, power and subjection—these are the nodal points of New Historicist reading.

But might there be a way of reading "otherwise" for the political in Shakespeare, a mode of inquiry and attentiveness that seeks not only the meaning of politics but also the politics of meaning as generated, sometimes through moments of self-transgression, by the plays themselves? Might we ask, after Benjamin, not only how the drama functions as a political expression among others with which it collaborates and competes for cultural capital but also how the work potentially aims to relocate itself *as* political expression by reimagining the very coordinates by which political enunciation is itself situated? Might we indeed entertain the possibility of a Shakespearean politics that stages politics as an interruption of the "political" (that is, "the political" as conventionally conceived) in order to consider politics, instead, as an Event: a (non)occurrence or condition of (im)possibility—at once lacking and excessive with respect to normative narratives of events, with their intelligible unfolding of meanings—that threatens or beckons with forms of affiliation and feeling, (dis)placement and temporality, that cannot be confidently domesticated or located?

Pursuing such a notion of Shakespearean politics as an Event that erupts within an order of knowledge, rendering visible or material what that order has

repressed while remaining incompletely accessible to knowledge's aims of co-gency and coherence,³ we are apt to see the political in Shakespeare take on a strategic, yet also spectral, quality, functioning more as a flickering anamorphic alternative to what is actualized by the drama's central emplotment than as a fully developed form of enlightenment or praxis. Various in its manifestations, the Event in Shakespearean drama will appear as a mode of difference that cannot be subsumed under a single organizing schema (unlike the zero-sum calculus of identity and difference through which New Historicism typically accounts for the plays' economies of subversion and power); evident but unlocalizable in any specific motivational structure, suffused with ideology yet unanchored to any particular ideological position, the Shakespearean Event will surpass itself while eluding capture by a telos, dialectic, or other determinate representation.

Take, for example, that wonderfully odd appearance of the Clown smack-dab in the middle of *Othello*, an irruption of interruptive difference into a dramatic arc of seduction, betrayal, and tragic misrecognition that seemingly depends for its successful completion, precisely, upon an uninterrupted pressure of events upon consciousness and decision:

DESDEMONA. Do you know, sirrah, where Lieutenant Cassio lies?

CLOWN. I dare not say he lies anywhere.

DESDEMONA. Why, man?

CLOWN. He's a soldier, and for me to say a soldier lies, 'tis stabbing.

DESDEMONA. Go to. Where lodges he?

CLOWN. To tell you where he lodges is to tell you where I lie.

DESDEMONA. Can anything be made of this? (III.4.1-10)

Clown's response to Desdemona's inquiry about Cassio's whereabouts rings with an Iagoesque, if insouciant, awareness of one's continual displacement or doubling in another's place, body, and voice, that ontological tragi-travesty so characteristic of self-presentation in the world of *Othello*. As an antic "abuser" of words—one liberated from specific social function by the very "nothingness" of his part (he is, after all, a comic misfit in a play taken over by Iago's violent, if potentially farcical, disruptions)—Clown refracts the main characters' uneasy, false, or misunderstood occupation of roles, performing with empty wit the ironic self-effacement that others live out unwittingly. Much like Iago—who likewise taunts the hero with canny quipping on the uncanny duplicities of the "lie" ("Lie—... With her, on her; what you will" [IV.1.33-35])—but without the freight of beguiling motivation, Clown is a self-conscious actor, making visible the arbitrariness of the mask through which his voice squeaks.

Indeed, at the center of Clown's evasive performance are his many "quillets" that earlier so annoy Cassio (III.1.20), the word nicely figuring the Clown's way of striking to the essence, the *thing-ness* or "quiddity," of experience by playing

upon its intrinsically self-transgressing equivocation, its “quibbling” potentiality. The knavish punster’s evocation of tensions and contradictions (lie/tell; am/not; mine/your; music/noise; pipe/throat—such doublets suffuse his brief performances in Act III) suggests that he inhabits or emblemizes contradiction itself as an (anti)mode of being. Shadowing, and thereby both de- and re-mystifying, Iago’s own degradingly corrosive insinuations, Clown’s elusive intents and easily overlooked effects enact, as a kind of pure form of play (or what we politely term “theorizing”), the psychologically and politically charged—that is, recognizably motivated—histrionics of both State epistemology (which the opening act exposes as entirely dependent on a strict series of oppositions: fair/black; Venetian/Turk; father/daughter; house/street; brother/stranger, etc.) and its vengeful displacement in the resentment that boils up from within its own social body. In his brief appearance across the fabric of some 50 lines, Clown variously copies, mimes, and mocks nearly every major protagonist of Act III: Cassio in his action as go-between to Desdemona, his suspect if abject place-holding or lieu-tenancy (“If she will stir hither, I shall seem to notify unto her” [III.1.28]); Othello in his public command (“Keep up your bright swords” [I.2.58]; “Then put your pipes in your bag” [III.1.18]); Desdemona in her intimate loyalty (“I hear not your honest friend. I hear you” [III.1.22]); and Iago in his very mimicry. In a sense, Clown becomes a site, like the “impossible” ocular for which Othello so pathetically yearns, upon which identity, in its very fluidity and self-surpassing multiplicity, can be experimentally constructed and decomposed (rather like that other elusive “thing” of Act III, the handkerchief, the blank space, the proliferate “it” [III.3.292 ff.], of the characters’ hermeneutic fever).

Seen thus through Clown’s antic (non)presence, *Othello* emerges as a performative and rhetorical taunt, as a peculiarly insistent (one might almost say unvarnished) instance of language’s inherent seductions and betrayals. For Clown’s corrosive antics display how any speech act, whether framed by specific literary conventions or located in the putatively “natural” discourse of “common” interchange, is always already ungrounded and unnamed, the social and psychic “real” being the originally arbitrary (though thereafter significant) parody of an “original” expression, of the “soulful” idiom of magical breath that we posit as the pure past or ideal future beyond lived history. The challenge of this antic dissembler, and the play, then, becomes whether the distinction between arbitrary and significant can be upheld: as Terry Eagleton phrases it, wary of taking appearances for reality, must we dismiss the potential reality of appearance? (70). Can there be a middle ground, or tertium quid, between mystifying allegorization (Iago as “devil,” Desdemona as “fair,” etc.) and debunking materiality (Iago’s flags and figurations, Othello’s words-become-froth)—or is that the endless abyss of an expressive and epistemological conundrum, leaving us in the state of swooning and inarticulate conceptual epilepsy? The play, and its characters, relentlessly seek

to arrest the aporetic terror unleashed so gleefully by Clown at the play's decentered center, asserting "cause" and "motive" at every turn until overdetermination of meaning itself becomes the basis for fresh spirals of demystification and recuperation.

This play between repression and expression suggests how Clown forces us to recognize the elusivity and fragility of presumably stabilizing values by incarnating and then dis-embodimenting their pretensions of "honesty." Hence, even more than Iago, he rather more re-acts than asserts, working by "echoing" and dislocating others' own words and perceptions. Demanding him, à la Cassio, to "keep up [his] quillets" suggests the unease Clown sows in hollowing the fiction of a reliable identity, truth, and status, cleverly undermining our values by decanting the terms by which such ideals have sought to establish themselves. A notably un-seemly example is the troping of Iago's clyster pipes (II.1.175) in the "wind instrument" nastily mocked by Clown at the opening of III.1, since it explicates Iago's essential method, the degradation of the ideal—Cassio's (over)gallant kiss; a complacent urge for social harmony—by (c)rude materialization: the movement from mouth to rearend, with its reductive pun on breath/wind/spiritus, is likewise paradigmatic (cf. Clown's refusal to "lie in mine own *throat*" [III.4.12, emphasis added]). Clown is, then, however unmoored from social impulse, a shrewd social critic, even if his evident delight is the disruption, not the appropriation or reformation, of the cultural idioms he travesties. Importantly, Clown's critique punctures Iago's debasements as surely as it pierces Othello's fancies. For Clown's disruptions highlight not only the inherent theatricality but also the fundamental idealism of Iago's will to mastery, its drive to conflate pleasure and power through manipulation of contradictions between what one "professes" and what one "is" in which the En-sign is himself thoroughly implicated. Like Iago, Clown presents himself to us as a masker of intentions that are themselves only guises borrowed from the cultural discourses that surround him (thus it is precisely in between Clown's appearances that Iago "echoes" Othello into jealous repetition of Brabantio's rage against Desdemona [III.3.93 ff.]). But unlike Iago, his play between the invisible and the visible—literally, a movement between re-repression and re-presentation—makes him absolutely, and not merely strategically, a "figure" whose movements seem both utterly transparent and absolutely impenetrable. One supposes that this doubleness of effect, the sense of openness and mystery that he creates around himself, is itself a key to the play's presiding question of "self"-presentation; but even that notion confounds itself on the indeterminacy of the very pronouns ("he," "himself," etc.) by which we seek to define his fugitive presence.

So Clown's peculiar texture of denial and negation offers an instructive route into the play's pervasive conjunction of idealization and abasement, its eruptions of violence always being accompanied by professions of metaphysical justification and abstract "service" (note how difficult it is to get Clown to do one's

bidding!). Clown's quips are, in effect, a kind of mirror of jealousy, that "monstrous" fear that the self is always already divided, doubled, twinned, and so begets itself by mocking (mimicking, polluting) the meat it feeds on (cf. Emilia and Iago on jealousy, III.4.160 and 166 ff.). Clown and jealousy are both self-produced and self-dividing, endlessly disturbing all settled structures, inflating and deflating appearances by distending signs whose meaning we take for granted. But jealousy is a *psychically motivated* mechanism—in the events that transpire within episodes that frame Clown's appearance, we witness an extraordinary demonstration of its will toward becoming and undoing its object (an object necessarily of hatred and desire, because lack and possession are the "double-backed" themes of those unebbed emotive powers); again like the handkerchief that becomes the visible figure of this *something, nothing* quality of wayward affection (this trifle become Holy Writ, as we see in the passing of the cloth from Iago's instrumental hands to Othello's magical imagination), jealousy shows us people being unwoven by being copied, disfigured and refigured by the double movement of wrath and preservation that "lies" within the need for ownership and the need for certainty. Clown is driven by no such psychic animus: he has no desire; he occupies no such narrative of social and phenomenological crisis. He is, perhaps, the laughing "mirror" of the tragic "monster" of jealousy, crossing boundaries, blurring distinctions, and mimicking properties and the proper (his "lack"—freedom from?—a *proper* name seems pertinent) without any evident intention or goal (yet another oblique conceit yet also critical counterfeit of Iago, with his famously opaque yet overdetermined motivation).

Clown can undertake this kind of parodic demystification of role (parodic, most pointedly, of Iago's own embittered demystifications) because he escapes our interest, and he bears away his part as something like pure function (hence his namelessness), as a voice speaking through but not weighted by a body. But the other, "real," characters enjoy no such release from desire or presence—they may be changelings for one another (Iago's de-creative inflection of God's Tetragrammaton, "I am not what I am" [I.1.62] being echoed throughout by his antagonists, most surprisingly in Desdemona's "I do beguile / The thing I am by seeming otherwise" [II.1.120-21]); but all the same they cling to the idealized assertion of an "I" unlogged anywhere but in their own unique frames—an assumption to which readers and audiences, even those driven by the interpretive suspicions of contemporary "political" criticism, cling with equal tenacity. "Make me to see't!" we cry, believing with Othellean urgency in the bodies before us, perhaps trusting that our own bodily wholeness can be ensured by maintaining safe distance from the enacted disfigurement taking place in the place of the other. Clown's sacrifice, repaid by a return of meaning unperturbed by elements that cannot be systematically assayed and reckoned, is the hidden but ultimate goal of our commitment to politics as a form of "the ocular," a medium of explanatory

disclosure; it is the “impossible satisfaction” lurking behind our desire to “know” completely, without remainder or reserve, the conceptual and material forms of historicized social behavior.

Othello’s Clown, we might say, makes possible an order of understanding that he disrupts; as seen in Act III’s pivotal scenic arrangement, a habitus of epistemological praxis, shaped by Iago but in full collaboration with his victims, comes into being precisely by over-looking Clown’s own central, but ephemeral, threat as a vehicle of abysmal negativity. It is in this sense that Clown constitutes an Event within the narrative continuum of the drama: belonging not to a “different” order of knowledge but to a realm other to knowledge as such, to an unlocatable space of non-Being, Clown makes the events surrounding him legible not only as an expression of psycho-social struggle but also as an experience excessive to its own articulation, as a symptom of compulsions, needs, traumas, and possibilities that cannot be fully registered within the comprehensible contours of a narrative process established between Roderigo’s inaugural “Never tell me” (I.1.1) and Lodovico’s concluding “relate” (V.2.370). Inessential to the tragedy’s evident political and epistemological economies, Clown’s digressive, distracting appearance suggests, in its very gratuitousness, a transgression of those economies that is not merely oppositional and focused but is—as Georges Bataille would say of laughter in the context of tragic gravity⁴—transformative and mobile: it directs our attention not so much toward the presiding narrative from a vantage of resistance or insurrection as simply (if perhaps quite radically) *elsewhere*, asking us to rethink the political not as a specific kind of meaning but as a search for energies, forces, intuitions, crises, and potentialities that elude meaning as we habitually imagine, demand, and construct it.

Had we time, we might follow Clown’s lead to other Event-ual figures and moments in Shakespearean tragedy: to his avatar in *Antony and Cleopatra*’s clowning carrier of an “odd worm” that touched a woman “something given to lie”; to that master “equivicator” of *Macbeth*, the Porter; to the punctum of silence between Volumnia’s “I’ll speak a little” and Coriolanus’s “O, mother, mother!”; to the superfluity of “monstrous” and retributive violence in the scene of Gloucester’s blinding; and, perhaps above all, to that ghost “in” but also *of* the narrative machine in *Hamlet*, the “figure like the king that’s dead” who tells a harrowing tale marked equally by lack (“I am forbid / To tell the secrets of my prison house”) and by excess (“Adieu, adieu, adieu”), and who remains unknowable to any interpretive gaze (“Stay illusion ... speak to me ... speak to me ... O speak ... ’Tis here. ’Tis here. ’Tis gone”). But our time now is better spent attending to the essays presented for this symposium on “Shakespeare and the Paradoxes of Political Tragedy,” which together provide powerful suggestions for reconceiving the Shakespearean political in ways that both employ and exceed the seminal frameworks of New Historicism and its various culturalist and materialist com-

rades. Certainly, the social effects of abusive and abused authority are charted here across the canon from *Titus Andronicus* to *The Tempest*, as the panelists display particular sensitivity to ambiguously “constructive” forms of nation, family, and other “institutional state apparatuses” (to borrow the Althusserian formulation). But in tracing such thematic concerns as they take physical shape through various dramaturgical and narrative (dis)figurations—corruptions and conscriptions of the body in *Titus*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*; deformations of desire in *Measure for Measure* and *Taming of the Shrew*; struggles for intimate acknowledgement and recognition in *King Lear* and *The Tempest*—these emerging scholars eschew any simple, or decided, opposition of self and other, individual and collective, subject and state. Rather, they focus most intently on those aspects of psycho-social experience that arise as a kind of subterranean impulse of the drama, rendering its narrative what Freud termed a “rebus” of condensed, displaced, and disruptive implication: melancholia attendant to scenarios of disempowerment and revenge (as per Anne-Marie Carmody’s reading of Lady Macbeth); corporeal shocks that are not fully co-extensive with their causal mechanisms in the social sphere (as with Nicole Myers’s parsing of Lavinia’s mutilated form as an ambiguous site of purity and abjection, or Irene McGarrity’s discussion of Isabella’s body as a conflictual medium of chastity and sacrifice); the vagrant impulses of extravagant self-valuation, be it marked by shame (as in Lucrece and Ophelia as read by Marissa Caston) or anger (as with the Lear’s catastrophic outburst, explored by Kelly Marron as already a refractory form of remorse and disavowal); or assertions of sovereignty that both mask and rewrite an incompletely formulated libidinal charge (as Meri Weiss locates in the “darker” regions of magical illusion in *The Tempest*, and which Goretti Vianney-Benca, charting *The Taming of the Shrew*’s peculiar form of ju-jitsu submission-and-seduction, terms “being Kated”).

Readers of this symposium will doubtless extrapolate from such insights many possibilities for a reimagined “political” encounter with the Shakespearean canon. In closing, I’d like to suggest that among the more generative of these possibilities—one particularly vital for reimagining the canon as a locus of innovative ideological critique—is a surmise about relations among consciousness, structure, and expression lodged in the authors’ collective focus on what we might term the drama’s *politics of affect*. Assuming neither the unified, intentional subject of Humanist criticism, nor the congruency of self-division and political inefficacy that presides within the more overtly “politicized” historicisms that fractured Humanism’s unitary hermeneutic, the contributors to “Shakespeare and the Paradoxes of Political Tragedy” entertain the possibility that moments of affectual crisis—the “Event” of their irruption into scenes of public assertion and struggle—can be creative in their recalcitrant relation to the governing narrative’s protocols of development, closure, and meaning. Such ruptures of the known and knowable necessarily remain only partially accessible to the symbolic and referential

resources of our available explanatory frameworks, and so an impatient political praxis will doubtless bid those who dwell upon such ruptures' consequential "paradoxes" to "keep up thy quillets." But what these essays invite us to consider, instead, is how the unfathomable Event of loss, laughter, or lament can be considered not the end but the inauguration of engagement and transformation.

Notes

1. Cf. Pechter.
2. The term's provenance for New Historicist thinking leads one above all to Louis Althusser's seminal essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Toward an Investigation)."
3. The Event thus conceived arises within a critical genealogy that one can trace—for example—in such writers as Michel Foucault (*The Order of Things*), Gilles Deleuze (*The Logic of Sense*), Michel de Certeau (*Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*), and Alain Badiou (*Being and Event*). Of particular interest to anyone interested in parsing the Event of early modern culture is Jacques Lezra's *Unspeakable Subjects: The Genealogy of the Event in Early Modern Europe*.
4. See "Un-knowing: Laughter and Tears."

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Wood and Water

Laurence Carr

Chop Wood
Carry Water

How romantic they make it sound.
How serene—

But in the heat of day,
when wood and water call you
to the field and battle lines are drawn—
It's they who've come to win the day.

The density of water.
The awkwardness of wood.
The weight of either can kill you
Three times over.

Wood and water mean no harm.
It's just their way.

In their stillness
They watch you evaporate,
or become seasoned, ready for the fire.

And even in the sweat of night's splintered sleep,
there is no oneness with wood and water.

There's only the next day's battle
to plan a dozen different ways—
till dawn,
when muster sounds
and battlelines are drawn again.

Chop and Carry.
This is what we do.

This is what we do.

The Road Long Traveled

Laurence Carr

Along the road
Blacktopped and tiger-stripped.

A road that once had been a path
for red-skinned traders
their beads and shells long buried.

A road for white-skinned
journeymen, moving on
to manifest their destinies.

The old post road
carrying news of birth and death
to the four corners.

The logging road
shaping timber plank and beam
to build the staid and staying.

A road named for the
long-forgotten hero
who fought to save
this patch of ground
for those
now here
leisurely jogging its length
without memory or destination.

Looking down the road,
along its cindered shoulder,
lies a fox, or
what once was fox
now doornail dead.
Caught in a world we made.

Once russet fur sleek with prideful shine
now dusty gray and scraped away
by rough and seething winds.

Crossed bones.
Cross-hatched.
An anatomy of neglect.

A head, or what once was head,
A skin of thin dry vellum
Stretched beyond a thought.

An open mouth, what once was mouth,
a gaping anguished cry;
frozen like that child
in that bleak and bitter box car
training to the camp
in the haunted winter of zero absolute.
Caught in a world we made.

And when I walk enough to satisfy,
I'll turn around and head for home.

And with each step
I hear a voice
muttering a selfish prayer—
our selfish plea:

Not to end like fox or that
Small child in that small room

Without comfort
or understanding
or tomorrow.

Serve Them Right

Dennis Doherty

In the last month alone, researchers working with brain imaging machines have captured the neural traces of schadenfreude...

—New York Times

Next, one suspects, comes *Sturm und Drang*,
Then *schadendrang* and *sturmenfreude*.
Let's suppose we all emote in German.

Slice it thin and flay it fine,
String the traces taut, and map
Them back to the hidey hole

Of area function, chemistry,
Electron generation. Then
Overlay a tit and tat,
And *Ecce Homo!* Complexity:
Bread for body, booze for blood.
Where *is* the source of wonder.

Suffer the fool who fails to hear
The buzz of needle numbed gums,
The groaning board meal, molar husked.

Let's explore the original cause:
I knew you in the navel of love,
Consumed you at the altar of loss.
They trace the pleasure back to pain.

Joy Unremembered Most Real

Dennis Doherty

I used to look for it at Manor Park
Where all I ever found was the
Mundane wash of seaweed tendrils
On the old dog-shouldered stones,
The moan of fog horns, the bored
Chop of bay slosh on the boats I'd never own,
And the far loom of Long Island
A call to sleep in manic dreams.

I looked in the circuit of houses near home,
Up, down the road, round and back. Then off
The track in the secret of spots,
Particularity of hummocks and hills,
Places disturbed by history of hands—
Structures in woods, fallen walls, litter,
Symbolic binding of bark twists and sticks,
Under erupting forsythia, honeysuckle
Immolated in frozen mushroomed bloom.

Looked in scattershot schools where
I learned to use tools like those
Beneath the broken bikes in the Winks'
Backyard dump. Grew to discuss
It in obsolete tongues; talked around
It in ricochet weave that wound
An armor plating's chime, deflecting gleam.

Beckoned! Pleaded! Languaged whisper-plasma,
Squeezed from the milk of intuition: burnt
In the groin by a light in the mind,
Grazed but not held by a hand from without,
Tickled by the inarticulate, informed
Of a joy unremembered most real,
I constructed stanzas to snare a pulse.

Lately I've been catching glimpses
With the sweep of my net, little glimpses

(With silver bellies, cilia feet, and
The wispy down of agelessness) that sift
Away as incense coils from cleric
Prayers: sideways roll of lambent brown eyes
Toward mine from a placid mien;
Defiant public lick of fingertips
From a sticky bun; a voice gentling
From a face swimming in the pleasure
Of its own beauty (“to simplify,
To simplify”) like pursed lips’ breath
Kissing music from a bottleneck.

When at last I piece it all together—
Thread the ocean through the street;
The child through the man;
The glimpses through the grail—
We will meet in that ultimate beat,
My poem stretched across the finish line:

And here she speeds to crash my open arms,
Obliterates my banner, scatters my tatters.
And when she plucks my bent and shadowed
Remnants held aloft and askew, she’ll squint,
“Is it you? Is it finally really you?”

For Gwen: Evel Knievel's Grandmother's Green Rice at the Third Grade States Fair

Dennis Doherty

...of which homo sapiens, man, is the only surviving species.

—OED

Yesterday night you grated all that cheese,
Like, three pounds, or something,
My duck, my little fart bomb.

You cut all that green stuff you say
You hate but have never ate (parsley)
To gladly foist on classmates

Knowing they'd inevitably bring
The sweets: cherry pie of
Washington, Georgia pecan,

Storebrought Vermont hippy
Ice cream. From the Treasure State,
Big Sky Country, the clever might

Expect Custard's Last Stand. Not so.
No, Mom's ambition in the kitchen
Is of sterner culinary stuff.

Cook you must, and risk the sublime,
Though not dare taste a square
Of your fine-tuned concoction

(Like months, weeks ago, or days—
I dunno—you serial-smashed
Your spine, perfecting handstands);

Sure, but what ruptures my spleen,
The thing that splints my shins,
Grinds my bones, galls my stones:

Hominids who kill with a kiss.
Everyone loves your dish,
And you hardly know it exists.

Likewise, this joyride pen's awkward wobbling
Couldn't conceive from my crumbs your cobbling.

Late in the Night in Spain Thinking of Hemingway

Matthew Nickel

I had just come down from San Fermin, down
Through the fields, crossing through wind-
Slanted grain seeing out in the field of sunflowers
A stone tower blinking in the sun; then up and
Over a mountain pass and down into the hot of
Spain and the dry rocked hot pine country—

At the top of the pass, I looked back to see the city
Rising from the plain, the old walls and
Cathedral and the bullring; I looked back
Thinking of Loyola's wound, feeling the weight
Of my pack in my legs and remembering all the
Bulls in the hot sun and blood and the legs folding—

I lay in the dark that night, in a small town called
Obanos, but I could not sleep, so I tried to remember
Something from home, someone's eyes or a girl's smile
Or somebody's hand resting on my shoulder
But all the girls were boring in the dark to remember,
And I could not pray, because I did not know how

To pray, in the dark of the night, and then I remembered
Hemingway's story "Now I Lay Me" and started
To think of that old childhood prayer,
Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord—
But I could not get past that part in the absolute
Dark of the night, so I found the book and a light,

And read Hemingway's story and tried to remember
Like Nick in the dark, and imagine what home was
And where, and I put the book down to try again
Without the light, but I still could not pray—
Instead, I began to remember Nick in the story,
And the dark streams and bait and slick feel of trout,

I felt my hand thrust into the icy cold spring,
Felt the heart lifting with the pull of the line

And I was with Nick then, remembering and
Imagining all the streams and people we knew;
I saw when his mother burned his father's things
I saw Nick's face, feeling complicit in Nick's betrayal,

I felt in the act of sin, the memory's need for purgation;
I was with Nick in the memory when he prayed
And I found myself saying, with Nick,
Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with Thee,
And I was praying then and did not realize it and was
Not afraid anymore and then I think I fell asleep.

In the morning, I woke alone and left and walked
In the hot sun, and in the next town,
I entered the half-light of a cool stoned dark church,
And knelt unafraid now in front of the cross,
And heard a voice happily in my memory, *Sinners*
Now and at the hour of our death, Amen.

Spring Morning at Riverby

For John Burroughs

Matthew Nickel

Two dancing tail tapping phoebe birds
Play in the lilac trees that line the river slope
Chanting hymn-chirps to welcome
This porch-smoking sun-rising morning

Leaves have unfolded and maple trees rise up high
Obstructing all views of the river below,
But I imagine the slow brown Hudson moving,
The diamond current shaping the water's edge

This is a vernal day, a day for growing
And sowing and there is much to get done
Leeks to plant, garlic to weed and the soil
Needs tilling for the planting; below

An old man tall walks ragged across the slope
Stooping low to follow a groundhog trail;
Setting aside a poem, I lift my .22 off the bench
And walk down the slope to follow him,

Ahead he walks slowly stalking, following the run
Beside raspberry bushes blossoming leaves,
Then pausing in a sudden slow swiftness
He raises his rifle and the crack sounds—echoed

From the Vanderbilt Mansion through the hollow
Valley of this two-hearted river, up the slope
Beside the spring-run down from The Nest,
And the groundhog writhes into fat agony,

I lift my rifle, hold the sights steady—see him
Staring at me, unmoving then and breathing,
All this in a moment while the old man rasps
His breath—then the final shot and the stillness.

The old man's face blinks in the half-light,
Smiling he nods and walks up the slope
Toward home; I lift the groundhog burden

And fling him down the hill for the coyotes;
That is done, and I return to the porch,
See the phoebe birds have gone to their nests,
It is time now for the planting
There is much to get done this year.

A Good Clean Village—War Monument Gorge du Tarn, France

Matthew Nickel

To have gone off and left the gorge
Deeply cut and the river flowing,
To have gone off and watched them die
One by one, dying as you knew them

Friends, neighbors, the man who gave you
A wooden cross for Noël, the cousin
Who taught you to swim, Uncle Jacques
Who held his wrinkled hand around yours,

Holding the taut line jerked by the trout
Hooked but fighting in the flowing river
Icy around your shivering thighs,
But satisfactory holding in the current,

To have gone off to watch your brother
Bleed to death in the trenches beside you
Your father caught by Germans, you watching
His execution, one pistol to the head

One shot you did not hear for the screaming
Breath dry in your mouth, as you ran
Toward them, caught by your Mother's Brother
Thrown down to save you from yourself,

To have gone off and to come back, alone
To the gorge wind and moving river, to the
High pass and cliff clutch which means
Nothing now but to hold tight from falling

To have gone off and to come back
Arched shoulders burdened
All for a German tourist fat with camera
Taking your picture unaware

As you wash your lettuce in the stream
That cuts the village, where you used to
Wash your feet before dinner so that

Mother would be happy,

Mother, now dead who had gray tears
When you came home alone,
Who aged a lifetime when she realized
No one else was coming back.

But you let him take your picture
Because your lettuce is clean now
It has come from a good walled garden
On the edge of the cliff in a good clean village

You shake your lettuce cage dry in the sun
Wave to the men playing boules by the stream
And you think of leeks fat for dinner, potatoes
Dirt groveled chthonic and waiting,

And Trout caught in the early dawn,
All for your family coming soon, where
Laughter loud from grandchildren will
Surround your table, satisfy a deep longing

In the day's last light, while the sun drops
Behind the wall of gorge, where you can hear
The stream from the village
Fall down into the river endlessly flowing.

A Photograph of my Parents in the Catskills circa 1937

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt

He hams for the camera
knobby kneed
cigarette dangling from his lips.

She smiles a
cherry lipstick smile.

I stare into the picture
Imagine thick summer air
honeysuckle and mock orange
light striking oak leaves
framing the shot

And I wonder
Did he carelessly touch her wrist?
Did she move towards him
Eyes closed lips tight with desire?
Did they whisper those
pleasantries only lovers know?

And when did it change?
When did their smiles thin?
Their pulse slow?
When did sorrow add heft to their bones?
When did they fall to earth
And become my flesh and blood?

I squeeze into a patch of light
A white leaf in the
dark background
of the shot.
I reach to touch them.
They vanish.
My body still unframed.

The Fitzgerald Variations

(in which the poet-troubadour tries, without benefit of text, to remember after midnight and wine his favorite Fitzgerald lines)

H. R. Stoneback

I

Reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope.
If I had listened to my father, as Nick Carraway did,
I would have known sooner what that means
and lived a different life in my teens,
wouldn't have been such a rotten kid.

II

An extraordinary gift for hope
a romantic readiness
I guess you could also call it innocence
The core of the dream
Heading West
At heart, moralists
Seeking Blessedness

III

We drifted here and there unrestfully
wherever people made poetry and song
and were poor together.
We were athletes, too, but we knew
the dramatic turbulence of old games
was irrecoverable, except in song.

IV

We still stretch out our *arms toward the dark water*
in a curious way but we no longer mistake
the sea-rocks for docks
and in the unquiet darkness
the ocean-light is not green

V

Within and without
Simultaneously enchanted and repelled

NOTE: This sequence written for and first performed at The Fitzgerald Museum in Montgomery, Alabama: January 18, 2007.

In your twenties it's good to be compelled
By double vision
But if you wish to live past 40
Precision and judgment are required
As long as the single window
Has the right view
And lets in enough light

VI

Other people are careful
They're the ones who get killed
When they believe in the green light
And suddenly meet those who run red

VII

One man could start to play
with the faith of fifty million people.
I suppose it happens every day
but we *must* still be staggered by the idea.

VIII

Clocks always *tilt dangerously*
at the pressure of the head—
past, present, future
Twilight Savings Time—
The past can never be repeated
And it never happened
If it was just an abstraction

[IX-X omitted]

XI

I don't know when I first read *Gatsby*—
Maybe it was in high school, that place
where millions of teachers and students
abuse great books, commit textual harassment
on the classics they don't understand.

I'm sure I read it before twelfth grade
where the teacher said it was like Hemingway's
Sun Also Rises, another pointless story about
a bunch of Jazz Age-Lost Generation drunks.
I know I hadn't read it in junior high
when my 8th-grade teacher Miss Evaul
quoted it in class. Miss Evaul was the only teacher
I had before college who knew and loved
literature and knew how that passion
could change your life. There was that whole week
when she made no assignments, asked no questions
in class, just told us all to shut up and listen.
She told us to "listen to the hum of the words,
the rhythm of the sentences"—she made us close
our eyes and *hear*. She read from Shakespeare,
Baudelaire, Eliot, Yeats, and Hemingway.
If anybody opened their eyes she'd throw an eraser
at them. She read from Dostoevsky and Ezra Pound.
A musician, I paid close attention to the sound
but I also looked through the cracks of my cupped
fingers on brow at the girl in the next row,
her leg swinging up and down in the aisle.
Miss Evaul caught me looking and nailed me
with an eraser, right in the forehead,
the cloud of chalkdust settling on my face
and clothes. I shut my eyes and kept them closed
while she read from Fitzgerald. She said she was reading
the beginning and end of a very great novel
that we should all know by heart, like our favorite song.
I really listened—I took those words out of the class
with me, still hearing them when I went to the boy's room
before lunch and washed that eraser chalkdust
from my ghostly face. But I never erased
those words about *romantic readiness*,
about being *compelled into an aesthetic*

*contemplation ... neither understood nor desired,
face to face for the last time in history
with something commensurate to [my] capacity
for wonder* and I kept hearing those words
even though it would be a long time before
I really knew what they meant and I have never
stopped hearing them. Miss Evald kept me
after class the next day. She did not say she was sorry
about the eraser, said I deserved it.
Then she said: "You're not stupid like the rest
of them. You need to listen and keep on listening—someday
you'll need all those words." I listened. A great teacher,
Miss Evald would probably be fired today.

XII

*We were a sort of royalty, almost infallible,
with a sort of magic around us—*
It's not just *Gatsby* we need; a little older,
everybody needs "Babylon Revisited."
Paris was my Babylon, too. The first
year I lived there it was like the world
of Charlie Wales. It was magic, the city
belonged to me. All that money, all that waste,
all those betrayals—long late nights unremembered.
Home at dawn. Nightfriends, heirs to famous
Fortunes, who ran up bar tabs in millions
of Francs. One of them skipped town,
disappeared, fate unknown to this day,
never paid his tab. Finally, we all pay.

XIII

*believed in character wanted to jump back
a whole generation and trust in character
as the eternally valuable element—*
Maybe we usually learn this too late.
Some of us learn it before everything's worn

out, before everything's gone.
Some never learn it. And they are the ones
who will make us pay and pay, forever.

Atheist Sings Hymns in My Kitchen

For Donald Junkins

H. R. Stoneback

Eternity happened in my kitchen,
one of my graduate students said,
written in the face, the voice, of the poet
from Amherst—tremolo-trembling, chin lifted,
eyebrows steeply arched, head bobbing up
and down like one of those bobblehead
figures, tears streaming down his cheeks
as we sing hymns for hours, long after midnight,
singing “In the Garden,” “Lord We are Able,”
“I Love to Tell the Story,” and all the rest.

(While I play guitar and sing I wonder
if the best poets are all lapsed Methodists.
He studied for that ministry until he fell
into the writing classes of Robert Lowell.
Did he ever sing hymns like this with Plath
and Sexton, with Lowell and Roethke?)

In between hymns someone whispers: “It’s the start
of a new school of poetry—*des Hymnagistes*.”

(Thinking well maybe it’s just lapsed Methodists—
who always were the best singers and songwriters—
I crank the guitar into a new hymn,
thinking of Pound and music, *melopoeia*,
phanopoeia, and *logopoeia*, and how
this is all three simultaneously.
At least it is for me.

Of course, I’ve done my time with Methodist
sermons and hymnsings. I wonder if somewhere
a nonlapsed Methodist preacher is at this
very moment chanting our poems with a trembling visage,
late, after Sunday certitudes and grape juice,
intensity inscribed in the lines of his face.)

The hymns pour, a timeless placeless hymnsing.
Like old nights longer than flesh, the hymns linger.

(I think of old friends in China, even Party officials,
who belted out hymns they'd learned from missionaries
in the days before hymnbooks were banned.)

The Professor from Texas, a poet
and a Catholic Pilgrim, lights his pipe, dances.

The Poet from Boston, a Unitarian,
and a professor, doesn't know our hymns.
(Perhaps a case of terminal Bostonitis?)

(I watch my old friend's face, paint it on guitar strings,
try to recall the first time we sang hymns—
on some island boat-dock? or on a careening bus
going too fast down a treacherous mountain pass
in Austria? The Hymnagiste altarcall winds down.
Poets go out into the altered night, heading home.)

Around 3 AM he says when the singing's over:
"I might be a lousy atheist but I won't let those creeps
take Jesus away from me, no sirree, they can't take Jesus
from me!" (No one thought to ask who the creeps
were who would take Jesus from him—we all
just seemed to know.) When he repeats his atheist
line more colorfully, his old compadre,
the deep-voiced Professor from Delaware,
ostensibly asleep in his chair, rumbles:
"You're not an atheist, you're an agnostic."

I wish Chinua Achebe had not gone home early.
His father was a missionary—I bet he knows old hymns.
A good guy. (We compared notes on wheelchairs,
someone called us Wheelchair Brothers.)
Even if they all thought he was wrong
about *Heart of Darkness*, he must know some songs.
Maybe Conrad was the creep who took Jesus away.
But that's not a very Polish thing to do.

Maybe it was Kurtz? Either way, it really hurts, especially when atheists from Massachusetts weep hymns in your kitchen at 3 AM.

The Corporate Body

Robert H. Waugh

They have no taste, no touch, no odor but the whirr
of air-conditioners set on low, they do have
infinite spaces in our hearts and purses,
they peer across the gold braid of our coffins,
they have no boundaries.

The sun at noon
drools grey compulsions, they possess the sky.

They are alive, the law allows them life,
the buttocks on the benches have pronounced
a legal fiction on their life, they are
alive! They open leaden eyes, they move
ponderous limbs, a monstrous rank
of the half-dead, but they have learned
to put themselves in fashion
and walk out in their double-breasted suits.

Like cells they pulse, diversify and merge.

They compose their bodies of iron,
of oil and coal and breakfast flakes, they flex
stiff muscles in the sheaves of law, they excrete
emptiness on the land.

The empty malls and heads
attest to their ferocious emptiness,
sales copulate in sales,
limpness in limpness where fluorescent lights
flitter across the whitened cerebella
and the depressive ceilings,
empty air makes a motion through your ribs
and the presumptuous aisles, your heart
spasms grey matter, plastic will not save you.

Collectibles

Robert H. Waugh

What have we made collectible? A doll
lolling its pink glass eyes at us, a clock face,
if it possesses provenance,
and photographs of people, not our people,
mere people that the flat daguerreotype
makes precious now, nobody that we knew,
all of the gone-by.

What have we made
collectible? It's death, we wait upon it.

You can hear the empty wind sough through the trees
outside the auction hall. It's death, and it's
the cash exchange, the value of the coin,
it's swift exchange, dollars for pounds and dimes
For pence, you can hear the wind of it, the exchange
Of these times for those times, and it's nothing but death.

We live in a time of exchange, in a time of exhibit,
we exhibit the privates of the dead, we loose
those privates on the wind, you can smell the stench
of this flat flesh, if it
possesses provenance that can stare us down,
the empty flesh, we call it ours, we call it
collectible, come buy, come examine these,
this is plate, this is pewter.

Chinoiserie
crackles, it soils and tickles us, we made it to collect
dust on the *étagère*, that's death,
the privates, the empties that clutter
the broad, uncollectible earth.

Methuselah

Lea Weiss

There is a minor breaking within a piñon seed
When crushed between incisors.
Last year's hours, molded with sea-green spores,
Now discarded.

The cave will not return
Nor will the thousand sands upon which
Your head rested.

May this year come with exultant swears
And intrude upon this room.

Succession should only come on canvas,
Where watercolour drains from corners,
Intruding.

Recluse

Lea Weiss

I see you scurrying across the stair
3 hairy 4
vicissitude of legs
now under railing
too stiff business-shoe lead

Inferno under buzzing—
God's elevator bells.
Without windows shadow them violet
Consuming gray light is brown red maroon.

Vacuum chord tied
Trap door refuse
Slush shuffle step

Implement and coffee cups last longer
than significance in the infinite fuselage of the grave.
Mouths pursed like o's of recognition
spiked and slicked hair of executives.

Cubicle settees
Flat carpet bug spray,
roach tap tap.

Circe

Lea Weiss

They may whisper that naught decide,
In the mess of leaves that hangs my hair,
never be,
must never be
Ringlets of moment in streaked mat hair.

But are,
Always moments, that way—
Changing contentments, moving
Closer.

Trapping in
the net I wave.
Spilled water
Thirsts
—brings forth in tide
Drowned sailors
On cask brown ships.

Wind-drape Siren
(Tide grip),
Drowning on rocks,
(over),
In azure rivets,
Sea water boils.

Telephone Talk

Sarah Wyman

Telephone talk is
Walking blind,
Filtered words
No body signs.

Shouting at a piece of plastic
I'm wired to the wall.
Surprised to find my tone so caustic?
That wasn't what I meant at all.

How could the message remain the same,
Twisted through a springed up cord?
The pay phone eats my final coin,
Clicks and calls me back for more.

Your voice is such a tease to touch,
But static pricks remove romance.
We're being bugged, the line is tapped,
Operator listens in at every chance.

We have ten fingers, but seven digits,
Any phone to any phone,
Intrusive ring, rude busy signal,
Unanswered noise when you're not home.

The book's a dictionary of disorder,
Wrong numbers, lines crossed at will,
Telephone Company takes the blame,
Times our tongues, then sends a bill.

Valentine Vine

Sarah Wyman

A woman brought a strange fruit
from the grocery.
Giving it to her husband, she said,
the seeds inside are my thoughts of you.

He pulled back the skin at once
finding encysted kernels in purple juice.
Wishing to know his wife's true feelings
(being a jealous man) he ate another knob
each time her back was turned
to wash a dish or put a box away.

By the end of the week, the generous fruit
was emptied,
its withering skin cracked at the folds.
The warm crannies of his gut
held the roots of sprouting seeds,
growing in darkness, upwards
in a slow, green crawl.

Not the sort of man to read
by touch between the sheets,
to listen for the messaged sounds of change,
he did notice the leafy rustle
emerging from his own body.

One morning in the mirror
he noticed lush sprouts peeking
to sunlight from his ear, pollen
dusting his mustache,
his tongue's recoil
from unusual verbage cover.
Using his nose hair scissors,
he clipped the leaf tips back from his ears.

The next day, dismayed,
he could hardly hear the tap

running for his toothbrush.
Looking up, he saw leaves
growing from all orifices.
He sneezed a powdered squawk.

His thirst became intense;
each gulp empowered the verdant guest.
Unable to read this leafy language,
he knew not what to think,
watching his own trunk expand
to a barrel shape.
Pointy toes grew sharply long and searching.

A fine but forthright tree
finally skewered its host,
breaking the manly shell,
carrying remains of love
upwards to the light.

Monterey Bay

Sarah Wyman

Aloft, afloat, but not adrift
over dark depths,
bundled up in a sea kelp girdle,
one sunning otter recalls
the man who passed
a few days back,
pushing pools of water aside,
making his way through the bay
as though sorting the world in piles
dipping in and out of the wet record,
pausing to identify more clearly
one gull among many,
the expired pelican, folded like an envelope,
as a familiar-sounding voice embraced
the crowd above
and fog obscured the distant shore
where ancient assemblies once called him
forth from dry pages to their light.

Popinjay in the Japonica

Sarah Wyman

Dame Elaine shined silver, wore lace, and painted teacups.
Some decades past, wrapped in cream satin, with orange
blossoms in her hand, she'd made a match with a Rock-
efeller, his family mansion, and vast grounds.

I, the gardener, enter the picture, a fly
on the wall, tending the boxwood, pruning this tree

or that. My quiet life on the estate, country
calm after city living, pleases me. A cou-
ple of marriages taxied by like butterflies.
More than ornamental cabbages, or orange
rays of sunset dropping their warmth on the ground,
I like to think and watch my thoughts take off like rock-

ets in a spacious place. *She* sits on her rock-
er, doing just what I do, counting seams on trees,
conversing with bees, shaking cold coffee grounds
into the leaves. But Dame isn't the same, her cup-
id's bow lipstick awash in tears, her brow and orange
wedge of worry, and every birthday Shoo-Fly

pie comes out burned, since the night I watched her hope fly
out the window. She saw a boy atop a rock,
standing bright, steady and still as a lighted an-
gel. He took aim and shot at a spreading tree,
knocking her popinjay from its japonica.

(*Please* don't tell that I saw her bird hit the ground.)

In a Picasso confusion of form and ground,
tears melted the colors and quince, her high flier
was dead: split beak and his broken body now cup-
ped in her hands. She buried him under a rock,
patting the earth with her pink Pappagallo, tre-
mendously moved by the last feather, torn orange

afflutter, as it fell on the fresh grave, arranged
with trefoil and leftover lilies. Her heel ground

a hole as she rose and spun 'round to scan the trees.
She did not spot me, only a lost lonely fly
catcher hunting for nest sites or bugs, rock to rock.
When Dame Elaine sees me nights now, I lift my cup
up to her (always alone), rocking in her cup-
ola, orange ground around the japonica tree.

V Essays

Denis Diderot, Sophie Volland, and the Impossibilities of Sensibility

Logan Connors

Denis Diderot was certainly a prolific writer, touching on a variety of subjects from biology to art criticism to theater in his numerous publications. With such a heterogeneous canon, critics tend to paint an ambiguous picture of his various moral and philosophical viewpoints. Is he a progressive philosopher, moving towards political upheaval, or a representative of classical and intellectual *raison*? Is he a forward-thinking family man, or an introverted loner? Though many of Diderot's texts shed light on these questions, his *Lettres à Sophie Volland* provide a first-person account of the philosopher's most intimate moments. Telling stories ranging from pernicious urinary problems to debates at artistic Salons, Diderot's letters to Sophie contrast a popular and worldly Diderot with a tired and lonely old man. And with the disappearance of Sophie's responses, Diderot's assertions about himself, Volland, and his surroundings emerge as unchecked autobiographical statements. Nevertheless, Diderot's *Lettres à Sophie Volland* contain a distinct and intriguing space where biographical facts entwine with the philosopher's imaginary identity.

Diderot emerges as an ambivalent "character," hovering unsteadily between weakness and strength, or *sensibility* and *reason*. By analyzing the philosopher's letters about his relationship with Volland in contrast to his own sense of place in the world, I hope to demonstrate several disparities between the eighteenth-century ideal of sensibility and Diderot's first-person construction of the very same concept in the *Lettres*. Although Diderot bolsters sensibility as the highest cultural value and even calls for a paradigmatic shift from "intellect alone" to sensibility, the philosopher is unable to escape the realm of reason and enter wholly into the new, enlightened age of sensibility.

Enlightenment Definitions

Before considering the letters, it may be useful to understand the concept of sensibility during the Enlightenment. In an article on eighteenth-century masculinity, Inger Brodey cites Diderot's own definition of sensibility, taken from *L'Encyclopédie*:

[Sensibility is that] tender and delicate disposition of the soul which renders it easy to be moved and touched.... It gives one a kind of wisdom concerning matters of virtue and is far more penetrating than the intellect alone. People of sensibility because of their liveliness can fall into errors which men of the world would not commit; but these are greatly outweighed by the amount of good that they do. Men of sensibility live more fully than others.... Reflection can produce a man of probity; but sensibility is the mother of humanity, of generosity; it is at the service of merit, lends its support to the intellect, and is the moving spirit which animates belief. (119)

For Diderot, sensibility is a necessary step in arriving at truth or knowledge. It is a spark that makes a man human and drives his desire to understand his own essence. In this definition, Diderot degrades reason, or what he calls “intellect alone.” He argues that reflection, intellect, and worldliness may be redeeming qualities, but they are by no means as vital to mankind as sensibility. Also, the philosopher links sensibility with a private and difficult, but largely rewarding life. Given Diderot’s philosophical bent, one can only assume he would call himself a “man of sensibility”—especially if sensibility is the only way of arriving at wisdom, belief, and truth. Leaving all assumptions about Diderot aside, one need only look at the various protagonists in the philosopher’s fictional works. In *Le Fils naturel*, the tormented and sensitive Dorval resolves an aristocratic family’s romantic problems. Dorval first *feels* a certain way, then thinks about his feelings, and then rationally constructs a successful moral course for the family to follow.

Although sensibility enjoyed great popularity during the Enlightenment, it posed demonstrable problems for eighteenth-century authors. As Anne Vila points out, there was no “one” form or even philosophy of sensibility:

Because it was so multifaceted, sensibility lent itself to a wide variety of literary treatments: it was central not only to the sentimental narratives that proliferated at the time, but also to the explicitly antisentimental narratives that were created by authors such as Diderot, Laclos, and Sade, each of whom was intrigued by the materialist possibilities that sensibility presented as a physicalized concept. In that sense, sensibility should be seen not as a fixed, oppressive set of literary and moral conventions...but rather as a potentially subversive property in itself. (6-7)

Using this analysis, we must re-read Diderot’s *Lettres à Sophie Volland* with an understanding that sensibility may surpass the author’s intention. Indeed, Diderot’s letters show a great deal of sensibility, but not always at the moments he desired. By looking at sensibility in the specific category of Enlightenment identity, we can see that Diderot’s desire to emphasize the concept certainly reflects an important eighteenth-century Zeitgeist. In his article on eighteenth-century masculinity,

Brody writes:

Sensibility's new masculine ideal, typified by the "man of feeling" renounces traditionally masculine roles such as those exemplified by the Roman citizen, orator, patriot, and patriarch. Instead, the new men of sensibility hover on the edge of illness, madness, impotence, inactivity, salience, and death and leave themselves open to the constant charge of "effeminacy"—a charge leveled at them by some of their contemporary readers, both male and female.... In other words, what we can see in the cult of sensibility is not simply a revolution in the concept of masculinity, but rather a growing conflict between two standards of masculinity. (116)

It is with the help of emerging definitions of Enlightenment masculinity and sensibility that we may be able to show Diderot's imaginary connection to sensibility, while at the same time admitting that the philosopher remains tied to intellect, worldliness, and what he disparages as reason. And as we delve into Diderot's letters, we perceive an uneasy balance between a desire to participate in the emerging cult of sensibility and a wish to remain firmly implanted in the powerful and visible world of intellectual reason.

A Sensitive Love? Diderot and Volland

Diderot's feelings about Sophie are never a secret in the majority of his letters:

J'aime une Sophie. La tendresse que j'ai pour elle affaiblit à mes yeux tout autre intérêt. Je ne vois qu'un Malheur possible dans la nature. Mais ce Malheur se multiplie et se présente à moi sous cent aspects. Passe-t-elle un jour sans m'écrire, qu'a-t-elle? serait-elle malade? et voilà les chimères qui voltigent autour de ma tête et qui me tourmentent....Crapuleux ou sobre, mélancolique ou serein, Sophie, je vous aime également, mais la couleur du sentiment n'est pas la même....(99)

I love a Sophie. The tenderness that I feel for her weakens any other interest. I only see but one possible unhappiness in nature. But this unhappiness multiplies and shows itself to me in hundreds of ways. If she goes one day without writing me, what's wrong? Is she sick? *Voilà*, the fantasies that soar around in my head, tormenting me.... Drunk or sober, melancholic or calm, Sophie, I like you just the same, but our feelings are not of the same color.¹

Diderot's language is marked with feeling and desperation. The philosopher is tormented when Sophie doesn't write, ecstatic when he sees her, and yearns for her when she is far away. There doesn't seem to be any incongruity between emerging philosophical definitions of sensibility and the sentimental love Diderot enjoys

with Sophie. Diderot's relationship with her appears to be a lesson in *amour sensible* and the philosopher's emotions—both positive and negative—are never difficult to find. Constantly obsessed by Sophie's lack of letters, Diderot laments her inability to feel the same as he does, stating that her "couleur du sentiment n'est pas la même." For Diderot, love is painful and obsessive, and he criticizes the fact that she fails to feel identically. Diderot draws a picture of what a love affair should be and demands that Sophie play by his rules. And most interesting, Diderot's rules do not stop with his obsessions over correspondence.

Throughout the *Lettres*, Volland's silence is deafening. Despite the fact that her letters to Diderot were lost during the eighteenth century, in his letters to her the reader easily notices Volland's opinions about the nature of their relationship. While Diderot's letters are filled with detail, emotion, and sensibility, he complains of a marked decrease in intensity (not to mention regularity) on her part. In fact, Diderot spends a good deal of his entire correspondence carping on her epistolary indifference. Without taking her idea of a romantic relationship into consideration, Diderot epistolarily begins a complicated process of creating his own perfect relationship with his lover. By forming a shared virtual group of friends, integrating his daughter's life with Sophie's, and constantly alluding to the potential death of the real Madame Diderot, he produces an open and loving marriage with Sophie—*on paper*.

Diderot's letters demonstrate an astute attention to detail. Upset stomachs, late trains, exact menus, and postal irregularities—*minutiae* dominate much of his correspondence. But beyond presenting simple details of his *vie quotidienne*, Diderot introduces and describes a myriad of characters to Sophie:

J'ai vu M. d'Argental qui m'a encore reparlé du projet des comédiens sur *Le Père de Famille*.² J'ai dîné avec l'abbé Sallier chez moi. Madame a très bien fait les honneurs. Elle a même dit à l'abbé un mot assez plaisant. Madame d'Epinay et Grimm sont venus aujourd'hui à Paris.... (110)

I saw Mr. d'Argental who spoke to me again about those actors' plan regarding *Le Père de Famille*. I ate at my place with the abbé Sallier. Madame did a good job with the introductions. She even had a few nice words for the abbé. Madame d'Epinay and Grimm came to Paris today.

Not only does Diderot introduce people like Argental and Sallier, but he also references "old friends" like Epinaï and Grimm—people whom Sophie may not have met, but because of Diderot's letters, now knows on a daily basis. Diderot produces an entire social circle, a constant dinner party, to which she is invited through his letters. Through Diderot, she dines with the Empress, attends operas with Holbeck and Grimm, and sits in on Madame d'Epinay's salons. Sophie travels with Diderot to Langres, southern France, and Germany. But it takes much more

than shared friends and experiences to construct a marriage, and eighteenth-century marriage, whether fictive or real, has to show some sort of intimacy between *only* two people, whether genuine or not.

The existence of Madame Diderot serves as a formidable obstacle in the philosopher's "paper marriage" to Volland. One might think that Diderot would seek to ignore his wife in letters to his mistress. But instead of excluding Madame, Diderot associates his wife with death, indifference, or absence to reduce her overall importance in the philosopher's life. On July 25, 1765 Diderot describes his wife as ghostlike and looking "fort blanche" ("very pale") and "malade" ("sick") (261-62). He even alludes to her possible death, exclaiming, "J'ai cru que je perdrais ma femme avant-hier" ("I thought that I had lost my wife the day before yesterday") (220). Diderot jumps from Madame Diderot to Sophie at the most morbid of times. After thinking he had lost his wife, Diderot quickly moves on, dropping Madame and exclaiming to Sophie in the very same letter that he cannot stop "penser à vous" ("thinking of you"). Finally, Diderot's language when describing his ailing wife is remarkably indifferent. Even if he did not share a romantic bond with his wife, one would assume that her grave health might have some sort of emotional effect on the philosopher. He frequently expects Madame Diderot's death, but without giving any hint of emotion. For Diderot, the death of his wife is inevitable, expected, and void of sentiment.

Not only does Diderot mix thoughts of Sophie with his descriptions of his wife, he also renders Madame Diderot's motherhood ambiguous and problematic. His text is filled with reflections about his daughter. From piano lessons to conversations over dinner, Diderot and Angélique's shared activities seem to illustrate a loving relationship. Absent, however, is Diderot's depiction of any relationship between Madame Diderot and her only child. Aside from a few castigating comments on her "overly sensitive" parental approach, the text is void of accounts of mother-daughter interactions. Diderot teaches Angélique how to play the clavichord, comments on her future life and marriage, and oversees her reading and lessons. In his letters to Volland, Diderot becomes a "single" father, seemingly charged with every aspect of Angélique's childhood. The philosopher seems to be removing motherhood from his wife and giving it epistolarily to his mistress. By describing the everyday events of his daughter and leaving out interactions with his own wife, Diderot places an imaginary shade over his wife and attaches his daughter Angélique to his mistress, Sophie.

Diderot blends familial relationships inside the Volland family as well. Instead of referring to Madame Volland (Sophie's mother) formally, Diderot first names her "notre maman" ("our mother") and then drops the possessive pronoun entirely (339). With a shared daughter and a single "maman," Diderot establishes intimate and familial ties with Sophie.

In the letters, Diderot and Volland have a day-to-day relationship, a society

of close friends, and possibly even a daughter. In addition, they seem to have a shared financial life. On September 8, 1765 Diderot thanks Sophie for reminding him to collect, “l’argent de l’Impératrice” (“money from the empress”) (272). And on December 30, 1765 the two lovers begin to discuss real estate:

Ce logement sur le Palais-Royal est bien séduisant, je ne vous conseille pas de le voir, si vous ne voulez pas l’habiter. Mais si dans l’incertitude sur le temps ou la rue Sainte-Anne sera habitable, on obtenait du propriétaire de prolonger le bail de six mois et qu’on l’obtient; si vous étiez maîtresse du prix de la location.... (290-91)

That place on the Palais-Royal is very tempting, and it’s best not to go see it if you don’t want to live there. However, during the time it takes for them to furnish [the place at] St. Anne, we could get the landlord to lengthen the duration of the lease and we could get it [the place at Palais-Royal]; if you were only the one in charge of the rent....

With a house, a child, shared extended family, and friends, Diderot constructs a perfect picture of the nuclear family. But his creation of a fictional marriage and family life jars with Sophie’s sporadic responses, long periods of silence, and random romantic encounters with other men. Nevertheless, Diderot’s attempt at a forged intimacy continues right up until the end of the lovers’ correspondence, and the philosopher’s last letter echoes Sophie’s emerging silence. After lamenting her disinterestedness for a dozen letters, Diderot musters a feeble, “...je vous dirais, mademoiselle Volland, que cette négligence me surprend moins qu’elle ne m’afflige...” (“I would tell you, Ms. Volland, that this negligence hurts me more than it surprises me”) (356). Despite his emotional attempt to create a shared life with his lover, Diderot can now only sit back, conquered and subjugated to Sophie’s feelings. Diderot is “au désespoir,” sad and emotional, but nevertheless in line with his *Encyclopédie* definitions of the lonely *homme de sensibilité*.

The World and Diderot

On the one hand, Diderot’s letters fit perfectly into the eighteenth-century “cult of sensibility.” Constantly complaining about foot ailments, stomach problems, near-death experiences, physical weaknesses, and sentimental love, Diderot seems to manifest a certain degree of the masculine helplessness illustrated by Brody. Nevertheless, this “sensitivity” is only apparent in the philosopher’s imaginary and epistolary relationship with his mistress.

Diderot’s letters to Volland hint at a perpetual loneliness and an inability to live without her timely responses. In his correspondence, Diderot seems to rely on her for his well being, consequently subverting traditional male-female

roles of dependency and power. But how much of Diderot's "dependency" or "unhappiness" is based in nothing more than epistolary rhetoric? On July 18, 1762 Diderot writes, "...je suis le seul innocent et le seul en paix" ("I am the only innocent and the only peace") and describes his inability to find any sort of "bonheur" ("happiness") (191). The philosopher seems lonely and melancholic. Nevertheless, Diderot links his own happiness (I guess it was there after all), to Sophie (192) and his good health (191) in the very same letter. This dichotomy between happiness and loneliness continues throughout the correspondence. At times, Diderot seems worldly and powerful. He realizes the commanding, philosophical legacy that he will leave, stating that, "...la plus grande considération dans la mémoire des hommes m'est assurée..." ("I am assured of the greatest stature in the memory of mankind") (46). He travels from salon to salon, town to town, and produces dozens of articles each year. In fact, Diderot writes to Volland during the most productive time of the philosopher's career.³ He is not afraid to reveal his worldliness, exclaiming, "J'ai vu toute la sagesse des nations..." ("I have seen the wisdom of many nations") (97). The philosopher seems to separate his outward, worldly life, from his epistolary relationship with Volland. He travels the globe, attends salons, lectures, and so forth, but when addressing Sophie, he employs sensibility. In life, Diderot maintains strong friendships, a close-knit circle of academic allies, and a busy schedule. He is, and has to be—as *lumière*—a man of the world and quite the opposite of his lonely *Encyclopédique* man of sensibility.

Sensibility irrefutably exists in Diderot's fiction, philosophy, and first-person accounts of his life. For Diderot, sensibility was of paramount importance and "the moving spirit which animates belief" (Brodey 119). But Diderot, for practical reasons, cannot manifest the paradigmatic shift from reason (or worldly intellect) to sensibility alone. In his *Lettres à Sophie Volland*, sensibility moves through the text, attaching itself to different characters at different times while remaining an important theme in the epistolary (and maybe actual) relationship between the two lovers. When the sensitive Diderot fears an early death, sensibility and feeling mark his words. And when Diderot begins to sense Sophie's increasing distance, the lonely man of masculine sensibility grabs his pen and pleads with his mistress. Nevertheless, Diderot cannot escape the worldliness and visibility that came with his role of *encyclopédiste*, dramaturge, and *philosophe*. But are we too quick to judge his inadequacy? To bring on an important change of cultural values, did he not have to frequent Enlightenment circles (i.e., salons, speeches, extensive travel, etc.)? Nevertheless, with a desire to solidify his place in the history of mankind and an obvious propensity towards social change, did Diderot really desire a complete overhaul of Enlightenment masculinity, and thus, an abrupt reduction of his own power?

Notes

1. All translations are my own.
2. Diderot's famous play, which describes his vision of an "enlightened" family structure.
3. During the ten years of the most continual correspondence, Diderot wrote his most famous work including *L'Encyclopédie*, *Le Fils naturel*, *La Religieuse*, and *La Rêve d'Alembert*.

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Harriet Martineau and the Separate Economy of “Domestic Service”

Lynda L. Hinkle

The rise of the middle class in Victorian England led to an outpouring of writings meant to codify a system of social climbing and the development and maintenance of an illusory sense of status. Much of this struggle for status was carried out in the domestic space, and the domestic servants became conscripted soldiers in the War of Upward Mobility. Coming into sharp focus only when they failed in some way to embody the virtues, values, and standards of their employer, these women suffered not only hardships but increasing societal disdain as the ideal woman became equivalent to a woman who did no labor. The writings of Harriet Martineau cast a discerning light on the problem of women and labor within the context of Victorian values and class disquiet. In her 1838 article for *The London and Westminster Review*, “Domestic Service,” Martineau exposes the development of a very different socioeconomic system within the domestic space than was developing between the working and ruling classes in the industrial arena.

In *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, Nancy Armstrong writes:

To consider the rise of the domestic woman as a major event in the political history is not, as it may seem, to present a contradiction in terms, but to identify the paradox that shapes modern culture. It is also to trace the history of a specifically modern form of desire that, during the early eighteenth century, changed the criteria for determining what was most important in a female. (3)

What was most important in a female? Well, as middle-class sensibility began to be a primary acculturation point appearing extensively in novels and prose writing, the middle-class woman became a galvanizing force in establishing, maintaining, and displaying family status within the community. Nancy Armstrong points out the burgeoning industry of female conduct books in the eighteenth century, the purpose of which was to codify the “correct” behavior in the domestic space for the upwardly mobile family: “... countless female conduct books, ladies magazines and books of instruction for children all posited a similar feminine ideal and tended toward the same objective of ensuring a happy household” (63). A happy household, of course, would be defined in terms of economic prosperity as well as the reproduction of a “higher” class of values in the family offspring. For Judith Flanders, author of *Inside the Victorian Home*, the development of the domestic sphere acts to counterbalance the stressors of industrialization:

As the Industrial Revolution appeared to have taken over every aspect of working life, so the family, and by extension the house, expanded in tandem to act as an emotional counterweight. The Victorians found it useful to separate their world into a public sphere, of work and trade, and a private sphere, of home life and domesticity. The Victorian house became defined as a refuge, a place apart from the sordid aspects of commercial life, with different morals, different rules, different guidelines to protect the soul from being consumed by commerce. (5)

Armstrong adds that

In representing the household as a world, with its own form of social relations, a distinctively feminine discourse, this body of literature [conduct books] revised the semiotic of culture at its most basic level and enabled a coherent idea of the middle class to take shape. (63)

In addition to the seemingly endless prose created to instruct the middle class on how to appear successful, the Victorian domestic novel, according to Armstrong, also aims to clarify and codify values and ideals for a middle-class audience that is clamoring for information on how to rise and stay arisen. The domestic sphere becomes the proving ground for families hoping to springboard off industrialization into new heights of financial success. One significant marker of this success was the development of a middle-class woman of leisure, complete with domestic servants.

Harriet Martineau was keenly aware of the capricious nature of class distinction and its economic realities. Her study of political and economic conditions led her to a conviction that proper work for women both inside and outside the domestic sphere would lead to the kind of greater equality and independence women would need to compete in the changing industrial economy.

Martineau was born into a middle-class family that valued education and provided the young Harriet and her siblings with the best they could afford. As Martineau reached her twenties, her father died, forcing the family to fend for itself. She became a writer and worked with the needle at times in order to remain afloat. Fortunately for Martineau, she was able to live comfortably off her earnings as a writer for the majority of her life. This was especially unique in that she remained unmarried, was deaf from childhood, and seemed to give mere lip service to the conventionalities of the day. Despite this, she herself produced some literature along the lines of the conduct book, including *How to Observe Manners and Morals* in 1838, *Household Education* in 1848, and an article in *Harper's* in 1850 entitled satirically "How To Make a Home Unhealthy." Though she had no children of her own, she offers heavy-handed advice about the nursery, the care of children, and their education throughout these pieces. As a woman clearly interested in selling her work, she certainly knew her market and what they clamored for.

In her *Autobiography*, Martineau recounts a conversation with a friend who was trying to understand why she had devoted her life to writing:

I told her I had never worked for fame. ‘Well then, —for money.’ She was so glad I was successful and could get such sums for my books. This, again, could not be let pass. I assured her I had never written, or omitted to write, any thing whatever from pecuniary considerations. ‘Well, then,’ said she, ‘for usefulness. I am determined to be right. You write to do good for your fellow-creatures. You must allow that I am right now.’ I was silent; and when she found that I could allow no such thing, she was puzzled. Her alternatives were exhausted. I told her that I wrote because I could not help it. There was something that I wanted to say, and I said it: that was all. (95)

Despite this protest, it is hard to believe that Martineau’s successes were completely without intelligent manipulation. Although she sometimes wrote things that brought her criticism—one 1849 article about her in the *American Whig Review* recounted that she had often been accused of “bold, unwomanly opinions, impertinent and mischievous representations”—she seldom wrote things that would not sell. Martineau knew her audience, and sometimes deliberately provoked them with ideas that challenged dominant notions of propriety in order to advance her pro-equality agenda. One such idea, as elucidated in “Domestic Service,” was her approach to the utility of standard procedures of managing the relationship with domestic servants that had become such a mainstay of the Victorian middle- and upper-class home.

To begin, Martineau argues that unlike the exchange system of work gaining hold in the industrial, non-domestic sphere, the relationship of domestic servant and “master” or “mistress” retained an outmoded economic model similar to enslavement. Rather than exchanging the “capital” of their daily work for pay, like a factory worker, domestic servants were expected to give up a certain level of personal freedom as they became representatives of the household whose moral beings were subject to judgment—and the penalty for not measuring up might be loss of place, and therefore loss of financial solvency:

The peculiarity of the life of domestic service is subjection to the will of another. There may be more or less of this, avowedly or virtually, in other modes of life, but of no other is it the distinguishing peculiarity. An artisan contracts to supply a want for a money recompense, retaining the power of doing the work in his own way, and the choice of doing as much or as little as he pleases, subject to his own necessities and not to the will of his employer. A servant enters a family for the very purpose of fulfilling the will of the employer; and obedience to orders is the first requisite demanded. The wages are given in return for the obedience of service quite as much as for the industry itself. (“DS” 409)

Though writing over 140 years later, Lewis A. Coser in his article “Servants: The Obsolescence of an Occupational Role” echoes Martineau’s assessment:

... even in the eighteenth century, when achievement criteria had already widely replaced criteria of ascribed status, master-servant ties were still conceived as primordial status relationships rather than as contractual agreements. (31)

He goes on to say that

The master’s family operates as a “greedy organization” in relation to the servant. It does not rest content with claiming a segment of the time, commitment and energy of the servant, as is the case with other occupational arrangements in the modern world, but demands, though it does not always receive, full-time allegiance.... the servant was not expected to have a private life shielded from invasion by his employer. (32)

Judith Flanders reminds us that servants performed the lowest duties in the household because “... no housewife who could possibly afford not to would spend time in the scullery” (130). The population of servants to meet the needs of these women for whom filth was becoming increasingly relegated to the lower classes to “deal with” was burgeoning. According to an 1851 census, “one in three women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four in London was a servant” (Flanders 131). Martineau suggests that the men of the house knew little about the goings-on of servants in their own household: “... the subject of Domestic Service is considered a low, trifling and almost ludicrous one. Men know very little about it, and would fain appear to know less than they do” (“DS” 409). Flanders suggests that middle class women also didn’t really know the whole story because

... the reality of extreme poverty among the working classes was unknown to many of the comfortable middle classes; servants were probably the only representatives many of them would ever meet from that faceless, nameless horde. Mrs. Beeton [a writer of conduct prose], like many others, thought that training servants was the most important responsibility a mistress had: enlightening the unenlightened, supervising their religious education, their moral welfare and their social lives. (133)

With these elitist attitudes of moral superiority in which one’s servants became like children one was to educate, it is no wonder that little private life was permitted to servants, who were not perceived as being trustworthy over their own moral choices. Martineau critiques this view, saying that

A favorite device for the amelioration of servants is the circulation of tracts written for them. But in these publications the supposition is made throughout, of the obligation lying all on one side. The reader might imagine that it is by act

of pure favour that the services of a domestic are accepted at all. Gratitude is preached throughout—gratitude for lodging, food and clothing, gratitude for health being regarded, gratitude for notice, gratitude for promotion, gratitude, in short, for whatever may be claimed and whatever is earned as well as for whatever may be bestowed. All this while, not a syllable is breathed about any reciprocity of duty, and the one moral lesson taught is servility. (“DS” 412)

In other words, the domestic servant was being thoroughly indoctrinated to view self as an extension of the family that paid her or him rather than as an independent being, and this served middle- and upper-class families by allowing them to guiltlessly build their fortunes through the sweat of those who would not in any real way benefit from the spoils of their labor. The upper and middle classes sought to diffuse any class conflict through education: the servant must be made to understand that it is only through the absorption of a service-oriented piety that she or he will be permitted to continue in this social contract with the masters and be given food and shelter in exchange for total devotion.

Martineau argues, however, that the servants were not buying this rhetoric:

... these writers seem to suppose that God and man cannot be sufficiently thanked by a girl who has food, one-third of a bed and two pound ten a year, without proper time to economize her money. This will not go down with any but the most servile of servant-girls. They may take the work and wages for want of something better, but they will not accept them as a boon, but put up with them as an evil. And what is an evil if not excessive toil with miserable pay? (“DS” 412)

Martineau, coming the closest to an argument for revolutionary change that she ever gets, further argues for a different kind of education, for “books which will work at length upon the minds of the laboring classes” but that are “proceeding from those classes, or from minds which are in sympathy with theirs, and not with the adverse party” (*Autobiography* 282). For Martineau, there is an obvious adversity between the servant and master that is as old as recorded history. She argues that the animosity goes both ways, because

... it has been true from the day that Cain rose against Abel, that men have hated those whom they have injured, and the lofty few of every land have therefore always misregarded the lowly many, believing them turbulent, malicious, inaccessible to kindness, to be reached only by flattery, while deserving little but contempt.... while the two classes have been thus regarding each other, nothing that an individual here or there could say or do could avail to improve the relation. (“DS” 411)

No one reformer can step in and create real change between these competing forces. A fundamental change of the relationship must occur on a broad societal scale. Martineau, who is extremely pragmatic in her approach, seems also quite pessimistic about the amelioration of this conflict. She appears to be right, for as Lewis Coser writes about the same problem in a modern context:

... despite improvements in the working conditions of servants, and because none of these improvements, whether due to the conditions of the labor market or to legislative enactment, managed fundamentally to transform the servant role, it has continued to be stigmatized. The nature of the diffuse tasks, the particularism of the relationship, the restrictions on private life and the uncertain boundaries between work hours and time off, as well as the high degree of control afforded an employer (the servant always remains vulnerable to surveillance)—all these factors combine to make the relationship highly undesirable. (39)

The enmity between servant and master seems unable to be resolved, but Martineau's goal is not so much to resolve it but to expose it with the objective eye of the sociologist rather than the transformative eye of the reformer. She points out that even though the population of servants in the United Kingdom is "considerably above a million," very "little philosophical observation and reflection" has been done upon their circumstances (*Autobiography* 278). In fact, servants become increasingly more invisible to people of status, from the middle-class woman who deals with them most directly to the upper-class male who barely knows they are there. Martineau's readers, generally members of the middle and upper classes, would likely have found her exhortation to consider these servants as distasteful at worst, bizarre at best.

Yet Martineau's dedication to the study of work, particularly women's work, would have been incomplete without the examination of the domestic servant. According to Edith Abbott in her article "Harriet Martineau and the Employment of Women in 1836," Martineau listed just seven types of occupations available to women in her 1836 discussion of women's work in America, as recorded in her book *Society in America*: "teaching, needlework, keeping boarders, work in cotton-mills, typesetting, book-binding and domestic service" (qtd. in Abbott 615). Abbott goes on to criticize Martineau for missing a number of occupations (a glaring example would be her own profession, of course, writing), but in the Martineau employment tableau, about half of the work available to women can take place inside the domestic sphere: teaching, keeping boarders, needlework, and domestic service.

It is then obvious that the consideration of these servants is necessary to a complete view of Martineau's economics. But if, as I argued earlier, Martineau was aware of and manipulating the market of her audience, why would she choose to

force them to view the conditions of servants that they preferred not to see, not to engage with, and certainly not to ameliorate?

In her autobiography, Martineau recollects the treatment of servants in her childhood:

As to social matters,—my passion for justice was cruelly crossed, from the earliest time I can remember, by the imposition of passive obedience and silence on servants and tradespeople, who met with a rather old-fashioned treatment in our house. We children were enough in the kitchen to know how the maids avenged themselves for scoldings in the parlour, before the family and visitors, to which they must not reply; and for being forbidden to wear white gowns, silk gowns, or any thing but what strict housewives approved. One of my chief miseries was being sent with insulting messages to the maids,—e.g. to ‘bid them not to be so like cart-horses overhead’ and the like. (24)

Martineau, who as you recall wrote conduct articles in which she elucidated proper behavior for the middle- to upper-class household, clearly also felt that the treatment of servants as contracted chattel was “old-fashioned” and not in good taste. Arguing for a more humane treatment of the servant, Martineau demands for women of lower classes—who like herself must seek independent means—the right to do so without interference or harassment by their employers. In “Domestic Service” she argues that middle- and upper-class women “treat their servants as they have been treated by those who have the control of their lot,” who are, of course, men (413). This downhill slide of mistreatment is, to Martineau, not only bad manners but also one building block to a system of what we in modern times would call patriarchal oppression, which the freedom-loving Martineau cannot abide. The fact that again and again she was able to sell works that challenged this system in limited ways (she never really challenges the idea of separating domestic spheres from industrial spheres, but merely allows for women to cross spheres as needed) indicated that her audience was poised, teetering on the edge of change. The only real reason for her audience to be seeking change was that they, too, observed along with Martineau that the class conflict was heating up. Industrialization required a complicity and cooperation between classes in order for the middle classes to continue to rise on their labor and the upper classes to continue to benefit from the labor of both middle- and working-class people. Martineau’s audience was becoming ready to hear the chastisement that they must find new ways of interacting with their servants, their workers, these lower classes, because their grumblings were becoming louder and more organized. The fear of unionization that had been slowly developing outside of the home caused Martineau’s male audience to lend an ear. How long before servants no longer “avenged themselves” peaceably in kitchens and simply ceased their willingness to obey? Without them, the domestic sphere upon which middle-class families

were building their upward mobility could not function, and the idealized, leisure-class female would be conscripted into service in the scullery once more.

Walt Whitman once said: “Be radical, be radical, be not too damned radical.” Harriet Martineau would likely have agreed with this statement. Her arguments for dealing with the unfair labor conditions of domestic servants are, in their own way, quite radical...but not too damned radical. It was in the best interest of her readership, the middle and upper classes, to pragmatically reassess how labor was managed within the domestic sphere that was so crucial to the development of successful middle- and upper-class families. Martineau, ever the good saleswoman, gave them not necessarily what they wanted, but what they needed and what they were willing to pay for.

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From Tom-Toms to Juice Joints: The Alienated Dancers
of Langston Hughes

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After the “Great Migration,”¹ which occurred largely between 1910-1915, Alain Locke christened Harlem “The Mecca of the New Negro,”² as the place where “the new spirit [of the Negro] expressed itself basically through the renewed assertion of the dignity of the individual” (Wagner 155). In his text “The New Negro,” Locke further explains, “by shedding the old chrysalis of the Negro problem we are achieving something like a spiritual emancipation [providing] a renewed self-respect and self-dependence” (962). Locke also sheds light on the ordeal of the emigrants, noting that “in the very process of being transplanted, the Negro is becoming transformed” (963). However, James de Jongh recognizes that the reception of these Southern blacks did not begin with the idealism of Alain Locke: “no population was less expected—and less welcome—than blacks in Harlem” (6).³ Despite these initial difficulties, Harlem still represented “a place for blacks to be themselves,” a “relative safety” that clearly contrasts with the anti-black violence and oppression apparent in many other parts of the country (de Jongh 7). Although Harlem did have its own seedy underside, what was important to the inhabitants of the time, workers and artists alike, were the qualities that made Harlem “different and better” (de Jongh 9). For Langston Hughes, Harlem was a “new world of escape and release, an exciting never land,” in which the “most exotic part of the city—its night life,” attracted him most (Arthur Davis 277).

Hughes’s early poetry contains an obvious thread of primitivism and exoticism that pervades the poems in which a dancer is the central figure.⁴ Arthur Davis notes that because of Hughes’s attraction to Harlem’s vibrant nightlife, it is fitting that the dancer be one of the most important inhabitants of this “magical city” (277). Although many of Hughes’s early dancers appear to be elevated through the use of imagery and language, the modes of elevation result in a distance that leaves the dancer alone and isolated. In the poems in which the subject is a dancer, the speaker is almost always an observer, describing the African dancing figure through a lens of sexuality and exoticism (Marx 90).⁵ These dancers are enveloped in a cloak of primitivism, which leaves them socially unclothed. The tom-toms of the poem “Danse Africaine” (1922), the jungle forest of “Nude Young Dancer” (1925), and the corporeal objectification of the “Midnight Dancer” (1926) all work to alienate these figures by rendering them primitive, exotic beings, removed from their surroundings and their observers, and left without the personality and voice that is so very apparent in countless other poems by Hughes.

David Chinitz asserts that Hughes did not introduce primitivism into the

mainstream, but he did have to “face the popularization” of such images (61). Kevin Dunn analyzes images of Africa as an “untamed wilderness ... a dream: beautiful, peaceful, and beckoning,” which were made popular among whites in the 1930s via motion pictures (154). He further claims that while “Africa is presented as a beautiful, unspoiled land ripe for settling, it is [still] a terrible, untrained wilderness that requires taming by whites, especially white men” (169). In 1928, Allison Davis published his essay “Our Negro Intellectuals” in which he indicts Carl Van Vechten, acknowledging that “Mr. Van Vechten is not responsible for the beginning of our literary effort to appear primitive, but he brought the movement to its complete fruition, and gave it the distinction of his patronage” (327).⁶ Davis further claims that primitivism was a “convenient mould for the energies of writers who had no tradition, to guide them in treating Negro themes” (327). Although Hughes’s white patron, Charlotte Mason, pressured him to “be primitive,” he laments, “I did not feel the rhythms of the primitive surging through me” (Hughes, *The Big Sea* 325). Reckoning with the notion of primitivism was obviously a complex and vacillating process with which Hughes clearly struggled, as further illustrated in a 1925 letter to Carl Van Vechten:

There seems to be ... an *animal* sadness running through all Negro jazz that is almost terrible at times. I remember hearing a native jazz-band playing in the Kameroun in Africa while two black youths stamped and circled about a dance hall floor, their feet doing exactly the same figures over and over to the monotonous rhythm, their bodies turning and swaying like puppets on strings. (Bernard 12, emphasis added)

The comparison to inanimate puppets essentially dehumanizes the African youths, prefiguring the same alienation and exoticism that appear later with Hughes’s dancing poetic subjects. Although Hughes claims not to “feel” the primitivism his patron desires, it remains embedded in the very language he uses to describe the dance of two young boys in Africa, as well as in the position he assumes—that of the distant observer.

In “Danse Africaine” (1922), we find the first dancer in the published poems of Langston Hughes. This “night-veiled” girl’s very eyes are covered in darkness, or her own blackness. The “low beating of the tom-toms... / Stirs [her] blood,” commanding her to “Dance!” (28).⁷ This dancer is not only a clear victim of an imposed exoticism, as indicated by the use of French for the title and her blinding veil of darkness, but also of a primitivism that leaves her likened to an almost invisible “wisp of smoke around the fire” (28). This dancer does not have the vocal presence that many of Hughes’s other female poetic subjects have.⁸ In “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” Hughes addresses the necessity of the black middle classes to “turn from their white, respectable, ordinary books and papers to catch a glimmer of their own beauty” (1271). He further expresses the sentiment

of the “younger Negro artists” that self-expression “without fear or shame” is paramount when faced with the “top of the mountain” (1271). However, in this same passage, Hughes temporarily shifts from the pronoun “we,” which he is using to describe and reinforce his affirmation of young Negro artists, and reconfigures that affirmation of the Negro artists into a “tom-tom [that] cries [and] laughs” (1271). The dancer of “Danse Africaine” undergoes this same eclipse; clearly if it weren’t for the “Low...slow / Slow...low” (ellipsis points in original) beating of the drums, she would simply exist with no identity, primitive or otherwise. Nothing but the infusion of this particularly African music gives this dancer an identity. She is “doomed ... to an irrevocable, if supposedly enviable Otherness” (Chinitz 64). She either embodies the form of the exotic Other, or she is a blinded dancer, alienated from mainstream society, dancing alone to the beat of a distinctly African drum.

Hughes’s poem “Nude Young Dancer” (1925) also displays this primitivist attitude through a series of questions without answers. Not only does this dancer sleep under a “jungle tree,” but a “great forest has hung its perfume / Like a sweet veil about [her] bower,” which is not only a shady recess, but an idealized space, not realized in any actual dwelling (61).⁹ This “night-dark girl of the swaying hips” is asked four questions, none of which she answers verbally. The poem begins with simple inquiry, “What jungle tree have you slept under?” and shifts to accusation as the speaker asks, “To what clean boy have you offered your lips?” thereby implying the uncleanness of this nude, dark-skinned girl, whose very essence is ingrained with that of a “great forest” (61). In his *Black Poets of the United States*, Jean Wagner ascribes Hughes’s use of the primitive to the fact that “he had not yet discovered a less romantic manner that would express discomfort at not being treated in his own country as a citizen on par with any other. He celebrates Africa as his mother” (395). By asking, “What star-white moon has been your mother?” the speaker of the poem conceptualizes the young dancer’s alienation. If she, like Hughes, celebrates Africa as her mother, then she becomes an alienated Other to dominant white culture by way of her racial identity. If she claims America as her “mother,” then she is an “object of admiration” (Chinitz 64) for both blacks and whites due to her primitive and exotic depiction; either answer (if she could in fact answer) would leave her alienated. In any case, the discomfort, which Wagner contends is the foundation for Hughes’s romanticized images, is absent. The dancer is voiceless and the speaker has no difficulty approaching her with a series of questions.

Hughes’s “Midnight Dancer (To a Black Dancer in the ‘Little Savoy’)” (1926) is the last female dancer of these early poems. She is without a doubt the object of admiration that Chinitz mentions. Again, we have a woman who is observed from a distance, with no opportunity to respond to her observer. The very structure of the poem objectifies her regardless of the race of her observer, as the words

“Lips” and Breasts” are each given their own line of the poem (91). In her article on primitivism and the Blues tradition in Hughes’s poetry, Lynette Reini-Graddell explains that for whites, Harlem was a place where they could engage their voyeuristic desires and take in the sexual aura exuded by erotic dancers and jazz music (116-17). This poem clearly agrees with Norma Ramsay Jones’s assertion that primitivism offers a picture of rampant sexuality and sensuality, as the naked body of this “wine-maiden” is on display (265). Her bosom is “like the pillows of all sweet dreams,” language that renders her breasts as a resting place for the male observer (Hughes 91). This dancer is forced into the realm of the alienated exotic as her dark skin is the result of “the grapes of joy” being crushed and their juice being dripped on her. She is not simply a black woman, but her blackness is the result of a process in which she passively allowed herself to be darkened. Not only is this dancer exotic, but she is also intoxicating, as her body and skin tone are infused with Dionysian pleasure.

While Hughes does not abandon his dancers completely, the exotic, primitive dancer is non-existent in Hughes’s poetry from 1933 to 1951, replaced by dancers who are alienated largely because of the separatist racial politics of America, not because they are admired or objectified. It is important to note that Hughes’s Harlem underwent a significant change over the course of time. The Great Depression of 1929 hit the inner city black population especially hard, showing Harlem how “marginal and precarious its economic foundations were” (Arthur Davis 278). After the riot in 1935, Harlem was still a city of migrants, but no longer a city of refuge for them (de Jongh 73). Gunter Lenz goes even further to state that it was the Great Depression that ended the literary movement of the Harlem Renaissance, while simultaneously destroying the dream of the “black metropolis” (327). The 1930s and 1940s became a transitional period for Harlem and its inhabitants, as the cabarets were moving uptown and all of the fun of the jazzy nightlife was being systematically eradicated. Another riot in 1943 cemented Harlem as a disillusioned city housing a “beaten people” (Arthur Davis 278-79). This new era of Harlem exposes the weariness and despair that had been so neatly hidden under the hectic joyousness of the glitzy cabaret life (Arthur Davis 277).

The race riots and depression created a crisis for the “black cultural awakening” in Harlem; if this enclave of the city was going to maintain its position as an emblem for “racial renewal,” then a “process of reinterpretation and revision would have to occur” (de Jongh 82). Hughes takes part in this “revision,” as illustrated by the changes in his later poems, due largely to the fact that there were not many new voices rising to sing Harlem’s praises in the 1930s and 1940s: “It was left to Langston Hughes . . . to take the lead in confronting in poetry the fact that the city of refuge . . . had deteriorated so rapidly into a setting for ghetto riots” (de Jongh 100). In the poems “Black Dancers” (1933) and “Dancers” (1947), Hughes abandons the exotic, voiceless female dancer and replaces her with col-

lective groups whose difficulties and despair are for the first time addressed by the observers. The observer in “Juice Joint: Northern City” (1947) is well aware of the alienation of black Americans, as he or she is speaking the minds of the members of this “juice joint” community of which he or she is a part. In “Dancer” (1951), Hughes’s last dancer poem, we have a solitary male figure who is voiceless and distanced from his observer. The reasons behind his dancing are what leave him alienated, left completely in solitude. Although the distance of the observer and means of alienation may change in these later poems, the dancer remains the manifestation of the alienated “New Negro,” who in spite of the advances in the arts and business remains the unwanted minority in the dominant culture.

Even though Hughes’s poems “Black Dancers” (1933) and “Dancers” (1947) are separated by a little over a decade, the treatment of the dancers here is very similar. “Black Dancers” is a Depression-era poem in which the most obvious difference from the early poems is the collective identity and shared plight of these dancers. In comparison to the singularity of the words “Lips” and “Breasts” from “Midnight Dancer,” in “Black Dancers” the words “We” and “Us” are arranged as the only words on the line, positioned to receive the most prominence. These dancers “have nothing to lose / [and] Must sing and dance / Before the riches / Of the world / Overcome / Us” (172). Here, dancing and singing function as a show, a catchy attention-getter for the rest of the world. This group is neither primitive nor exotic, but poor. This poverty-stricken group is dancing to keep the “riches of the world” from “overcoming” them (forgetting about them or overpowering them in their desperation). Dancing and singing remain the last methods of garnering attention from the wealthy mainstream, from whom they remain alienated by way of their poverty. Although these dancers have a voice of their own and are not forced into the realm of “the silent observed,” their lack of possessions and riches reduces them to an issue that can be resolved and forgotten about. In the midst of Depression-era despair, they “must laugh and dance” to keep themselves from forgetting how to do so. The idea of dancing as preservation is also apparent in “Dancers” (1947). Here the observer notes that these dancers are “Stealing from the night / A few / Desperate hours / Of pleasure / Stealing from death / A few / Desperate days / Of life” (334). Again, this group is not a group of exotic primitives, but marginalized thieves. The only way for them to preserve their life and pleasure is to steal it, as their isolated position of unwanted Other prohibits them from legitimately claiming their so-called “unalienable rights (of) life ... and the pursuit of happiness” (“Declaration”).

“Juice Joint: Northern City” (1947) treats these collective groups and their alienation much differently than in the previous two poems. This poem addresses the letdown felt by the thousands of blacks who left the “racist South to reach the ‘Promised Land’ of the North” (Lenz 318). The structure of the poem illustrates this shift from South to North, as it begins with a “gin mill on the avenue” and

ends with a “tavern on a city street” (362-63). The South clearly provides the foundation for the nostalgia of the gin mill patrons, as every once in a while “a black boy plays a song / That was once sung beneath the sun / In lazy far-off drowsy Southern days / Before this long hegira had begun” (362). This escape from the South “brought dark faces / And gay dancing feet / Into this gin mill,” while at the end of the poem a “guitar-playing lad / Whose languid lean brings back the sunny South” plays a tune for the purposes of “keep[ing] the gall from biting in his mouth” (363). This new, bitter, and pretentious tune is played for “soft sad black feet,” not “gay dancing” ones (363). While the dancers aren’t reduced to objects in this poem, they exemplify a shift from enthusiasm to depression. Jean Wagner speaks of the “rootless people ... [who] suddenly found themselves hundreds or thousands of miles removed from the familiar scenes, lost amid the crowd... Transplanted to this urban environment, Negroes needed more than ever to recall the past” (166). This statement explains the irony in the fact that the juice-joint crowd misses the “mellow Southern air” that paradoxically pervades their blues songs. The “sunny joys” of the Southern songs are completely removed from the “jungle joys” of the black boys’ lips in Hughes’s earlier poem, “Harlem Night Club” (1926). Here, it is the South, not the jungle, not Africa, that is inherent in the songs that are being played and sung, a presence so powerful that “every swaying / Guitar-playing boy / Forgets he ever sang / A song of joy” (363). This tavern houses an unfulfilled population, as dreamers are still “seeking stars” and children have forgotten to laugh. Although the dancers are not the sole subject, they are still a part of this group that is alienated from the despair-free life they expected in the North, and removed from the ironically “sunny joys” of the violently racist South. The group is left weary of the frustrations of the North, longing for the place they felt it necessary to escape.

In Hughes’s “Dancer” (1951), we are left with our final dancer, a black male who has tried to manipulate dancing to cover his ineptitude, but has failed miserably. The irony here is that unlike the female dancers of the 1920s who were exoticized via their positions as removed objects of voyeuristic pleasure, this male dancer *seeks* a voyeur. He needs his dancing to work for him, somewhat like the group in “Black Dancers,” but he is in fact covering for his lack of sense and limited lovemaking ability. He is already in an unfortunate position as these two things “failed him / that had not failed people / of lesser genius” (400). His “wonderful feet” are not enough to cover his shortcomings. Even though he finally makes “folks say / Looky yonder / at that boy,” the women leave him because he is “no good at lovin’” (400). He is not good enough to hold their attention beyond his undeniable talent. The incredible sadness in this poem is exposed in its last lines as we are told, “Even a great dancer / can’t C.P.T. / a show” (400). His failure is intensified as he can’t even bring members of his own race to see him on “Colored People’s Time,” late, after the lights are off and the show has already begun. He is

left alone, alienated from everyone, black and white, not because of some misguided exoticism, but because his dancing cannot disguise his social and sexual incompetence. He gets nowhere with women; he gets nowhere with the crowd. His talent is the only thing he's got going for him, and it is not enough to interest whites or entertain blacks. This is the dancer of the dream deferred. Interesting enough, this dancer does, in fact, provide an example of the "less romantic manner" in which Hughes could express the discomfort of blacks (Wagner 395). All traces of the exotic primitive are gone here, as this dancer does not connote overt sexuality, but covert impotence.

Although the alienation of Hughes's dancers was probably unintentional on his part, the implications of primitivism and exoticism as a means to illustrate the distance between subject and object in these poems should not be ignored. While Chinitz contends that the African-American community was empowered by primitivism, he fails to address the implications of the fact that it suddenly placed black people as "*objects* of admiration" (64, emphasis added). Unfortunately, a product of this new admiration perpetuated black stereotypes, furthering an already harmful alienation of blacks as the Other, which Hughes exemplifies using the figure of the dancer. Allison Davis further argues that the "Negro intellectuals" he is speaking of adopted the primitive because "it interested the sophisticated [namely white] reading public" (327). In contrast, Norma Ramsay Jones asserts: "a displaced people were finally discovering roots... it allowed Black Americans to feel like they were just like all the other poor ... people from somewhere else" (263). She considers primitivism to be a way in which the black Americans "legitimized" themselves (263). Edward Marx contends: "By engaging in primitivism, and adapting it to serve black interests, the writers of the Harlem Renaissance offered an important counter-balance to more than a century of primarily Eurocentric primitivisms" (91).¹⁰

These were the contexts in which Langston Hughes was forced to navigate his position as a black artist. Hughes acknowledges that "the present vogue in things Negro ... may do as much harm as good for the budding colored artist [but] it has brought him forcibly to the attention of his own people among whom for so long, unless the other race had noticed him beforehand, he was a prophet with little honor" ("Negro Artist" 1269). Hughes was left with the quandary of wanting to reinforce the concept that African Americans were different, but "not *that* different" (Chinitz 68). Later, as the real Harlem changed, primitivism and exoticism faded. The nightclubs of Harlem disappeared and so did the miscegenation of the jazz life. There was no need for Hughes to continue romanticizing Harlem when any black reader would have seen the truth and known first-hand how Harlem had changed. Ultimately, primitivism was a double-edged sword. While putting black culture in a light in which it could be "admired" by whites, total acceptance of the race was thereby made "less rather than more achievable" (Chinitz 68).

Hughes illustrates this lack of complete acceptance, initially because of primitivism and later as a result of garden-variety racism and poverty, through the use of the marginalized dancers. He takes a figure that was popularized in Harlem Renaissance literature as an elevated, sexual, and beautiful being and shows us the sadness, the ineptitude, the desperation, the frustration woven throughout African-American souls as they navigated their new society in search of a community where they could be accepted, without pretenses or euphemisms, simply as black people that are “beautiful and ugly too” (Hughes, “Negro Artist” 1271).

Notes

1. The Great Migration transported approximately half a million blacks from the South to northern urban centers.
2. “Harlem, Mecca of the New Negro” is the title of a special issue of the *Survey-Graphic*, a sociology and social work magazine, which Locke prepared in 1925.
3. De Jongh notes that in 1880 Harlem was an upscale neighborhood largely frequented by whites for pleasure, business, and residence. It wasn’t until 1914 that Harlem was home to a definite black presence.
4. For the purposes of this paper, Hughes’s early poetry refers to the works written between 1920 and 1933.
5. It is interesting to note that in the poem “The Harlem Dancer” (1922) Claude McKay addresses this same exoticism of the African-American woman dancer. McKay’s observer recognizes this dancer’s strength and beauty, however, and is far more aware of the dancer’s subjectivity, as he “knew her self was not in that strange place.” It is the “wine-flushed,” presumably white, voyeurs who “devour her with their eager, passionate gaze.” In contrast with Hughes’s early dancers, this woman is aware of her Otherness, as evinced by her “falsely smiling face.”
6. Carl Van Vechten was a prominent New Yorker who had a great interest in African-American art. He initiated the publishing of Hughes’s *The Weary Blues* (1926), and Hughes sent him a manuscript of every collection thereafter, asking Van Vechten for his suggestions and insight. While his presence among black artists was largely accepted, his novel *Nigger Heaven* didn’t sit well with many in the black community.
7. All quotations of Hughes’s poetry are from Rampersad’s edition of *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, and parenthetical citations refer to page numbers.
8. For a discussion of Hughes’s treatment of female poetic characters, see Joyce, who provides an extensive analysis of Hughes’s nuanced illustrations of black women in his poetry.
9. These different definitions of bower are from the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Although the definitions were current in different time periods, all three suit the interpretation of this poem.
10. It is problematic, however, that Marx ends his article with the notion that a black poet

using primitive images equals an “adaptation [of the popular images] to serve black interests” when the bulk of the article is spent discussing the ways in which Harlem Renaissance writers used primitivism primarily as a means to capitalize on the interests of the larger, white audience (82-83).

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VI Book Review

James Shapiro.

A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599.

New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

Thomas G. Olsen

1599. Imagine an age when a happy and prosperous nation slowly begins to suspect that it has been mired in a fruitless colonial campaign against irregular armies led by warlords who refuse to abide by the commonly agreed-upon rules of military engagement. Imagine a time when religious and political holidays so fuse into each other that the populace is left unsure whether they are celebrating their god or their political leader. A time when political dissent is suppressed by a small cohort of political insiders, even loyal dissenters shoved out of all political life or brutally punished. An era whose economic system is so out of whack that masses of penniless migrants—internal and not—scour the land in search of some viable means of supporting themselves and their families. It all sounds so distant, so faraway, and so foreign, doesn't it?

Or does it? One of the great virtues of a long and detailed book like this—a carefully researched and lovingly laid out “thick description” of a single year four centuries ago—is the way that one long-forgotten era can so persuasively serve as a dark mirror of another. James Shapiro accomplishes many things in this nearly 400-page literary-historical account, but one of the most surprising (and discouraging) is how he implicitly confirms the enduring wisdom of Santayana's old adage that those who learn nothing from their history are doomed to repeat it. Alas, given our recent experiences with supposedly quaint Elizabethan phenomena like phantom terror alerts, misguided imperial ventures, sordid court intrigues, and a harried and detested lame duck monarch, perhaps it's just as fitting to remember the ever-witty, ever-cynical George Bernard Shaw, who averred instead that “we learn from history that we learn nothing from history.”

Shapiro's project is a history lesson. Literally, and with very few exceptions, he limits himself to the events and issues of 1599. On occasion he steps briefly outside this self-imposed chronological pale to contextualize or fill out a particular detail, but to his considerable credit, this really *is* a book that delivers on its promise to chronicle and analyze just one year in the life of late Elizabethan England and its greatest author. And what a year it was for William Shakespeare! One of the most important themes of Shapiro's project is that 1599 was an obvi-

ous watershed year in the literary career of the Bard (who, though he was not yet given this honorific by popular culture, was taking his first serious steps toward a new kind of imaginative greatness that would give later generations good cause to celebrate him in exactly these terms). Within the calendar year 1599 Shakespeare reinvented the English history play, took two quantum leaps forward in his basic conception of tragedy and especially of tragic interiority, and wrote his first comedy that stood outside its own forms and made fun not only of laughable lovers but also of laughable comic stage conventions. Not a bad year's work, anyone would have to admit.

A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare is organized according to a seasonal scheme. The book's four major divisions begin with "Winter" and end with "Autumn," each new section illustrated with a charming seasonally appropriate woodcut image from the contemporary *A Book of Diverse Devices* (published c. 1600). The narrative recounted across a prologue, fifteen individual chapters, and an epilogue begins with the dismantling of The Theatre in late December 1598 and its rebirth as The Globe, several months later and across the Thames (though still outside the jurisdictional reach of London's civic authorities); it ends with a description of the royal Christmas celebrations of 1599, when Shakespeare's company, The Lord Chamberlain's Men, might have performed *As You Like It* before the queen and her court. In these twelve months Shakespeare wrote *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, *Twelfth Night*, and most of *Hamlet*. Each of these works represented an astonishing stylistic, technical, or cognitive advance for the playwright and his paying public; according to Shapiro, the building of The Globe theater inspired Shakespeare to reach for new creative heights. Using purloined plots and drawing upon a combination of literary convention and theatrical common sense, in these four plays he began to explore the very nature of theatrical illusion and the relationship of the contemporary and the historical in stunningly fresh ways. Shapiro makes an extremely compelling case for the topical political relevance of both *Henry V* and *Julius Caesar*, both of which he persuasively reads as encoded commentaries on Elizabeth's fragile, teetering polity and her disastrous colonial campaign in Ireland. In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare interrogated and upset the conventions of romantic comedy and the Petrarchan love tradition, all the while producing a delightful romantic comedy that audiences have more than just "liked" for over four centuries. Perhaps most astonishing, as the year came to a close, he was hard at work creating *Hamlet*, Western literature's first literary representation of a human psyche that owed almost nothing to the top-heavy, intricate allegories and crudely conceived revenge narratives of earlier dramatic traditions.

And despite the nation's involvement in an ill-advised, miserable, costly, and mismanaged expansionist campaign in Ireland, in 1599—even as the impetuous, headstrong Earl of Essex was squandering his nation's treasure and the

queen's favor in a misbegotten military enterprise—England became a bona fide colonial power with the formation of East India Company. (An aside: what a project a book called *1699* would be for an aspiring economic historian willing to try to explain the leaps that occurred in the century between the formation of the East India Company and the end of the seventeenth century!) But 1599 was also a year of much less profitable overseas ventures: the population of southern Britain lived out the last years of the sixteenth century in almost perpetual fear of another Spanish attempt on England—an “Invisible Armada” that, especially with the memory of Philip II's 1588 failed campaign to retake England still fresh in people's minds, played very well into the regime's efforts to keep the populace in a state of high alert and to silence dissenters.

Like all biographers of Shakespeare (see my review of the scintillating *Will in the World* in the 2005 issue of *The Shawangunk Review*), Shapiro must confront the problem of a documentary record that is vague in places and full of holes in others. And like all previous students of Shakespeare's life, he resorts to conjecture when it suits him to do so, filling in a gap here and making a leap there. However, he is generally cautious when doing so, usually clearly delineating fact and surmise and carefully supplying the requisite *maybes* and *perhapses* to signal to readers where demonstrable facts must give way to more speculative narrative phases. In only a few places does his method jar a bit, as for example when he tells us that “There's simply no way of knowing how he felt unsaddling at New Place on this or other visits” back to his native Stratford, only to assert with all confidence two pages later that “Heading home, the irony could not have escaped Shakespeare how closely his journey resembled the experience of his characters. Like Orlando, Celia, Rosalind, Touchstone, and the rest, he had left the world of court and city behind and entered Arden” (239, 241). I don't really think one can have it both ways.

Arguably, these are inconsistencies owing more to matters of style or related to the impulse to tell an interesting story, which *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* certainly is, than with any fundamental misconception about the aims of the project as a whole. I am more concerned that Shapiro's sense of audience and purpose seems at times to wander a bit. For the most part, I find the book appropriately written for the broad, general audience he seems to have in mind. For one, it lacks footnotes (though each chapter has a corresponding essay at the end of the volume detailing key sources and giving useful suggestions for further reading—a tried and true method often found in popular history books). For another, it's written in a breezy style that's just a register above truly colloquial. All of this is fine, but at other times Shapiro assumes far more about Elizabethan publishing, stagecraft, law, or heraldic practices than any general reader can be assumed to know. The result is a book that may well leave a lot of its intended audience skipping over some sections, I fear.

I don't recommend doing this, however. Shapiro's *1599* (as I am inclined to call it) does work well as both an historical survey of late Elizabethan England and a biographical essay on that culture's greatest writer. Some of the fifteen chapters seem to me far better unified and successful than others in fusing the historical particulars of late Elizabethan society with the details of Shakespeare's participation in it. I would especially recommend Shapiro's chapters on *Henry V* and *Julius Caesar* for their fascinating engagement with topical politics; and though his discussions of *Twelfth Night* and *Hamlet* seem to me much more tenuously rooted in the precise historical events of 1599, they also make very illuminating reading for those principally interested in the "Shakespeare" part of 1599.

In all, this is a long, detailed, and carefully proportioned book. Its principal virtues are its highly readable synthesis of already known facts and theories, and its depth of detail. For a whole host of reasons, one could do a lot worse than spend some time with *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*.

VII Thesis Abstract

Proto-Absurdist Strides and Leanings: Jarry's
Shakespearean Spirit in *Ubu Roi*

Corey Mittenberg

Although it is generally accepted that Alfred Jarry's influential 1896 play, *Ubu Roi*, was revolutionary for its language, staging, and black comedy, little has been written to analyze the work's many Shakespearean connections. Plot devices, characters, dialogue, as well as production choices display evidence of Jarry's knowledge of Shakespeare; his appreciation and understanding of the dramatic pieces from which he borrows informs his entire play. By incorporating these particular Shakespearean elements, *Ubu Roi*—primogenitor of Absurdist theater—continues in the Shakespearean dramatic tradition more thoroughly than most critics acknowledge.

My paper addresses the issues of legitimate versus illegitimate adaptation as they relate to questions of authorship, style, and audience, as well as the historical background of both Jarry and Shakespeare in the context of French theater. As Shakespeare is an outside voice in France, the role of the other as a subject of spectacle (and the connotations of foreigners and foreign lands in relation to the choice of setting) is also discussed. Additionally, my paper examines the freedom of Shakespeare's translators in France into the nineteenth century, Jarry's critical battles over *Ubu Roi*, and a close study of Jarry's reworking of Shakespearean plot lines, themes, and staging choices.

VIII News and Notes

In this column we feature news from current and recent graduate students: honors, achievements, publications, conference papers, progress in PhD programs, and other news.

1. Two of our MA students will enter doctoral programs in the fall: Matthew Nickel (2006) is considering an offer from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, with a Teaching Assistantship; and James Stamant (2005) will attend Texas A&M University, with a Teaching Assistantship and Merit Fellowship
2. Twelve recipients of our MA and one of our MAT continue their progress in PhD programs: Eileen Abrahams (2002) at the University of Texas, Austin; Lawrence Beemer (2002) at Ohio University; Cristy Woehling Beemer (2002) at Miami University of Ohio; Michael Beilfuss (2005) at Texas A&M University; Danielle Bienvenue Bray (2004) at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette; Nicole Camastra (2005) at the University of Georgia; Deborah DePiero (2001) at the University of Rhode Island; Steven Florczyk (2002) at the University of Georgia; Timothy Gilmore (2004) at the University of California, Santa Barbara; Tina Iraca (2001) at the University of Connecticut; John Langan (1998) at the City University of New York; Cornelius Rose at the University of North Carolina (MAT 2001); Amy Washburn (2005) at the University of Maryland.
3. Over the past year current and former New Paltz graduate students have continued their extraordinary record of professional activities and accomplishments. (Full bibliographic information for conferences frequently mentioned in the entries below is as follows: the 12th International Hemingway Conference, Malaga and Ronda, Spain, June 25-30; the 4th Richard Aldington Conference, Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, France, July 6-8; the New York College English Association Conference, SUNY New Paltz, April 13-14; the Annual Robert Penn Warren

Conference at Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY, April 20-21; the Ninth Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference at Saint Catharine College, Bardstown, KY, April 21-23.)

Current Students

Marissa Caston presented papers at the Northeast American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Annual Meeting, Salem State College, Salem, MA, November 9-12, and the New York College English Association Conference.

Andrea Ditter presented a paper the Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association Convention, Boston, MA, April 4-7.

Landon Gross presented papers at the New York College English Association Conference and the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Eric Hess presented a paper at the New York College English Association Conference.

Nicole A. Myers presented papers at the 9th Annual National Graduate Creative Writing Conference, SUNY Binghamton, October 2006, and the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Matthew Nickel presented papers at the International Hemingway Conference, the Richard Aldington Conference, the New York College English Association Conference, the Robert Penn Warren Conference, and the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference; his poem about hurricane Katrina was anthologized in *Maple Leaf Rag* III.

Jim Perry presented a paper at the New York College English Association Conference; he published poems in *Red Owl* XXIII and *Star*Line* 30.2.

Brian Rubin presented a paper at the New York College English Association Conference; he is Copy Editor and Arts and Culture Correspondent for the *Ellenville Journal*.

James Sherwood presented a paper at the New York College English Association Conference.

Paula Sirc presented a paper at the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Goretti Vianney-Benca presented papers at the International Hemingway Conference and the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Nicholas Wright presented a paper at the New York College English Association Conference.

Former Students

Eileen Abrahams (2002), now finishing her dissertation at the University of Texas, Austin, presented papers at the Household Names Colloquium, University of Texas, Austin, April 27, and at a conference entitled "Sound Effects: The Oral/Aural Dimensions of Literature," University of St. Andrews, St. Andrews, Scotland, July 5-8. She is Editorial Fellow for *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, and Managing Editor of *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* and for *Bat City Review*.

Cristy Woehling Beemer (2002), now a doctoral student at Miami University of Ohio, published a collaborative article in the online journal *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*.

Michael Beilfuss (2005), now a doctoral student at Texas A & M University, presented papers at the Robert Penn Warren Conference and the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

William Boyle (2006), now a teacher at Iona Preparatory School, presented papers at the Richard Aldington Conference and the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference; his poem on hurricane Katrina was anthologized in *Maple Leaf Rag III*.

Danielle Bienvenue Bray (2004), now a doctoral student at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette, presented papers at the Graduate Conference on Language and Literature, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, April 29, at a conference entitled "Belief: Faith, Knowledge and Credulity in the Eighteenth Century," Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, September 30, and at the Fantastic Genres II Conference, SUNY, New Paltz, October 6.

Nicole Camastra (2005), now a doctoral student at the University of Georgia, presented papers at the International Hemingway Conference, The Richard Aldington Conference, the Robert Penn Warren Conference, and the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

D. A. Carpenter (2005) presented papers at the International Hemingway Conference, the Richard Aldington Conference, the Robert Penn Warren Conference, and the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Lynne Crockett (1996), now an Instructor of English and Coordinator

- of the Teaching Assistant Program at SUNY New Paltz, presented a paper at the New York College English Association Conference.
- Kathena Hasbrouck DeGrassi (2005), now an Adjunct Instructor of English at SUNY New Paltz, presented a paper at the New York College English Association Conference.
- Joann Deiudicibus (2003), now an Adjunct Instructor of English at SUNY New Paltz, presented a paper at the New York College English Association Conference.
- Deborah DiPiero (2001) is completing her doctorate at the University of Rhode Island and defends her dissertation this spring. While working on her dissertation, she served as the Acting Director of the URI Writing Center and taught as an Adjunct Instructor at Rhode Island College, Roger Williams University, and URI.
- Mary Fakler (1994), now an Instructor in English at SUNY New Paltz, presented a paper at the New York College English Association Conference.
- Steven Florczyk (2002), now a doctoral student at the University of Georgia, presented papers at the International Hemingway Conference, the Richard Aldington Conference, and the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference; he published an article in *Hemingway's Italy: New Perspectives* (Louisiana State University Press).
- Kate Hurd (2005) is an online Adjunct Instructor in English at Pace University.
- Tina Iraca (2001), who is completing her doctorate at the University of Connecticut and working as an Adjunct Instructor of English at SUNY, New Paltz, presented a paper at the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.
- Jennifer Kaufman (2003) accepted a tenure track position in the English Department at Ulster Community College.
- Carrie Landi (1996) accepted a position as an Instructor in the English Department of English and Humanities at Dutchess Community College.
- Jennifer Lee (2004), now an Adjunct Instructor of English at SUNY New Paltz, presented a paper at the New York College English Association Conference.

James Malone (2003) is an Instructor in the English Department of English and Humanities at Dutchess Community College.

Brad McDuffie (2005), now an Instructor of English at Nyack College, presented papers at the Richard Aldington Conference, the New York College English Association Conference, the Robert Penn Warren Conference, the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Michele Morano (1991), who received the MFA and PhD from the University of Iowa, is now an Assistant Professor of English at DePaul University; she has just published *Grammar Lessons: Translating a Life in Spain* (University of Iowa Press), a collection of 13 essays, one of which appears in *Best American Essays 2007*.

Joan Perisse (1995), now an Adjunct Instructor of English at SUNY New Paltz, presented a paper at the New York College English Association Conference.

Rachel Rigolino (1993), now an Instructor in English at SUNY New Paltz, presented a paper at the New York College English Association Conference.

Abigail Robin (1998), now an Adjunct Instructor of English at SUNY New Paltz, presented a paper at the New York College English Association Conference and hosted three television shows for the SUNY New Paltz On-Campus series; she also published the book *L'Chiam* (EarthWorks Publishing).

James Stamant (2005) presented papers at the International Hemingway Conference, the Richard Aldington Conference, the Robert Penn Warren Conference, and the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference; he was elected Graduate Student Representative on the Board of Directors of the Robert Penn Warren Circle.

Amy Washburn (2005), now a doctoral student in Women's Studies at the University of Maryland, presented papers at the Graduate Interdisciplinary Conference, University of Maryland, College Park, May 24-26, the Mid-Atlantic Popular / American Culture Association Annual Conference, Baltimore, MD, October 27-29, the City University of New York Graduate Center Comparative Literature Annual Conference, November 2-4, the City University of New York Graduate Center Feminist Studies' Group Annual Conference, April 13, and the New York College English Association Conference.

Meri Weiss (2006), now an Adjunct Instructor of English at Fordham College, Lincoln Center Campus, and at Yeshiva University, presented a paper at the New York College English Association Conference; she is a coeditor for the 2008 NYC edition of the guidebook series *Not For Tourists*.

4. The Editors would remind students of the Russell S. Cleverley Memorial Fellowship, established by Luella and Donald Cleverley in memory of their son Russell S. Cleverley, who earned his MA in English from SUNY New Paltz in December 1995. The Cleverley Fellowship is open to students matriculated in the MA English program with a 3.5 GPA who register for 41590, Thesis in English, in the award semester. The award is \$500. Please submit a letter of application with transcript, the thesis proposal signed by the thesis director, and two letters of recommendation (one from the thesis director) to Daniel Kempton, Director of English Graduate Studies. Applications for the next award (fall 2007) are due May 15, 2007.

IX Guidelines for Submissions

As the journal of the English Graduate Program, the *Shawangunk Review* publishes the proceedings of the annual English Graduate Symposium. In addition, the Editors welcome submissions from English graduate students in any area of literary studies: essays (criticism; theory; historical, cultural, biographical studies), book reviews, scholarly notes, and poetry. English faculty are invited to submit poetry, translations of poetry, and book reviews.

Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with MLA style and should be submitted as an electronic file accompanied by a hard copy. Essays should not exceed 3500 words (10-12 pages), stories 3000 words, book reviews 1250 words, poems five pages, and MA thesis abstracts 250 words. With your submission please include a brief biographical statement.

Please submit material to the Department of English, SUNY New Paltz and/or kempton@newpaltz.edu; the deadline for Volume XIX of the *Review* is December 15, 2007.

X Contributors

Kimberly W. Benston is the Francis B. Gummere Professor of English at Haverford College and a member of the Pulitzer Prize Jury for Drama. His numerous, award-winning publications include *Baraka: The Renegade and the Mask* (Yale, 1976), *Performing Blackness: Enactments of African-American Modernism* (Routledge, 2001), and the forthcoming book, *Darkroom Rememory: African-American Photography as Transgressive Witness* (Africa World Press), in addition to numerous essays on early modern English drama and other topics in poetics and in performance, literary, and cultural theory.

Ann-Marie Carmody is a student in the joint MA/MAT program at SUNY New Paltz, where she is also a research assistant for the Hudson Valley Writing Project. She has written features on John Turturro, the Psychedelic Furs, and numerous rock acts.

Laurence Carr is an Instructor of English at SUNY New Paltz, where he teaches creative and dramatic writing. Over thirty of his dramatic pieces have been produced in NYC, regionally, and throughout Europe, and his prose and poetry have appeared in numerous publications. His new book of microfiction, *The Wytheport Tales*, has been published by Codhill Press.

Marissa Caston is a MA student and Teaching Assistant at SUNY New Paltz. In 2006 she presented a paper at the Northeast American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Annual Meeting and in 2007 at the New York College English Association Conference.

Logan Connors is a graduate student in French and Francophone Studies at Louisiana State University. He would like to thank Dr. Katharine Ann Jensen, in whose graduate seminar on the eighteenth-century epistolary novel he wrote an earlier version of his essay.

Dennis Doherty is an Instructor in English and the Coordinator of Creative Writing at SUNY New Paltz. His first book of poems, *The Bad Man* (Ye Olde Font Shoppe Press), was published in 2004. His second collection, *Fugitive* (Codhill Press), will appear in 2007.

Thomas Festa is an Assistant Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz, where he teaches courses at the graduate and undergraduate level on early modern English literature and the history of literary criticism. He is the author of *The End of Learning: Milton and Education* (Routledge, 2006) and articles that have appeared or are forthcoming on Milton, Donne, Shakespeare, and Wordsworth in such publications as *Studies in Philology*, *Shakespeare Yearbook*, *English Language Notes*, *Milton Studies*, *Reformation*, *John Donne Journal*, and *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*.

Lynda L. Hinkle is currently completing her MA in English at Rutgers University-Camden, while simultaneously pursuing her JD at Rutgers Law. She has an MST from Rowan University and has taught Reading and Writing courses at Camden County College in New Jersey.

Daniel Kempton is an Associate Professor at SUNY New Paltz and Director of the English Graduate Program. He is the coeditor of *Writers in Provence* (2003) and *New Places* (2005), essays from the first three International Richard Aldington conferences. He has recently published an essay on Shakespeare's *Pericles*.

Kelly Marron is an MA student at SUNY New Paltz.

Irene McGarrity graduated from SUNY New Paltz with an MA in English in August 2006. She has recently completed a novel entitled *Junkies and Aliens in the USA*.

Corey Mittenberg holds the MAT in English from SUNY New Paltz and is currently fulfilling the MA portion of the joint MA/MAT program. He was awarded the Russell S. Cleverley Memorial Fellowship for his thesis, "Proto-Ab-surdist Strides and Leanings: Alfred Jarry's Shakespearean Spirit in *Ubu Roi*."

Nicole A. Myers is a MA student and Teaching Assistant at SUNY New Paltz, who will receive her degree in May 2007. She has presented papers at the 9th Annual National Graduate Creative Writing Conference and the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference.

Matthew Nickel will receive the MA in English from SUNY New Paltz in May 2007. For his thesis semester, he was awarded the Russell S. Cleverley Memorial Fellowship. Last summer he presented a paper at the 12th International Hemingway Conference in Ronda, Spain and at the 4th International Richard Aldington Conference in Les Stes-Maries-de-la-Mer, France. His critical essays and poetry have been published in the *Shawangunk Review*.

Thomas G. Olsen is an Associate Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz. He specializes in Shakespeare and has published in such journals as *Studies in English Literature*, *Annali d'Italianistica*, and *Shakespeare Yearbook*. His edition of the *Commonplace Book of Sir John Strangways* for the Renaissance English Text Society appeared in 2004, and he is currently at work on a study of representations of Italy in Tudor England.

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt is a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor. She has published two collections of autobiographical essays by women teachers, two volumes of poetry, and *Legacies: Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Nonfiction*, a literature anthology for composition courses (co-authored with Dr. Lynne Crockett), which is about to go into its fourth edition. She has given workshops on the teaching of writing at the local, regional, and national level. Her fields of specialization include Composition Studies, Women's Literature and Autobiography, Holocaust Literature, and Creative Writing.

H. R. Stoneback is a Distinguished Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz. He is a Hemingway scholar of international reputation, author/editor of twelve books and more than 100 essays on Durrell, Faulkner, Hemingway et al. He is also a widely published poet, author of five volumes of poetry including *Café Millennium* (2001) and *Homage: A Letter to Robert Penn Warren* (2005). His latest book, *Reading Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises*, is the inaugural volume of the Reading Hemingway Series from Kent State University Press (May 2007).

Goretti Vianney-Benca will receive the MA in English from SUNY New Paltz in May 2007. She has presented conference papers at the International Hemingway Conference, the Robert Penn Warren Conference, and the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference; her scholarly interests include Twentieth-Century Modernism, Children's Literature, and Composition and Rhetoric.

Robert H. Waugh is a Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz and the Director of the annual Lovecraft Forum. He is the author of *The Monster in the Mirror: Looking for H. P. Lovecraft* (Hippocampus Press, 2006) and of many articles on science fiction, horror, and fantasy literature, which have been published in such journals as *Extrapolation* and *Lovecraft Studies*. He is also a widely published poet, and his chapbook, *Shorewards, Tideways* (Codhill Press), is forthcoming in summer 2007.

Lea Weiss is an MA student at SUNY New Paltz, a secondary school English teacher, and an acupuncturist.

Meri Weiss holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Southampton College and an MA in English from SUNY New Paltz. She teaches Composition at Fordham College, Lincoln Center Campus, and at Yeshiva University. She recently co-edited the 2008 NYC edition of the guidebook series *Not For Tourists* and is currently working on a television pilot.

Constance L. Woodard is a second-year MA student and Teaching Assistant at Salisbury University in Salisbury, Maryland. She will graduate in May 2007 and plans to begin her PhD program in Fall 2007, specializing in African-American and Diaspora literature. She hopes to continue teaching English at the post-secondary level.

Sarah Wyman is an Assistant Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz. Before joining the New Paltz faculty, she taught at Chapel Hill, NC and Konstanz, Germany. Her scholarship and teaching involve twentieth-century US literature, women's writing, and studies in Word and Image, in which she compares the paintings of Paul Klee and Tom Feelings to the writings of various contemporary poets and novelists.