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THE ICONOGRAPHY OF POWER

IDEAS AND IMAGES OF RULERSHIP ON THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE STAGE

Edited by
György E. Szőnyi &
Rowland Wymer

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GYÖRGY E. SZŐNYI
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FOREWORD

This collection had its origins in a number of papers given at the ESSE/4 conference held at Debrecen in September 1997. It has since been augmented by contributions from a number of scholars who were not present at the original seminar. "Iconography" and "power" have both been key terms in the criticism of English Renaissance drama over the last twenty-five years and the essays draw eclectically on a number of distinct yet overlapping critical approaches, none of which seems wholly adequate when pursued in isolation from the others.

Questions about the relationship between power and theatrical representation have, of course, been central to the work of new historicists like Stephen Greenblatt, Jonathan Goldberg, and Leonard Tennenhouse, but despite their frequent use of the word "theatricality" such critics have not always been closely interested in the actual details of Elizabethan stage practice (Greenblatt's famous essay "Invisible Bullets" is an obvious example of this). Moreover, despite acknowledging Foucault as one of their most important intellectual influences, they have not always followed through the implications of his famous dictum, "We must conceive of power without the king". Complex networks of influence and patronage have sometimes been reduced to a naively absolutist model which bears little relation to the realities of Elizabethan and Jacobean politics.

Increasingly important in recent years has been the rather different tradition of performance criticism, practised by critics like Alan Dessen, David Bevington, Mick Hattaway, Ann Pasternak Slater, and Marion Lomax. This provides an indispensable foundation to *any* responsible critical approach to the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries but is sometimes in danger of becoming purely descriptive and insufficiently alert to the political significance of the material being studied.

A third quite distinct strand of scholarship is the art history tradition founded by Aby Warburg and Erwin Panofsky, and later represented by the Warburg Institute and scholars associated with this institution such as E. H. Gombrich, Fritz Saxl, D. P. Walker, Edgar Wind and Frances Yates. This tradition gave rise to the specialised area of emblem studies as represented in the work of Peter

Daly, Michael Bath, Alan Young and others. This scholarship has been admirable in its capacity to uncover obscure ethical and mythological significance but is at risk of becoming too abstract and intellectualised in its treatment of popular theatre and too ready to see fixed meanings in the fluidities and contingencies of actual performance.

For criticism to go forward it needs to draw on all these approaches and on the most sophisticated 'revisionist' and 'post-revisionist' historical work which is being done on the nature of power relationships in Elizabethan and Jacobean society. The stage spectacle, like the social spectacle, is not one in which all lines of power and influence lead back inexorably to the monarch at the centre. Instead we have a plethora of signification, often setting word against visual image, action against word, and images against each other. When Northumberland approaches the walls of Flint Castle in *Richard II* 3.3, he is rebuked by Richard for failing to kneel to his sovereign and promptly adopts the requisite posture of humility, speaking of Bolingbroke also as coming to his king upon his knees. Richard's dominant position on the walls, his crown and robes, and the verbal imagery of sun and eagle complete a stage picture of royal authority being successfully asserted. Yet, moments before, Bolingbroke had ordered his soldiers to march about within view of the castle and they now remain menacingly visible on another part of the stage. Bolingbroke himself stands with them, in a posture which is not indicated by the text but seems likely to be very far from humble. The presence of a silent group of armed men, with their flags and shields carrying the symbols of alternative allegiances, transforms our interpretation of the stage picture. This is actually a castle under siege and it is the sword rather than the crown which is the signifier of real power. Very shortly, Richard will be forced to come down from the heights "like glist'ring Phaethon", triggering a new set of iconographic and mythological associations.

One of the most commonplace symbols of power on the Renaissance stage was, of course, the throne itself, which was usually raised up on a dais or scaffold in a strong, central upstage position, providing a focal point in all court scenes. It may also have been left onstage in other scenes as a permanent visual reminder of what was being fought over. (At the trial of Mary, Queen of Scots, an empty chair represented the absent, but also perpetually present, authority of Elizabeth.) Although the central upstage 'locus' position was undoubtedly a strong one, it was not a wholly dominant one since, as Robert Weimann and others have argued, the downstage 'platea' position is where the actor comes closest to the spectators and achieves the kind of collusive intimacy which can destabilise all pre-existing structures of authority. Thus in the second scene of *Hamlet*,

Claudius on his throne is partially 'upstaged' by the prince who is almost certainly downstage of him and whose bitter jests are made directly to the audience, engaging them in his disillusion and leaving them uncertain where the true centre of authority lies.

Although possession of a property crown economically signified the stage monarch, the stage picture, like the social reality it represented, cannot be reduced to 'the monarch versus the rest'. Costumes, properties, and conventionalised gestures turned all stage relationships into relationships of power with clear markers of aristocratic, civic, and ecclesiastical authority, as well as hierarchizations founded on distinctions of age and gender. Coats of arms and imprese announced aristocratic identities which continued to assert themselves against the centralised monarchy. Mitres and croziers ambiguously signified the spiritual authority of the church or the defeated power of Rome. The Lord Mayor's chain of office reminded monarch and audience alike of the powers and privileges of the City of London, which could match those of the aristocracy. (In the brief interval between the death of one monarch and the proclamation of the next, the country's chief magistrate was not a duke or earl but the Lord Mayor of London.)

There is virtually no escape from the pursuit and display of power, no escape from this world where all difference is hierarchized. The brief lyric moments between the Duchess of Malfi and Antonio or between Lear and Cordelia are just that – brief moments. They involve a temporary redeployment of the signifiers of power – Lear kneels to his own daughter, Antonio keeps his hat on in the presence of his Duchess – rather than a complete erasure of them. The nearest approach to such an erasure is when something more than earthly power is being signified. The 'heavens', consisting of sun, moon, and stars painted on the underside of the stage roof, were a permanent reminder of something 'above' the human level. Like the property skulls in *Hamlet* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* they tell us that the symbols of power, the symbols of hierarchized difference, may one day be nullified, that "Sceptre and Crown / Must tumble down / And in the dust be equal made / With the poor crooked scythe and spade". Such an implication is only provisional however, for even if all things are written in the stars, we may lack, as Bosola tells Ferdinand in *The Duchess of Malfi*, the spectacles to read them.

The essays in this collection synthesise in several different ways the critical approaches mentioned above, but all of them focus on the capacity of plays to encode complex political meanings whilst delivering them in an ambiguous and unstable form. The iconography of power in the theatre is revealed as a process

of persuasion, seduction, conflict, allusion, commentary, revision, and disenchantment rather than a series of symbols yielding fixed moral and political meanings.

***

I would like to conclude by thanking the organisers of the ESSE/4 conference, the British Council, the Institute of English & American Studies of the University of Szeged, and most of all my coeditor, György Szőyi, for their help in producing this volume. Special thanks are due to JATEPress for the quick printing and Etelka Szőnyi for the cover design.

July 15, 2000.

ROWLAND WYMER

MATCHING THE 'FALLES OF PRINCES' AND 'MACHIAVELL'. TRADITION AND SUBVERSION IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY AND ICONOGRAPHY OF SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORIES

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Postmodern Challenges About Reading History

Introductory Notes

It is enough to have a glance at today's so overpoliticised Shakespeare criticism and we become convinced: none of his works can be separated from history or politics. The Chronicle Plays, in particular, demand an analysis of aspects concentrating on 'Shakespeare and history', since nowhere else did he scrutinize the relationship between individuals, community, politics and history more than in his plays about the English Middle Ages.

Today's critics also have to realize that it has become impossible to approach these questions 'naively', with an instinctive interest, since issues relating to history and politics tend to appear in an increasingly complex theoretical framework and interpreters are compelled to face theory first and reveal their standpoint. In the first part of my paper I am going to have a look at a few important theoretical issues which touch upon the historicity of culture, then, having in mind the findings of this survey, I review the critical history of Shakespeare's Histories. All this will be related to the question: to what extent did the visual and theatrical conventions of the Elizabethan stage contribute to the creation of complex 'possible worlds' in the Histories, and I shall try to decide if iconography should be regarded as an affixed ornament or an essential means in the expressive structure of the plays. In the last section of the paper I shall round up all the above issues while examining *King John*.

Historicity and Theories of Culture

Since we are concerned with interpretation, a suitable starting point is to set up an inventory of the main points of discussion in contemporary literary and

cultural theory. These can be listed under four points: 1/ The status of the literary work as opposed to other forms of discourse: that is whether the language of literature can be clearly separated from non-literary discourse on the basis of formal or other types of analysis. 2/ The question of meaning: that is whether the meaning of the work derives from the author's intention and so has an ontological stability, or if it is constituted in the hermeneutical process and thus is part of the reader response. 3/ The question of history: that is whether we consider history as context or intertext. Another question following from this is whether we can separate the work from history as a monument, or whether we should rather treat it as a document of its own age. 4/ The last but by no means the easiest question relates to the subject. Post-structuralism at the beginning started a debate about the problem "who speaks?" in the work, and by today the discussion has become even more problematic by not avoiding the unnerving question, "after all, who reads?". Let us select point 3/ from the above list and concentrate on the question of history. The most important theoretical approaches about the historicity of artworks can be summarized in the following table:

HISTORICISM	STRUCTURALISM	POST-STRUCTURALISM
works mirror / imitate objective reality – 'grand narratives', reductionism	the work is an eternal 'monument', autotelic, it is separated from history	history is identical with texts, intertextuality, the plurality of discourses, the work is situated in history

The intertextuality of history and (narrative) texts is stated for example in Clifford Geertz' definition of culture: it is the sum of those stories we tell about ourselves to ourselves, that is "the culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles" (Geertz 1973, 452, cf. also 448ff). We should note that the elements of this definition – telling a story (*narrativity*, fiction, 'mythos'), about ourselves (*self-reflexivity*), to ourselves (the decisive role of *the interpretive community*) – belong to the key issues of (post)modern literary/cultural theory.

This is the frame of reference in which I propose to look at Shakespeare's Histories. As we shall see, a challenging approach is offered by 'new historicism', which – in spite of its inspiring exposure of certain problems – does nevertheless reveal its own difficulties, too.

The Critical History of the Histories

Among the interpretations of the Histories we can find historicist, structuralist and post-structuralist (including new historicist) ones. Behind all of them there is a common consideration: what was Shakespeare's relation to history, what example or teaching did he want to provide by the presentation of English history. The answers given, however, are quite far from each other. Since each Chronicle Play concentrates on the personality and deeds of a monarch, a common question asked by these plays is "who is a good ruler, what is the respectable king like?"

In accordance with the political philosophy of the age, from Shakespeare's Histories two principles of acceptable rulership can be inferred: 1/ The first is of medieval heritage and emphasizes the vital importance of legitimacy, suggesting that a ruler, legitimite by the grace of God, cannot but be good and caring for his people. The idea of the supernatural commission of kings through Divine Providence resulted in a patriarchal approach to the task, the good king was represented as a good father or shepherd and in the analogy-based medieval iconography of the Great Chain of Being one immediately notices a similarity between God (the Father) and a king (cf. Farnham 1956, Tillyard 1946). 2/ Renaissance political theory, however, added a new, radical component to the above model: that of personal appropriateness. Arnold Hauser called this the principle of 'realpolitik' (1964) and it was drafted by Machiavelli who merged stunning pragmatism with a humanist belief in the autonomous integrity of great personalities. According to this doctrine the Prince can do anything which brings benefits to the state under his rulership: the prosperity of the state and the aptness of the monarch can overrule moral considerations (on Machiavelli cf. Coyle 1995, Masters 1996, Skinner 1981, Riklin 1996). From Shakespeare's plays we can conclude that each principle is necessary for good rulership but neither is sufficient by itself. An ideal combination, however, hardly occurs (a closest approximation would be Henry V but recent studies are increasingly in doubt about the traditional optimistic interpretations) and one cannot even say that Shakespeare tried to synthetize the two principles. It seems, rather, that he followed the Christian doctrines about the course of history and man's place in it on the one hand, while on the other, also subverted those in unexpected ways and times. The emblematic and stage imagery of kingship he uses clearly testifies

to this practice. Before looking at it, one must remember that differing traditions of explication have come to radically different conclusions about the Histories. Recently one can witness a battle between essentialist and anti-essentialist interpretations, the former pointing out the power of tradition in Shakespeare's vision of (English) history, the latter, on the other hand, discerning instances in his works which subvert the traditional notions of history and man's role in it. The aim of the present paper is by no means to reconcile the two opposing views, rather to point out that both ingredients – tradition and subversion – are necessary to produce significant art and that on Shakespeare's stage essentialist representation seems to cast anti-essentialist shadows and vice versa.

Historicist / Essentialist Interpretations

There is much debate nowadays about to what extent was the Renaissance essentialist. If we look at the above-mentioned concepts of rulership, both of them seem to have presupposed essentialist principles. 1/ The idea of Divine Providence naturally referred to an outsider deity whose plans become manifest only in the long run – in fact only in perspectives of the whole cosmic history (as represented in early medieval chronicles, the later mystery cycles or even in Walter Raleigh's humanist world history). 2/ Humanist notions of the autonomous individual also implied an unchanging, essentialist system. So the human 'passions' were interpreted as an essentialist system based on the fixed scheme of classical 'humors' (cf. Campbell 1960), such as pride, greed, wrath, which were supposed not to change throughout history. That is why history could be considered either a storehouse of moral lessons, suitable for didactic presentations (cf. the *De casibus...* tradition, *The Mirror for Magistrates*, or *The Falles of Princes...* as explained by Doran 1954, 116-28 and Farnham 1956, 69-173) or a reservoir from which to draw practical advice about the strategies of government, as suggested by Machiavelli, in fact more in his *Discorsi* on Titus Livy's Roman history than in his notorious *The Prince* (cf. the above mentioned monographs plus McAlindon 1995a and 1995b in which the author assesses the essentialist and anti-essentialist arguments in sixteenth-century political philosophy).

Anti-Essentialist Concepts

Recent post-structuralist criticism has challenged the above essentialist concepts and cultural materialism, in particular, argued that Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre uncovered and subverted the beliefs of the dominant ideology of the time in 1/ God's Providential overseeing of human affairs and in 2/ the existence of an essential human nature which would not change throughout history (Dollimore 1989, Holderness 1992). New historicism, as represented by Stephen Greenblatt (1980, 1988) approached Shakespeare in a more cautious way, asserting that the playwrights – with Shakespeare among them – subverted the existing order in such a way that at the same time maintained it, too. As he wrote, "I argued in *Shakespeare Negotiations* that the sites of resistance in Shakespeare's second tetralogy are co-opted in the plays' ironic, complex but finally celebratory affirmation of charismatic kingship. That is, the formal structure and rhetorical strategy of the plays make it difficult for audiences to withhold their consent from the triumph of Prince Hal" (Greenblatt 1996, 56). One can thus see a more complex and dynamic model according to which in Shakespeare's works, especially in the Histories, a combination of conservative and radical tendencies can be found (for similar approaches see also Howard 1994, Montrose 1996, Rabkin 1981). Both cultural materialism and new historicism rely heavily on a body of contexts and intertexts, featuring contemporary philosophers, such as Bacon and Montaigne, but, first and foremost, Machiavelli.

The underlying theoretical foundation of post-structuralism is the assumption that there is no fixed meaning in literary works, since meaning is constructed either in the hermeneutic circle between text and reader, or in the course of ideological power technologies, but in any case, via the use, that is the pragmatics of the text. Precisely because of this – as opposed to essentialist critics – today's interpreters do not even try to extract some concrete meaning from the plays; they are more interested in that dynamically changing intertextual net which, although it consists of texts, functions as an indicator of ideological and power relations. Greenblatt in this sense borrows a definition of culture from Geertz (different from the one quoted above): "a set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions... – for the governing of behavior" (Geertz 1973, 49), or, in his own words:

> *interest lies not in the abstract universal but in particular, contingent cases, the selves fashioned and acting according to the generative rules and conflicts of a given culture. And these selves, conditioned by the expectations of their class, gender, religion, race and national identity, are constantly effecting changes in the course of history (Greeblatt 1996, 55).*

The 'Meaning' of the Histories: the Tudor Myth

Traditional, 'essentialist' approaches have naturally tried to identify a clear-cut and stable program behind the Histories, too. An especially extreme suggestion was made by Tillyard (1944) and Campbell (1947), according to which Shakespeare's ideological concept with the Histories was to corroborate the so called Tudor myth. In other words: "proving that Henry Bolingbroke's deposition of Richard II, an anointed king, was punished by God with a long train of civil discord that ended only with a providentially appointed savior, Henry Tudor, who could unite the two houses" (Doran 1954, 115; cf. Tillyard 1944, 60). Campbell even proposed that "each of Shakespeare's Histories serves a special purpose in elucidating a political problem of Elizabeth's day and in bringing to bear upon this problem the accepted political philosophy of the Tudors" (1947, 125). All this was rooted in certain trends of Victorian criticism which over and again looked for 'coded messages' in the histories, much like for example that public lecture of the New Shakespeare Society in 1874 which dealt with "The Politics of Shakespeare's Historical Plays" and suggested that Shakespeare had repeatedly departed from his historical sources in order to draw parallels between King John and Queen Elizabeth (Richard Simpson's paper is cited in Taylor 1989, 222).

The anti-essentialist case is most clearly represented by Holderness (1992), who labels Tillyard's model "conservative, nationalistic and authoritarian [and] which reproduces the plays as parables of political order, or 'strategies of legitimation'" (21). The novelty of his interpretation is that he places Tillyard and his followers (such as Olivier's film version of *Henry V*), in their own historical context, thus unmasking "polemical immediacy disguised as historical scholarship" (22). His originality is less apparent in the interpretation of the plays (what he calls 're-cycling'), since his predecessors had already raised most of the objections he has against Tillyard and Campbell. It is particularly noticeable to see his con-

scious underplaying of Robert Ornstein's *A Kingdom for a Stage* (1972), boxing the author into the category of "American free-thinking liberals suspicious of all ideology" (30), while in fact, Ornstein at several instances seems to prefigure many post-structuralist notions, arguing systematically against Tillyard's ideological reductionism and against historicist reconstructionism in general:

> *The literary scholar insists that historicity is the goal of interpretation. Convinced that the 'Elizabethan response' which he postulates is the authentic one, he assures us that if we were Elizabethan enough in our attitudes, we would have no difficulty in interpreting Shakespeare correctly. [...] And it is doubtful that even the most dedicated students of literature can teach themselves to look at the History Plays through Elizabethan eyes (8).*

Holderness infers that in Ornstein's criticism the history play is discussed in terms of an extremely abstract definition of 'politics', conceived "not as the specific discourses and practices of power in a particular historical moment, but as a Machiavellian system located in the universal shabbiness of political practices throughout the ages" (31). In my opinion, Ornstein's claims are much more complex than this reductionist summary, such as in the following quotation:

> *Like Machiavelli, [Shakespeare] sees the contention for power as one of the eternal facts of history, and he realizes that pious professions simply mask the dominant role of self-interest in politics. But he knows also that ideals of honor and loyalty can inspire men to rise above their selfish interests and that principles of right and justice have since time immemorial exerted their influence on English life" (29).*

Precisely this capability of double vision differentiates the earlier challengers of the providential model from that of the representatives of new historicism and cultural materialism. Ornstein, for example, acknowledges on the one hand that "no other Elizabethan writer so acutely and extensively portrays the weakness, folly, incompetence, and wickedness of English kings" (ibid.), but at the same time is willing to discover in Shakespeare's plays the presence of Gadamerian goodwill, ambition for understanding, and a historically located patriotism, too.

The deconstruction of the 'Tudor myth' and the providential concept has been accomplished in several steps. Ornstein (1972) and Barg (1986) convincingly argued that the 'Tudor myth' is by no means a homogenous concept

coherently exhibited, since one finds different emphases in Edward Hall's *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke* (1548) and Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577-87); and that Shakespeare derived from the two sources a hybrid concept in which the aspect of ultimate providentialism (everything follows from Bolingbroke's 'original' sin) mixes with pragmatic providentialism according to which the final outcome is determined by providence but smaller events originate from human character and human insight.

Others pleaded for the poetical quality of the plays as against the notion of treating them as mere historical documents. James Winny's *The Player King* (1968), on entirely essentialist grounds, asserted that, in the context of poetry, the king is an archetypal image invested with powerful associations and that Shakespeare's king "is an imaginative concept, developed from play to play, and keeping step with the growth of linked interests in his other plays of the period" (44-5). His conclusion is that critics should not try to trace ideological and artistic development according to the chronology of the historical process presented (culminating with Henry Tudor in Richard III); rather, they should concentrate on the chronology of the plays, seeing *Henry V* as Shakespeare's last word about rulership in the Chronicle Plays.

Similarly, John Wilders in his *The Lost Garden* (1978) insists that the Histories should not be rigidly separated from Shakespeare's other plays. He finds close connections with the tragedies, especially with the Roman plays and claims: "His imagination, is, I believe, governed by a view of human nature which he held irrespective of the historical period he chose to depict" (ix). It is interesting to see how much Wilders' views were stimulated by Northrop Frye's concept of genres (his comparisons of tragedy and history, for example), just as Martha H. Fleischer gained inspiration from the *Anatomy of Criticism* to sketch the whole iconography of the history play (1974). Before turning to this book for a more detailed view, it is necessary to face the nature and importance of the iconographical method in Shakespeare scholarship and we also need to situate iconography between 'essentialist' and 'anti-essentialist' theories.

The Iconography of the History Plays

Iconography and Shakespeare

Essentialist interpretations gained important profit from iconography and emblem studies. As Panofsky defined it, iconography "presupposes a familiarity with specific themes or concepts as transmitted through literary sources, whether acquired by purposeful reading or by oral tradition" (*Meaning in the Visual Arts*, quoted by Daly 1993, 8). It would imply that formal emblems as well as other iconographical imagery rely on a shared knowledge and have culturally fixed meanings. Essentialist interpreters would refer to this shared knowledge as the unchanging foundations of the Classical and the Judeo-Christian traditions of European culture and look at iconographical imagery in order to decode the meanings of motifs in various contexts; they would even use emblem books as dictionaries to translate meaning and interpret use. Again, in Panofsky's definition:

> *Iconography, is, therefore, a description and classification of images: it is limited and, as it were, ancillary study which informs us as to when and where specific themes were visualized by which specific motifs. [...] In doing all this, iconography is [...] the necessary basis for all further interpretation. It does not, however, attempt to work out this interpretation for itself (Panofsky 1970, 57).*

Caveats have already been voiced within the essentialist camp about the traps of iconographic interpretations which lead to abuses, and it has been pointed out how misleading the analogy of the dictionary can be. Everybody should know from personal experience that a beginner learner of a foreign language can misuse a dictionary *ad absurdum*, being mislead by synonyms and homonyms, not mentioning context-sensitive meanings. These observations lead the later Wittgenstein to his theoretical conversion, finally designating pragmatics as the cornerstone of linguistics. The problem, naturally, applies not only to language but to other sign-systems, too. Thus iconography, like all semiotic structures, contains elements of multiple meanings. This is because, according to tradition, all symbolic components had positive and negative significance (*in bonam partem / malam partem*) and because of the verying horizon of expectations from which meaning is constructed through the hermeneutical process. The full under-

standing of this complicated process was boosted by post-structuralist theory, the influence of which can be felt on the following remark of the well-known emblem scholar, Peter Daly:

> *Emblematic and iconographic codes do not convey single signations, but potentially pluri-signations. [Emblems], like dictionaries, can be used or abused. Seeing is believing, but what we see is in a sense a function of what we believe, or what we know. What we see also depends in some measure on what we are looking for, and capable of finding" (1993, 20).*

One can find a similar warning already in John Steadman's monograph from the 1970s:

> *The critic cannot assume that the symbolic vocabularies of different cultures, or even of different historical epochs, are essentially interchangeable, that they possess the same ontological status or semantic value, or that they stand in the same relationship either to abstract ideas or to subliminal 'archetypes' (1974, xxiii).*

Inspired by post-structuralism, such warnings have been expanded to broad theoretical generalizations about the multiplicity of meaning of emblems, previously thought to have fixed reference. Stephen Orgel in one of his most recent studies claims:

> *... the breath of interpretive possibility often seems both endless and, for modern readers looking for a key to Renaissance symbolism, distressingly arbitrary. Renaissance iconographies and mythographies are in this respect the most postmodern of texts, in which no meaning is conceived to be inherent, all signification is constructed or applied; the fluidity and ambivalence of the image are of the essence (1996, 136).*

The Iconography of the History Plays According To Fleischer

Returning to the iconography of the Histories, perhaps the most grandiose model has been constructed by Martha Fleischer. Associating Frye's cyclic views with the visual emblematic metaphor of Fortune's wheel – so important an image in the Histories – she defined the history genre as a romance-like go-between, uniting tragedy and comedy, but also relating to the Passion Cycle, the

Miracle Plays and the cycle of romances as identified by Frye: perilous journey – crucial struggle or battle – the exaltation of the hero.

Analyzing (mainly) the nonverbal imagery (iconography) of the history plays, Fleischer also recognized in those a cyclic design: the structure starting with images of the 'State' (hierarchy, crown, throne, entries, processions, council scenes), representing the *regno* portion of the Wheel of Fortune, which, since it becomes the prime vehicle for the expression of disorder, also serves as the prefiguration of death and destruction (1974, 277). The second iconographic stage is the 'Garden', which, by referring to Eden, shows a contrast (or parallel) to the growth of evil in the realm. The garden also symbolizes the King's 'other body', the private self as opposed to the sacred/political idea (as described by Kantorowicz 1957). The third emblematic locale is the 'Battle' which portrays the severest chaos implied by rebellion against the hierarchical order of the state. It suggests the final war of good and evil (op. cit., 279) and a return to the 'State' in the final phase, serving as the prefiguration of conclusive judgement or resurrection, often in a triumph, or a nativity scene. "Being centered about the exalted monarch, the scene also praises that monarch, who may be identified directly with the reigning monarch at the time of production" (281).

One can easily see that while the Tillyard school narrowed the meaning of the Histories to a shallow lipservice paid to the official political ideology of their day, the interpretations of Wilders and Fleischer try to disassociate from that opportunism by reaching out to the other extreme: a too general and even evasive moralism, a cosmic concept of order and its abuses. If we take Winny's very sound interpretation as measurement: "King is not merely a title but an identity. The bare name of king demands to be supported by personal qualities, or its bearer makes a mockery of his great office; yet personal majesty without legal title falls short of what kingship should involve just as badly. Shakespeare's kings are a mixture of legal inheritors without natural title to the crown, and men of kingly ability debarred from true possession of the name they seize..." (1968, 45) – this is what I tried to describe by the alternatives, 'The Falles of Princes' and 'Machiavell' – clearly, Fleischer represents only the perspective of 'The Falles of Princes'. It is a regrettable distortion, since her cataloguing of the verbal and nonverbal iconography is thorough, imaginative, and far more reasonable than Caroline Spurgeon's authorial psychology-oriented inventory of Shakespeare's imagery (1935). As we remember, she concentrated on verbal imagery, only,

and her main goal with the interpretation was to reconstruct Shakespeare's mind and personality. Today her project seems to have had a regrettably limited scope and a futile objective; however, as we shall see in the case of *King John*, many of her concrete observations are still worth remembering. The same is true about Martha Fleischer, who, despite her somewhat one-sided views, came to many valuable comments which are still valid: "The true poet, for Sidney, is most assuredly a didactic poet. But the precepts he presents are ethical maxims, of the most general application, not theological arguments or amoral political advisements. It is my contention that the dramatist of the Elizabethan history play is just this kind of poet. The truths he reveals are dilemmas not prescriptions..." (262-3).

Fleischer's cosmic and ritualistic iconography is provocatively completed by Jan Kott's vision in his essay: "Kings" from his *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary* (1964). Kott's concept aligns with 'Machiavell', and, although he does not purposefully deal with iconography, he in fact proposes a number of strikingly visual images to explain the world of the Histories. He speaks about the 'Great Mechanism' and develops a powerful emblematic image to make it memorable: it is like a large flight of stairs on which ambitious men climb one after the other – towards the throne. He suggests that in Shakespeare's Chronicle Plays the general picture of history towers above the individual kings and usurpers. This is what he sees as the picture of the Great Mechanism. According to this image, feudal history is like a great flight of stairs on which a continuous procession of kings is climbing. Each step is taken via murders, treachery, dissimulation. Each step takes them nearer to the throne. "One more step and the crown falls. You can pick it up, then..." (15ff).

Kott's reading anticipates the by now commonplace thesis of iconography according to which although emblematic images may seem to have a firmly fixed conventional interpretation, in various contexts the same image can be used radically different meanings, signifying positive or negative aspects ('in bonam partem', or 'in malam partem'). What is more, an inventive author – such as Shakespeare – could further develop their meaning and occasionally use very conventional iconography in order to subvert the received ideas. It was S. K. Heninger, who clearly pointed out such diversions. As early as in 1974, he demonstrated how Shakespeare used the conventional iconographic elements in an unusual way in order to communicate a new, unorthodox representation. A

good example is the special handling of the traditional paradigm 'god–sun–lion–king' in *Richard II*. The very turns of the plot question the validity of this set of analogies, and this unorthodox message is even verbalized by the image of the setting sun which becomes Richard's emblem:

> SALISBURY *Ah, Richard! with the eyes of heavy mind*
> *I see thy glory like a shooting star*
> *Fall to the base earth from the firmament.*
> *Thy sun sets weeping in the lowly west,*
> *Witnessing storms to come, woe, and unrest.*
> *(R2 2.4.18-22 – cf. Heninger 1974, 346-7)*

Shakespeare's anti-traditionalist usage of this analogy is further amplified when the King is deprived even of the image of 'a dying lion':

> QEEN *What, is my Richard both in shape and mind*
> *Transform'd and weak'ned?*
> *[...]*
> *The lion dying thrusteth forth his paw,*
> *And wounds the earth, if nothing else, with rage*
> *To be o'erpow'r'd, and wilt thou, pupil-like,*
> *Take the correction, mildly kiss the rod,*
> *And fawn on rage with base humility,*
> *Which art a lion and the king of beasts?*
> *(R2 5.1.26-34)*

The latest phase in iconographical and emblematic investigation is marked by Stephen Orgel's already mentioned essay, "Gendering the Crown", in which the author not only argues for the possibility of multiple interpretations of the same emblematic images, but questions the previously unchallenged tenet that emblematic iconography constituted the most stable layer among socially traditionalized, 'received' meanings. It seems that as a dictionary can be a most dangerous tool in the hands of a translator who has a weak knowledge of the foreign language, in the same way shallow knowledge of emblematic imagery can be just as deceiving. Orgel illustrates this by the pelican image of 'caritas'. In *Richard II* the use of the image definitely subverts the well-known meaning of self-sacrifice, 'caritas' in a contrary meaning, pointing to vengeance:

JOHN OF GAUNT [to Richard II]
O, spare me not, my brother Edward's son;
That blood already, like the pelican,
Hast thou tapped out and drunkenly caroused
(2.1.124-6).

According to Orgel, Shakespeare here not only deconstructs a culturally fixed image; rather, the ambiguity can already be felt in the original emblem. We only have to think over its moral with all the consequences: "reading is an adversarial procedure. If the mother pelican is a type of endlessly self-sacrifying Christ, the next generation of pelicans are, it follows, a race of cannibals – the only way to have the topos is to have it both ways" (134).

The review of theoretical debates and varieties of interpretive practice, including iconographical analyses, leads us to the conclusion at this point, that Shakespeare doubtlessly knew well the Christian, Classical, and applied iconography (e.g. heraldics) of his time, but we also ought to note that an important innovative feature of his art was the often subversive and idiosynchratic application of this traditional imagery. When interpreting his works, consequently, one cannot dismiss the knowledge of the visual-iconographic traditions of the age; however it would be naive to expect him to follow these traditions unimaginatively either in their ideology or in respect of the formal elements. Interpreters, at the same time, should avoid an uncritical cult of 'the genius', too, that would not admit about the Bard any gesture of conventionality. Shakespeare indeed was an innovator in many things but we also know that he had no scruples in 'appropriating' traditional ideas, topics, or genres, *including* the works, phrases, or images of his fellow writers. The critic or historian is thus continuously trapped by the text, caused by the preconception he or she might have. The Histories are no exception to this rule, as I try to demonstrate through an interpretation of *King John*.

The Critical History and Iconography of *King John*

King John is one of the relatively little discussed Histories, perhaps because it stands alone between the two tetralogies. In my opinion this play is an out-

standing piece, both for its artistic merits and for its treatment of ideological/political problematics.

If we want to approach the question 'Shakespeare and history' we have to take into account a complex set of filters that separate Shakespeare's play from its historical roots. Most immediate is Shakespeare's own concept, his dramatic world with a specially shaped plot and specially moulded characters, behind which one can see the preceding literary interpretations of John Lackland's character – John Bale's *King Johan*, a political morality from the 1540s, and the anonymous *Troublesome Reign of John, King of England* (1591, restaged 1611) – from which Shakespeare's version is as different as from the factual material of the chronicles. One should also note, however, that the two groups of sources – the chronicles and the dramatic elaborations – are not radically different either, first, because the earlier dramatists must also have used chronicle materials, second, because the chronicles themselves had 'literary' ambitions, as a comparison of Hall and Holinshed clearly testifies (on the theory of the fictional nature of chronicles cf. White 1978 and 1987).

John and the Question of Ideal Ruler

King John is a good example of the complexity of the bipolar ideal of true kingship: legitimacy and personal fitness for governing the country. There seems to be a unanimous concord of all historical sources that John's claim to the throne was neither legitimate nor had he an apt personality for rulership. Due to his machinations against papal supremacy, however, some Protestant historians started seeing him in a more positive light and he could even acquire an image of somebody courageously resisting foreign oppression. Hence the fundamental ambiguity of his portrayal in the various chronicles. Protestant ideologists apologized for him, and Bishop Bale in *King Johan* turned him straightforwardly into a hero who had redeemed the allegorical personification of Widow England. Holinshed showed more hesitation about his personality but suggested that the old writers, who had belonged to the clergy, had had no good word about him, because:

> *He hath beene little beholden to the writers of that time in which he lived; for scarselie can they afoord him a good word, except when the trueth inforceth them to come out with it as it were against their willes.*

The occasion whereof was, for that he was no great freend to the clergie... (Bullough 1962, 4:49).

To a certain extent Shakespeare mirrors this ambiguity when in Act 3.1 he lends words of national pride and royal integrity to John – "What earthly name to interrogatories / Can taste the free breath of a sacred king? [...] and from the mouth of England / Add thus much more, that no Italian priest / Shall tithe or toll in our dominions..." (3.1.147-54) – however he leaves no doubt about the weak and mean character of John. The nationalistic-patriotic reading of the play and the topic did not disappear even later. Gary Taylor mentions the Drury Lane revival of the mid-1700s, when *King John* was played in Cibber's adaptation under the title: *Papal Tyranny in the Reign of King John* (Taylor 1989, 121). Here he also detects the ever present politics of interpretations, when he reminds us of the debate between Malone and Ritson over the histories. Malone, the conservative, and his more liberal adversary clashed over issues such as whether Richard III had a legitimate claim to the throne, or if Shakespeare could be allowed to be connected in his sources to Roman Catholic historiographers (op. cit., 146-7).

The most striking difference between Shakespeare's fiction and history is the insertion of Bastard Faulconbridge who substitutes for William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke (according to the chronicles, it was Marshal who saved England at the time of John's death from the outbreak of a civil war). The employment of Faulconbridge is again a good example of Shakespeare's liberalism in exploiting sources, since this character had been invented by the writer of The Troublesome Reign...; however it was only Shakespeare who developed him into a colossally meaningful emblematic character. Richard Faulconbridge embodies the machiavellian virtues of an efficient ruler (underlined by his pragmatism in the commodity-speech but elswhere also shows signs of bravery as well as patriotism) and thus helps complete the much quoted paradigm: Arthur is the king *de jure*, John is *de facto*, while the Bastard represents the royal appropriatness *par excellence*. One of his nicest and definitely *non*-Machiavellian gestures is when he does not take the opportunity to seize power but passes it over to the legitimate heir, the young adolescent Prince Henry.

It is significant, that Shakespeare packed all his royal ideals first into a fictitious character. Later on he tried to transfer these to the historical personality

of Prince Hal/Henry V, but as many recent interpretations warn us, with unnerving if not unconvincing ambiguity (Holderness 1992; Greenblatt 1988; Rabkin 1981; Sinfield 1992). We can consider this gesture as a delicate subversion of the 'Tudor myth': since he found no real historical character suitable to demonstrate the complete fitness for rulership, he showed it through the character of an invented bastard, when an otherwise unquestionably positive noble character was also available (William Marshal – for *King John* as a problem play, see Stanco 1993).

The Imagery of "King John"

There is a consensus about the play's merits in respect of poetical strength, especially a richness of imagery. One can easily find a great number of emblematic images, often asserting conventional meanings but also often extending them towards innovative and/or subversive connotations. In this respect the play successfully links the pieces of the first, experimental tetralogy and the second, mature one.

Looking at the iconography of the play, we have to consider the following aspects and structural layers: 1/ The verbal texture is particularly rich in images and in this layer we find word-emblems in which Shakespeare refers to conventional motives (valour, dignity, royal power) through conventional images, however sometimes in a subversive sense. 2/ A more complex and universal iconography can be found in the poetical imagery of the drama, constituting extensive and paradigmatic image clusters, as already noticed by G. Wilson Knight (1931) and Caroline Spurgeon (1935). The latter set up charts and tables comparing the richness of verbal imagery in Shakespeare's different works, and her data state, for example, that *King John* has the greatest number of personifications as well as images of body and bodily action (op. cit., Appendix, Chart VI). 3/ Finally stage imagery and iconography have to be taken into consideration. This is the aspect of theatricality, ranging from smaller elements – gestures, stage movements, ritualistic entrances and *tableaux* (see Dessen 1995 where he calls these 'theatrical vocabulary') – to an overall emblematic visual design, analysed by Fleischer (1974).

A good example to illustrate embedded word-emblems is the scene when the Bastard questions Austria's valour with the following sting:

You are the hare [...]
Whose valor plucks dead lions by the beard...
(2.1.137-9)

The proverb refers to Whitney's *A Choice of Emblems* (1586), whose poem on page 127 recalls the body of Hector violated by the Greeks, but only in death because they would not dare to touch him while still alive (Whitney's text and poem can be found in Daly 1988, 219). This is a totally conventional classical allusion (on the values of its stage-imagery cf. Fleischer 1974, 218) but it gains a deeply ominous significance in foreshadowing Shakespeare's shocking invention in *Troilus and Cressida* where the cowardly and cynical Achilles does not slay the unarmed Hector by himslef but orders his myrmidons to do so:

HECT. I am unarm'd; forego this vantage, Greek.
ACHIL. Strike, fellows, strike! this is the man I seek.
[Hector falls]
So, Ilion, fall thou next!
(5.8.9-11)

Most of the poetical images need no complex philological investigation to enjoy. Shakespeare's imagination is rich, at the same time disciplined. He often uses a single motif to develop large image clusters which lead through the whole play. Caroline Spurgeon's examinations of his verbal imagery are reliable in demonstrating that one of the central artistic paradigms of the play is the metaphorically used images of body and bodily action. Spurgeon singled out the following entities which became signified through such images:

> *the two great protagonists, France and England, the fate that befalls them under the guises of fortune, war and death; the emotions and qualities called into play by the clash of their contending desires: grief, sorrow, melancholy, displeasure, amazement, commodity; the besieged city of Angiers; all these are seen by Shakespeare as persons; angry, proud, contemptuous, saucy, indignant, smooth-faced, surly and wanton; sinning, suffering, repenting, kissing, winking, wrestling, resisting, whirling, hurrying, feasting, drinking, bragging, frowning and grinning (1935, 246ff).*

All the more surprising that Spurgeon practically overlooked another, strikingly noticeable image paradigm in the play: the symbolism of the 'water–river–

sea–flood' complex which is used to delineate the ever-changing political relations: government, political behaviour, party politics and dynastic strategies.

All these paradigms referred to by images of rivers, streams, floods, tides and tears are also connected with images of England – the stage and scenery of the historical performance:

> *England, [...]*
> *that water-walled bulwark, still secure*
> *And confident from foreign purposes (2.1.26-7)*

– says Austria, and on the water-walled island John's passions violently flood:

> *Say, shall the current of our right roan on?*
> *Whose passage , vex'd with thy impediment,*
> *Shall leave his native channel and o'erswell*
> *With course disturb'd even thy confining shores,*
> *Unless thou let his silver water keep*
> *A peaceful progress to the ocean (2.1.335-40).*

The short-lived alliance, made between the French and the English on the occasion of the engagement of Blanche and the Dauphin is now compared to peaceful, joining rivers:

> *O, two silver currents, when they join,*
> *Do glorify the banks that bound them in;*
> *And two such shores to two such streams made one...*
> *(2.1.441-4).*

Rivers and water appear in the microcosm of the body, too. Salisbury surmises wickedness behind Hubert's tears:

> *Trust not those cunning waters of his eyes,*
> *For vilainy is not without such rheum;*
> *And he, long traded in it, makes it seem*
> *Like rivers of remorse and innocency (4.3.107-10).*

Clashing interests are again compared to a flood when John requests Pandolf: "This inundation of mistemper'd humour / Rests by you only to be qualified" (5.1.12-3). And although not due to Pandolf, but order is (temporarily) restored: the revolting magnates return to John's camp, the civil war ceases.

Shakespeare – through the mouth of the rebel Salisbury – describes this state again with a memorable water image:

> *We will untread the steps of damned flight,*
> *And like a bated and retired flood,*
> *Leaving our rankness and irregular course,*
> *[...]*
> *And calmly run on in obedience,*
> *Even to our ocean, to our great King John (5.4.52-7).*

It may seem significant that the next line after this quotation endorses tradition: "happy newness, that intends old right" (5.4.61). This may be an argument in the debate of essentialist and anti-essentialist interpretations of the Histories.

The verbal symbolism of the play is completed by a visual symbolism on the stage, and, realizing this, modern criticism cannot afford any more to concentrate only on the poetical text, neglecting theatricality. The more so, because by now we see clearly that on the Elizabethan stage the text was much less of a fixed and respected medium that in the case of later dramatists. Elizabethan directors considered the text more of a loose script than crystallized and finalized literature; in the absence of authorized copyright, phrases, images, even whole *sujets* freely wandered from one play to the other and Shakespeare was no exception in such practice (for the Renaissance handling of dramatic texts see the *Textual Companion* of the *New Oxford Shakespeare:* Wells–Taylor 1986, and Taylor's narrative about the long story of the canonization of Shakespeare: 1989, esp. 280ff). The secondary importance of texts is proved by the uncontrolled printing process of the plays. Publications were accomplished without the supervision of the authors (hence the many corrupt quarto editions), for the sake of sensation rather than acknowledged literary merit. We should not thus approach Elizabethan dramas (including Shakespeare's plays) without trying to picture the visual effects on the stage: the scenic effects, the requisites, the costumes, but above all the stage movements, processions, flags, trumpet signals, gestures and mimics (groundbreaking studies in these areas were: Bevington 1984, Dessen 1977, Slater 1982).

In fact one could suggest that without these elements Elizabethan drama is incomprehensible or highly misleading, since this theatre was of emblematic nature where the stress did not fall on photographic representation, rather on

symbolic signs from which the viewers were expected and encouraged to extract meaning (on the emblematic theory of the Renaissance stage cf. Wickham 1966). Sometimes the 'instruction' meant a transfer from stylization to naturalism, as in the famous prologues of *Henry V*:

> CHOR. *Thus with imagin'd wings our swift scene flies*
> *In motion of no less celerity*
> *Than that of thought. Suppose that you have seen*
> *The well-appointed king at Hampton pier*
> *Embark his royalty; and his brave fleet*
> *With silken streamers the young Phoebus fanning:*
> *Play with your fancies, and in them behold*
> *Upon the hempen tackle ship-boys climbing;*
> *Hear the shrill whistle which doth order give*
> *To sounds confus'd... (3.Prol. 1-10).*

More often, however, the scenes conveyed a condensed emblematic message which reminded the viewers of the correspondences between the microcosm of the stage and the universal macrocosm, the structure of cosmic order, or actually the problematic frailty of the respected hierarchies. The analysis of the various aspects of kingship, the display of the vagaries of power proved to be particularly suitable to create this double perspective. As Fleischer remarks, King John seems to usurp his own throne, so the staging of his coronation in fact visually destroys his legitimacy (1974, 79). Almost any violation of court etiquette, she adds, "can produce a stage image of Morality-like misgovernment. [...] In *King John* the rebels signify inverted degree by ignoring due ceremony when they leave the royal presence" (op. cit., 80). Another memorable stage effect is when John is brought onstage in the final scene in a sick-chair. Although this arrangement is not made absolutely unquestionable by the text itself, relying on circumstantial evidence (stage directions of the *Troublesome Reign...*) Dessen is convinced about the emblematic significance of this design: "To have John brought onstage in a sick-chair in the final moments would then epitomize the crisis of authority critics have linked to his rule and, in addition, would recall Arthur's death sentence as part of that crisis" (Dessen 1995, 117). The reference is to Arthur's being bound to a chair in Act 4.1 before Hubert relented.

The overall problematics of *King John* are presented immediately after the beginning of the play:

CHATILLON Philip of France, in right and true behalf
Of thy deceased brother Geffrey's son,
Arthur Plantagenet, lays most lawful claim
To this fair island and territories [...] (1.1.7-10)
The proud control of fierce and bloody war
To enforce these rights so forcibly withheld (1.1.17-18).
JOHN Our strong possession and our right for us.
ELEANOR Your strong possession much more than your right
Or else it must go wrong with you and me (1.1.39-41).

The conflict is thus resulting from *that* paradox of the possession and exercise of authority according to which those who exercise power often do not possess it legally. In any way, we know by now, that the exercise of power and authority is nothing but a kind of discourse which takes place through semiotic systems of signs; this is made manifest through the highly formal entrances, the choreography of the staged audiences and council scenes which also contribute to the visual iconography of the play. Again, Fleischer calls attention to the importance of the 'hand action' of *King John*. While handshake is a common emblem of peace in the finale of the play, its earlier meaning is suspect, especially in the scene which contains what Fleischer calls one of the central emblems of the drama, namely when Pandulph forces Philip to drop John's hand and thus break the freshly forged league (Fleischer 1974, 157):

PAND. ...blessed shall he be that doth revolt
From his allegiance to an heretic (3.1.174-5).
Philip of France, on peril of a curse,
Let go the hand of an arch-heretic (3.1.191-92).
K. PHI. Good reverend father, make my person yours,
And tell me how you would bestow yourself.
This royal hand and mine are newly knit...
(3.1.224-6).

Austria's pledge of fidelity to Arthur is not only rich in verbal images but it must have been complemented by important body language and gestures which can be inferred from the text itself:

AUSTRIA Upon thy cheek lay I this zealous kiss,
As seal to this indenture of my love,
That to my home I will no more return
Till Angiers, and the right thou hast in France,
Together with that pale, that white-fac'd shore, [...]
Salute thee for her king (2.1.19-30).

Another much discussed scene showing important visual stage imagery is when at the beginning of Act 4.3 Arthur appears on the walls of Northampton Castle, ready to throw himself in the abyss. Fleischer interprets this scene – including the prince's forthcoming suicide – as a sacrificial death, promising renewed life: "The Prince's fallen state emblematizes his *lack of* personal ambition. Though temporarily this death provides a focus for rebellion, ultimately it works to the survival of the realm by clearing the succession" (op. cit., 133). One may or may not follow Martha Fleischer in her ritual-oriented interpretation, but one thing is sure: she did not notice a cryptic phrase in Arthur's last words which Dessen ventured at explaining as one important element of the play's theatrical vocabulary. According to Shakespeare's invention (and unlike in the literary sources), Arthur appears on the walls in the clothing of a ship-boy: "This ship-boy's semblance hath disguised me quite" (4.3.4). There is no ready explanation for this seemingly irrelevant costume but Dessen connects the ship image it evokes to the general water–flood imagery of the drama, already mentioned. He associates this ship image with John's last sentences when he greets the Bastard as follows: "The tackle of my heart is crack'd and burn'd / And all the shrouds wherewith my life should sail / Are turned to one thread..." (5.7.52-4). The dying Arthur and the dying John are both referring to their situation in life through images relating to shipping and sailing and, as Dessen observes, the group of persons surrounding them is the same so the connection is even visually amplified. John's last words, in fact, push the sailing image to shipwreck and merge it into the broad water-imagery of the play:

JOHN Were in the Washes all unwarily
Devoured by the unexpected flood.
*[*The King dies.*] (5.7.63-4)*

In conclusion, it is reasonable to suggest that the theatricality of the Elizabethan plays, as well as the emblematic-hierarchical architectural structure of the

stage itself followed the macrocosmic-microcosmic notions about the relationship of the world and humankind which, of course, were often referred to in the poetical text, too. For example, when in *King John* the king compares his own temperament to his country's shores and tides:

> *JOHN Nay, in the body of this fleshly land,*
> *This kingdom, this confine of blood and breath,*
> *Hostility and civil tumult reigns*
> *Between my conscience and my cousin's death*
> *(4.2.245-8).*

Conclusion: the Potentials and the Gains of Iconography

The examination of *King John* has hopefully testified that iconography is a vital ingredient of all the Histories, and, beyond that, all the plays of Shakespeare and his fellow Renaissance dramatists. It is relevant and apparent on several layers of the works, from smaller elements of the poetical text through various aspects of overall theatricality.

After looking through my whole review now, we can suggest that the study of images seems to be more a methodology and a special area of research than an independent critical theory having its own philosophy. We also have to give up the ambition to consider iconography as an objective and reliable means to clarify the meaning or underlying programmes of literary works. On the other hand, neither should we think that iconography has become outdated, a relic of research tools from the past. Results in imagery research will always enhance those broader theoretical concerns in the service of which they have been employed, but they also will reflect the limitations and biases of those theoretical concerns. We can thus hardly expect to arrive at a synthesis, not even a consensus of the interpretation of the emblematic imagery employed by Shakespeare, just as we shall not arrive at a synthesis in the general interpretation of the Histories.

In spite of all this, we can safely conclude that whatever the theoretical basis of the interpretation we follow, the study of emblematic imagery, in our present case the imagery of power and rulership, will always usefully complete and augment our work.

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CUPID AND ELIZA:
VARIATIONS ON A VIRGILIAN ICON IN PLAYS BY GAGER, LYLY, AND MARLOWE

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The image of the 'Madonna and Child' is surely one of the most important and immediately recognisable items in the repertory of Christian iconography. Its ubiquity in the art and literature of the late mediaeval and early modern periods needs no illustration, but there are one or two examples which may still warrant some investigation. Such, I suggest, is the case with John Lyly's second play: *Sappho and Phao* (1583, printed in 1584). The drama deals with a contest between Venus and her erstwhile *protégée* Sappho: Can the virgin lady resist the power of the goddess of love? In obedience to his mother's orders, Cupid pierces Sappho with an arrow which will make her love Phao, then strikes her with another which makes her fall out of love with Phao and any other man (or woman).[1] Finally, Cupid goes over to Sappho's side and sits on her lap, surrendering his arrows of desire into her charge in exchange for sweetmeats. This image of a virgin lady with the infant god of love on her lap must have reminded its first observers of the icon of the Madonna and Child – but Lyly is probably drawing on other iconographical traditions.[2] The first of these, as we shall see, is a minor icon of 'Elizabeth and Cupid' which has its prototypes in the progress entertainments of the previous decade. But the one we shall be mainly concerned with in this essay is the secular icon of 'Dido and Cupid' as originally

[1] In quotations from early texts, all contractions (except ampersand) have been expanded, modern conventions have been adopted in the use of *u/v* and *i/j*, and italicised names have been changed to romans. If two dates are given after the name of a play, the first is the date of first performance, the second the date of the first imprint.

[2] But cf. Jankowski (1991, 80): "to be mother of Cupid is quite different from being mother of Christ".

depicted by Virgil in the first book of his *Aeneid*. In fact, a comparison of this kind almost cries out to be explored, since Virgil also calls Dido by her Tyrian name: Elissa – or Elisa.

Little attention has been paid to Lyly's use of Virgilian material in *Sappho and Phao*; but here I hope to show that the panegyrical tableau with which that play (almost) ends constitutes an important intervention in the way in which this most popular love-story was represented on the Elizabethan stage in William Gager's Latin play *Dido* (ms. 1583), and Christopher Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (?1587, pr. 1594). Conversely, by placing *Sappho and Phao* in this Virgilian context, we may better understand how Lyly uses the materials of Elizabethan panegyric for 'secular' purposes. Lyly was not entirely adverse to flattery, but he always resisted the more extreme forms of royal panegyric which elevated princes to godhead. However, as Lyly himself says in another context, "lest like the Mindians we make our gates greater than our town, and that our essay runs out at the preface, we here conclude".[3]

The Panegyrical Background: Churchyard and Goldingham

Let us begin by tracing the origins of the image of Sappho with Cupid on her lap in the panegyrical tradition of the decade or so before Lyly's play was written. *Sappho and Phao* is one of three plays presented at court in the winter revels season of 1583/4 which seem to constitute a quite conscious 'revival' of the splendour of earlier Tudor entertainments. To this revival Lyly also contributed his *Campaspe* (1583, pr. 1584); but this, his first play, although it suits court-performance perfectly well, seems to have been written quite as much with the metropolitan audience of the Blackfriars playhouse in mind.[4] As a 'court play', *Sappho and Phao* has much more in common with his associate – and perhaps kinsman – George Peele's *Arraignment of Paris* (1583, pr. 1584). This

[3] Cf. 'The Prologue at the Blackfriars' to Lyly's *Campaspe* (1583, pr. 1584).

[4] We still need a clear and comprehensive account of the literary and theatrical background to this extraordinary season. But see Pincombe 1996, 14-19, 52-62.

'pastoral' could never have been presented in London in the state in which it has come down to us because it requires the presence of Elizabeth for its final scene to work properly. Here, with the approval of the three goddesses who were judged by Paris in the famous beauty-contest, Diana places the golden ball in Elizabeth's own hands. Diana calls her both 'Eliza' and 'Zabeta', and this latter name is an allusion to a device written by George Gascoigne to be presented to Elizabeth on progress at Kenilworth Castle in 1575, and printed in *The Princely Pleasures of the Court at Kenilworth* (1576). Similarly, the final and culminating panegyrical image of Sappho with Cupid on her lap in Lyly's play harks back to devices presented to Elizabeth whilst she was on progress in Norwich in 1578—and it seems entirely likely that the two young men meant their work to be seen as part of this well-established tradition of progress shows and other panegyrical devices.

The first of the Norwich shows was written by the doughty Thomas Churchyard, and printed in *The Queen's Majesty's Entertainments in Suffolk and Norfolk* (1578). His "Show of Chastity" depicts the humiliation of Cupid by Chastity and her ladies, and ends when Chastity gives into the queen's hands Cupid's bow and arrows. The point is that Elizabeth cannot herself be wounded by these weapons, but that she may wound whom he she likes with them – thus tactfully leaving the matter of the queen's marrying open but very much in her own hands. The same device was developed by Henry Goldingham a few days later in a show printed by Bernard Garter in his *Joyful Receiving of the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty into Her Highness' City of Norwich* (1578). But whereas Churchyard's Cupid had been thrown out of his coach by Chastity, who despoiled him of his weapons and sent him packing before handing them over to Elizabeth, Goldingham's little god has learnt his lesson, and himself politely surrenders his golden arrow to the queen, with the same message: "Shoote but this shafte at King or Cæsar: He, / And he is thine, and if thou wilte allowe" (sig. E3 v°). Lyly takes this theme one step further by having Cupid actually climb into Sappho's lap. Churchyard and Goldingham could never have allowed the boys playing Cupid to clamber onto Elizabeth's knees! But as Lyly is writing a play rather than a device, he can take greater liberties with his materials – and hence our splendid panegyrical icon. There is more to be said on this matter, but let us now turn to the other image which lies behind this icon: Virgil's 'Cupid and Elissa'.

Dido and Cupid in Virgil's *Aeneid*

The *Aeneid* is a long tale called forth by a single though not simple question: "Now Muse direct my song to tell what offence and why: / What ayled the queene of gods to dryve thus cruelly, / This noble prince of vertue mylde from place to place to toile, / Such paines to take?" (1.8-11: tr. Phaer, p. 8). Why does Juno persecute Aeneas? The first reason Virgil gives is that Juno has heard that a scion of the Trojan line was fated to destroy her much-loved city of Carthage. The prophecy, of course, refers to the Punic Wars, in which Rome finally defeated Carthage and began to win control over the Mediterranean. But Juno's fears for an earlier Carthage are by no means unfounded either. Other reasons are less altruistic: she still hates Aeneas because his mother, Venus, defeated her in the legendary beauty-contest; because he is a Trojan, a descendant of Dardanus, who was the son of her adulterous husband by Electra; and – rather oddly – because of Ganymede, another Trojan, whom Jupiter took up to heaven to be his cup-bearer. Aeneas and Ganymede are associated in Juno's jealous mind because they are both reminders of her husband's infidelity. Still, it is surprising to find what is nevertheless a rather tenuous connection asserted at so early and important a point in the poem. On the other hand, as we shall see, it gave Marlowe food for thought.

Juno goes to Aeolus, the god of the winds, and at her bidding he releases a storm, which Juno intends should wreck Aeneas's fleet and drown his men and him. Neptune, however, angry that Aeolus should interfere in his own watery domain, sends the winds back; and Aeneas and his men reach the safety of the Carthaginian shore. It is at this point that Jupiter looks down from the heavens to where Aeneas has been stranded, and that Venus tearfully reminds him of his promise that Aeneas should found the colony that would eventually become Rome. Jupiter reassures her that it is still so, and sends down Mercury to inspire the Carthaginians with friendly feelings towards the Trojans who have been washed up on their coasts. But Venus wants to make sure that this welcome reception lasts. So she begs her son Cupid to disguise himself as Aeneas's son Ascanius and go in his place to the banquet Dido is arranging for her Trojan guests: "whan within her lappe the Queene thee gladly shal embrace (*cum te gremio accipiet*), / [...] And clippes thee sweete, and on thy lipps doth presse the pleasant kisse / Disperse in her the secret flame and poyson sweete inspier"

(1.685-8: p. 25). A few lines later, the description is repeated: "unto the Queene he [Cupid] drew, and her with eyes and brest and all / About her necke embraceth sweete, and whole on her doth fall. / She on her lap sometime him sets (*gremio fovet*), good Dido nothing knowes / How great a god upon her sits, what cares on her hee throwes" (1.717-9: pp. 25-6). And so here we have the 'Virgilian icon' of our title. It is a memorable image.

William Gager's *Dido*

William Gager (1555-1622) was the foremost Latin or neo-Latin dramatist of the Tudor Age; and *The Tragedy of Dido* is his best-known play.[5] It was performed at All Soul's College, Oxford, on 12 June 1583, to grace the visit to the university of Count Albert Łaski ('Alasco') of Poland. It was written quickly, within less than a month, but Gager still makes good sense of his Virgilian material.

In the opening scene of the play, Venus gives Cupid his instructions: "I want you to assume the guise of sweet Ascanius [...] so that when the queen takes you on her lap (*te excipiet sinu*) during the banquet laid for the strangers, kisses and embraces you, you may breathe love into her and kindle her torch" (1.1.100-102). And so it happens. Dido blesses Cupid-Ascanius and says: "Receive this kiss as the pledge of my love" (2.1.319). Unfortunately, Gager's stage-directions are elegantly sparse; so we do not really know whether Dido has him in her lap or bosom at this point. But this is what Cupid himself says later in the play (3.3.595-600):

> *[...] it has cost her dearly to dandle little Iulus [i.e. Ascanius] on her knees and lap (genibus et gremio). With my mouth I return her kiss with one of my own, which is something other than just a pleasantry. While she plays with me sportively, I have tricked her with my fraud. She drank? I cadged a sip. She gazed at me? I turned my face to her. She called? I appeared. She caressed me? I perched in her lap (implevi sinu).*

[5] For further details, see the 'Introduction' to the play in Sutton (1994, 1.241-253).

This is mainly Gager's invention, developed from hints in Virgil; and it certainly does not correspond in every detail to what we see in the banquet scene (there are no calls). In fact, the most remarkable part played by Cupid-Ascanius in this scene is not kissing Dido, but pointing out the location of the main events of the Siege of Troy on a map made of marzipan![6] On the other hand, it would make no sense for Cupid to gloat so graphically if it did not remind the audience of what they had seen in the previous act. Certainly we may assume that, whilst disguised as Ascanius, he sat on her lap. Possibly there was a fair amount of silent stage-business of the kind Cupid describes: kissing, drinking, gazing, and caressing. Interestingly, this is precisely the sort of detail which Marlowe adds in his own version of the story; and it is not quite out of the question that Marlowe knew or knew of Gager's play.[7]

However, what is most remarkable (for our purposes) about Gager's *Dido* is the opportunity it takes to weave in compliments not only to Count Łaski, but also to Elizabeth. So, for example, Gager has Virgil's Iopas sing a 'hymn' in praise of Aeneas and 'Elisa' which clearly also alludes to the Polish count's reception by the English queen. Two lines may suffice: "As Cynthia shines among the stars, such is our Elisa's splendor on earth. See, happy guest, to whom you have come when you left your homeland" (2.1.345-6). On the other hand, Gager also wants to make it clear that Elizabeth is both like and unlike Virgil's Elisa (which is Gager's spelling of 'Elissa'). The epilogue spells this out very plainly: "But Dido (*Elisa*), one woman surpasses you by far: our virgin queen (*regina virgo*). In her piety, how many reversals has she endured! What kingdoms has she founded! To what foreigners has she plighted her trust! But she has not condescended to marry any Sychaeus [Dido's first husband], and may no Aeneas sway her affections!" (ep. 1241-5). Elizabeth is an Elissa who is so much in command of her own affections that she has never even married, far

[6] So reports Raphael Holinshed in his *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587). See Sutton (1994, 242) for this "marchpaine patterne".

[7] Sutton notes that Anna commits suicide in Gager and Marlowe, but not in Virgil (1994, 250). This is the sort of striking deviation from the original that might well make its way into literary gossip, much as the marzipan map struck Holinshed as remarkable. It would be strange if Marlowe knew nothing at all of Gager's play. News presumably reached Cambridge of the *éclat* of the Oxford production.

less entered into a disastrous liaison with a foreigner. In fact, the epilogue is particularly blunt on this point: "Foreign marriages rarely turn out well". And it may be that Gager has in mind the queen's last seriously-considered flirtation with a foreign prince: François, duc d'Alençon. The union proposed was anathema to many Englishmen because Alençon was a son of Catherine de' Medici, whom they feared and distrusted, and a confirmed Catholic who might, if he were royal consort, attempt to return England to the Roman Church. There were many protests, most notoriously John Stubbs's *Gaping Gulf* (1579). Stubbs lost his hand for that. However, Alençon left England for the last time in February 1582; so it may have been considered safe a year or so later to make more tactful allusions to what must now have seemed a *fait accompli*. But Gager does not go much further than the allusions already mentioned. Perhaps he was being tactful; but more likely he saw no further point of contact between Elissa and Elizabeth. He saw the opportunity for flattery and exploited it; but he is chiefly interested in writing a play rather than a panegyric. But with Lyly, the situation is more complicated. Elizabeth was not present at Gager's *Dido*, but she certainly was when *Sappho and Phao* was presented at court on 3 March 1584.[8]

John Lyly's *Sappho and Phao*

Lyly must surely have known Gager's *Dido*. Just as Lyly and Peele seem to have been associates in the 1583/4 revels at the royal court, so were Peele and Gager in the revels which took place at Oxford a few months earlier. In fact, the theatrical connection between Peele and Gager goes back several years, and they may well have been the leading lights of an informal 'dramatic society' at Oxford during the late 1570s and early 1580s. Lyly was an Oxford man, although he left the university too early to have been part of any such society that Peele and Gager were involved in. On the other hand, in January 1585, we find Lyly lending theatrical costumes to Gager's Christ Church players to be used in a

[8] Scholars have always detected allusions to the Alençon courtship in *Sappho and Phao*, too. But cf. Bevington's sceptical survey of the evidence (1991, 164-7).

revival of the latter's *Meleager* (1582, pr. 1593).[9] So there was certainly some connection by then. But it seems likely that Lyly must have known or known of Gager a couple of years earlier, when he was working with Peele. It has been suggested that Peele might even have written parts of *Dido*![10] But in any case, the play which he had helped to stage at Oxford must have been fresh in Peele's mind when he was involved a few months later in the production of his own *Arraignment* at court. Doubtless, *Dido* was a topic which Peele and Lyly must have often discussed.

But there is also internal evidence to suggest that Lyly knew Gager's play at first hand. *Dido* opens with an exchange between Venus and Cupid, which is based on Venus's supplication to Cupid in the *Aeneid*. The relationship between mother and son is portrayed rather differently, however. In Virgil, Venus seems to think it necessary to beg and flatter: "Son, who art alone my strength, my mighty power – O son, who scornest the mighty father's Typhoean darts, to thee I flee and suppliant sue thy godhead (*numina*)" (1.664-6: tr. Fairclough).[11] Gods are not usually this quick to magnify each other's *numen*; but Venus makes a point here that will not be lost on Lyly: she needs Cupid as the instrument of her will. Gager's Venus, however, is less flattering, and his Cupid (who says nothing in Virgil) is deferential and obedient: "Mother, why seek to obtain with your words that which you have a right to obtain from me, your son" (1.1.46-7). Like his brother Aeneas, Cupid knows the meaning of filial *pietas*.

But there is one moment when he questions his mother's plans. Venus explains how she has met Aeneas and showed him the way to "Elisa's palace"; at which point the following exchange takes place:

> *CUP. What hope lies in Elisa? She is devoted to Juno.*
> *VEN. She supports Juno, but Jupiter has taken precautions lest any evil befall Aeneas in the city.*

[9] The relevant records may be found in Boas (1914, 180, 194).

[10] See Sutton 1994, 248.

[11] I use Fairclough's Loeb translation here because Phaer for some reason misses out the crucial phrase: "ad te confugio et supplex tua numina posco" (*Aen.*, i. 666).

> *CUP. Would that this might be so! Nevertheless I mistrust the Phoenicians [Dido's followers] (1.1.77-81).*

This is a reworking of the following passage in Virgil: "Suspect she doth the Moores [Dido's followers], that have of dooble toong the name, / And Junos wrath her frets, and in the night her care returnes (1.661-2: tr. Phaer, p. 24). This is why Venus begs for Cupid's assistance. Now in Virgil, we already know by now that Juno is devoted to Carthage; and we have also seen that Dido, as Gager's Cupid observes, is devoted to Juno. When Aeneas first sees Dido, she is founding a temple to the goddess. But since Gager has started his play *in medias res*, he has not yet had time to explain to his audience the mutual devotion of Dido and Juno; hence the helpful hint from Cupid. And this tiny addition seems to have stuck in Lyly's mind.

Sappho and Phao opens with a scene which is remarkably similar to the first scene of Gager's *Dido*. There is first a brief soliloquy spoken by Phao, which serves the purpose of setting up the all-important distinction in social rank between himself (he is a ferry-man) and Sappho: "As much doth it delight thee to rule thine oare in a calme streame, as it dooth Sapho to swaye the Scepter in her brave court" (I. i. 6-7). Then he retires as Venus and Cupid come on the stage. Venus is angry because she feels her dignity is perpetually slighted by her union with Vulcan, the blacksmith of the gods. A rather perplexing exchange then ensues:

> *[VENUS.] [...] But come, we wil to Syracusa, where thy deitie shal be shown, and my disdaine. I will yoke the necke, that yet never bowed, at which, if Jove repine, Jove shal repent. Sapho shal know, be she never so faire, that there is a Venus, which can conquer, were she never so fortunate.*
> *CUPID. If Jove espie Sapho, he wil devise some new shape to entertaine her.*
> *VENUS. Strike thou Sapho, let Jove devise what shape he can.*
> *CUPID. Mother, they say she hath her thoughtes in a string, that she conquers affections, and sendeth love up and downe upon arrandes; I am afraide she wil yerke me, if I hit her (1.1.31-41).*

Lyly takes the Virgilian scene as expanded in Gager's dramatic version and puts it to use in his own adaptation of the myth of Venus and Phaon (he was a fer-

ryman whom she made irresistibly attractive as a reward for carrying her in his boat). He even takes up the polite doubts expressed by Gager's Cupid, and amplifies them into an important element in the conflict between the traditional myths and the new Elizian panegyric which is so typical of his drama. Elizian mythology has impacted on the older strain to the extent that Cupid seems unsure as to whether Sappho "sendeth love up and downe vpon arrandes" or not. He is himself 'Love', after all. But who is his real mistress: Venus or Sappho?[12]

The rest of the play is mainly taken up with resolving this mysterious conflict. Cupid is in fact rather prescient than expert when he alludes to Sappho's Eliza-like command of her affections. At the beginning of the play, she is merely a great lady, with no particular emphasis on that all-important Elizian virtue: virginity. She is "faire by nature, by birth royall, learned by education, by government politike, rich by peace" (1.2.7-9). Furthermore, she is also a devotee of Venus, which is not what you would expect of an Eliza! By an ingenious transformation of his sources, Lyly makes out that Sappho is a sort of foundling whom Venus discovered in a bed of lettuce. In gratitude, she becomes Venus's devotee, and is puzzled that her foster-mother should turn against her: "O Venus, have I not strawed thine Altars with sweete roses?" (3.3.86). She has also looked after Venus's pets: swans, sparrows, doves, tortoises, cockles, and sponges. And, after a while, Venus relents just as quickly and mysteriously as she first set her mind against her *protégée* (4.1); and it is immediately after this reconciliation that Cupid, acting now on his own initiative, touches his mother's bosom with the same arrow with which he has previously wounded Sappho, so that she falls in love with Phao, too. Now there is nothing unusual in Cupid's playing tricks of this kind on his mother. In Lucian's "Aphrodite and Selene", in his *Dialogues of the Gods*, Aphrodite complains to the moon-goddess of Cupid's mischievous aim: "See what he's done to me, his own mother. First he brought me down to Ida after Anchises the Trojan, and then to Mount Libanus after that Assyrian lad [viz. Adonis]" (19 [11] 231). What makes the reversal so

[12] The peculiar allusions to rivalry between Venus and Jupiter over Sappho seem to refer back to the poem "Iovis Elizabetha", which ends the panegyrical section of *Euphues and his England* (1580). Here, Juno, Pallas, and Venus all contend for possession of the nymph Eliza, but Jove finally decides that she is his instead. See Pincombe 1996, 57.

interesting, however, is that it marks the beginning of the transformation of Sappho from a romantic heroine to a panegyrical figure of Eliza.

To remove her rival from the contest for Phao's affections, Venus instructs Cupid to strike her with an arrow of disdain, which he does. But Cupid then 'goes over' to Sappho, who, upon hearing of Venus's real reasons for releasing her from the original love-spell, breaks decisively with her former guardian and offers her own protection to Cupid. The scene is worth quoting at length (5.2.8-22):

> *SAPHO. Feare nothing: for if Venus fret, Sapho can frowne, thou shalt bee my sonne. Mileta, give him some sweete meates; speake good Cupid, and I will give thee many pretie things.*
> *CUPID. My mother is in love with Phao, she willed mee to strike you with disdain of him, and him with desire of her.*
> *SAPHO. O spitefull Venus! Mileta give him some of that. What els Cupid?*
> *CUPID. I could be even with my mother: and so I will, if I shall call you mother.*
> *SAPHO. Yea Cupid, call me any thing, so I may be even with her.*
> *CUPID. I have an arrow, with which if I strike Phao, it will cause him to loth onely Venus.*
> *SAPHO. Sweete Cupid, strike Phao with it. Thou shalt sitte in my lappe, I will rocke thee asleepe, and feede thee with all these fine knackes.*

Cupid goes off to shoot his arrow, then returns, and climbs up on to Sappho's lap, which is the first thing Venus sees when she comes on stage to reclaim him: '*VENUS.* [...] How now, in Saphoes lappe? – *SAPHO.* Yea Venus, what say you to it? in Saphoes lap" (5.2.45-6).

This is a brilliant transmutation of the Virgilian icon! Here is Sappho with Cupid on her lap, but the context is no longer that of Virgilian epic, but Lucianic dialogue. The banquet has dwindled to a dish of sweets, and the register is determinedly colloquial, just as it is in Lucian's Greek prose. In fact, the strong Lucianic element here prevents the new Elizian mythology from supplanting the more traditional one. Lucian liked to depict the gods and heroes of ancient epic as beings with unusual powers, it is true, but essentially human personalities, especially in domestic situations 'behind the scenes' of their epic adventures. Sappho persuades Cupid that, with his arrows in her possession, she

shall become "on earth the Goddesse of affections" (5.2.64). And well she might; but Lyly sees all goddesses, earthly or heavenly, in the light of Lucian's *Dialogues*.

Sappho speaks like an Eliza when she says: "I will direct these arrowes with better aime, and conquer mine own affections with greater modesty" (5.2.26-7). But Lyly will only grant her access to an Elizian *numen* of her own within his usual Lucianic interpretation of what the gods are really like. Once she has had a taste of *numen*, Sappho becomes as comically catty as Venus. And this, it seems to me, is the way in which Lyly achieves his precarious balance between the competing claims of royal panegyric and artistic integrity. The conflict of symbolic sovereignty is not really resolved at the end of the play, for Venus storms off swearing revenge: "Well, I will be even with you both, & that shortlye" (5.2.93). But the conflict is at least held in check, and the temporary supremacy of Elizian mythology is signalled by Sappho's appropriation of the Virgilian icon to her own revisionist ends.

Christopher Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*

Marlowe seems to have been generally immune to the attractions of Eliza. None of his plays or poems makes any significant contribution to the Cult of Elizabeth, not even *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, where the Elissa-Eliza association would have given him an easy occasion for casual compliment. Dido's other name is mentioned only once in the play, when Iarbas begs Jupiter to hear his "plaining prayers, / Whose hideous ecchoes make the welkin howle, / And all the woods *Eliza* to resound" (4.2.1102-4). But this is after Dido "Yeelds up her beautie to a strangers bed", so there is no question of any positive allusion to Eliza or Elizabeth here, nor of any conflict between traditional and Elizian mythologies. But, like Lyly, Marlowe is happy to let Virgilian and Lucianic interpretations of ancient mythology contend within a single work. And this can help us better understand the Lylian scene in retrospect.

Marlowe makes a number of interesting changes to his source in Virgil. Here, the infatuation of Dido takes place after the banquet scene, not during the feast. Ascanius is the last to leave the stage when he is intercepted by Venus disguised as "Didos waiting maide" (2.1.599). She persuades him to come to her in a

speech which seems quintessentially Marlovian in its opening phrase and general format: "Ile give thee Sugar-almonds, sweete Conserves, / A silver girdle, and a golden purse, / And this yong Prince shall be thy playfellow". But here is Sappho again: "Mileta, give him some sweete meates; speake good Cupid, and I will give thee many pretie things". The *dabo* or 'I will give you' theme is Lyly's then, before it is Marlowe's. Venus then picks up Ascanius in her arms: "For Didos sake I take thee in my armes, / And stick these spangled feathers in thy hat, / Eat Comfites in mine armes, and I will sing". Here, then, is another variation on the Virgilian icon.

Venus is on her feet, not on a throne, but otherwise it is much the same image. But the new details are important as well. The lullaby Venus sings has the effect of arresting the action for a little while, thus giving the image longer to sink into our minds. And when Dido takes Cupid-Ascanius in her arms in the next scene, he will sing, too. He appears on the scene alone, brandishing his "golden arrow" (another detail not found in Virgil or Gager, but probably taken from Lyly).[13] Then Dido enters with Anna and Iarbas, and Cupid tries to climb into Dido's lap:

> CUPID. *No Dido will not take me in her armes,*
> *I shall not be her sonne, she loves me not.*
> DIDO. *Weepe not sweet boy, thou shalt be Didos sonne,*
> *Sit in my lap and let me heare thee sing (3.1.655-9).*

Again, it is tempting to see the Lylian scene reworked, especially in the use of the 'mother and son' theme. And it would be very surprising if Marlowe had not seen or read Lyly's earlier plays. When Marlowe burst on to the theatrical scene with *Tamburlaine* in 1587, Lyly already had three plays behind him and was now basking in the glory of his fourth and most famous play: *Endymion: The Man in the Moon* (1587, pr. 1591). Moreover, since Marlowe wrote *Dido* for a company of boys, he must have at least considered the work of the foremost children's dramatist of the 1580s.

[13] There is much play with arrows in *Sappho and Phao*, and we actually see some being made on stage in IV. iv. The golden arrow (it also has peacock feathers) is for "daintie and coy Ladies" and "amiable and young Nymphes" (5.1.20-22).

However, although Marlowe may have taken one or two details from Lyly and other earlier writers, he uses them very much in his own way. We may wonder about the relative sizes of the actors playing Venus and Ascanius in the scene mentioned earlier.[14] 'Venus' would have to be quite a lot taller and larger if he is to sing whilst holding up 'Ascanius'. And this is not the only time such a pairing is required. The Nurse (whom Venus impersonates in the earlier scene) also picks up a young lad, this time Cupid disguised as Ascanius, and carries him off-stage: "*CUPID*. Nurse I am wearie, will you carrie me? – *NURSE*. I, so youle dwell with me and call me mother" (4.5.1386-7). Marlowe clearly wants us to remember the image of a woman with a beautiful young boy in her arms, whether she is sitting or standing. And all of these images are probably meant to be coloured by the extraordinary image with which the play begins. The opening stage-direction reads: "*Here the Curtaines draw, there is discovered Jupiter dandling Ganimed upon his knee, and Mercury lying asleepe*". And it is here that Marlowe comes closest to the Lylian scene.

Comparisons between the literary horizons of Lyly and Marlowe may be made with slightly more than the usual half-confidence, since both men attended the same school: King's, Canterbury.[15] Lyly was ten years older than Marlowe, but there is no reason to suppose that the curriculum had much changed within a decade. We are certainly on safe ground in assuming that both had read Lucian's *Dialogues* in Latin translation whilst they were in the lower forms (Baldwin 1948, 1:169). Such texts were regarded as ideal for younger learners: they were short and funny and the prose was colloquial. It is less likely, however, that our two school-boys were exposed to Lucian's 'Ganymede dialogues': "Zeus and Hera" (8 [5]); and "Zeus and Ganymede" (10 [4]). But they must have read them later on.

[14] Cope (1974) gives such matters thought and concludes that Marlowe exploits the comic potential in size-difference. But cf. Goldberg 1992, 118-136.

[15] As a matter of fact, there is no documentary evidence for Lyly's attendance at King's, since the records do not go back so far. But his brothers went to King's (one was in Marlowe's class); and when he lodged at the Savoy in the late 1570s, it was quite probably as a result of a family connection with William Absolon, then Master-Chaplain of the Savoy, but formerly Lyly's head-master. See Hunter 1962, 45.

In the late 1570s, when he wrote *Euphues: The Anatomy of* Wit (1578), Lyly was friendly with Gabriel Harvey, who owned a four-volume set of Lucian, which was almost certainly the Latin translation of Lucian's *Opera omnia* (1563) made by Gilbert Cousin (Duncan 1979, 84). These volumes seem to have been circulating amongst other of Harvey's friends about now. E.K., for example, in his commentary on Edmund Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) certainly seems to know the the 'Ganymede dialogues'. Of the friendship between Colin and Hobbinol (i.e. Spenser and Harvey) in the "January" eclogue, he says: "In thys place seemeth to be some savour of disorderly love, which the learned call pæderastice" (p. 422). Actually, "pæderastice" is the spiritual love between men, and therefore better than "gynerastice", which is sexual love between men and women; but E. K. is anxious not to be misunderstood: "But yet let no man thinke, that herein I stand with Lucian or hys develeish disciple Unico Aretino, in defence of execrable and horrible sinnes of forbidden and unlawful fleshlinesse". If E. K. had read these dialogues, then so, probably, did Lyly. And one cannot imagine that they escaped Marlowe's attention either.

"Lucian's influence is clear in the opening of *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, where the dalliance of Jupiter and Ganymede is closer in tone to the *Dialogues of the Gods* than to Virgil" (Duncan 1979, 111). In fact, Marlowe works up his famous induction from a hint in "Zeus and Hera". Here, Ganymede is mute, but at the end of the dialogue, in which Hera scolds Zeus for neglecting her in favour of his new lover, Ganymede evidently starts to whimper. Zeus turns to him and says: "Hullo, not crying, are you? Don't be afraid. Anyone that choose to hurt you will regret it" (216). This oblique warning, evidently aimed at Hera, provides Marlowe with the suggestion for the "rap" which Juno has given Ganymede and Jupiter's further and more grandiose threats of reprisal: "I vow, if she but once frowne on thee more, / To hang her meteor like twixt heaven and earth" (1.1.8 & 12-3). But the visual image of Jupiter sitting on his throne with Ganymede on his lap is surely a parody of our Virgilian icon. Or, rather, it is a parody of the scene of Venus's supplication to Jupiter produced by super-imposing onto that scene this parodic icon of Dido and Cupid. Duncan is right to see Lucianic influence at work here, but the design of the induction also seems to owe something to the penultimate scene of Lyly's *Sappho and Phao*. Jupiter's acquisition of a pretty boy and Venus's stormy intrusion into their affectionate baby-talk seems remarkably similar to the final scene in the contest between

Sappho and Venus over the disposition of *eros* in Lyly's play. However, I wish to end this essay by returning briefly to the larger aesthetic considerations concerning the representation of such 'secular icons' on the Elizabethan stage.

Secular Icons

We began by comparing the Lylian image of Sappho with Cupid on her lap with the sacred icon of the 'Madonna and Child'. It is not impossible that Lyly meant to sound a mariological resonance with his own image, but the panegyrical context of the play would argue against it. Although Elizabethan iconography was deeply implicated in the traditional images and symbols of the Virgin Mary, the 'Madonna and Child' was an inappropriate icon in the case of a childless queen.[16] Rather, Lyly was drawing on a secular tradition, in which the same basic configuration – such as mother and baby – might appear without any obvious sacred implications. However, the word *icon* will always have the ring of the sacred even in its most casually journalistic uses. When we talk of the 'icons' of the silver screen or of prepubescent pop-music, we always imply an element of worship (usually 'false worship'). In the case of what I have been calling the 'Dido and Cupid icon', this quasi-sacred element of veneration derives from its function as a demonstration of the awesome power of *eros*.

Virgil himself makes this clear in his little narratorial moralisation of the image: "good Dido nothing knowes / How great a god upon her sits, what cares on her hee throwes". Of course, in Virgil's time, when the gods were still worshipped, there may have been a genuinely religious element in his depiction of Dido as a hapless victim of Cupid. But the image was secularised by the poets of christendom, for whom it was merely one amongst many other allegorical illustrations of the force of sexual desire. One thinks, for example, of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, which tells the story of a number of 'Cupid's martyrs'. The longest tale is given over to the "Legenda Didonis martiris", where Chaucer

[16] Therefore we find very little—if any—allusion to the use of the icon in Elizabethan panegyric in Helen Hackett's invaluable survey: *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen* (1995).

complicates the scene by casting doubt on Cupid's part in Dido's infatuation (F 1139-47):

> *. . . oure autor telleth us,*
> *That Cupido, that is the god of love,*
> *At preyere of his moder hye above,*
> *Hadde the liknesse of the child [Ascanius] ytake,*
> *This noble queen enamored to make*
> *On Eneas; but, as of that scripture,*
> *Be as it may, I hold no cure.*
> *But soth is this, the queen hath mad swich chere*
> *Unto this child, that wonder is to here.*

Since Chaucer has been commanded by Cupid himself to write these legends, he may well wish to minimise the part played by "myghty god of Love" in Dido's tragedy. There is no mention of his direct intervention in any of the other tales, but since Virgil makes so much of it in his story of Dido and Aeneas, Chaucer feels he has to deny this part of the "scripture".

In fact, although Chaucer preserves a little of the mystery of the original episode in Virgil by referring to the extraordinary fervency of Dido's affection towards Cupid-Ascanius, "that wonder is to here", he remains on the whole a sceptical narrator, even a slightly lewd one. The "secret flame" which Venus orders Cupid to inspire in Dido is now transferred to the quite ordinary effects of conversation and "pleye" between Dido and Aeneas (1156-8):

> *Of which ther gan to breden swich a fyr,*
> *That sely Dido hath now swich desyr,*
> *With Eneas, hire newe gest, to dele.*

Now "dele" means 'have sex with'; and the bluntness of this remark again suggests that Dido's passion was of natural rather than supernatural origin. Chaucer's treats the episode with a similar absence of awe or reverence when he tells the story in his earlier poem: *The House of Fame* (1.240-247):

> *And, shortly of this thyng to pace,*
> *She [Venus] made Eneas so in grace*
> *Of Dido, quene of that contree,*
> *That, shortly for to tellen, she*
> *Becam hys love, and let him doo*
> *Al that weddynge longeth too.*

What shulde I speke more queynte,
Or peyne me my wordes peynte
To speke of love?

Even though he keeps the allusion to Venus here, Chaucer's clumsy euphemisms and apologies ("queynte" is a word for the female pudendum) make light of the episode.

This is the spirit in which Marlowe approaches his Virgil, as many have observed. The emphasis on the physicality of love leads to his replication of the arresting image of one boy-actor holding a smaller boy-actor in his arms. From what we know of the scandalous reputation so often assigned to the boy-actors and their admirers, such images must have been designed to produce a distinctly homoerotic *frisson* which bears no relation to the sacred mystery that hangs about Virgil's icon of Cupid and Dido. Lyly was perhaps more prudish than Marlowe. He only very rarely even allows his boys to kiss on stage. But like Marlowe, he was aware of the limitations of boy-actors in 'heroic' roles. The academic juvenile drama of the Tudor century shows a distinct *penchant* for plays based on tragic or epic themes, but there the histrionic emphasis was more on rhetorical delivery (the cultivation of 'boldness') than on theatrical verisimilitude. But Lyly's plays were written for a metropolitan juvenile company that was in more or less open commercial competition with the adult companies; and he was always alive to the comic possibilities of any inherent comparision between the diminutive actors of his own troupe and the men who played elsewhere in London. Parody is almost a structural feature of the boy's drama simply because it is played by boys. Epic and tragedy do not thrive in such conditions, and nor does panegyric, which is also concerned with gods and heroes and other persons of greater not less stature than ordinary men and women. Perhaps we need a new term for Lylian drama: 'parapanegyric'. The final image of Sappho with Cupid on her lap is on the one hand a development and supersession of the panegyrical devices involving queens and cupids made by Churchyard and Goldingham, but it collapses immediately into the comic domesticity of Lucianic or Chaucerian irreverence. One can only imagine that Elizabeth was amused.

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"SO POTENT ART": MAGIC POWER IN MARLOWE, GREENE AND SHAKESPEARE

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Merlin, the legendary wizard of Arthurian romance, has neither Ph.D. nor library. His knowledge of magic does not derive from books, nor is it the fruit of academic study. His forecasts of the future are prophecy, not lectures. He is a prophet, after all, not a professor. Professors rarely live in caves or in the woods, where Merlin makes his home, a wild and – according to Robert de Boron – inordinately hairy creature. Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* reports that Merlin was begotten by a devil with a virtuous maiden. (Griscom 1929, 381).[1] The learned Faustus, more the professorial type, has a more prosaic family background. We read in Marlowe's Prologue that he is descended from "parents base of stocke." Not until after he "was grac't with Doctors name" did he team up with the Antichrist and dabble in magic. As magicians, the difference between Merlin and Faustus can be summarized thus: Merlin is a natural talent, Faustus is not. Faustus is an academic.

From medieval romance to Renaissance drama, the figure of the magician undergoes a transformation. The half-devil becomes fully human. The Merlin of the romances was Prospero, Ariel, and Caliban all in one, but the magician of Elizabethan drama, no longer endowed with innate magical gifts, approaches the world of magic as a scholar, a scientist, an explorer. And just as the explorer's urge for knowledge, in the age of a Columbus, a Ralegh, a Pizarro or a Drake, aims at conquest and domination, so is the magician's curiosity inseparable from his will to power. In staging the magician's "fortunes good or bad", the

[1] The devil in question belongs to the category of "spiritus, quos incubos demones appellamur." For a detailed survey of the various strands of the Merlin tradition see (Loomis 1959).

Elizabethan dramatists, contemporaries of Francis Bacon, devise test-cases for the axiom that knowledge is power. Within the hierarchical framework of their society, the magician's claim to power is an anomaly, even a transgression. Justified by neither birth nor office, it rests on nothing but his knowledge or – the word most frequently used in the plays – his "art". He shares this rather precarious position with that other practitioner of art, the playwright. The analogy between magician and dramatist is one of the commonplaces of criticism of *The Tempest*[2] but has rarely been explored with reference to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* or Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. The point I wish to argue is that in all of the three plays[3] the figure of the stage magician can be read as a portrait of the artist, especially of the artist in society. His scope and limitations reveal themselves in the power hoped for, or actually wielded by, the magician. And just as this magical power turns out to be a highly problematical asset, the position of the artist-magician vacillates between grandeur and social isolation, between visions of unlimited upward mobility and total failure.

At the beginning of Marlowe's play, Faustus' entrepreneurial optimism knows no limit: "All things that mooue betweene the quiet poles/Shal be at my commaund", (A-text; i, 86f). In euphoric anticipation he abandons himself to a vision of boundless power that will raise him above any worldly potentate:

> *Emperours and Kings,*
> *Are but obeyd in their seuerall prouinces:*
> *Nor can they raise the winde, or rend the cloudes:*
> *But his dominion that exceedes in this,*
> *Stretcheth as farre as doth the minde of man.*
> *(A-text, 1.87-91)*

[2] Cf. Berger 1977; Ettin 1977; Kernan 1979.

[3] Quotations are from the following texts: *Marlowe's Doctor Faustus 1604-1616* ed. by W.W. Greg (Marlowe 1950); Robert Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, ed. by Daniel Seltzer, Regents Renaissance Drama Series (Greene 1964); William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Stephen Orgel, The Oxford Shakespeare (Shakespeare 1987).

Greene's "frolic friar"[4] is no less boastful in his claims. He too means power when he speaks of his magic. And so does Prospero, at whose command even graves

> *Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth*
> *By my so potent art.*
> *(5.1.49)*

Disregarding their obvious differences for the moment, we can say that the three magicians strongly resemble each other in emphasizing power as the main benefit of a knowledge of magic. Before examining the nature and scope of this power more closely, it is enlightening to note that the scholar or scientist is given a leading part in the Elizabethan theatre only as a magician. Only when his curiosity transcends the boundaries of legitimate pursuit of knowledge, only when his chances of gain and loss assume horrendous proportions, does the stage take any interest in the character of the academic.[5] The dry pedant, the puny bookworm must make a quantum leap from the harmless to the dangerous to become a figure capable of captivating an audience.[6] But it is not his entertainment value alone which qualifies the scholar-turned-magician for the stage. The fascination goes deeper. Reaching beyond the limits imposed by law and convention, he becomes, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, 'a man who stands in symbolic relations to

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[4] For a discussion of Greene's portrayal of Roger Bacon in comparison with his main source, *The Famous Historie of Frier Bacon*, in (Thoms [1907]), c.f. Daniel Seltzer, "Introduction", (Greene 1964).

[5] Cf. *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, 2.46-51:

> Resolve you, doctors, Bacon can by books
> Make storming Boreas thunder from his cave
> And dim fair Luna to a dark eclipse.
> The great arch-ruler, potentate of hell,
> Trembles, when Bacon bids him or his fiends
> Bow to the force of his pentageron.

[6] Arguing along similar lines, György E. Szőnyi points out that the legitimate pursuit of knowledge can never satisfy the illimitable desire of the Renaissance imagination as represented by the figure of Faustus. Cf. Szőnyi 1991, 2.

the art and culture of his age',[7] an emblem for its most optimistic beliefs as well as its deepest fears.

The credo of man's unlimited power and potential for self-realization, that centrepiece of Renaissance humanism, is nowhere more enthusiastically expressed than in Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's famous introductory speech to his nine hundred theses, *De hominis dignitate* (1486). "That we are what we want to be" is the message of this tract, in which Pico has God Himself address man and explain to him his place in the world.

> *O Adam, I have given you neither a determined place nor a single physiognomy, nor any specific gift, since the place, the physiognomy, and gifts which you wish for you shall have, according to your wish and will. As for the others, their defined nature is ruled by laws which I have prescribed; while you are not limited by any barrier but your own will, in which power I have placed you so that you determine your own nature. I have installed you in the middle of the world in order that you examine there most comfortably around you all that exists in the world. I have made you neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal, so that, master of yourself and having as it were the honor and duty of fashioning and modeling your own being, you will compose it in the form which you prefer. You can degenerate into lower forms, which are animal, or you can, by a decision of your spirit, be regenerated in higher forms which are divine (Garin 1942).*

Man created by God is given god-like creative power to shape his own being. On the basis of this notion the artist gains a hitherto inconceivable prestige, exemplifying as he does man's distinctive feature in its purest essence: that of maker, of *poietés*. This line of argument is most forcefully pursued in Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*:

> *The Greeks called him 'a poet', which name hath, as the most excellent, gone through other languages. It cometh of this word poiein, which is 'to make': wherein I know not whether by luck or wisdom, we Englishmen have met with the Greeks in calling him 'a maker': which name, how*

[7] Wilde says of himself in *De Profundis*: "I was a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age" (Wilde [1966] 1969, 912).

> *high and incomparable a title it is, I had rather were known by marking the scope of other sciences than by my partial allegation (Sidney 1965, 100).*

While Sidney describes the working of poetic invention as a kind of creative alchemy turning nature's brazen world into a golden one of his own making, we must go back to Pico for an explicit statement on the nature and function of magic. Following his teacher Ficino, whose Latin translation of the *Corpus hermeticum* provided Renaissance occultism with one of its key texts,[8] Pico recommends magic as "the most perfect highest wisdom" and a means of rising to the level of the divine. Like the other Neo-Platonist admirers of magic, he is at great pains to distinguish beneficial "mageia" from its evil counterpart "goeteia", or black magic.[9] This "most deceitful of all arts" turns its adepts into "slaves of the powers of darkness". (How true this is, Faustus must learn at his own cost.)

The appearance of the figure of the magician on the Elizabethan stage may be said to bear witness to the continuing impact of what Jacob Burckhardt called one of the noblest legacies of the Renaissance, Pico's treatise on the dignity of man. The aspirations of a Faustus, a Bacon, a Prospero clearly presuppose the humanist background. But it is no less clear that the dramatists' presentation of the learned conjurer/magus contains a critique, a revision of Piconian idealism. For Pico's praise of man's unlimited potential has quite important limitations, ignoring as it does both the physical and the socio-political determinants of human existence.[10] As his own creator and creation, Pico's philosophical *Übermensch* embarks on his journey towards spiritual perfection unimpeded by obstacles arising from his physical nature or from the world around him. Pico's work triumphantly bears witness to that brief historical moment when Renais-

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[8] For two fairly recent accounts of Neo-Platonic occultism cf. Vickers 1984 and Mebane 1989.

[9] For a discussion of this and other distinctions and their (doubtful) applicability to specific dramatic texts cf. Szőnyi 1995, 110-114.

[10] For a different view of Pico's attitude toward man's physical existence see Barkan 1975, pp. 32-33. According to Barkan, Pico does not ignore the body but considers it, "as only one element in man's chameleon-like condition", with a "mixture of celebration and fear".

sance optimism asserted itself unchecked,[11] while the plays belong to a later period full of doubts, reservations and misgivings.[12] But also the nature of drama itself precludes the unimpeded spiritual progress envisaged by Pico. Drama, simply, must place obstacles in the hero's path to be dramatic. The stage necessarily adds those factors that the philosopher is at liberty to leave out: society and the body.

The case of Prospero, Duke of Milan, is instructive. He is not left in peace to reach the highest stage of spiritual perfection. Neglecting his state duties, "all dedicated to closeness and the bettering of my mind" (1.2.89), he is rudely forced from his esoteric seclusion by a brother, driven not by Pico's "sacred ambition" but by a much more worldly thirst for power. Pico's vision proves to be incomplete, unrealistic: Prospero cannot, after all, escape being a *zóon politikón*, a political animal. Only after he has learned how to use magical knowledge – which he initially employed only for self-improvement – to manipulate others does the deposed duke regain his lost place in society.

In Robert Greene's play man's subjection to the frailty of his body is made evident with the didactic simplicity of a moral exemplum. Bacon's most cherished creation is a brazen head with prophetic powers. Just before the head comes to life to utter its long-expected prophecy, Bacon is overcome by fatigue and must leave his observation post to Miles, his dim-witted factotum. Miles, predictably, wastes the precious magic moment. All he can report to his master afterwards is that the head has spoken the words: "Time is. Time was. Time is past" (scene xi). The ability to see "what is, what will be, and what has been" is one of the marks of perfection distinguishing Pico's ideal man. Greene gives us a mocking echo of this ultimate achievement by showing the powerful magician frustrated by a banal, yet basic human need, the need to sleep.

Marlowe too leaves us in no doubt that his magician is a being of flesh and blood with not only a soul to lose but a body as well. Faustus' body turns into a protean trick object which can be dismantled and reassembled. In one scene a torn-out leg, in another (in the B-text) even his severed head is miraculously re-

[11] Although Pico, of course, was checked by the church authorities who prevented his grand scheme for a synthesis of Christianity, Judaism and classical Greek philosophy by placing him under the ban.

[12] Arnold Hauser's monumental study *Der Manierismus* (1964) is still one of the best accounts of this shift.

stored. Pico's idea of man as his own creator and creation is parodied here in a crude black farce anticipating the devil's threat to tear Faustus to pieces. ("Reuolt, or Ile in peece-meale teare thy flesh"; A-text; 13.1335).

On the inner stage of humanist theorizing, man appears god-like in his freedom to make his own destiny. Drama confronts him with forces beyond his control, subjecting him to a dialectics of intention and achievement, fantasy and reality. The humanist ideal of self-determination finds its dramatic correlative in the protagonist's wish for self-transformation. Faustus takes up magic because it promises to enable him to rule the world. The difference between the Elizabethan magus and his medieval predecessor is clearly recognizable. When Merlin changes King Uther into the likeness of Gorlois and himself into Bricel, this transformation is a mere disguise, a courtly stratagem to gain access to Tintagel castle and help Uther rendezvous with the fair Igerne.[13] Faustus wants a much more fundamental transformation, hoping to become what Merlin already is: a magician. His urge for power suffers no delay. He wants everything at once, no matter what the cost. "This night Ile conjure though I die therefore" (A-text; 1.199). The same rashness that leads him to discard the whole of his academic learning after a cursory and highly distorted summing-up of the main tenets of each discipline characterizes his approach to magic.[14] Like Tamburlaine, he chooses "the shortest cut" to power. Patient study is definitely not his forte. Rhetorically, he behaves like another Scythian world-conqueror. Given his conviction that, being human, he cannot escape sin and hence damnation, his headlong rush towards magic is inspired by a vision of magical omnipotence that surpasses anything his 'colleagues' Bacon and Prospero ever attempt or envisage.

Greene's "frolic friar" intends to surround England with a protecting wall of brass. The project, which remains unrealized, resembles Faustus' fantasizing in its megalomaniac proportions. However, it differs from the German doctor's plans in two important aspects. First, it confines itself to a large, but limited territory: England. Secondly, and more importantly, it is intended to serve the community of which Bacon sees himself a part. Bacon's magical authority does

[13] Cf. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, chap. 19.

[14] Faustus impatience has been a matter of much debate among commentators. Cf. West 1974; Ettin 1974, 280-281; Blackburn 1978; Traister 1984, 93-96.

not compete with the lawful authority of the king, which is also very much in evidence in the play. Instead of a struggle of rival 'charismas', which Stephen Greenblatt has taught us to recognize as the ubiquitous secret agenda of Elizabethan drama,[15] Greene's play demonstrates a separation of powers. Bacon's magic does not encroach upon, but supports the legitimate authority of the king, thus securing legitimacy for itself. This is in accordance with the ambitions of contemporary practitioners of the occult, people like John Dee, Robert Fludd, or Simon Forman. Never quite safe from the threat of church reprisals or mob violence, none of them would have dreamt of aiming higher than service to the crown (in the role of court astrologer, for instance).

This falls far short of Faustus' ambition. His megalomaniac vision knows no limit. The power he craves "stretcheth as farre as doth the mind of man". It is entirely egotistical, anti-social, and, in its absoluteness, a direct challenge to the legitimate authority of the monarch. What Faustus desires clearly goes beyond even the power of a Prospero, whose control over nature and a household of ever-ready spirits confines itself to the *locus conclusus* of a remote island and finds its strategic *telos* in the regaining of a dukedom, that is, the restitution of legitimate rule over a limited territory.

The decisive difference between Faustus and Prospero and Bacon is, of course, that Faustus does not get what he wants. His dream of power eludes him like a fata morgana. The depth of his tragic fall can be measured by the gap between wish and fulfilment. His progress from would-be emperor to the devil's serf, like the progress of a Macbeth or Brutus, is lined with dramatic ironies. His first success, ironically, is a failure. He conjures. Mephistophilis appears. Faustus rejoices. For a moment, the beginner deludes himself into thinking that he has reached the pinnacle of black art, exclaiming: "Faustus, thou art Coniurer laureate" (A-text; 3.276). But Mephistophilis drily curbs his self-congratulatory en-

[15] Cf. Greenblatt 1988, 94-128. The socio-historical groundwork for Greenblatt's argument is to be found in Keith Thomas' comprehensive study *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971).

thusiasm: there had been no compelling force in Faustus' words; the devil has appeared more or less by accident.[16]

The pact confirms Faustus' powerlessness. Magic, he had hoped, would miraculously annihilate the difference between thinking and doing, opening up a paradise of unrestrained wish-fulfilment.

But just as the witches' prophecies in *Macbeth*, while seeming to guarantee the usurper's invulnerability, only augur his downfall, Faustus' grandiose vision of world rule, ironically, turns out to be true in a most devastatingly literal way. "As farre as doth the minde of man" – defines the true extent of Faustus' realm. Confined to his imagination, it stretches not a jot beyond his mind. It is a utopia in the literal sense of the word: a 'no place', a nowhereland, a portable paradise whose seductive glamour soon fades away. The topography of Marlowe's play allows Faustus' utopian vision no place to realize itself, no room to inhabit, no territory to colonize. There is simply no free space left.

When Faustus asks Mephistophilis where hell is, he gets the famous answer: "Why, this is hel nor am I out of it." Hell is, in fact, everywhere.[17] In comparison with that other Marlovian overreacher, Tamburlaine, this reveals a crucial difference. In *Tamburlaine* the stage represents those territories which the protagonist subjects one by one to his rule. At first his realm too, like Faustus', is nothing but a vision. But soon this powerful vision occupies the entire performance space. Faustus, on the other hand, loses what little space he can call his own. Through his subjection to the devil, even '*his* study' is swallowed up into the universal locality of hell. When Faustus returns from his wanderings, the study he once set out from is not a last sanctuary but a trap. The final soliloquy completes the tragic reversal. In the beginning, Faustus had set himself up to be "a mighty God." Now he vainly tries the opposite route, praying to be changed into an animal in order to avoid the eternal torture only human souls must suffer.

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16 FAU. Did not my coniuring speeches raise thee? speake.
ME. That was the cause, but yet per accident,
(A-text; 3.290f.)

17 Cf. Ricks 1985; Hugo Keiper (1992), points out that the play's topography differs significantly in the A- and B-versions of the text.

Or better – because smaller – still:
Oh soul, be changde into little water drops,
And fal into the Ocean, nere be found
(A-text, 14.1502f.)

Yet this transformation is no more a success than the first one. It, too, remains a mere fantasy. Throughout the play Faustus' "art" is essentially the working of his overproductive imagination. Thus Marlowe's learned magician may be properly called an artist in a far more literal sense than he himself is aware of: someone who is, in the words of Sidney's *Apology*, "lifted up with the vigour of his own invention" (Sidney 1965, 100). Andrew Ettin illustrates Faustus' urge for instant mastery by quoting Sartre's observation that "the act of imagination is a magical one. It is an incantation destined to produce the object of one's thought, the thing one desires [...]. In that act there is always something of the imperious and the infantile, a refusal to take distance or difficulties into account" (Ettin 1974, 280). But the passage serves equally well to corroborate the close affinity between magician and poet. It seems no accident, then, that Faustus should describe himself after the first, seemingly triumphant, manifestation of his newly acquired art as "Coniurer *Laureate*" (A-text; 3.276)

For all his self-aggrandizement, Greene's "frolic friar" is more moderate in his claims than Faustus. This is due to the design of Greene's comedy as much as to Bacon's fundamental Englishness. The monodramatic structure of Marlowe's play sets the protagonist off against a gallery of shadowy background figures, but Bacon's progress takes place in the framework of a comedy plot. In the love triangle involving Prince Edward, Lacy, and Margaret, the fair maid of Fressingfield, he has an important but subsidiary part to play. Unlike Faustus, he never presumes to grasp for political power. Even when he boasts of being strong enough to subdue ten Caesars, this does not mean that he entertains any hopes of becoming a ruler ten times as powerful as the Roman statesman. Rather, he speaks as an English patriot who wants to protect his country against foreign aggressors.

And I will strengthen England by my skill,
That if ten Caesars liv'd and reign'd in Rome,
With all the legions Europe doth contain,
They should not touch a grass of English ground.
(2.58-61)

Although the means by which Bacon wants to achieve this end may be wrong – a protective brass wall would, after all, be hardly in the interest of an expanding seapower – the patriotic end in itself is never discredited in the play. While Faustus, too, initially intends to do some good for his fellow academics and for his country,[18] Bacon is actually shown to act as England's champion in a spectacular public contest with his foreign competitor, Vandermast, which doubtless won him much favour with Elizabethan audiences.[19] Throughout Greene's play, the magician's mighty egotism is tempered by his containment in two overlapping social contexts: the scholarly community at Oxford and the romance-setting of a distinctly pre-modern, feudal England.

This containment makes his art both less absolute and more effective. For all his boasting, Faustus hardly ever interferes with the course of other peoples' lives.[20] Bacon, on the other hand, does so on several occasions, and with striking results. He invents a "prospective glass" in which far-off people and events appear to be present. These 'live broadcasts' affect both watcher and watched. Thus Edward espies his friend Lacy who, instead of pressing the prince's suit with Margaret, is about to marry her himself. Bacon uses his magical remote control to stop the ceremony by paralyzing Friar Bungay's arms. This may still be a relatively harmless prank. But when two students, young Lambert and young Serlsby, stab each other to death after watching their fathers die in a duel fought over the fair Margaret, Bacon realizes that his magic is out of control. He too, proud know-it-all that he is, must learn his lesson – albeit a much less severe

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[18] Cf. A-Text, 1.120-125:

> Ile haue them wall all *Iermany* with brasse
> And make swift *Rhine* circle fair *Wertenberge*:
> Ile haue them fill the publike schooles with skill.
> Wherewith the students shalbe brauely clad:
> Ile leuy souldiers with the coyne they bring,
> And chase the Prince of *Parma* from our land ...

[19] James D. McCallum (1920) first suggested that this scene may have been based on Giordano Bruno's celebrated visit to Oxford from April to July 1583. For a discussion of the patriotic element in the play, see Ardolino 1988.

[20] This is true of the A-text. In the Saxon Bruno Episode of the B-text, Faustus does in fact influence the course of European politics.

one than the one his colleague Faustus learns.[21] Full of remorse, he smashes the glass, abjures his dark practices and vows to spend his life thenceforth "In pure devotion, praying to my God" (13.107). Notwithstanding this pious resolution, the play's final assessment of magic is by no means uncompromisingly negative.[22] The grand festive finale restores harmony by reconciling the rivals, Prince Edward and Lacy, and matching them with appropriate damsels in a double wedding. This not only includes Bacon but occasions the most resonant of his patriotic speeches to bring the play to a close. Bacon clearly speaks here with the authority of a magician. Even without his brazen head, he can see into the future. His prophecy transcends the fictional world of the play by connecting the theatrical representation of monarchy with its real life representative: Bacon prophesies the rule of 'Diana', Elizabeth I.[23] The most authoritative statement in the play is thus attributed to the vatic powers of the artist-magician.

> *I find by deep prescience of mine art,*
> *Which once I temper'd in my secret cell,*
> *That here where Brute did build his Troynovant,*
> *From forth the royal garden of a king*
> *Shall flourish out so rich and fair a bud*
> *Whose brightness shall deface proud Phoebus' flower,*
> *And over-shadow Albion with her leaves.*

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[21] The hope denied to Faustus is readily – even instantly – available to Bacon:

> God's mercy.
> Yet Bacon, cheer thee; drown not in despair.
> Sins have their salves. Repentance can do much.
> Think mercy sits where Justice holds her seat,
> And from those wounds those bloody Jews did pierce,
> Which by magic oft did bleed afresh
> From thence for thee the dew of mercy drops
> To wash the wrath of high Jehova's ire,
> And make thee as a new-born babe from sin.
> (13.98-105)

[22] Cf. Crupi 1986, 119: "Greene [. . .] sets two images of Bacon's magic against each other, and neither quite cancels out the other [. . .] The potential for good is genuine, but Bacon must renounce the destructive power of forces that he cannot fully control."

[23] For the mythological symbolism of this passage, cf. Mortensen 1972, 206-207.

Till then Mars shall be master of the field;
But then the stormy threats of wars shall cease.
[...]
Juno shall shut her gilliflowers up,
And Pallas' bay shall bash her brightest green;
Ceres' carnation, in consort with those,
Shall stoop and wonder at Diana's rose.
(xvi,42-50, 59-62)

Faustus is the radical egoist who demands absolute power and reaps absolute dependency; Bacon, with magical powers purified of dangerous side-effects, can be integrated into a romanticized image of England. Prospero represents a third variant of the learned magician. Unlike the other two, he wields both magical and political power. It has been suggested recently (Rosador 1990) that Shakespeare was careful to separate Prospero's two roles in order to avoid any contamination of legitimate monarchic power with its illegitimate competitor, the power of magic. Hence Prospero must cease to be a duke when he becomes a magician and must abjure his magic before becoming a duke again. Likewise, according to this argument, the magician's island had to be separated spatially from the duchy of Milan. The play, it seems however, is not quite as clear-cut in its segregation of the two powers or spheres. Prospero, it is true, changes from duke to magician to duke again, but it is only through magic that he wins his dukedom back. Like the forest of Arden in *As You Like It* and the woods near Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Prospero's island represents that "green world" which Northrop Frye has identified as the centerpiece of the typical tripartite structure of Shakespearean comedy. Within a progression "from normal world to green world and back" (Frye 1948, 58-73), this "green world" may be set apart from everyday reality, yet its influence always extends well into the "normal world". Witness Miranda's marriage with Ferdinand, by which Prospero determines the political future of two states, Milan and Naples. Here, as in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, magic brings about "something of great constancy". Although the action of *The Tempest* – except for I i – takes place entirely on the island, the triadic structure is nonetheless clearly recognizable in the prehistory and posthistory of the dramatis personae. On the island, Prospero reigns absolute, no less so than Faustus in his imaginary nowhereland. But Faustus' unreal kingdom soon fades to nothingness precisely because of its

unreality, while Prospero's island is visited by emissaries of the real world cast up on its shore by a tempest which is nothing more than a magic trick. Magical and political power, like green world and normal world, are not neatly separable in the play.

Nor is there any strict moral segregation of the two types of power. In taking possession of Caliban's island by magical force, the deposed duke, it is true, becomes a usurper himself. But such an act of colonialist violence would hardly appear reprehensible to Shakespeare's original audience,[24] and Prospero's ability to establish and uphold his rule on the island is the test he must pass before he can reclaim his former authority and eventually present himself "as I was sometime Milan" (5.1.86). This does not relieve the moral dubiousness of Prospero's island regime. On the contrary, this dubiousness extends beyond the magic circle of the island to the very foundations of the dukedom regained. Prospero proceeds from innocence to experience, from pure to applied magic, from the idealism of bettering his mind to the *Realpolitik* of authoritarian statecraft. Only then is he ready to regain his position as head of state, ready to foil any future designs on his rule by the likes of Antonio and Sebastian, whose evil natures have proved impervious to his "so potent art".

But Shakespeare does not let matters rest here. Instead of 'freezing' the tableau of order restored as the play's final image, he dissolves all magical and political power in a final gesture of resignation. The world of the play cancels itself in Prospero's address to the audience.[25]

The epilogue both recalls and revokes the initial act of magical manipulation, the storm, which landed the shipwrecked travellers from Tunis in a maze of magical illusions and the spectators in a world of dramatic fiction. Now Prospero finds himself shipwrecked "on this bare island" which, the moment he calls it an island, ceases to be one and becomes nothing but a bare stage. Thus the magical power that could raise a storm on this wooden platform is handed

[24] Stephen Orgel lists some of the most important treatments of the colonialist issue in the introduction to his edition of the play (*The Tempest*, p. 24). Montaigne's favourable view, also cited by Orgel, that the cannibals represent a state of prelapsarian innocence is certainly not given much import in the portrayal of Caliban.

[25] *The Tempest* 5.1.319-338. For a perceptive discussion of Prospero's epilogue see Weimann 1991.

over to those whose acceptance had empowered the magic of theatrical illusion in the first place: the spectators.

The epilogue reveals that Prospero's realm, like Faustus', is a mere phantasm. It stretcheth as far – and no farther than – the mind of man. Within their respective fictional worlds, the two magicians Prospero and Faustus could not be farther apart from each other, embodying as they do the extremes of power and impotence, achievement and mere fantasizing. The metatheatrical ending of *The Tempest* cancels this opposition. As creator (and creation) of theatrical make-believe, Prospero turns out to be a close relation of Faustus as well as Bacon – playmakers, illusionists all.

Faustus' magical power just suffices to serve the potentates he had boasted of forcing into submission as an entertainer and provider of quasi-theatrical spectacle. This is nowhere more evident than in his encounter with the emperor, Charles V. "The Emporer shal not liue but by my leave" rants the would-be magician (A-text; iii 355). No trace of such bragging remains in his obsequious address to the ruler:

> *FAUSTUS:*
> *My gratious Soueraigne, though I must confesse / my selfe farre inferior to the report men haue published, and / nothing answerable to the honor of your Imperial maiesty, / yet for that loue and duety bindes me there-vnto, I am con- / tent to do whatsoeuer your maiesty shall command me. (A-text; x, 1052-1056)*

These grovelling civilities resemble in tone and function the flattering dedicatory prefaces which 16th-century poets and playwrights wrote to secure aristocratic patronage. The emperor demands to see a show: Alexander the Great and his paramour, complete with the mole on her neck, as real as if they were alive and yet, as Faustus painstakingly points out, not "the true substantial bodies" but "spirits", "shadows" or, one might say, theatre. Like the stages of Elizabethan London, Faustus' magical theatre is beholden to government authority which restricts it while at the same time securing its liberty. The legislation which in the course of the sixteenth century – most stridently during the first decade of Elizabeth's reign – defined "the place of the stage",[26] its legal

[26] Cf. Mullaney 1987.

and social status within the community, severed those ties with the political and religious issues of the day that had enabled the theatre to serve as a propaganda weapon during the denominational controversies of the 1530s and 40s.[27] Forced by law to refrain from any direct interference in the affairs of church or state, the stage gained the aesthetic freedom to house infinite worlds of the imagination. The emperor's words similarly circumscribe Faustus' magical performance.

> *... therefore is my request, that thou let me see some proof of thy skil*
> *... and here I sweare to thee, by the honour of mine Imperial crowne, that what euer thou doest, thou shalt be no wayes preiudiced, or indamaged. (A-text; x, 1045-1050).*[28]

"A sound magician is a mighty god" (A-text; i, 92), says Faustus in his opening monologue. The same could be said of the poet and is, in fact, said of him in Sidney's *Apology*.[29] Like Faustus, the magician who turns out to be "omnimpotent", in Constance Brown Kuriyama's apt term (Kuriyama 1980, 95-135), he is both almighty and powerless. As creator of a "second nature", the poet, like Prospero and Faustus, rules absolute in a world of his own making, a heterocosm, which is *like* reality but severed from reality.

Sidney, steeped as he is in classical poetics, has nothing but contempt for the dramatists of his own day, and although he died before the heyday of the Elizabethan stage it is safe to assume that its masterpieces would not have found his favour, either. But it was not just in the abstract realm of Aristotelian poetics

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[27] Cf. Yachnin 1991, 59: "The polemical theater of the early and middle Tudor Period gave way to the recreational theater of Elizabeth's reign." (ibid., 73): "The powerlessness of the stage guaranteed the players a prosperous security because a powerless theater was perceived by the authorities to pose no threat to the established political order." A good example of the earlier polemical theatre is found in the works of John Bale, who designates "players, printers, preachers" as "a triple bulwark against the triple crown of the Pope". Cf. Balslev-Blatt 1968, 131.

[28] This brings up the much debated question of containment versus subversion, which has been one of the major issues of new historicist and cultural materialist criticism. (For a view almost diametrically opposed to Paul Yachnin's article quoted above cf. Kastan 1986).

[29] No consideration of *An Apology for Poetry* should ignore its complex rhetorical ironies. Sidney's facetiousness undercutting his claims for the quasi-divine status of the poet is not all that remote from the dramatic ironies Marlowe employs to deflate Faustus' aspirations. For a perceptive analysis of Sidney's argument, cf. (Levao 1979).

that the contemporary dramatist found himself near the bottom of the scale. G.E. Bentley's ample evidence (Bentley 1971) suggests that socially he fared little better. Society at large held his works – a term never even applied to plays before Ben Jonson's daring Folio-publication of 1616 – in similarly low esteem. Because the plays of Shakespeare and his colleagues have for us become such central texts of early modern discourse we tend to forget their actual marginality. As professional writers, purveyors of a literary commodity the Elizabethan playwrights are the true avant-garde pointing the way towards the literary marketplace of subsequent centuries. But it is their very professionalism in turning a gentlemanly leisure-time activity into a mere trade which discredits them in the eyes of their contemporaries. Even the actors of the licensed companies on whom they depended for their income seem to have been held in higher esteem.[30] Although the young 'university wits' of the 1580s and early 1590s may have embarked on their literary careers with high hopes for advancement through patronage, the realization of these hopes was more the exception than the rule.

Bearing this in mind, the fact that Faustus, Prospero and, to a lesser extent, Bacon are all presented as lonely, isolated figures further emphasizes the kinship between magus and dramatist. From the hubris of his supposed singularity, Faustus undergoes a process of painful isolation culminating poignantly in the lonely agony of his last hour. Knowledge, initially promising total control, has become the tragic awareness of total, irrevocable isolation. Prospero, who towers in solitary superiority above all the other characters, at the end of the play must face his audience alone: no longer the all-powerful ruler but a supplicant asking for mercy. Only Bacon is allowed to pass beyond despair and isolation and return to his place within the community in the grand festive finale.

At a time when the writing of dramatic poetry was becoming a profession and gaining its practitioners the precarious liberty of working freelance, Robert Greene, who in his short life seems to have seen more of the pitfalls than the advantages of this new freedom, nostalgically evokes an idealized version of the older feudal order in which the wizard-poet held his undisputed place near the centre of power, sustained by and sustaining the charisma of the monarch. As

[30] Bentley 1971, 49-50.

Marlowe and Shakespeare conceive him, the learned magus encompassing the extremes of omnipotence and powerlessness, emblematically reflects the new situation of the writer, ruling in god-like absoluteness over a realm of his own invention, yet a marginal, inconsequential figure in the eyes of the world.

With Faustus and Prospero a dichotomy begins to make itself felt which compelled another defender of the 'magical' power of poetry, two centuries after Sidney, Percy Bysshe Shelley, to proclaim that "poets are the *unacknowledged* legislators of the world" (Shelley 1880, 144).

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"MONSTROUS REGIMENT": STAGING FEMALE RULE

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In the sixteenth century, two developments began to occur in Europe which, although they arose for different reasons, soon became interlinked. In the first place, there was a sudden dramatic increase in the number of women rulers wielding power in a range of European countries - Mary and Elizabeth Tudor in England, Mary of Guise and Mary, Queen of Scots in Scotland, Jeanne d'Albret in Navarre, Catherine de' Medici in France, Margaret of Austria, Mary of Hungary, Margaret of Parma and the Archduchess Isabella in the Netherlands, and also less fortunate women like Juana of Castile and Anne of Brittany who were heirs to thrones or ducal chairs but not actually able to occupy them (Hopkins 1991; Jankowski 1992).[1] In the second place, there was a rapid growth in both the amount and the complexity of theories of government. Many of these, like More's *Utopia*, took their impetus and forms primarily from the rediscovery of classical models, and at the outset they addressed only the question of male rule, as the title of Machiavelli's *The Prince* implies. But as increasing numbers of European thrones passed out of the hands of men and into those of women, many treatises on government began to address, in particular, the specific issue of female rule.

The unprecedented appearance of a sizeable number of women rulers was due largely to a roughly simultaneous failure of male heirs, or to the accession of minors, in many of the principal ruling houses of Europe, a situation which eventually came to mean that for a considerable period after 1559 only one of the monarchies of Western Europe, Spain, had an adult male ruler. There had

[1] Henry Howard, later Earl of Northampton, did write a defence of female rule, but it has been suggested that he was 'constrained' to do this after displeasing Elizabeth (Bossy 1991, 119).

of course been previous, isolated instances of female rule – Margrethe I in fourteenth-century Scandinavia, the two Juanas in Naples, and Isabella of Castile were notable examples – but in general female rule had remained an extremely unusual and very unwelcome rarity. When Princess Maria of Hungary was left as heir to her father's throne it had been promptly usurped by an adult male relative who had paraded 'King Maria', as he scornfully termed her, through the streets of her former capital as a demonstration of the ridiculousness of her attempt, as a woman, to claim power.

This use of the term 'King' to denote a woman ruler is, indeed, a prominent and recurring feature of typical responses to the spectacle of a female in power; acquisition of power unsexes a woman, and indeed Mortimer Levine suggests that "Mary and Elizabeth [Tudor] were legally kings, that is, males, for the purpose of ruling" (Levine 1982, 110). It may have been partly an internalisation of this idea – certainly women rulers themselves came to use the title 'king' (Bassnett 1988, 8; Marcus 1988, 56-7) – which led so many women who did accede to power to attempt immediately to devolve it onto a male partner, as was the case with Mary, Queen of Scots. Thus, even if a woman could succeed to power, she acted at best as a kind of transmitter of it, first to her husband and, it would be hoped, thereafter to her son, and indeed it seems that some of the resentment manifested against Elizabeth I was caused by her failure to secure the succession in this way (Levin 1988, 80). However, the only reason for a woman to come to the throne in the first place was that a male line had failed; and so, by definition, the plethora of princesses meant a concomitant shortage of suitable princes for them to marry. At least in part as a result of this, marriages, seen by political thought as the only possible rescue operation for a female heir, became increasingly likely to be in fact an additional trap rather than a means of escape, because the lack of suitable husbands turned so many marriages of female rulers into disastrous misalliances. Of the women who ruled as queens in their own right during the course of the century, only Isabella of Castile made a marriage which could realistically be termed successful, and she had come to her throne much earlier, at a period when the shortage of royal males had not become so marked. Juana of Castile, Mary, Queen of Scots, Mary I of England and Jeanne d'Albret of Navarre all made marriages which were either personally or politically disasters for them – although Jeanne d'Albret was happily rid of her husband when, during the French Wars of Religion, he chose to bare his

buttocks to the inhabitants of the town he was besieging, and was fatally wounded by an arrow which festered. Elizabeth of England never married at all, but even that did not enable her to steer altogether free of the troubles and controversies which beset sixteenth-century queens, for by the time of her accession, marriage, although it continued to be a foremost topic of concern for female rulers, was no longer the only one; it had been joined by a heated debate about the nature and permissibility of female rule itself.

Before the sixteenth century, and during the first few decades of it, the question of the legitimacy of female rule as such had barely arisen. The only place where a clearly formulated view was really discernible was France, where, as Shakespeare carefully explains in *Henry V*, the Salic Law was said to bar women from the throne. This actually seems to have been decided less as a point of principle than to exclude from the throne the small daughter of Louis X, whose mother had been unfaithful and whose legitimacy was therefore suspect (Wood 1976, 387). Since the child was the niece of the powerful Duke of Burgundy, whom the nobles did not wish to alienate, as they would undoubtedly have done had they declared his niece a bastard, they resorted to declaring that it was her gender which debarred her from the succession, thus neatly sidestepping the need to raise any question about her legitimacy; and as later developments made the Salic Law ever more convenient for the French, since it prevented the kings of England from laying claim to their throne, it became more and more firmly entrenched.

In other countries, however, where no such emergencies arose, no comparable response was elicited, and a coherent viewpoint therefore tended not to be formulated. Thus, although the succession in England during the Middle Ages never happened to devolve on a female, since there was no shortage of male candidates, Edward I, the Yorkists, and ultimately the Tudors themselves all based their claims to the throne on transmission through the female line, and could not, therefore, logically debar female inheritance. Similarly, in Scotland, a fourteenth-century statute had theoretically limited kingship to males, but by the time Mary, Queen of Scots inherited the throne the Scottish crown had already passed once, albeit briefly, to a female – the Maid of Norway, who had died of seasickness on her voyage to her new kingdom – and in practice there was no trouble whatsoever about the recognition of the baby Mary as queen. In Navarre, where Jeanne d'Albret inherited the throne from her father, there had

been a long history of transmission through the female line, and in Brittany, despite French attempts to enforce the adoption of the Salic Law so that the duchy would pass into their control, the parliament had formally declared the Duchess Anne competent to succeed her father.

All these cases, though, had depended primarily on the concept of female inheritance as one of transmission of power, rather than actual wielding of it. Although Henry VII of England claimed the throne through his mother, there had never been any suggestion that she rather than he should wear the crown and direct the government; she had already done her job by producing a son who had inherited her blood. Similarly, when Henry VIII proposed to divorce his first wife Catherine of Aragon on the grounds that she had borne him only a daughter, Mary, and that he wished to marry again to father a son who could succeed him, hostile crowds in London exclaimed, "We will have no king but the Lady Mary's husband!". A woman in the succession was thought of, essentially, as a link between male rulers, rather than as an actual ruler herself.

During the course of the sixteenth century, however, circumstances dictated that this view of female succession as being little more than transmission had to undergo a rather drastic change. The view of female rule as essentially passive rather than active simply could not hold water in the face of the mass of evidence to the contrary which suddenly began to present itself all over Europe – not only from the influx of Queens Regnant, but also, and equally importantly, from the large number of female regents who had unexpectedly materialised in a variety of European countries. Louise of Savoy in France, Margaret Tudor in Scotland and Catherine of Aragon and Catherine Parr in England all briefly assumed the regency during the minority of a son or the temporary absence of a husband; but even more important were the two long and troubled regencies of Mary of Guise in Scotland, and Catherine de' Medici in France.[2] Each of these women took power at a crucial time, and hung on to it throughout a substantial period of violent religious and political unrest. Each, too, faced the added problem of being a foreigner in the country they were governing, Catherine, Italian by origin, being regent in France, while the French-born Mary of Guise governed

[2] Amanda Shephard discusses the use of both Margaret of Parma and Louise of Savoy to provide positive precedents for female rule (Shephard 1994, 167).

Scotland. Even more importantly, each was a Catholic; and the way in which they defended their religion against the rapid growth of Protestantism in their respective countries was to earn both of them virulent hatred. Catherine de' Medici, in particular, suffered under one of the worst reputations of the century, being loathed as a murderess both on account of the many individual poisonings she was supposed to have arranged (including that of her fellow queen Jeanne d'Albret) and also because of her rôle in the instigation of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre. Mary of Guise was less hated, but even she was accused, with no apparent justification whatsoever, of that crime so commonly attributed to powerful women, sexual incontinency, and became the target of considerable Protestant propaganda – in a neat blending of the twin themes of deviancy in sexual matters and deviancy in religion, she was accused of having taken a Cardinal as her lover. And gradually Protestant writers, faced with the prospect not only of these two powerful Catholic regents but also with the presence of the equally female and Catholic Mary Tudor on the throne of England, formulated their antipathy against these particular women into a whole theory of the absolute illegitimacy of female rule in general – and indeed, by extension, into a tirade against even male governors who were seen as effeminate (Bushnell 1990, 64).

Foremost amongst these Protestant theoreticians was of course John Knox, whose *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (regiment here meaning rule) is well known (Hansen 1996). Other voices were also joined to Knox's. Writers in the burgeoning Renaissance discipline of history dealt nervously with the many instances of queens, such as Boadicea, Cartimandua, and the mythical Cordelia, whom they encountered in Britain's Roman or pre-Roman past (Mikalachki 1998, 11). The essays of the moderate Catholic Montaigne contain denunciations of female rule, and the radical Huguenot François Hotman, in his *Francogallia* (1573), went even further, claiming that "if ever woman acquired control of the administration of the kingdom in the times of our ancestors, they always caused extraordinary calamities and subsequently a vast crop of troubles in our commonwealth...As Cato used to say, 'If you loose the reins with women, as with an unruly nature and an untamed beast, you must

expect uncontrolled actions'" (Englander et. al. 1990, 412).[3] In this violent dislike of female rule, Huguenots could claim support in the thought of Martin Luther and of other Protestants after him, which had done so much to displace the Virgin Mary from her traditional position of importance and which indeed had adopted the image of a woman in power as the ultimate in evil, the Whore of Babylon. But Catholics, too, could be won over to the French view of female succession, as can be seen by the comments of the Venetian ambassador to France, Michele Suriano, in 1561: "women are excluded by the Salic law, as they call it, or by an established custom which has the force of law. And therefore the king of France is always a Frenchman and can never be of another nationality. For this reason there never happens here what often happens in other kingdoms where the succession through women causes uncertainty as to who will become king, and where often the king comes from a hated and hostile people" (Englander et. al. 1990, 407). In fact, by the second half of the sixteenth century, chance, political developments and religious conflict appeared to have combined with the entrenched doubts about female capabilities to have produced an almost unstoppable rising tide of dislike and distrust of female government.

Much of this ire was directed specifically against Catholic queens, and Protestant queens, like Jeanne d'Albret in Navarre and Elizabeth I in England, were felt to constitute a rather different issue. John Knox went through some absolutely monumental eating of words when Catholic Mary died and Protestant Elizabeth – also a woman, but this time, from Knox's point of view, a woman on the right side – succeeded her. Since Elizabeth made her displeasure with his views very plain, Knox had little choice but to try to negotiate a way out of the corner he had manoeuvred himself into, attempting to mollify the queen by putting forward the theory that although women in general were undoubtedly unfit to rule, she was a special case, divinely selected by God as His special and chosen instrument for chastising the Catholics: this compares with the "conventional view (articulated by Becon, Calvin, and others)...that a woman ruler was a sign of divine displeasure" (Kay 1997, 4). Other Protestant leaders compared Elizabeth liberally with the chaste and just females of the Bible, like Judith, Susannah, Esther, and Deborah, all similarly called by God for special tasks which

[3] Similar issues are discussed in Berry 1989, 68-9 and Shepherd 1986, 161-2 and 187-8.

could be entrusted to them alone. The accession of Elizabeth, in fact, meant that the Protestant campaign against female government, prompted at least in part by the presence of so many Catholic women on or behind the thrones of Europe, went into reverse gear. Even then, though, the case remained a difficult one to make: Dennis Moore points out that "[p]revailing conceptions of womanhood made queenship anomalous, and British history offered scant precedent (witness the desperation with which Tudor apologists invoke the legendary Queen Cordelia)" (Moore 1995, 113). Something of the distrust with which female monarchs were still viewed even late in the reign of Elizabeth is indicated by the plethora of rumours about the survival of Edward VI or the existence of alternative male heirs to the crown (Levin 1986).

In many ways, though, the reign of Elizabeth did decisively alter accepted images of female government (Lee 1986); she does, after all, become the nominal heroine of a work like Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, though even there the author experiences visible difficulties in depicting the role of a queen as an active one, and allows it to be undermined in other ways too when, in Empson's devastating formulation, Britomart "copulates with the crocodile and thus produces the English Monarchy" (Empson 1996, 112). The fact that Elizabeth did not marry naturally served to remove the emphasis from woman as transmitter of power and to place it very emphatically on woman as wielder of power in her own right. More importantly, the fact that she capitalised on her unmarried state and turned it into an integral part of her own personal mythos meant that, for the first time, femininity, rather than being a hindrance to government, actually became its fundamental underpinning. Elizabeth escaped the confines of gender by moulding for herself an image of transcendent androgyny, as seen in the words which the famous Armada speech attributes to her, "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king". The image of the female king, far from being any longer the ridiculous idea with which the poor Maria of Hungary was taunted, has, in the person of Elizabeth, become the ultimate symbol of a superhuman figure, the special exception, near deity, who, by containing within itself both genders, becomes mythically superior to either.

The pattern of royal births and marriages in the seventeenth century, however, meant that the extraordinary appearance of so many women simultaneously in power did not occur again: when Elizabeth died in 1603 she was succeeded

by a man, James I, and the French ambassador reported that he felt the English were so relieved to see an end to petticoat government that they would never tolerate it again. France too had a mature king, Henry IV, for the early part of the seventeenth century. Largely as a result of the return to male rulers, speculation about the general legitimacy of female government also cooled down; but in place of political theory, a sudden rash of dramatic representations of female governors and female transmitters of power began to appear. This may have been influenced in part by James I's decree that no living ruler could be represented on the English stage: showing a queen would clearly excuse the dramatist from any possible accusation that he was caricaturing a living king. But there are also clear signs that many of these plays register a genuine concern about the whole question of female rule and of women's roles as inheritors, wielders and transmitters of power.

Dekker's and Webster's *Sir Thomas Wyat* (1607) is quite open about its view of such matters. The virtuous Jane Grey has no interest in power, telling her husband Guildford Dudley that "Troth I doe injoy a Kingdome hauing thee. / And so my paine be prosperous in that, / What care I though a Sheep-cote be my Pallace / Or fairest roofe of honour". The far greater eagerness to be queen of the play's Mary Tudor might perhaps be excusable in view of the fact that she has a legitimate hereditary claim, but we may nevertheless be invited to notice the ironic contrast between her intial disclaimer of desire for worldly power and her quickness to seize the offered chance of it.

In Shakespearean comedy, a customary pattern is for the proceedings to be opened and closed by the male ruler – Solinus in *The Comedy of Errors*, Theseus in *A Misummer Night's Dream*, the King of France in *All's Well that Ends Well*, and in *Romeo and Juliet*, a play which has so many comic features, Prince Escalus. Our recognition of this norm enables us to interpret as significant any deviations from it, such as the fact that the two Dukes in *Measure for Measure* and in *Twelfth Night* do not withdraw into their proper position of detached administration of justice but instead allow themselves to become personally involved in events, to the extent that we are legitimately entitled to question their judgement – indeed Dennis Kay suggests that "Orsino seems designed almost as an anthology of many of the personal inadequacies that might hamstring a ruler. More specifically, his failings are those conventionally associated in Tudor misogynist discourse with a female ruler" (Kay 1997, 1). In

Shakespeare's last plays, however, there is an even more drastic deviation from the norm: although power, in all of them, is at the outset securely vested in the hands of men – Pericles as Prince of Tyre, Cymbeline as King of Britain, Prospero as magus of his island realm, and Leontes as King of Sicily – what each of these plays enacts is first of all the gradual, threatening loss of that male power, and then the ultimate recovery of it.

The rulers in the last plays are all alike in that each of these kings has only a daughter to succeed him. Cymbeline and Leontes once had sons, but have lost them – Leontes to death, Cymbeline because his two boys have been kidnapped by a disgruntled courtier; Pericles and Prospero have both only ever had one child, and in each case she is a daughter. This means that Imogen is heiress to Britain, Perdita to Sicily, Marina to Tyre and Miranda to Milan. Remarkably enough, however, none of these four women ever actually wields power in the dominions that they stand to inherit; and in *The Tempest*, the displacement of females from the line of inheritance is made even more prominent by the proposal to exclude Claribel from the Neopolitan succession (as well as by the way in which Claribel's Tunis is overtly connected with Dido's Carthage in II.i) and by Prospero's refusal to acknowledge Caliban's claim that "This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me" (1.2.331-2). (More educated members of a contemporary audience might, additionally, have recalled that in historical fact the succession to the Duchy of Milan had indeed passed in much this way, when the condottiere Francesco Sforza had made himself master of the city after marrying Bianca Maria Visconti, illegitimate daughter and only child of its last duke, and that this had eventually provided the pretext for French and ultimately Spanish involvement in the internal affairs of Northern Italy.) In *Cymbeline*, too, the displacement of women from positions of political power is further underlined by the death of the Queen at the end of the play. Critical attention has often focused on the sense of renewal which can be detected in these plays, as ageing fathers are reinvigorated and brought to life by their discovery or re-discovery of their youthful daughters; but the most obvious reincarnation of the father, the person who will succeed him as ruler of his kingdom, is not to be his daughter, but her husband, or, in the case of Cymbeline, her long-lost brothers. The woman, once again, can act only as a transmitter of power; it is an essential part of the happy endings of the last plays that there should be a suitably young and vigorous male on hand for that power to be transmitted to.

It is a measure of Imogen's virtue that she is so happy when her brothers are found that she never thinks of her own lost chance to rule, just as Marina, Miranda, and Perdita will all happily renounce their own rights in favour of their husbands, Lysimachus, Ferdinand, and Florizel, who will become the real governors of the countries which these daughters inherit from their fathers.

A similar pattern is implied in other plays. In Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King*, the Princess Panthea is discovered to be the rightful heir to the throne, but she immediately renounces power by agreeing to marry Arbaces, whom she has hitherto believed to be her brother: instead of the threat of incest between them, with which we have previously been faced, normality is restored, and male rule continues undisturbed, after having been temporarily troubled by Arbaces' disorder of mind when faced with a passion for his supposed sister which he cannot control and cannot gratify. Kathleen McLuskie sees a similar process taking place in *Philaster*: "the 'serious concerns' are to do with dynastic competition resolved by sexual exchange" (McLuskie 1989, 207). In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the Princess of France is left temporarily in charge of the kingdom after the death of her father, but that will soon be remedied when, at the end of the year she has allotted him for his maturation, she marries the King of Navarre – just as the real-life crown of France had indeed passed from the Valois to Henri of Bourbon, ruler of the much smaller kingdom of Navarre. Here, just as in the last plays, our desire for the marriage which will constitute and generate a happy ending for the play makes us accessories in wishing to see this transfer of power and the reconstitution of the patriarchal order which the topsy-turvy world of comedy has temporarily disrupted. Women may be temporary custodians of power in these plays – the Princess of France will rule for a year, until her marriage takes place, and the Countess of Roussillon can govern her estates until her wayward son Bertram has finally come to his senses – but their position cannot be permanent; they occupy, to a large extent, the psychological space of the mother, presiding over the development of the son but fading away as he reaches manhood. Just as the heroines of the last plays are the daughters of their fathers, so they are, in one sense, the mothers of their husbands. They are constantly defined by their relationship to men, but always seen as part of a chain of progression, not as partners.

Their role as mothers and the fact that they are there as transmitters and not as wielders of power is stressed, too, by the emphasis so often laid on the over-

riding need for chastity in them: in a pun much beloved of the Renaissance, every queen is seen as potentially a quean. The entire plot of *The Winter's Tale* is generated by fear about a queen's fidelity, and much of the action of *Cymbeline* derives from the similar testing of Imogen's virtue. The getting of heirs plays a central part in *All's Well That Ends Well*; Marina, in *Pericles*, actually meets her husband-to-be when he makes an assault on her virtue, and Prospero in *The Tempest* is neurotically anxious lest his daughter should be deflowered before her marriage. In those plays where female power is an issue, female chastity becomes one too.

This is not due solely to the fact that such women become transmitters of the bloodline and the hereditary right to rule. In one sense, the very fact that they are transmitting power from their fathers makes their chastity less necessary rather than more; their children might not be their husbands', but they will always, as Paulina reminds Leontes, be unquestionably their own. The children of a king's wife may not be so obviously his, and it is, in this respect, actually easier for a woman to be seen as a more reliable transmitter of a bloodline than a man. The primary point, however, is that the question of female chastity had always been linked with the question of female government, because it was seen fundamentally as a question of control. One of the main arguments deployed against rule by women centred precisely on this: since women were notoriously unable to govern their own appetites, how then could they possibly rule others? Stories of real-life female rulers, like Juana of Naples and Cleopatra, had always concentrated on their promiscuity; and the history of Caterina Sforza, who fell into the hands of Cesare Borgia, showed that even where a woman was not voluntarily libidinous, she was still vulnerable to enforced unchastity if she was raped, a fate to which a male ruler was not imagined to be vulnerable.

Nor was it it just a question of an equation between female honour and national honour: a play like *Measure for Measure* exposes very clearly how closely questions of sexual morality were seen as being bound up with questions of social order, and so women, as the weaker, more lascivious sex, were politically weak because of their sexual susceptibility. It is notable that in *Twelfth Night* and *Measure for Measure*, the Shakespearean comedies where the duke actually becomes involved in the action instead of remaining properly aloof, it is sexual involvement that provides the greatest threat to his plans and leads him to behave in a way detrimental to his dignity: Vincentio's growing feelings for

Isabella make him lose his carefully planned control of the situation and fall back on a series of ad hoc manoeuvres designed simultaneously to fend off Angelo and placate Isabella, while Orsino's passion for Olivia and his complex involvement with the disguised Viola bring him to the brink of murder and of an utter and public loss of self-control. Angelo himself becomes unfit for rule only after he falls under the influence of passion, and Lucy Hughes-Hallett has shown, too, how the same criteria are used in the Roman assessment of Antony: his indulgence in love has effectively rendered him womanish and, simultaneously and concomitantly, has made him unable to exert political control, because his own personal passions are not under control (Hughes-Hallett 1991, 78-9). The same is true of Arbaces, in *A King and No King*, whose passions veer dangerously out of his control until he is able to insert them safely within the framework of marriage when he discovers that the woman he loves is not, after all, his sister.

Fletcher's *Bonduca* is a play in which this perceived incompatibility between government and female nature is very clearly illustrated. As Antonia Fraser points out in *Warrior Queens*, representations of Boadicea (the Bonduca of the title) changed dramatically after the death of Elizabeth and the accession of James, and Fletcher's character is a typically Jacobean Boadicea (Julie Crawford posits something like an equation of Elizabeth=Bonduca and the heroic Caratach=James; cf. Crawford 1999, 358) in her hysteria, her unreliability, her military incompetence and, above all, in her vulnerability to assault, although in her case it is not she herself who is raped but her two daughters, the transmitters of the Icenian blood-line from their father Prasutagus. The only British character in the play whom we are apparently asked to admire is Bonduca's brother-in-law Caratach, an efficient and heroic soldier who responds to his nieces' desire for vengeance on the men who raped them with the devastatingly simple remark, "You should have kept your legs close[d] then" (Strachey 1950, 2, 162). As well as for this rather striking lack of sensitivity, Caratach, like all the other men in the play, is notable for his distrust of women and his preference for forming emotional bonds only with men. He says,

> *I was born a soldier;*
> *And he that in the head on's troop defies me,*
> *Bending my manly body with his sword,*
> *I make a mistress. Yellow-tressed Hymen*

Ne'er tied a longing virgin with more joy,
Than I am married to that man that wounds me.
(p.115)

All the men in *Bonduca* display a fear that involvement with women will sap their identity and rob them of control, and the play ends with the death of all the women, children and old men and an emotional reconciliation between the surviving Roman soldiers and the heroic Caratach. Now that women have been banished from the scene, control and stability can resume.

The dangers of uncontrolled passion are also evident in *The Duchess of Malfi*. We need not blame the Duchess for her obviously genuine love for Antonio, nor for her secret marriage to him; but it is impossible to avoid noticing that succumbing to passion has disastrously lessened her political effectiveness. Webster's complex probing of the sins and secrets of his society obviously paves the way for us to attribute many of the faults and weaknesses of his characters to their depraved environment, but matters are not as simple as that: his exploration of the dynamic between rulers and ruled, between individual and collective responsibility, may mitigate condemnation of the Duchess, but if we are invited to blame fate or those around her, it is primarily for having put her, a woman, into this position of power in the first place. What the Duchess does would not be wrong if she were a private person; the implication is, therefore, that if a woman is put in a position of public responsibility she must either violate her own nature or transgress against her duties. Female government is thus by its very nature seen as inherently monstrous, as indeed is suggested by Knox when he compares female government to a monstrous body politic with no proper head.

The same idea occurs in other plays. In John Ford's *The Queen*, the Queen of Aragon shows herself completely unfit for rule by her skittish, passion-inspired treatment of her heroic but misogynistic general Velasco, and matters are restored to their proper place only when Velasco agrees to marry her, which will, of course, inevitably entail him taking over the government. Another Ford play, *The Broken Heart*, addresses the issue even more explicitly: the heroine Calantha is left as reigning queen of Sparta, but chooses instead to die of grief for the murder of her lover Ithocles, having carefully explained before she does so that a woman could not rule successfully in a warlike state such as Sparta. The female characters of Renaissance plays, defined as they almost invariably are entirely and

exclusively by their relationship to one or more of the male characters, are automatically debarred by their inherently passionate female nature from the proper exercise of political authority in a society where social order is seen as so inextricably bound up with sexual order. The tragic purging which takes place at the end of Ford's and Webster's tragedies involves a shift from female back to male rule, just as the three women amongst whom power was split in *King Lear* all die, even the virtuous Cordelia, to leave room for a proper male authority to take their place; and in Shakespeare's last plays the happy ending is both produced by and intimately dependent upon the displacement of the female from her central role in the succession. From John Knox to John Ford, then, representations of female rule seem to be characterised primarily by dislike, distrust, and an obsession with sexuality.

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ELIZABETHAN CONSTRUCTIONS OF KINGSHIP AND THE STAGE

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New Historicists have followed many older historicists in disputing the model of Elizabethan thought set forth in E. M. W. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture*: the idea that most Elizabethans viewed their heads of state, past and present, as semi-divine ministers, placed in high positions of authority by God in order to ensure His Providence for England. Mid-century critics such as Geoffrey Tillotson, Hiram Haydn, A. P. Rossiter, and Helen Gardner argued not only that Shakespeare's history plays were too complex and ambivalent to be said to contain only one political message, but also that Elizabethans themselves were a diverse population whose political views could likewise not easily be summarized.[1] More recent cultural historicist and New Historicist writers such as Jonathan Dollimore, Stephen Greenblatt, Leonard Tennenhouse, Graham Holderness, and Steven Mullaney have argued convincingly that the Elizabethan notion of divine-right rule, while it unquestionably existed, was not nationally or even widely held, but instead was an ideology generated by the Tudors themselves, continuously promoted and disseminated from above to counter the threat of popular rebellion from below. In other words, in the New-Historicist view, the idea that the monarch was a monarch because of his or her inalienable and divinely bestowed fitness for the job was a fiction the very existence of which in the Renaissance bore witness to the presence of that idea's radical opposite: the burgeoning notion that political identity was not innate, but acquired, and the accompanying supposition that a ruler did not need to be born, but could be made.

[1] See the discussion of these mid-century scholars' critique of Tillyard's views as it is summarized in the introduction to Wells, Burgess and Wymer (eds.), *Neo-Historicism* (2000), 7-12.

The proliferation of texts in late-sixteenth-century England that stressed the quasi-divinity of the monarch may suggest, not the ubiquity of the concept of divine-right rule, but the presence of strong subversive elements in English culture that provoked the discursive counter-attack of the queen or her conservative supporters. In November 1570, for example, Elizabeth I found it necessary to issue "A proclamation gaynst mayteyneis of seditious persons, and of trayterous bookes and writings,"[2] and in 1585 the Anglican divine John Prime, after warning his Oxford congregation that "All authoritie is of God, and therefore kinglie most of all," added, "This speech were utterly needlesse, were wee not fallen into the waining of the world [...] when men are not only despisers of governours, but evill speakers and misconsterers of authoritie itself and soveraigne government in the highest degree". Prime's criticisms were directed primarily at English Catholics, whose highest earthly loyalty would properly be to the pope rather than to the national sovereign, but his words also reflect the anxiety of both the prelacy and the queen regarding the danger of too-powerful nobles, many of whom were plotting against Elizabeth. (For example, the Northern Uprising of 1569 directly precipitated Elizabeth's 1570 proclamation.) Prime's fear of rebellion against the seated monarch was also, presumably, a late reaction to the volatile fifteenth-century period of the Wars of the Roses (his sermon, perhaps not coincidentally, was delivered in the centennial year of that conflict's official end at the Battle of Bosworth Field). English recoil from the horrors of civil war is evident in the frequency of references in texts of this period to the peace now reigning. A typical example is the prelate Anthony Anderson's 1581 published sermon, entitled *The Shield of our Safety*, which blesses Elizabeth since "From God by hir hande we enjoy this most pleasaunt seedes tyme of the Gospell, nowe well neare full twentie three yeares". Elizabeth, declaring the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland traitors on 17 November 1569, referred to their treason as "the first rebellion and breache of the publique blessed peace" since the start of her reign. And sixteenth-century chroniclers of English civil wars tended to insert into their narratives reminders that the Tudor monarchs were responsible for the end of such horrors. Samuel Daniel, for example,

[2] Additional examples of such warnings are Elizabeth's 17 November 1569 proclamation "Declaring the Earles of Northumberland and Westmoreland traitors" and Anthony Babington's 1587 letter, "A defence of the honorable sentence and execution of the queene of Scots."

introducing his tale of the ghastly bloodshed resulting from the York-Lancaster feud (the Wars of the Roses), admonishes his readers:

> *And yet to God wee have no cause to plaine*
> *Since hereby came, the quiet calme we joye*
> *The blisse of thee ELIZA, happy gaine*
> *For all our losse; for that no other waye*
> *The heavens could find, then to unite againe*
> *The fatall fev'red families, that they*
> *Might bring forth thee: that in thy peace might grow*
> *That glory which no age could ever show.*
> *(Book I, stanza 3, p. 435)*

Such ideological rhetoric is a weapon, New Historicists argue, that by its very existence indicates an enemy: the presence in English culture of countervailing philosophies that suggested alternative views of princely identity, and that needed to be fought.

And indeed, the evidence of such subversion is not far to seek. But whereas most new-historicist work attempts to uncover literary strategies of control emerging in response to subversion, this essay will focus on the scope and power of literary resistance to Tudor ideology, by exposing such resistance in the work of Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatists, as well as in emblems and literature of the period. As such my essay shares something in intent with György Szőnyi's inquiry into Shakespeare's ambivalent participation in the promulgation of divine-right doctrine, in his essay in this volume. In what follows I hope to demonstrate that challenges to Tudor orthodoxy regarding divine-right rule were rife in late-sixteenth-century England, and are identifiable not just in overt denials of the prince's sanctity (of which, understandably, there were few) but within the very texts, images, and dramatic productions that ostensibly promoted Tudor ideology. For embedded within the discourse and images which aimed to sanctify royal power through establishing its God-given inalienability are suggestions which subtly indicate the antithetical view that royal identity is something acquired, "put on," enacted – in effect, a costume or a role. Thus I will argue that the ultimate nexus of these two warring views of kingship was the Renaissance stage, which both represented and promulgated a deeply subversive notion of the constitution of royal identity. An understanding of this ideological conflict, a conflict which was part of the cultural context out of which Shakes-

peare's histories emerged, will clarify Shakespeare's crucial part in the theatres' challenge to the crown.

Our perception of the radical departure from orthodoxy constituted by the notion of acquired kingliness depends, of course, on our clear understanding of the orthodox (Tudor) view of kingship. This view was, as noted above, ceaselessly promulgated during Elizabeth's reign through sermons, political treatises, royal proclamations, emblem books, and historical chronicles, and is well summed up by the anonymous author of a 1570 "Homilie against wylful rebellion":

> *By [St. Paul and St. Peter] it is most evident, that Kinges, Queeenes, & other princes (for [Peter] speaketh of auchtoritie & power be it in men or women) are ordayned of God, are to be obeyed and honoured of their subjectes: that such subjects as are disobedient or rebellious gaynst their princes, disobey God, and procure damnation: that the government of princes is a great blessing of God geven for the common wealth . [...] It commeth therfore neither of chaunce & fortune [...] nor of th'ambition of mortall men and women clymyng up of their own accorde to dominion, that there be Kynges, Queenes, princes, and other governours over men beyng their subjectes: but all Kinges, Queenes, and other governours are specially appoynted by the ordinaunce of God.*

Thomas Bilson, in *The True Difference between Christian Subjection and Unchristian Rebellion* (1585), argues more succinctly that "Princes are placed by God, and so not to bee displaced by man". Such displacement will be harshly punished by God. Holinshed's chronicles remind readers more than once that for the deposition and murder of Richard II "both [Henry IV] and his posteritie tasted such troubles, as put them still in danger of their states, till their direct succeeding line was quite rooted out by the contrarie faction, as in Henrie the sixt and Edward the fourth it may appear." Richard Crompton, in *A Short Declaration of the ende of traytors, against the state, & of the duetie of subjectes to theyr soveraigne governour* (published, as were Holinshed's revised chronicles, in 1587), echoes this view of Henry IV's fate. Crompton writes that after Richard's murder

> *great troubles and sundry insurrecctiones, within this Realme did happen unto [Henry IV], and though hee dyed possessed of the Crowne, yet H.6 his sonnes sonne was put from the same . [...] By these examples you may*

> *see, how almightie God hath punished even Princes, which have conspyred or opposed and not spared the offspring of the offender in that behalf.*

Sermons and treatises warned subjects that kings were not to be opposed even if obviously evil. "We must obey kings, be they good or bad," wrote Richard Bancroft in 1593; "God placeth tyrants sometimes for the punishment of his people". And the author of the *Homilie against wylfull rebellion* asks, "Shall [subjects] obey valiaunt, stout, wyse, and good princes, and contemne, disobey, and rebell agaynst.. evill governours?," answering, "God forbid. For what a perilous thing were it to commit unto the subjectes the judgement which prince is wyse and godly [...] and which is otherwise". Evil governors as well as good ones are placed on earth in accordance with God's plan: "What yf it be long of the wickednesse of the subjectes, that the prince is undiscrete or evill? Shall the subjectes both by their wickednesse provoke God [...] to give them an undiscrete or evill prince, and also rebell agaynst him, and withall agaynste God?".

The image of the ruler as not only divinely derived, but divine himself or herself, was sometimes subtly and sometimes blatantly promulgated. Associations of Elizabeth with Diana and Venus in pastoral poetry and plays were common, and these associations were dramatically incorporated into the ceremonial apparatus of rulership. A collection of speeches "delivered to her majestie this last progresse [...] at Bissam" records an elaborate pastoral drama centered around the queen's actual person, symbolically associating her with the gods of nature. The queen's procession halted "[a]t the top of the Hill going to Bissam," where "a wilde man came forth," declaring that he had rejected Pan and Sylvanus to come and pay homage to Elizabeth. The wild man went on to praise the "honour of Virgins who became Goddesses, for their chastity". Sermons elaborated the distinction between God and the monarch in terms which seem rather to argue for their sameness: "Though [kings] be not gods," Henry Smith preached in 1591, "yet they are liker God then other: the Prince is like a great image of God [...] appointed to rule for God, to make lawes for God, to reward for God, to punish for God, to speake for God. [...] Princes, and rulers, which are gods themselves, are to doe the businesse of God [...] because they are gods".

The vision of the ruler as both royal and divine involves the notion of the monarch as the earthly locus and repository of heavenly power. The monarch is frequently identified with the sun: Lord Willoughby's 1589 *Short and True Dis-*

course for Satisfying All Who Speak Indiscreetly of Her Majestie characterizes Elizabeth's detractors as dogs who "barke at the ful moone or rather seeke to shadow the sunne, whose brightnes breaketh foorth through all cloudes". The metaphor suggests that the monarch is the point of origin, not only of all blessings, but of all hierarchy and degree – in short, for the very identities of his or her subjects.

An "ancient emblem" in a 1635 collection by George Wither (figure 1) graphically depicts this relationship. Below a caption reading, "Our outward Hopes will take effect, / According to the King's aspect," a lordly sun beams down on a garden of flowers and a procession of courtiers, bringing both groups into bright visibility.

Figure 1

An accompanying poem reads, in part,

> *When Phoebus with a cheerefull eye, beholds*
> *The Flow'r-embroydered earth, and freely spreads*
> *His beams abroad; behold, the Marigolds*
> *Beginne to reare their low-dejected heads:*
> *The Tulips, Daysies, and the Heliotropes*
> *Of ev'ry kinde, their closed Leaves display;*
> *And (as it were) with new-recover'd hopes,*
> *Attend upon the Ruler of the Day.*
> *Againe, when either in the West he shrowds*
> *His Rayes below this Horizon, or hides*
> *His Face behinde the Curtaines of the Cloudes;*
> *They lose their beauties, and abate their prides.*

The poem may well remind us of Prince Hal's sly soliloquy in act one of *Henry IV, part one*, when, by way of explaining to the audience his involvement with Falstaff and other denizens of the Boar's Head Tavern, he announces his intention to "imitate the sun,/ Who doth permit the base contagious clouds/ To smother up his beauty from the world" (1.2.197-99).[3] Yet Wither's and Shakespeare's passages actually offer two radically different interpretations of a royal figure's identity. In Wither's sun metaphor, the king is a prior source of princeliness which is sometimes obscured, but, in essence, never changing. What do change in relation to the sun's/ruler's aspect are those beneath him. The fullness of his subjects' identities depends on their ruler's fixed selfhood; subjects become themselves in the light of the king's godly dispensation of royal virtue. Without his light, they "lose their beauties, and abate their prides". In Hal's metaphor, it is the other way around. There, the prince acquires a virtuous character through the action of his environment – the movement of the "base contagious clouds" which symbolize (among other things) his rascally friends Falstaff and Poins. These clouds' temporary presence will make the prince, "when he please again to be himself," "more wond'red at / By breaking through the foul and ugly mists/ Of vapors that did seem to strangle him" (1.2.200-03). For Hal royalty is flexible, seeming to inhere in a malleable public response to the royal figure

[3] This and all other quotations from Shakespeare are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*.

rather than to exist within that figure himself. Princely virtue becomes itself by reference to the prince's world rather than vice versa (in contrast to the view promulgated by Wither's poem and emblem). For Hal, princeliness is that which "shows more goodly and attract[s] more eyes / Than that which hath no foil to set it off" (1.2.214-15).

Thus Shakespeare subtly reverses the more orthodox Tudor representation of kingship as a fixed interior quality. Alongside and in contrast to the view Prince Hal expresses must be set the writings of late-sixteenth-century thinkers such as Charles Merbury, who, in *A Brief Discourse* (1581), elaborates (as would Wither) the concept of human identity deriving from the inherent royalty of the prince. Just as the earth is darkened by clouds obscuring the sun, Merbury writes,

> *If the Princes Power be in any pointe impared, or the brightnesse of his Royall Majestie any whitte eclipsed: the subjecte straight doth feel the smarte, and want thereof. The Travailer is lesse esteemed abrode: the Courtier lesse regarded at home: the Marchant lesse privileged in a farre countrey: the Noble man lesse honored in his own . [...] The prosperous estate of the subject is derived from the prosperitie of the Prince: their honour from his honour: their estimation from his estimation (2).*

The monarch, then, according to this orthodox view, is a fixed power base whose royalty is inborn rather than acquired, and whose intrinsic virtue is the origin of all status and degree in his or her realm. "[T]itles, and dignities," writes, "are but as lanternes without light" in the ruler's absence (5). In other words, they are not themselves. The ruler, in contrast to the holders of "titles, and dignities," is possessed of an interior, inalienable royal selfhood. As Sir William Stanford writes in his 1567 *Exposicion of the Kinges Prerogative*, "[the king's] person shalbe subject to no mans suite".

Such rhetoric promoting the view of the monarch's intrinsic ordination was generated, as Prime's sermon against sedition acknowledged, partly to combat the threat of this doctrine's dangerous opposite – the notion that royalty was conceded to the ruler by the ruled, and therefore could, at appropriate moments in history, be withdrawn from below. God's authority, according to this opposite view, was channeled through the people to the sovereign rather than directly to the ruler. The cultural presence of this dangerous idea naturally prompted the

defensive response of the monarch and her supporters, but what is most intriguing about the conservative discourse of counter-attack is the way in which suggestions of the relative arbitrariness of royal power are woven into the very fabric of the language which would safeguard the royal image. Thus these sermons, emblems, and texts at times furthered the dissemination of the very subversive doctrine they attempted to stifle.

One way this process occurred was through the inclusion of certain radical political philosophies in homilies and pamphlets attempting to expose the alleged illogic of these philosophies. Those who did not know where to find seditious views expressed would have been readily introduced to them through the sermons and treatises of conservative prelates, who rearticulated these doctrines in the very act of refuting them. "*Treason against the Prince is no sinne against God*, saith Everard Hance, as you may read in the wise and *True report of the Arrainment and execution of the Popish Traitor*," John Prime helpfully pointed out in his aforementioned 1585 sermon. And in 1593, Richard Bancroft published a pamphlet drawing attention to "Daungerous positions and proceedings, published and practiced within this islaund of Brytaine," in which he responds to the alleged propositions of the Consistorians (those within the Church who believed it to be man's God-given duty to remove evil princes from seats of power) first by rehearsing, in full and in bold-faced type, these same alleged propositions, at such length and with such care that it is difficult at first glance for the reader to determine which is the argument and which the counter-argument. "Out of [...] these English bokes," Bancroft begins, "I have collected these seditious and consistoriall propositions following" – thus making it easier, one would presume, for the interested to assimilate what Bancroft claims is Consistorian thought. He proceeds, "It is not sufficient for Subjects, not to obey wicked commandements of their Princes, but to withstand them also, in dooing the contrarie . [...] The authoritie, which Princes have, is given them from the people: Kings, Princes, and governours, have their authoritie of the people; and (upon occasion) the people may take it away again [...] Evill Princes ought (by the lawe of God) to bee deposed, and inferior magistrates ought chieflie to doo it. Examples allowed of Kings desposed. Edward 2. Richard 2. [...] It is lawfull to kill wicked Kings and tyrants" (Bancroft 1593, 34-36). Although Bancroft counters these alleged arguments, he appends to his own responses what he supposes would be the Consistorian objection, thus further – unwittingly – dis-

seminating the alleged viewpoint that competes with his own. (For example, he follows his claim that "We must obey Kings, be they good or bad. [...] God placeth tyrants sometimes for the punishment of the people" with the supposed counter-attack, "So doth he private men sometimes to kill them" [34].) The aim, presumably, is to hold the dangerous ideas up to ridicule. But in fact, Bancroft has rendered more than half his pamphlet the kind of literature which Elizabeth condemned in her 1570 proclamation of the same name as "trayterous bookes and writings."

Those sermons and texts which were directed, not to English subjects, but to princes themselves often undermined the principle of innate kingliness by presuming to instruct the monarch in proper kingly behavior. The proliferation of courtesy books in the late 1500s has been investigated by Frank Whigham, who attests to the large number of such instructional treatises which addressed themselves, not, or not merely, to courtiers, but to rulers. Along with Baldwin's well-known *A Mirror for Magistrates*, with its cautionary exempla, there were at this time circulating short histories of fabled evil princes who perished as a result of gluttony, cruelty, lust, or simple ineptitude. Two examples are James Glaucus's *A Knowledge for Kings* (1576), which tells of a king who was turned to an ass as punishment for his idolatry, lecherousness, and bad rule, and Bishop Martin Cromer's *Notable Example of Gods Vengeance, uppon a Murdering King* (1560), which is just that: it tells of a young king, corrupted by evil counselors, who murders his uncles and is as a direct result devoured by giant mice. In both tales, the rulers are led astray by outside influence (Glaucus's king has an evil wife who inflames his lust), suggesting the acquisition rather than the prior existence of a moral or immoral nature on the part of the king. This image of royalty was presumably at odds with the competing vision of the monarch as "sun" or absolute source of virtue, not garnering royalty from without, but radiating kingliness outward from within. Further, as admonitory tracts, these books themselves enacted the deconsecration of kingship which they described . They and treatises like them existed as warnings to kings to act like kings – warnings which would have been unnecessary had the monarch been essentially and choicelessly kingly to begin with.

Sermons delivered in front of Elizabeth herself were sometimes quite bold in their admonitions, and constituted something of an about-face on the parts of certain prelates. When not cautioning Elizabethan men and women to refrain

from disciplining their rulers, Anglican ministers were unstinting in their own admonitions to theirs. The reverse tactics were supported by reversible texts. While the 1570 *Homilie against Wylfull Rebellion* quoted the Biblical story of King David in order to disseminate the doctrine of passive obedience, Bishop John Jewel, in a sermon preached before Elizabeth in 1583, used David's example to urge royal humility and constraint. "Lay no violent hands upon [even an evil prince] saith good David," the 1570 *Homilie* says, "but let him lyve until God appoynte and worke his ende". Jewel, on the other hand, uses David not to justify princely power but to remind Elizabeth of royal fallibility, preaching that "The people of Babylon built themselves a Tower as high as the heavens, to shew forth their pryde, and get themselves a name. Hereof David sayth, The kinges of the earth band themselves, and the Princes are assembled together against the Lord, and against his Christ. He sayeth not, the vulgar people, or a sort of raskals onely, but Kinges and Princes [...] and in this power they think they are invincible." Invincible, Jewel went on to assure Elizabeth, they were not. His sermon encouraged humility on the part of the sovereign, and was itself (in aim, at least) instrumental in the creation of the queen's humility.

Another such sermon was preached by Bishop Anthony Rudd in March 1596 before the queen at Richmond. Rudd advised her to "apply her hart unto wisdome" and to pray thus: "Lord, I know and confesse, that in my predecessors dayes, and in the 37 years past of my raigne, thou has delivered me [...] from all my malicious and daungerous enemies. [...] I have now put foote within the doores of that age [...] where [...] the senses begin to faile, the strength to diminish, yea all the powers of the body daily to decay. Now therefore graunt grace, that though mine outward man thus perish: yet mine inward man may be renewed daily." Rudd's emphasis on Elizabeth's physical decay acknowledges what Ernst Kantorowicz has called the monarch's "two bodies," the temporal body subject to decay and the timeless spiritual body, but stresses the temporal body, thus emphasizing her mortality – her likeness to the rest of humankind. And Rudd's desire to impart instruction to her, like Jewel's sermon and Cromer's and Glaucus's cautionary tales, is a demonstration of the subversive principle that monarchs may acquire rather than simply inherit their ruling ability.

The notion of acquired gentility – an actuality in the late sixteenth century, when certain titles could be bought – thus touches the image of the monarch herself. Thomas Phaer, in Baldwin's *Mirror for Magistrates*, articulates, through

the persona of the fallen Welsh prince Owen Glendower, the theory that gentility is derived from without, through learned behavior:

> *But as for man, sith severally they have*
> *A mind whose maners are by learning made,*
> *Good bringing up alonly doth them save*
> *In vertuous dedes, which with their parents fade.*
> *So that true gentry standeth in the trade*
> *Of vertuous life, not in the fleshly trade.*
> *(ll. 22-27)*

That this notion of achieved gentility could – and, in the late sixteenth century, was beginning to – encompass the nobility of the monarch is revealed not only through admonitory texts and sermons of the type discussed above, but through

Figure 2

emblems purportedly strengthening the iconicity of the king's image, as well as through history chronicles doing the same. George Wither, for example, includes in his collection of ancient emblems the figure of a king standing, bare-chested and ragged, with his right hand clutching a sword and his left a book, above which picture is the caption, "A Princes most ennobling Parts, are skill at armes, and Love to Arts" (see figure 2).

The poem beneath the emblem begins by celebrating the sovereign's innate lordliness, a vision of kingship suggested by the figured monarch's near-nakedness. "[S]uch a Prince is not a Casuall-thing," Wither writes, "The Glories of a Throne, by Chance, possessing:/ Nor meerely from his Parents, doth he spring, / But he is rather Gods immediate Blessing". But the verse concludes with lines offering the countervailing suggestion that kingliness can in fact be achieved through emulation, without "Gods immediate blessing":

> *If thou desirest such a Prince to be,*
> *Or to acquire that Worth which may allure*
> *Such Princes to vouchsafe some Grace to thee;*
> *Their kingly vertues, labour to procure.*

The book held in the emblematized king's left hand graphically indicates the intellectual labor which is the route to princeliness. Thus Wither's emblem initially invokes the concept of innate sovereignty, only to call that concept into question.

Holinshed's chronicles do likewise. Long noted for his conservative promulgation of the orthodox Tudor ideology of the king's intrinsic sovereignty, Holinshed yet incorporates into his histories language which provides a countervailing image of the monarch. It is from Holinshed that Shakespeare derived the idea of Henry IV's need publicly to stage Richard's deposition and his own accession to the throne. Both political processes needed to be "by the lords and commons admitted and confirmed" (Holinshed 1957, 499/1/48), as though the approval of secular witnesses conveyed legitimacy to the power transfer despite Henry's displacement of a born king. Kingship, in this phrase of Holinshed's, is construed as something to be accorded from without. In a similar vein, Holinshed later describes the newly crowned Henry V as consciously accommodating himself to the royal role, "put[ting] on him the shape of a new man" (op. cit., 505/1/3).

The idea that status was something that might be "put on," like a costume, is in fact overtly attacked by Holinshed elsewhere in his chronicles, despite his description of Henry V's coronation. In Holinshed's history of Richard II, the chronicler laments that at King Richard's court sumptuous costume obscured rather than contributed to the actual status of the king's retainers:

> *in gorgious and costlie apparell exceed[ing] all measure, not one of them [...] kept within the bounds of his degree. Yeomen and groomes were clothed in silkes, with cloth of graine and skarlet, over sumptuous ye may be sure for their estates. And this vanitie was not only used in the court in those daies, but also other people abroad in the towns and countries, had their garments cut far otherwise than had been accustomed before [Richard's] daies, with imbroideries, rich furres, and goldsmiths worke, and everie daie there was devising of new fashionings, to the great hinderance and decaie of the commonwealth (543/1/47, 502/2/51).*

Holinshed's complaint betrays an anxiety regarding whether distinctions in status and degree, supposedly intrinsic, can function in a world that treats status and degree as mobile commodities, available for putting on and putting off. Such a world sees honor, including royal honor, not as a prior spiritual state, but as a reified object, a symbol without a transcendent referent. Honor, in this view, inheres in the audience's perception of honor. The anonymous play *Thomas of Woodstock* gives voice to this view when the courtier Green beseeches King Richard (with whom he has been "sit[ting] in Council devising straunge new costumes"), "prethee sweete king, letts rid somwhether, & it be but to showe our selves. Sfoote, our devisses are like Jewels kept in casketts, or good faces in maskes, that grace not the owners, because th'are obscured. If our fashions be not publisht what glories in the weareing?" (2.1.1207-11).

Concern to preserve the external sumptuary symbols of place as symbols of intrinsic worth was recorded in 1562, two decades before the publication of Holinshed's chronicles, in Elizabeth's statutes of apparel, which strictly regulated the type of attire which could be worn by the holders of various social ranks. No one below the rank of mayor's officer, for example, could "presume to show hymselfe [...] in anye [...] place within this Realme, in anye payre of hosen [...] conteyning in the nether stockes and upper stockes, more than one-yarde and a halfe, or above one yarde and three quarters at the most, of the brodest karley".

Both Holinshed's and Elizabeth's anxiety about apparel demonstrates a defensiveness in response to subjects' potential "presumption" (no low-ranking citizen could "presume to showe hymselfe" in fancy attire) – the belief on the part of the lowly that the higher social ranks could be broken into by means of costuming, of putting on a higher state. And of course, at this time, this belief was increasingly well-founded, as attested to, among other things, by the popularity of courtesy literature instructing the ambitious how to improve their looks and manners and thereby their estate. When taken to its logical extreme, this subversive counsel threatened the stability of the monarchy itself – for if rank was to be acquired through costume and performance, then why could not any able man "put on" kingliness, as did Henry V?

In addition to Holinshed, other late-sixteenth-century writers subtly, and doubtless equally unwittingly, promoted this suggestion of the relative fluidity of royal identity. Charles Merbury, for example, in his *Briefe Discourse*, begins by stressing the reverent analogy between the king and the sun which lights the world from above. The king, like the sun, is inviolable and undisplaceable. Yet Merbury includes in his treatise a catalogue of the various ways in which earthly kinghip has historically been constituted, the very length and variety of which list suggests the arbitrariness of the choice of sovereign. In this long list of techniques for awarding kingship, the accession of England's own "mirror of all Christian kings," Henry V (Shakespeare, H5 2.Pro.6), comes across as only one of a series of practical options:

> *Some kingdomes go by gift, as Juba was by Octavius, made of a slave king of Numidia. [...] Others are lefte by will of testament, as Charles nephew, and heire unto Renald Duke of Anjoue bequethed all his estates, and dominions unto the french kinge Lewis the leventh. Some descende by the vertue of a Lawe, as the realme of France [...] doth by the Lawe which they call Salicke. Others goe by adoption. So in king Henry the fifth of England byside the interest of his auncesters, and his owne interest into the Crowne of France was added an adoption by his father in law the french kinge Charles the sixte. Some kingdomes are translated from one to an other by lotte, or chaunce of fortune [...]*

and so on (Merbury 1581, 16-18). Although Merbury goes on to champion the superiority of England's lineal method, by which "right of Succession" is accord-

ed "unto the next of the blood royall" (19), his representation of Henry's accession as simply one among many possible solutions to the problem of selecting a prince has undermined his general theme, which was the glory and sanctity of the English monarchy.

Implicit in Merbury's *Discourse* is the same spirit of pragmatism, activity, and inventiveness which characterizes Renaissance courtesy books, and which both Holinshed and Queen Elizabeth construed, quite rightly, as a threat. The subversive idea was that rank was indeed a human invention, constructed as a practical solution to man's need for governance, as possible to re-allocate as "one yarde and three quarters [...] of the brodest karley". Discourses on kingship dwelt on the sensibleness of the monarchical system: Glaucus's *A Knowledge for Kings* describes a community who conclude, after deliberation, that "theyr country, coulde not bee saufegarded by any better meanes, then by electing and chosing of a king". A 1598 translation of Guillame de La Perriere's *Mirrour of Policie* stresses the convenience of "prefer[ring] one only Prince and Soveraigne" over "the government of many. [...] [T]he sovereignty of one alone is better, more assured, and more durable than the government of many." Words like "electing," "choosing," and "preferred," though used in defense of the sacred monarchy, shift the locus of power from throneroom to people. Thus these texts generate a subversive image of the king as popular creation.

Such an image of the sovereign was, as I have been attempting to demonstrate, latent rather than explicit in most Renaissance texts treating kingship, and existed in an uneasy relationship with the overt celebration of the monarch's intrinsic majesty which was, more often than not, the author's primary theme. Nevertheless, the presence of the subversive image of king as popular creation indicates a growing consciousness of the influence subjects might bring to bear on sovereigns, and of the importance of the consensus of the governed in solidifying the power of governors. That Elizabeth was well aware of her need for such consensus is evident from the pains she took to promote public loyalty through acknowledging her people's support. Her "Golden Speech" to the House of Commons in 1601 concluded with an assurance to her hearers that "nothing is more deere to us then the loving conservation of our subjects hearts". Similarly, a letter she sent to London's lord mayor in 1586, expressing appreciation for "the joy her subjectes [in London] took upon the apprehension of divers [traitors]," thanks God for "inclin[ing] the heartes of our Subjectes [...]

to carrie [...] greate love towards us [...] which ought to move us (as it doeth in very deede) to the conservation of so loving and duetifully affected Subjectes". Shrewdly, Elizabeth added that "We thinke meete, that these letters shouldbe be communicated in some generall assemblie to our most loving Subjects the Commoners of that Citie" ("True Copie of a Letter"). Although Elizabeth carefully avoided stressing the *necessity* of the commons' and commoners' support, instead treating the people's love as simply an added, albeit cherished, element in her glory–chief among "the infinite blessings [God] layeth upon us, as many as ever Prince had," as she says in her letter to the mayor – her scrupulous and frequent acknowledgment of public devotion in speeches and proclamations throughout her realm discloses an awareness of her dependence on her subjects' affection. Whether or not Elizabeth believed her sovereignty to be intrinsic, she understood that its preservation depended on validation from without.

That late-sixteenth-century writers also understood this is reflected in texts which emphasize the importance of Elizabeth's public aspect, celebrating her for her fame. Thomas Nelson, in his 1591 description of "The Blessed State of England," counts as one of the nation's greatest blessings the high degree to which "foraine Nations doe admire and wonder at" her queen: "her majestie is more spoken of in the courtes both of Christian and heathen princes, and more feared and beloved than ever prince that lived in this lande". And a 1587 "humble petition of the communaltie to their most renowned soveraigne," requesting an increase in the number of learned ministers, begins with an appreciation of "the ritche and exceeding great blessings given of God unto your Highnes (the fame whereof is spread abroade, farre & nigh, wherein you approche to the excellence of Salamon)". Admonitory treatises, including emblem books, urged the importance of maintaining the public's perception of the monarch's virtuous rule, as in Islip's English edition of Guillame de La Perriere's *The Mirrour of Policie* (1590), which asserts that "the love of subjects towards their Prince, is an invincible fortress" and goes on to instruct princes in how to create a benevolent public persona.

La Perriere's emblem collection, *Emblems*, also translated in the 1590s, includes sketches and verses which also stress the sovereign's need widely to disseminate a certain kind of public image. One such emblem, which reveals the influence of Machiavelli's pragmatic discourse on governance, pictures a dog and

a hare holding high a crown, underneath the caption, "Love and feare are chiefest things, / That stablish Scepters unto kings" (cf. figure 3). The accompanying verse makes clear that the animals represent the prince's subjects, who are impressed into service by virtue of their prince's reputation:

Figure 3

A Prince that would his fame should still increase,
And honour to resound in every place,
He shall assure his Scepter with more ease,
If that his subjects love and feare his face.
A Dog and Hare two enemies to peace,
One loves, the other fareth in like case:
Yet better peace to Princes never springs,
Then when like Dogs and Hares men serve their kings.

The image promotes the doctrine that the crown is supported from below and derives its stability from a certain type of fame that inspires the complicity of the governed.

Figure 4

The orthodox Tudor doctrine that antithetically affirms the monarch's divine support, from above, is suggested by another of George Wither's "ancient emblems" (figure 4). Wither describes a heavenly arm reaching out from a cloud, upholding a king's arm, which brandishes a sword. The sketch and the accompanying text construct an image of kingship maintained by heaven, and of ceremonial honors which figure divine authority. Wither's verse reads:

> *When thou beholdst, upon a Day of State,*
> *The King (or, some inferior Magistrate)*
> *Walke forth in publicke, and the royall Mace,*
> *The Sword, or Scepter borne before his face:*
> *Suppose thou not, that those are carried, so,*
> *In ostentation, or for idle show.*
> *These vulgar Emblems, are significant;*
> *And, that authority, which Princes grant*
> *To Bodies politicke, was heretofore*
> *Declared, by those Ensignes, which they bore.*

Wither's emblem generates an image of divinely derived sovereign power, and of concrete honours (the sword and sceptre) which signify a spiritual reality. According to this view, power trickles downward from its source in the prince (and ultimately from God) – is "grant[ed]" by the ordained prince "to Bodies politicke".

La Perriere's sketch and verse, in contrast, promote a vision of power generated upward from the body politic, and strip the concept of "honour" of its spiritual significance, using the word as a synonym for "fame" ("A Prince that would his fame should still increase / And honour to resound in every place [...] "). This treatment of "honour" recalls us to the view expressed by Green, in *Thomas of Woodstock*, that nobility is nothing until "publisht." La Perriere's emblem both indicates and helped generate a more modern, pragmatic vision of royal identity as something which was not prior, but accorded by and in need of the ratification of the commonwealth. (Interestingly, even George Wither's more orthodox text accompanying *his* emblem acknowledges, while it laments, the people's claims to authority, where he asserts that "the bruzing Mace [...] [a] branch of Royall-power *did* signifie [my emphasis]," but concedes, "although, perhaps, with us, / It be not in these times restrained thus".)

Even Tudor historians, in constructing images of past kings, dwelt on the importance of fame and of public consent in securing the monarchical authority of Elizabeth's predecessors. Holinshed describes Henry V as a "mirrour of magnificence and famous to the world alwaie" and, as has been noted, emphasizes the importance of the acquiescence of the commonalty in Richard II's deposition at the hands of Bullingbrook, recording Bullingbrook's insistence that "the causes of [Richard's] deposing might be published through the realme for satisfieing of the people" and the later circumstance of the public exhibition of Richard's bare-faced corpse in St. Paul's Cathedral "that all men might behold it" (Holinshed 1957, 505/1/3). Samuel Daniel's history of the English civil wars has the dying Henry IV urging his son to consolidate popular support: "with payne / Thou must contend to buy the world's content," King Henry tells the prince, "And that unless [the nobles will] confirme the thinge / Thou canst not be the father to a king". Shakespeare, focusing on the importance of the public's role in the construction of kingship, would later develop Henry's concern at length, showing the king in *Henry IV, part two* urging his son to seek "Better opinion, better confirmation" for the crown (2.4.188). While Daniel, Holinshed, and Shakespeare are all specifically addressing the problem of Henry Bullingbrook's usurpation of the throne, and are exploring the problems inherent in substituting earthly legitimation of royal power for the divine sanctification now lost, their references to the importance of fame and of secular confirmation indicate these latter notions' cultural presence and power.

Thus, while the discourse and iconography of the queen and her conservative supporters in late-sixteenth-century England explicitly promoted the sanctity and God-given priority of royal selfhood, these same discourse and iconography were permeated with countervailing indications of the importance of external validation and influence in fashioning the monarch. Admonitory texts and sermons directed to princes, royal addresses to the commons, and historical constructions of past kings' careers all contributed to the dissemination of the new and subversive idea that kingship could be actively accorded by man rather than passively received from God. In such a view, royalty is a socially constructed role into which the chosen monarch steps, and which he or she must perform according to certain socially prescribed conventions. The king is a king not by vir-

tue of intrinsic royalty, but because he is capable of "kinging it" to the satisfaction of his audience: of effectively performing the part.

The representation of kings on the Elizabethan stage, then, participated in this subversion, involving as it did the embodiment of the metaphor of king as actor (implicit in texts and images which urged the sovereign to play to an audience). To put it more simply, the actor as king suggests the king as actor. The performer's role-play draws attention to the elements of role-play in kingship itself, thus helping promote the image of sovereignty as a behavior rather than an innate quality of self. This is most powerfully true of plays which address themselves specifically to the relation between kingliness and role-play, of which Shakespeare's *Richard II* and second group of Henry plays are the chief examples.

The stage presentation of a living, breathing Edward III or King John or Richard II reminded Elizabethans that, in Hamlet's words, "The king is a thing." Dramatic enactments of the lives of England's rulers thus were part of a groundswell of pragmatism which threatened Tudor ideology, dependent as that ideology was on English subjects' belief in their sovereign's divine legitimation. Against the official doctrine can be (and was) set the view put forth in Edward Hoby's 1585 translation of Matthew Coignet's *Politique Discourses upon Trueth and Lying*, which characterizes unseen realities as no realities. "And leaving all togither the Philosophers dalyings touching the true marke and knowledge of the trueth," Coignet announces, "we will wholie cleave to common sense [...] and will thinke that reasonable, which we have seene, heard, tasted, and felt". The Elizabethan stage provided its audiences with kings and queens who could be seen and heard, if not tasted and felt, and in so doing assisted in what Jonathan Dollimore calls "the demystification of political and power relations" which fostered a "radical social and political realism" (Dollimore 1984, 5). To quote Russell Fraser, "the rude handling of sacred totems is what [Renaissance] drama is all about" (Fraser 1976, 3). This "rude handling" was nothing less than what Raymond Williams terms the "[specific] disclosure" of "real social relations" (quoted in Dollimore, 3). However orthodox the playwright's intention, the presentation of (say) Prince Henry sticking needles in his coat prior to visiting his father in the anonymous *Famous Victories of Henry V* focused audience attention on royalty's human aspect at the expense of its divine one.

Thus the English history play promoted the displacement of the *tenor* of the metaphor signifying god-monarch by its *vehicle*. With the growing popularity of the staged history after *Gorboduc*'s production in 1561, the ruler, meant by Tudor apologists to be perceived as a vessel of divine authority, became increasingly represented through an aesthetic mode which enforced attention to the vessel rather than to the divinity. Marlowe's Tamburlaine, though he claims the title of the scourge of God, captures our attention and his kingdoms through his physical energy rather than through miraculous heavenly intervention in his bloody career. Likewise, Shakespeare's *First Tetralogy*, though it closes with a formal endorsement of the Tudor doctrine of kings, has, in its close attention to the practical battle strategies of the Yorkists and Lancastrians, focused audience attention on human rather than cosmic planning. It is not that these plays abandon the doctrine of the king as divine-right ruler; indeed, the *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III* seem designed specifically to promote that doctrine. ("O now let Richmond and Elizabeth, / The true succeeders of each royal house, / By God's fair ordinance conjoin together!," Richmond prays at the close of *Richard III*, "And let their heirs (God, if thy will be so) / Enrich the time to come with smooth-fac'd peace" [5.5.29-33].) It is just that the work of destiny becomes in these plays obscured and displaced by the material presentation of human political activity. And when the king's activity is disclosed as human activity, he appears as a man playing a role.

Richard III, the last of Shakespeare's first group of histories, shows the beginnings of Shakespeare's fascination with royalness as role-play, despite the play's ultimate rejection of false actor Richard for "true succeeder" Richmond. Richard's initial virtuosity in the role of good king, which wins him both Parliament and the widow of the prince he has himself killed (3.7 and 1.2), focuses our attention on the importance of crowd-pleasing to the legitimation of the monarch – an idea which the second group of Henry plays continues to develop.

The Henry plays, in fact, intensify the inherent subversiveness of history theatre by treating the very tension between the theatrical and the essential visions of kingship as a major theme. Shakespeare's later histories were, beneath their surface affirmation of the Tudor myth, strongly heterodox, generating an image of the king as a socially constructed political being, which image was powerfully at odds with conservative ideology. In the *Second Tetralogy*, royal identity is neither prior and intrinsic nor the arbitrary gift of the commonwealth. Instead,

royal identity comes from the prince's channeling of his creative imagination into the structure of communal expectations for the sovereign. Richard II failed as king, says Shakespeare's Henry IV, because he

> *was but as the cuckoo is in June,*
> *Heard, but not regarded; seen, but with such eyes*
> *As, sick and blunted with community,*
> *Afford no extraordinary gaze,*
> *Such as is bent on sunlike majesty*
> *When it shines seldom in admiring eyes.*
> *(Henry IV, part one, 3.2.76-80)*

Henry IV himself, he claims, succeeded by "courtesy," "dress[ing him]self in such humility" that he did "pluck allegiance from men's hearts, / Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths, / Even in the presence of the crowned King" (3.2.50-54). As for Prince Hal, he learns in the tavern world to earn the goodwill of common men: to "drink with any tinker in his own language," that he may one day "command all the good lads in Eastcheap" (2.4.19, 14-15).[4]

For these royals, royal identity is role-play. It is the co-creation of a private individual and his public "audience" – an audience which, through withdrawing its complicity in the individual's power, could cause that power to crumble.

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[4] See Stephen Greenblatt's "Invisible Bullets" for a discussion of Hal's strategies to this effect.

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HISTORICO-TRAGICO-COMICAL KINGS.
GENRE CONVENTIONS AND/AS EMBLEMS OF POWER IN SHAKESPEARE'S *HISTORIES*[1]

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"At this point, we are to philosophise, we are to
analyse carefully what feelings Darius must have had:
pride, perhaps, and elation; or, may be,
something like a sense of the vanity
of greatness. The poet ponders this deeply"
(Constantinos Kavafis, *Darius*)

"I live with bread like you, feel want,
Taste grief, need friends – subjected thus,
How can you say to me, I am a king?"
(William Shakespeare, *Richard II* 3.2.175-77)

Introduction:
Emblematic Rulership in Shakespeare's English History Plays

The (un)bridgeable gap between the "wooden O" and the "vasty fields of France" laid bare by the chorus in the prologue to *Henry V* points to the symbolico-emblematic traits of the theatrical sign. The audience is expected to co-operate in transforming the "unworthy scaffold" into battlefields and royal courts.[2] At the same time, the spectators are also implicitly made aware or

[1] I wish to heartily thank Dr. Margaret Squibb for her precious linguistic suggestions. I also very much thank Professor Paola Pugliatti, who generously offered me a pre-print of her *Shakespeare the Historian*.

[2] The symbolico-emblematic quality of the theatrical sign and the need for the spectators' cooperation is also stressed in contemporary treatises on poetry. See, for instance, Sidney's *Apologie*: "Now ye shal haue three ladies walke to gather flowers, and then we must beleeue the stage to be a Garden. By and

explicitly reminded (particularly in the interludes) of the theatrico-fictional elements of the world which is recreated on the stage. They are not merely asked to suspend their disbelief: they are supposed to both believe and disbelieve. An example of this mixture of belief and suspended disbelief can be seen in *Richard II*, where the king's role is half-naturalistic, and half-theatrical: the Richard that we see on the stage 'is' a king who 'acts' the king. The theatrical world emblematises the 'real' world and, vice versa, the 'real' world thus theatricalised becomes an emblem of the theatre and theatricality – "all the world" obviously being "a stage". In this way, the representation of power in Shakespeare's English histories is emblematic as long as the theatrical sign itself is emblematic.

The theatricalisation of a historical world, however, implies further – more specific – emblematic correspondences. The stage representation of a historical past obviously involves a theatricalisation of history. Indeed, we generally represent history to ourselves as intrinsically theatrical. (Aren't Joan of Arc's trial or Mary Stuart's execution 'theatrical' in themselves, independently of their actual stage performances?) In *Richard II*, medievalism and theatricality are evocative of each other. The formal quality and manneristic redundancy of the language is a means of emblematically distancing the action not only as 'theatrical' but also as 'historical'. If, on the one hand, linguistic virtuosity works as a reminder of the theatricality of the action, on the other hand, the ceremonialism of language also has the aim of introducing the Elizabethan audience into a lost and irretrievable historical world. The suggested trial by battle between Bolingbroke and Mowbray is eminently theatrical (because of the display of ceremony and pageantry it involves), as well as typically medieval (judicial combats having fallen into disuse by Shakespeare's day). Theatricality and pastness go well together in Shakespeare's histories.

Although evoking a sense of pastness, history plays also inevitably suggest certain emblematic links between present and past. The representation of cul-

by, we heare newes of shipwracke in the same place, and then wee are to blame if we accept it not for a Rock. Vpon the backe of that, comes out a hidious Monster, with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bounde to take it for a Caue. While in the meantime two Armies flye in, represented with foure swords and bucklers, and then what harde heart will not receiue it for a pitched fielde?" (Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie* [c. 1583; printed 1595], in: Smith, 1904, 1: 148-207, 197).

tural-historical 'breaks' does not exclude, indeed goes along with, a sense of historical continuity. By filtering the past through a present perspective, history plays establish a dialogue between present and past. It is well known that the deposition scene in *Richard II* (4.4.154-316) was only allowed to be printed in the fourth quarto edition of 1608 because it might have suggested a dangerous identification between King Richard and Queen Elizabeth.[3] On the Shakesperean stage, past rulership was, or could become, an (orthodox or unorthodox) emblem of present rulership.

The Elizabethan representation of power can also be defined as emblematic in a more strictly visual and iconographical sense. As has been shown by Tillyard and his school, the Elizabethan world picture rested on a hierarchico-analogical cultural model (1943). This was based on a set of correspondences and microcosmic–macrocosmic relations. Shakespeare's histories undoubtedly exhibit such a visual–emblematic representation of power. However, when scrutinised more closely, these figurative elements – in spite of their conventionality – do not convey an altogether conservative ideology. As can be seen from *Richard II*, the analogical correspondences between king and sun or king and eagle, although they seem to testify to the sacredness of the monarchical institution, do not guarantee the legitimacy of the monarch's person as such. Apparently, royal analogies only apply to the body politic, not to the king's natural body. When Richard is "unkinged", the emblems of monarchy abandon him and are re-inscribed onto Bolingbroke's political body. More important than that, the providential scheme underlying such sets of correspondences is shown as gradually giving way to a sort of Machiavellian political pragmatism. In the hands of Bolingbroke and his supporters, the analogico-providential model is stripped of its metaphysical significance: providential arguments and emblematic correspondences are covertly assimilated into strategies of royal legitimation and political propaganda.

In short, the representation of power in Shakespeare's histories can be defined as symbolico-emblematic from various points of view. In a very broad sense, the stage representation of rulership is intrinsically emblematic because of the em-

[3] Such an emblematic identification was fostered by the Queen herself: her "Know ye not, I am Richard" is no less well known. Parallels between Henry V's dramatic monologues and Queen Elizabeth's public speeches have also been drawn (Montini 1995).

blematic quality of the theatrical sign. In addition, more specific emblematic relations can be found between medievalism (in all its ceremonial aspects) and theatricality, as well as between past and present historical contexts: that is, between medieval and Elizabethan rulers. Finally, the Elizabethan world-view itself – with its analogical cultural models and interpretive patterns – is profoundly emblematic.

However, there is still – at least – one more sense in which Shakespeare's representation of power in his English histories may be defined as emblematic. I will be attempting to show that Shakespeare's 'histories' do not fit into a single, well defined dramatic genre (i.e., the history play) and that their *generic opacity* emblematically suggests a parallel *opacity of power discourse*.

Genre Conventions as Emblems of Power; Emblems of Power as Genre Conventions

The theatrical representation of power, obviously enough, implies a definition – and, eventually, a reshaping – of power in terms of aesthetic categories and discourse. Displaying power on the stage means treating a *political* object from an *aesthetic* perspective. The distinction itself between the king's two bodies suggests the presence of fictional elements in the representation of the royal persona.[4] As a matter of fact, the 'natural' / 'political' opposition which was used in relation to the king's double persona can be regarded as at least partly overlapping with the 'natural' / 'artificial' antonymic pair which was so pervasive in Renaissance treatises on poetry. From such a perspective, the 'political' can be seen as intrinsically 'artificial' – and, therefore, aesthetic. In contemporary treatises on poetry, the poetics of dissimulation, which was proposed by the critics to the courtly poets, makes an aesthetic counterpart to the politics of dissimulation, which was the core of Italian and European treatises on the art of government. It should not be overlooked that government was indeed regarded as an 'art': Thomas Elyot's *The Boke Named the Governour* (1531) or George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), although they deal with different

[4] On the representation of the king as a *persona ficta*, see Montini 1995.

topics – politics and poetics, respectively – undoubtedly exhibit common cultural patterns. Principles or rules such as order, measure and proportion apply equally well to political and poetical arts.

In 1586, Queen Elizabeth said to a parliamentary deputation: "We princes are set on stages in the sight and view of all the world".[5] This is not dissimilar from what the Bastard says of the Angiers citizens in *King John* : they "gape and point" at the kings of England and France "as in a theatre" (2.1.375). As has been observed by Stephen Greenblatt, "Elizabethan power [...] depends on its privileged visibility" (1981, 64).[6] In fact, Elizabethan power was displayed through a number of 'theatrical' celebrations: public processions, ceremonies and, of course, dramatic representations. However, the discursive modes and generic forms through which power made itself visible (in other words, the aesthetics of power) still remain largely unexplored.

Given the patent aesthetic elements in the Elizabethan representation of power, some aesthetic categories – such as those of literary genre – were also bound to contribute towards a definition of power. Indeed, the very existence of genre conventions and stylised speech-forms implies the power of certain discourse types over other discourse types (in this sense, cultural models themselves represent forms of power). More specifically, the *generic forms of power representation* make an essential element in the semiotics and ideology of power.

Literary genres both contribute to the production of power discourse and, in their turn, are part of the very power discourse they have contributed to produce.[7] Therefore, the dramatic use of historico-tragico-comic genre conventions should not be regarded from a merely aesthetic perspective but, rather, as an intrinsic and emblematic constituent of a play's political significance.

Events, of course, are neither tragic nor comic in themselves. The issue of a battle can either be a victory or a defeat, depending on whose perspective is adopted. Representing the battle of Agincourt as a victory and giving it a comic

[5] Quoted in Neale (1965, 2: 119).

[6] On the theatrical display of power in the age of Shakespeare, see also Di Michele 1988.

[7] On the politics of genre, see Tennenhouse 1986.

form obviously implies seeing things from an English and royalist perspective. The same event would presumably have been handled in a tragic form by a French dramatist. Likewise, a royal deposition is not necessarily a negative event; as a matter of fact, its tragic markers may be disrupted by, say, the suggestion that it could pave the way for a better form of government. In other words, comic and tragic patterns implicitly suggest the presence of an authorial perspective and thus orientate the spectators' emotional and ethical response. Conversely, the opacity of – comic or tragic – genre conventions makes the identification of the authorial stance more problematic. In Shakespeare's *histories*, as we have already mentioned, the opacity of genre conventions can therefore be regarded as an *emblematic parallel* to the opacity of power discourse.

As is well known, the thirty-six Shakesperean plays collected in the First Folio in 1623 were subdivided by the editors into three main dramatic genres: *Comedies, Histories & Tragedies*. Such a generic distinction has undoubtedly influenced the way we approach Shakespeare's 'histories'.[8] In spite of the Folio editors' definition, a number of plays which were grouped under the headings of 'tragedies' or 'comedies' could equally well be defined as history plays and, in much the same way, many 'histories' could be labelled as either tragedies or comedies. Moreover, it should be remembered, Heminge and Condell's generic subdivision was not the only one. In *Palladis Tamia* (1598), Francis Meres had already subdivided Shakespeare's works into the two main classical genres of tragedy and comedy (thus implicitly denying the existence of the history play as a genre in itself).[9] A clue to this generic impasse is perhaps indirectly provided by Shakespeare himself. In an oft-quoted speech, Polonius suggests the impossibility of drawing clear-cut boundaries among dramatic genres. Plays can be

[8] A similar generic classification had been proposed by William Webbe who subdivided English poetry into "Comicall, Tragicall, Historiall" (*A Discourse of English Poetrie*, 1586, in: Smith 1904, 1: 226-302, 249-50).

[9] According to Meres, comedies include: *Gentlemen of Verona, Errors, Loue Labors Lost, Loue Labors Wonne, Midsummers Night Dreame, Merchant of Venice*; while tragedies are represented by *Richard the 2, Richard the 3, Henry the 4, King Iohn, Titus Andronicus, Romeo and Juliet* (*Palladis Tamia*, in: Smith 1904, 2: 308-24, 318). As can be seen, Meres's classicistic approach leads him to classify as 'tragedies' those very plays which would later be labelled as 'histories'.

"pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral" (2.2.393-95). Notwithstanding the parodico-ludicrous intent of such a definition, through the character's words the author hints at what is perhaps the most conspicuous aspect of contemporary drama: generic mixture. In fact, Polonius' generic fuzziness applies to the players' repertoire no less than to Shakespeare's dramatic canon as a whole. And, it should be remembered, the mingling of dramatic genres had not passed unnoticed by contemporary critics, both in England and on the continent.[10]

Even a rough reading of the ten plays labelled as 'histories', reveals that they do not form a generically homogeneous group. As some critics have justly argued, "lumping the plays together [...] as histories may be convenient, but it skates over some real difficulties" (Moseley 1988, 82). We should not forget that the titles of the Elizabethan and Jacobean quarto and folio editions of *Richard II* indirectly reveal to us that the play was perceived by Shakespeare's contemporaries not only as a history, but also as a tragedy.[11] Indeed, such uncertainty as to a play's generic affiliation was common in the Elizabethan age.

As a matter of fact, a neat generic opposition between histories and tragedies, or between histories and comedies appears as unmotivated and inconsistent. If, oversimplifying a rather delicate question, we can separate tragedies from comedies on the basis of their respective catastrophes or dénouements, there is no apparent reason why a tragic ending could not be represented in a historical way or a comic ending should not take place in a historical time. In other words, the sense of pastness which we generally ascribe to a history play does not seem to conflict with either a tragic or a comic pattern. In Shakespeare's second tetra-

[10] See, for instance, Sidney's attack on the mingling of "Kings and Clownes" and on "mungrell Tragy-comedie" (in: Smith 1904, 1: 199).

[11] The first part of the titles of Q1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 reads (with minor typographical variations): *The Tragedie of King Richard the Second*, whereas in the folio edition the play's title is *The Life and death of King Richard the Second*. Terming the play *Life and death* instead of *Tragedie*, Heminge and Condell probably intended to emphasise the historical and chronicle – rather than the tragic – elements in it. Needless to say, such a critico-editorial choice is coherent with the inclusion of the play within the section of the "Histories" (pp. 23-45). Differently from Heminge and Condell, Meres regarded *Richard II* as a tragedy (see n. 8, above). As can be seen, the Elizabethans were not in agreement as to questions of genre classification.

logy, the historical mode combines with both tragic and comic genre conventions. It would perhaps be more accurate to define *Richard II* a 'historical tragedy', the two parts of *Henry IV* 'historical *Bildungskomödien*' or 'conduct comedies', and *Henry V* a 'historical comedy'.

The Historical Mode and its Opacity

What is, then, the 'historical' mode, and how does it structurally combine with comic or tragic patterns? A definition of the historical mode in fiction may be conveniently sketched out by means of a double comparison between: i) historical fiction and historiography, ii) historical fiction and other – non-historical – fictional modes or genres.

In the last twenty years or so, the line of demarcation between historiography and fiction has been made thinner by some historiographical schools – notably, "New Historicism". New Historicists – and their pioneer Hayden White – have quite reasonably argued, and shown, that historiographical texts should be regarded as literary artifacts (White 1973 and 1978).

However, the identification of a poetics of the historiographical discourse does not, in itself, imply – as New Historicists have tended to assume – that historiographical prose can or should be assimilated into fiction. As a matter of fact, historiographical texts are supposed to comply with a set of well defined, culturally (i.e., historiographically) accepted strategies of veridicality (Lozano 1987; Eco 1991). None of these are required in fictional texts (Pugliatti 1994). While a historiographical discourse is – or is supposed to be – referential, a fictional discourse is – declaredly – pseudoreferential. Since historiographical assertions are assumed to be verifiable (and to have been verified), historiographical texts must avoid all those discursive (narrative or dramatic) techniques which can only generate unverifiable assertions.

At the origins of historiography, historical records were said to be founded upon direct testimonial evidence. In fact, the very term 'history' is connected with an indoeuropean root (**wid-*, **weid-*) which means "to see".[12] Therefore,

[12] See Lozano's account (1987) of Benveniste's etymological reconstruction of the term *'st-* (1976, 414).

the historian's account was shown as a narrative of what the 'histor' had personally seen.

The testimonial function and the discursive forms which are appropriate to historiographical recording are intrinsically associated with an *external focalisation*. Thus, the historian's view cannot penetrate the historical characters' inner thoughts and feelings or capture their subjectivity.

As has been shown by Genette (1991), there are certain discursive types which are intrinsically fictional and cannot be adopted by historiographical reports: for instance, interior – or dramatic – monologues and, generally speaking, any discursive form which implies or requires an internal focalisation. For very similar reasons, sustained dialogues, such as those of drama, go beyond the possibilities of historiographical recording and thus, at least implicitly, present themselves as fictional.

Historical fiction draws – more or less extensively – on the *historical encyclopaedia*: it re-tells historical facts or topics within discursive forms which are peculiar to fiction. So, in spite of a certain degree of historicity in its contents, historical fiction keeps the *illocutionary status* of fictional discourse. An historical novel or play directly or indirectly shows itself as *a fictionalised representation of historiographical material.*

As is implicitly suggested by Kavafis' poem which we have cited as an epigraph, the task of historical poetry or fiction is to recover some sort of *historical subjectivity*. Such a goal is splendidly achieved, for instance, by the Shakespearean representation of King Richard II. King Richard's speech – "I live with bread like you, feel want, / Taste grief ..." (3.2.175-6) – may be said to emblematise that same sense of the vanity of greatness which Kavafis looked for in the historical representation of Darius. Obviously (as has already been noted), the representation of historical subjectivity exceeds the limits – and the scope – of the historiographical discourse. Indeed, if we interpret the adjective 'historical' in its proper historiographico-testimonial sense, the very syntagm 'historical subjectivity' appears as oxymoronic (since an eye-witness type of report does not allow any introspective representation or discourse). However, whereas the analysis of Darius' or Richard's feelings need not concern the historian, it is essential to the historical poet. It can thus be concluded that one of the scopes – perhaps, the main scope – of historical fiction is to analyse those historical contents, such as

historical subjectivity, which are excluded from the proper historiographical domain by the very discursive form and illocutionary status of historiography.

Although historical fiction and historiographical prose are distinguishable in terms of their respective discourse types, it must be noted that in the Elizabethan age the boundary line between them was made somewhat problematic by some characteristics of sixteenth-century historiography. Elizabethan historiographical reports – such as Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1587) – made a certain use of dialogic forms and, if judged in terms of twentieth-century standards of historiographical discourse, could be regarded as fictional. However, it must be stressed that *on the whole* their discursive forms were, and can be, fairly neatly distinguished from those of fiction. As a matter of fact, the difference between the illocutionary status of historiographical and fictional texts was clearly acknowledged by the Elizabethans themselves. As Sidney pointed out, unlike the historian, the poet – and, therefore, the poetic text – "nothing affirmes, and therefore neuer lyeth" (Smith 1904, 1:184).[13] In spite of some fictional elements in them, historiographical texts were thus separated from fictional ones.

If historical fiction has a different illocutionary status (and, thus, also a different scope) from historiography, then the term 'historical', when it is associated with fiction, must be interpreted in a sense which is consistent with the illocutionary status of fictional discourse. Such a definition of 'historical' permits us to distinguish between historical fiction and other fictional modes.

When it is related to fictional discourse, 'historical' does not imply or suggest any historiographical authenticity but rather indicates *a chronologico-cultural distance between the time of representation (or the authorial time) and the represented time*. Here, the authorial time must not be understood as an extratextual category but, rather, as a textual strategy. We are informed about the date of composition of a literary work by means of external or extratextual evidence. In addition to this, a literary work also bears internal or textual evidence of its date of composition. As a matter of fact, the authorial time is textualised in a lot of ways. Historical fiction exhibits a more or less evident *historical incongruity*

[13] Even if diversely from Sidney, also Holinshed emphasised the distinction between historiography and fiction: "My speech is plain, without any rhetoricall shew of eloquence, having rather a regard to simple truth, than to decking words" (*The Third Volume of Chronicles*. London, 1587: Aiii).

between the textualised authorial time or the time of representation, and the historical time represented. For instance, in Shakespeare's Roman plays, this incongruity may be exemplified by the contrast between the Elizabethan language which is spoken by the characters (and which pertains to the authorial time) and their historical Roman condition (which pertains to the represented time).[14] This historico-cultural distance generates *a poetics of anachronism*. Historical fiction is thus based on an anachronistic *interplay of cultural codes between the representational and the represented (con)texts*. Different types of anachronism mark historical fiction: besides linguistic or expressive anachronisms, semantic and para-textual anachronisms can be found as well. Semantic anachronisms can be exemplified by the appellative "ladies" which is attributed to Roman matrons in *Coriolanus* (1.9.5), or by the definitions of "nationalist" and "protestant" which are given to the heroine in G.B. Shaw's *Saint Joan*.[15] In both cases, the represented historical context is – anachronistically – attributed semantic units, and cultural patterns, which pertain to the representational context. Of course, para-textual[16] anachronisms also variously characterise historical fiction. In their pointing to cultural distances – and dialectical exchanges – between two different historical contexts, anachronisms can be regarded as *genre-markers of 'historical fiction'*, as well as *forms of (meta)historical interpretation*.

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[14] Although such conclusions may seem almost self-evident, many Shakesperean critics have incongrously applied historiographical categories to historical fiction. In relation to the two *Henry IV* plays, such confusion has produced an untenable distinction between 'historical' and 'non-historical' scenes. If we understand the term 'historical' in its historiographical sense, there is no single line in these plays which can be regarded as historical. Conversely, if we coherently assume that in fiction the adjective 'historical' has nothing to do with historiographical authenticity but merely denotes the conveyance of a sense of pastness, there is no logical reason for considering the Eastcheap scenes as non-historical. These scenes are historical as long as they represent fragments of late medieval popular culture.

[15] Of course, semantic anachronisms serve different specific functions in historical fiction. A preliminary distinction could be made between 'intentional' and 'unintentional' anachronisms (although, in many cases, such a distinction would be rather problematic). For instance, the anachronisms in *Saint Joan* which we have mentioned above should be regarded as 'intentional', in that they suggest a form of historiographical interpretation: in her being an evolutionary heroine, Joan 'anticipates' nationalism and protestantism.

[16] As to a definition of 'paratext', see Genette 1987.

Since they are essential to historical fiction, anachronisms must be visible and can only partially be dissembled. The narrator of *Ivanhoe* finds it necessary to specify that, for practical reasons, the characters' Anglo-Saxon conversation – which is registered by him in an eye-witness type of report – has been 'translated' into contemporary, nineteenth-century English. Walter Scott was obviously aware of the fact that linguistic anachronism undermines the historiographical credibility or truth value of an assertion. At the same time, of course, he did not really want his characters' speeches to be regarded as real but only as realistic. It is also because of its quasi-overt display of anachronisms that historical fiction is distinguishable from *forgery*. In fact, differently from historical fiction, forgery is based upon the concealment of all those – expressive, semantic and paratextual – elements pertaining to the representational context. After all, a historical novelist or dramatist generally pursues different scopes from, say, the author of the *Donatio Sancti Petri*. Other literary types, such as the 'medieval' findings of some preromantic poets seem to stand halfway between forgery and historical fiction and would need a separate discussion.

The interplay between two different historical (con-)texts which marks historical fiction can sometimes be ambivalent, or opaque. On the Shakesperean stage, the public could see the author's fictionalised perception of the past – that is, one of the ways an Elizabethan represented the Roman times or the English late Middle Ages to himself. Although *Richard II*'s medieval characters speak some sort of Elizabethan English, the Elizabethan audience would not recognise it as the current 1590s language. As a matter of fact, the archaico-ceremonial tone of language emblematically marks it as both 'Elizabethan' and 'medieval'. In more general terms, the cultural models represented in the play are partly Elizabethan, partly medieval (and, therefore, neither properly Elizabethan nor truly medieval). Besides a sense of the 'remoteness' of the historical past, Shakespeare's audience would have simultaneously recognised the 'contemporary' aspects of the various historical plays. As is inevitable, the historical past is represented in terms of present cultural patterns. From this point of view, the so-called "Longleat manuscript" (1595) can be regarded as emblematic: the half-Roman, half-Elizabethan characters acting in *Titus Andronicus* indirectly show how, on the Elizabethan stage, the past was both distanced as culturally remote and anachronistically brought nearer as culturally contemporary (the Roman past being metaphorically 'dressed' in Elizabethan clothes).

A certain ambivalence in the representation of the past can be regarded as an intrinsic constituent of historical fiction. The past, of course, can only be seen from a present perspective. This has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, some aspects of the past become clearer when they are viewed from the present. For instance, in modern times, feudalism has undoubtedly become a much better understood economico-cultural phenomenon than it was in the Middle Ages. On the other hand, in viewing the past from the present we inevitably lose a number of things. For instance, we can only have a pale and distorted idea of the actual experience of life in feudal times.

Shakespeare's histories exhibit both a deep understanding of the cultural and feudal alterity of a late medieval past and an ambivalent projection into it of contemporary Elizabethan cultural patterns and policy.[17]

As has been suggested by Graham Holderness, at least three schools of historiography are distinguishable in Elizabethan England. The providential-theological view of history supported by the encyclopaedic chronicles of Hall and Holinshed can be contrasted with the political pragmatism of humanist historiography. On the other hand, both providentialism and humanism – in their common lack of a true perception of the past – can be contrasted with antiquarian historiography, which is conversely marked by a profound sense of the diversity – or pastness – of the past (1992, 1-20).

The Shakespearean history plays reveal a profound, quasi-antiquarian understanding of feudal laws; they "can be read as serious attempts to reconstruct and theorize the past", in that they "embody a conscious understanding of feudal society as a peculiar historical formation" (Holderness, 1992, 13-14). It is also evident, though, that the feudal past which is represented on the Shakespearean stage is deformed – or, at least, recreated – with a view to its pragmatic exempla-

[17] Some critics have regarded Shakespeare's representation of the past as a mirror of *contemporary* culture and policy (Campbell, 1947); others have pointed out Shakespeare's understanding of the *alterity* of the past (Holderness, 1992). Perhaps, the truth is in the middle. Shakespeare's representation of the past could be defined as 'opaque', as a mingling of past and contemporary codes – which is, however, typical of the history play as a genre.

rity[18] or on the basis of a providential interpretation.[19] An Elizabethan audience would feel Shakespeare's recreation of a late medieval setting as both 'remote' and 'contemporary'.

On the one hand, Shakespeare's histories hint at a linear historical paradigm, from chaos following the deposition of a legitimate king to the re-establishment of order and harmony (such a view is in line with a providential scheme). On the other hand, they also suggest a circular or cyclical historical pattern, which implies the 'repeatability' of historical events (this view is in line with humanist political pragmatism). The king's deposition in *Richard II* might be – and was – interpreted by Shakespeare's contemporaries both from a monarchist and an anti-monarchist standpoint. As a matter of fact, it was both – orthodoxically – seen as the representation of an original sin leading up, after a long and inevitable period of anarchy and political turmoil, to the Tudor pacification, and – unorthodoxically – as an act implying the possibility that the present Queen herself might similarly be deposed.[20]

The ambivalence in the historicisation of juridico-political structures is matched by a corresponding ambivalence in the representation of historical subjectivity. Richard II, for instance, is simultaneously a late medieval and an Elizabethan monarch. Although his use of trial by combat is typically medieval, much of his symbolism is eminently Elizabethan.

In conclusion, the present-past relations which characterise the historical mode are opaque, and so is the historicisation of power and public structures as well as the historicisation of the self.

Indeed, as we shall see, the opacity and the openness of the texts which make up the second tetralogy is not merely confined to their historical mode, but also concerns – and combines with – the plays' tragic or comic generic forms.

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[18] As is shown by the Bastard's final speech in *King John*, the past can be used as a source for present moral and political instruction ("Nought shall make us rue/If England to itself do rest but true!": V.vii.117-18). Such a pragmatic approach to the past is a characteristic of humanist historiography.

[19] On the influence of Providentialist historiography (especially of Hall's *Union*) on Shakespeare's histories, Tillyard's work, in spite of its one-sidedness, is still precious (1944, 47-56).

[20] Because of such a subversive implication, as has already been noted, the deposition scene (4.1.154-316) was censored and could only be printed in Q4, 1608.

The Opacity of Tragic and Comic Genre Conventions and the Opacity of Power Discourse

Fictionalising history for a Renaissance playwright meant adapting it to the conventions of tragedy or comedy. The literary patterns of historiographical discourse had to meet with a poetics of dramatic closure. In his dramatic production, Shakespeare conformed to the two most important conventions of his time: a five-act structure and a threefold division of the action into protasis–epitasis–catastrophe (or dénouement) (Snuggs 1960; Herrick 1964).

Far from forming a generically homogeneous group, Shakespeare's 'histories' can be divided into 'historical tragedies' and 'historical comedies', in that their onward movement from start to finish follows a progressive – tragic or comic – scheme. Such a dramatico-theatrical adaptation of the historiographical discourse has obvious political implications. Historical events in themselves do not exhibit the linear, progressive movement of either tragedy or comedy. Encoding a historical event into a historiographical discourse implies overcoding it with ideological evaluations. Adapting the historiographical discourse to a tragic or comic pattern (and poetics of closure) implies further ideologically charging it. The tragic or comic theatricalisation of the historiographical discourse, besides complying with aesthetic rules, also plays an evident ideologico-political role. Thus, genre conventions emblematically cooperate in structuring power discourse.

Even if they conform to tragic or comic generic patterns, Shakespeare's histories – at least partly – question, and disrupt, those very patterns. In fact, the presence of tragic and comic genre conventions is made opaque by a number of anti-tragic or anti-comic elements. The plays' treatment of power is likewise opaque. This point will be illustrated in relation to *Richard II*, *Henry the Fourth, Part One* and *Henry V*. As we have already suggested, each of these plays can be taken to exemplify a particular generic type.

Richard II and 'Historical Tragedy'

Richard II can be defined as a 'historical tragedy'. In fact, the historical events represented in the play are shown as progressively leading to a tragic ending. As

has been pointed out by some critics, the play's historical action is tripartite: the sequence of events falls easily into the protasis, epitasis and catastrophe scheme. Things start evolving tragically for King Richard from the play's very beginning, that is from the moment when he banishes his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke and is faced with the news of the Irish rebellion (1.1–2.1). Bolingbroke's invasion and the transference of real power mark a second step towards tragedy (2.2–3.3). The catastrophe or the culminating moment is represented by the deposition and killing of King Richard (3.4–5.6).[21]

On comparing *Richard II* with what is now commonly regarded as its main historiographical source – Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, one of the most striking differences can perhaps be found in the very selection of historical events from King Richard's reign. While Holinshed's narrative covers the whole reign of Richard II (1377–1399/1400), Shakespeare only deals with King Richard's final years (1398–1400).[22] The reason for such a choice is plain: the playwright must have thought of the chronicle flux of events in terms of a dramatic development, and a progressive tragic structure. Bolingbroke's banishment is the historical event in Richard's reign which is best suited as a first step towards an overall tragic movement. The action is driven forward by means of a set of fast-moving and slower-moving episodes, which finally evolve into death and destruction.

As is indirectly shown by Falstaff's end in *Henry V* (2.3), death is not intrinsically tragic. In *Richard II*, the events anticipating, accompanying and following Richard's death no doubt inspire a tragic feeling of pity (in the Aristotelian sense) – sometimes, of self-pity – which is uttered throughout the play by many characters, including the king himself. In many respects, as more than one critic has pointed out, Richard's malaise prefigures Hamlet's nihilism.

The king's death is not only tragic because of the emotional response which it evokes, but also because of its ideological implications. Richard's end is – at least partly – shown to be the result of blind necessity: it appears as inscribed *ab*

[21] On the threefold partition of *Richard II* see Melchiori 1979, 14-17.

[22] On the theatrical transcoding of the historiographical sources in Shakespeare's second tetralogy, see Serpieri *et al.* (critical contributions by Susan Payne, Serena Cenni and Aldo Celli) 1988, vol. III.

ovo in the course of events. Queen Isabel prophetically foresees a tragic movement: her "nameless woe" (2.2.40) anticipates the king's deposition and death. In a partially similar way, in *Julius Caesar* Calphurnia foresees Caesar's murder (2.2). In both plays, a sort of premonition of sorrow makes a tragic development appear as unavoidable: "...What can be avoided / Whose end is purpos'd by the mighty gods?" (JC 2.2.26-27). Richard's and Caesar's lives are shown as dominated by Fate. Sorrow is inevitable; above all, sorrow is purposeless. Such a view is profoundly tragic: it is the view of classical Greek tragedy.

On the other hand, *Richard II* also exhibits some providential elements which question its fatalistic model and tragic pattern. Both Carlisle and York, although for different political reasons, give voice to a providential viewpoint. In York's perspective, in particular, Richard's deposition is not shown as a form of purposeless suffering, but takes on a providential justification: "heaven hath a hand in these events" (5.2.37). As has been observed by George Steiner among others, tragedy is alien to the Judeo-Christian justification of suffering.[23] Adopting Steiner's point of view, it could be concluded that the presence of such providential elements disrupts the tragic pattern in *Richard II*.

The providential undermining of a tragic progression has certain political implications. A providential justification of King Richard's deposition is based on the suggestion that, although Richard II is legitimate, he does not embody the ideal king. In the histories, legitimacy does not always coincide with personal appropriateness.[24] Besides being probably guilty of Gloucester's death, Richard II also proves to be wasteful and weak. His many faults are remembered and illustrated in some commentary scenes by a number of 'minor' characters, such as Gaunt (2.1), the gardener (3.4), and others. In short, King Richard's deposition and death make possible the accession to the throne of a new Lancastrian king, Henry IV, who – as is sometimes insinuated, sometimes explicitly stated – promises to be a better king than the dethroned Richard had been.

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[23] In his well known study of tragedy, Steiner (1961) argues that the Christiano-Jewish doctrine of Divine Providence eventually led to the death of tragedy, which is based on the Greek sense of Fate.

[24] Cf. Szőnyi's essay in the present volume. The legitimacy *versus* appropriateness principles as rules governing royal succession are implicitly discussed by King Henry IV, when he states that Percy would make a much better king than Hal: "He hath more worthy interest to the state/Than thou the shadow of succession" (1H4 3.2.98-99).

However, *Richard II*'s generic form and political significance suggest much deeper layers of meaning than those embedded in the fatal/providential opposition. If King Richard's faults – seen in the light of the pervasive garden imagery (Ure 1956, li-lvii; Melchiori 1979, 3-17) – are connoted as a sort of original sin, Bolingbroke's usurpation and regicide take on the connotations of a post-lapsarian fault and a prime historical infraction of the divine and natural law. It is Bolingbroke himself who finally associates the killing of King Richard with Cain's fratricide (5.6.43). Cain's crime, although biblical, is not redeemed by any providential justification. In fact, Abel's – and, partly, King Richard's – deaths symbolically represent a profoundly tragic historicisation of crime and sorrow.

Moreover, other textual elements can be found hinting that York's providential justification of Bolingbroke's usurpation should not be taken too literally. Both fatalism and providentialism present the course of human events as necessary and unescapable. From a different, materialist perspective, human suffering and conflict contrariwise appear as the contingent effect of "social and historical forces focussed in state power".[25] In *Richard II*, rather than hinting at a metaphysics of power, providentialism is used as a repertoire of political arguments. Northumberland's emphasis on "policy" probably best synthesises the spirit of the play.[26] As a matter of fact, the providential arguments produced by Bolingbroke's supporters are implicitly demystified by Northumberland's *realpolitik*. Religious idealism is thus turned into political materialism.

Thus, *Richard II*'s generic opacity emblematises a parallel opacity in the representation of power. In proposing multiple perspectives which – directly or indirectly – undermine one another, the play questions both canonised genre conventions and culturally accepted views of power and principles of rulership.

Henry IV, Part One and the 'Historical Bildungskomödie'

The historical action of *Henry IV, Part One* can similarly, and conventionally, be divided into three parts (1.1–2.4; 3.1–3.2; 3.3–5.5) (Melchiori 1979, 273-

[25] See Dollimore's criticism of Steiner (1989, xvi-xxii).

[26] Northumberland's emphasis on "policy" ("That were some love, but little *policy*": 5.1.84) can be regarded as analogous to the Bastard's stress on "commodity" in *King John* (2.1.597).

75). The action's progressive movement leads to a happy dénouement. The happy ending is represented by the royal victory over the rebels at Shrewsbury. This is made possible by the process of education which the hero undergoes. Thus, the dissipated and unruly prince Hal is gradually transformed, until he becomes capable of recognising and firmly pursuing truly royal tasks. The crucial moment of Hal's growth is marked by his chivalric display of honour at the battle of Shrewsbury against his fierce opponent, Harry Percy (5.4).[27] And, finally, at the end of the play, Hal may be said to fully represent the princely ideal: "[t]he courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword".[28]

A *Bildungsroman* or a *Bildungskomödie* is characterised by the main character's development: at the end, the hero fulfils his objective (an objective which, at first, he had not been able to fully recognise) by gradually reforming his desire and behaviour. From this point of view, *Henry the Fourth, Part One* can be conveniently defined as a 'historical conduct comedy' or a 'comedy of formation'. In fact, it is the prince himself who, speaking about his future "reformation" (1.2.208), indirectly hints at the play's generic structure. This pattern may have been borrowed or suggested by the contemporary vogue of conduct books, many of which dealt with political conduct.[29]

In *Henry the Fourth*, the author, although outwardly conforming to such a model, inwardly undermines it by strewing the text with anti-formative elements. These may be identified: 1/ in some unconvincing aspects in the prince's transformation; 2/ in the fact that all of the Eastcheap characters remain unreformed. Differently from what happens in other types of more conventional *Bildungs*-texts, in *Henry the Fourth, Part One* the 'subversive' elements are not fully or convincingly 'contained' by the conclusion.

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[27] Hal's display of honour at Shrewsbury had been prepared by the scene of his reconciliation with his father King Henry IV (3.2).

[28] These are Ophelia's famous words in *Hamlet* (3.1.153). An apparently analogous conception of the ideal prince is formulated in *Measure for Measure* by the Duke ("a scholar, a statesman, and a soldier": 3.2.142).

[29] Other Shakesperean plays exhibit partly similar formative models: among these, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Tempest*.

From his very first appearance (1.2), Prince Hal is characterised by a dual personality whose conflicting halves are not completely aware of each other. On the one hand, the prince's political self has to stage all those ethico-juridical principles or constraints which act as a guarantee of social and political order (surveillance and repression being obviously part of a ruler's duties). On the other hand, the prince appears as marked by that same anarchy of desire which he punningly suggests should be severely chastised in Falstaff. Surprisingly enough, Hal predicts for Falstaff – or, rather, threatens him with – a future of "gallows" or, at least, of "robe of durance" (1.2.38,42). And he does so when he is still unreformed and guilty of those very crimes he would like to see punished in his comrade. The inflexibility of the ethico-judicial code by which the prince judges his Eastcheap companions, sharply contrasts with the exceedingly self-indulgent judgements which he passes on himself.[30] No signs of repentance or self-criticism can be seen in him (still less any shadow of Hamletic self-horror). Instead of suggesting a process of spiritual growth, the prince's conversion seems rather the result of a strategical self-adjustment to the reasons of the body politic.[31]

Not only this, but the prince's "reformation" is unaccompanied by an analogous conversion of his Eastcheap companions. In fact, the 'low' characters continue with their eating, drinking, sleeping, whoring and stealing. As has been suggested by Greenblatt, they may be said to embody "a dream of superabundance" (1988, 41). The Eastcheap group impersonates a sort of folk carnival humour and release. Carnival, as Holderness suggests, "was a contradictory social institution: its whole *raison d'être* was that of opposition to established authority", yet "it was countenanced, permitted, even fostered by those very authorities".[32] Carnival revelry permits a temporary inversion of social

[30] In many respects, the play's ethico-juridical code is as problematic as it is in *Measure for Measure*.

[31] The play's progressive movement can be said to reveal a sort of freudian *Unbehagen in der Kultur*: the prince's "reformation", taken in its social context, reveals all the hypocrisies, internal contradictions and instinctual repressions of *Kultur*.

[32] Holderness 1985; also in Holderness 1992, 152. Holderness's reading of *Henry IV* is declaredly indebted to Bakhtin (1965).

hierarchy. Such a hierarchical inversion appears as pervasive throughout the play. It is perhaps most evident when Falstaff tries to play the king's role and thus implicitly presents himself as a carnivalesque king of fools: "This chair shall be my state, this dagger my sceptre, and this cushion my crown" (2.4.373-74).[33]

However, although he impersonates a carnivalesque Lord of misrule, Falstaff is – above all – a picaresque rogue. The choice of the inn as a setting for the Eastcheap group is very picaresque. In spite of their embodying "a dream of superabundance", these low-life characters have to cheat or steal in order to survive. This is much more in the picaresque vein than in the carnival custom. Falstaff's picaresque traits are implicitly pointed out by Hal himself: for instance when, on asking him "What a devil hast thou to do with the time of the / day?" (1.2.6-7), the prince calls attention to Falstaff's life-style. Like a picaresque rogue, he has no projects but rather obeys his spur-of-the-moment impulses.

A picaresque reading of the play has a number of socio-political implications. Carnival represents a form of temporary and legalised infraction, the court fool enjoying a sort of legal immunity. Differently from the court-fool, a picaro does not live in the cultural centre of his country. He is a marginal person, as well as an outlaw. Prince Hal's punning threats to Falstaff in *Henry IV, Part One* (1.2.38, 42) are symbolically realised by the hanging of Bardolph in *Henry V* (3.6.104-05). Far from being guaranteed a clown's immunity, picaresque crimes are severely punished. Therefore, the subversive elements of a picaresque action are not so easily reabsorbed or contained as carnivalesque infractions are. Rather than legalised or temporary inversion, the low-life characters of Eastcheap represent a much less authorised alternative cultural model. They make up a subtext of popular culture and 'minor' history which, in its very illegality, radically interacts with court and dynastic history.[34]

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[33] This is analogous to Stephano and Trinculo's mock-coronation in *The Tempest*. Even Richard II, when he loses his royal power, stages this same paradigmatic inversion ("O that I were a mockery king of snow": 4.1.260). Of course, the carnivalisation of the king as fool is pervasive throughout *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. On Shakespeare's fools see Gentili 1978 and Mullini 1983.

[34] On 'minor' and popular history, see Ginzburg 1976. On the Shakespearean representation of popular culture and minor history, see Weimann 1987, Pugliatti 1996, especially 179-245.

Also from the point of view of the play's overall construction, the – typically picaresque – loose and episodic structure of the Eastcheap scenes contrasts with, and opposes, the progressive movement of Hal's "reformation". The 'imperfect' or only partial reproduction of the generic structure of a *Bildungskomödie* suggests a parallel opacity in the representation of power. Even after the prince's repudiation of his former companions, royal and popular – as well as legal and criminal-codes – keep interacting and transfusing into one another. Above all, the play's mingling of picaresque, clownish and kingly aspects within one and the same character, points to the existence of more complex, intrinsically dialogic forms of historical subjectivity than those which were exemplified by more conventional *Bildungs*-structures.

Henry V and 'Historical Comedy'

Henry V exhibits symbolico-emblematic relations between generic opacity and the opacity of power not dissimilar from those which we have observed in *Richard II* and in *Henry IV, Part One*. We have defined the play as a 'historical comedy' because of its historically contextualised happy ending.[35] The historical time theatricalised in "an hour-glass" covers the years from 1414 to 1420, stretching to 1422 in the epilogue. Although the emblematic interludes divide the dramatic sequence into five parts, the story may be said to be structured into three main episodes: the justification of – and preparations for – the military campaign in France (1.1–2.4); the actual expedition to France culminating in the victory of Agincourt (3.1–4.8) and the peace treaty of Troyes with the nuptial agreement between Henry and Katherine (5.1–2). Other episodes (such as the discovery of the plot against the king's life, in the second act), however important they may be in terms of the play's overall ideological structure, are merely digressive and do not speed the action on to its conclusion.

[35] On the one hand, *Henry V* continues the action of the two *Henry IV* plays; on the other hand – in its treatment of the Hundred Years' War – it makes a link with the first historical tetralogy, and especially with *Henry VI, Part One* (as is clearly illustrated by the epilogue).

The presence of the chorus, the opening epic-like invocation to the Muse, the heroico-chivalric tone which pervades most characters' speeches and the providential view of history manifested by King Henry V, all contribute to show the sequence of events – and essentially the English triumph at Agincourt – as theologically and teleologically oriented. In King Henry's words: "O God, thy arm was here, / And not to us but to thy arm alone / Ascribe we all" (4.8.107-09).

However, the hagiographic picture of the battle of Agincourt and of Henry V's behaviour is undermined by a number of seemingly minor and subsidiary themes and textual implications. The question of the legitimacy of the English claims over the French throne is only juridically voiced through the English perspective (the French limiting themselves to invectives). In spite of that, even such an internal or domestic juridical perspective is shown as ambivalent. In fact, Canterbury's 'bribing' demystifies from the inside the "true titles" of the English (1.1.87). As a consequence of that, Henry's behaviour and the credit which he gives to the bishop's arguments ambivalently suggest either political naivety (Henry is deceived by the bishop) or, rather, political opportunism (Henry finds it convenient to let himself be deceived).

Most English treatises on the 'art' of war were published about the same years when *Henry V* was composed. These military treatises had been preceded and influenced by translations of classical and continental works, such as Machiavelli's *Dell'arte della guerra* (1519-20, translated as *The Art of Warre* by Peter Whitehorne, 1560). In military leaders, the chivalric ideals of knighthood were to be inextricably fused with eminently political talents. Such contradictory traits show through in *Henry V*. Is King Henry V a "Christian king",[36] a *homo politicus*, or both? The historical recreation of royal subjectivity appears as rather ambivalent. As a matter of fact, the play seems to advocate a form of 'Christian policy' which proves, in its turn, basically ambivalent. As in *Richard II*, it is not clear whether providential views suggest a metaphysics of power or are to be understood as cunningly dissembled strategies of legitimation. Likewise, the romantic aura which is apparently cast on the wedding between King Henry V and Princess Katherine is demystified by the suggestion that the royal marriage has been inspired by political opportunism. The doubts that the play raises on the legiti-

[36] It is the king himself who suggests such a definition (1.2.242).

macy of the English claims over France as well as the obvious political elements in King Henry's marriage throw a shadow on the happy dénouement.

Moreover, it is the process itself of history-making that is put into question. In the Induction to *The Second Part of King Henry the Fourth*, the very possibility of historiographical falsification "with false reports" (Induction, 8) had already been put forward. Rumour, as the presenter, exemplified referential falsity. The Prologue to *Henry V* analyses, instead, the emblematic transposition of the historiographical discourse into theatrical performance. Besides that, many speeches allude or refer to the play's indebtedness to historiographical sources.[37] The implication is that, either in the chronicles or in their theatrical transposition, historical events may (have) be(en), if not referentially falsified, at least ideologically distorted. In this respect, the very speech of King Henry on the eve of Saint Crispin's day (that is, the day before the battle of Agincourt) is rather ambivalent. The epico-celebrative note which pervades the king's speech is not entirely justified if we judge his words in terms of dramatic realism. Although the battle has not yet taken place, it is evoked as if from the triumphal oral accounts of the English soldiers who took part in it. On showing their scars, the soldiers will say "These wounds I had on Crispin's day" (4.3.48). King Henry's epic fantasy is slightly anachronistic from a point of view of dramatic time: the very words "[t]his day is called the feast of Crispian" (4.3.40), which are used instead of a more plausible "tomorrow will be ...", either reveal an authorial lapsus or – more probably – are a form of (half-hidden) authorial obtrusiveness. Maybe, the king anticipates the result of the battle because – like Fluellen – he is a careful reader of Elizabethan chronicles.[38] More important than that, in the oral historical narrative which is imagined by the king, the English victory will be blown up or remembered "with advantages" by its protagonists (4.3.50). Although seemingly harmless, such a humorous remark hints at a possible ideological distortion of historical events. The speech, therefore, raises a number of questions: what is history? how is a historical event turned into historiographical discourse? is the chronicles' – and the play's – epico-celebrative tone appropriate,

[37] See Fluellen's reference to the chronicles ("as I have read in the chronicles": 4.7.93-4).

[38] See n36, above.

or is it a result of the winner's falsification? above all: what – or, rather, whose (the French or the English) – historiographical version is the audience watching on the stage?

Obviously enough, the following anti-heroic scene (4.4), with its display of plundering and cowardice, further demystifies the king's – as well as the chorus' – epic tone. Pistol's bombastic style and empty eloquence also work as a form of, albeit indirect, criticism of certain types of nationalist and chauvinist historiographical discourse.

So, the play's happy ending is obscured and made opaque by the presence of a (quasi-)parodic treatment of military rhetoric which can be detected under the celebrative surface.[39]

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Although adhering to – and rehearsing – the generic conventions of history, comedy and tragedy, Shakespeare's histories also contribute to transform them. In *Richard II*, the fatal-tragic pattern is partly disrupted by a polyphonic combination of providential elements and political pragmatism. In *Henry the Fourth, Part One*, a flow of picaresque looseness contrasts with – and questions – the progressive scheme represented by Hal's "reformation". In *Henry V*, a parodic, anti-epic undercurrent subverts the celebrative tone of the linguistic surface.

The mingling of dramatic genres and different views of power in these plays gives life to *a new type of historical discourse*. As has been said, the co-occurrence of multiple dramatic voices supporting different points of view suggests a form of *historical multiperspectivism*.[40] Dynastic history finds a *social* counterpart in *'lower'*, and marginal *history*. The very dialogic form of the history play also permits the author to explore the shaping of the historical subject. The histories thus help to invent – or, at least, to give shape to – *new, more dialogic forms of historical*

[39] On the theory and criticism of parody, cf. Billi 1993.

[40] On Shakespeare's historical multiperspectivism, see Pugliatti 1996; on the theory of Shakespearean polyphony, see Serpieri (1986). An analysis of Shakespeare's historical multiperspectivism is also in my critical reading of *King John* (1993).

subjectivity. In representing the public structures of a feudal past, the plays also analyse the way such structures affect the construction of the self. In so doing, they exhibit the core of late feudal subjectivity and its transition into modern consciousness.[41]

The sequence of *Richard II* through to *Henry V* suggests the idea of historical interpretation being a cultural-political construct, a varied and variable social practice whose discursive forms reveal the ideological character of – public as well as private – structures of power and knowledge.

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[41] The Shakespearean history play can be said to 'anticipate' different types of historiographical research and approaches: among these, Ginzburg's attention to social and 'minor' history, or Ariès's and Duby's interest in the forms of historical subjectivity and private life. On the Shakespearean fusion of the public and private aspects of kingship, cf. Gregson 1983, 26-94.

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CHIVALRY, MONARCHY AND REBELLION IN SHAKESPEARE'S *HENRY IV, PARTS ONE AND TWO*

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Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Parts One and Two* were written and first performed during the period (1596-1598) when the Earl of Essex, perhaps the most famous embodiment of Elizabethan chivalry, was at the height of his popularity. This was the period between his triumphant return from the successful expedition to Cadiz in June 1596 and the disgrace and house arrest that followed his unauthorised return from the Irish campaign in September 1599. My contention in this paper is that in the context of Essex's general popularity, his political influence among the old nobility and his military reputation, Shakespeare's two parts of *Henry IV* can be seen to raise issues relating to the conflicting role of chivalry in Elizabethan England and the fragility of the so-called 'chivalric compromise' between monarch and nobility.

Under the Tudors, chivalry went through a renaissance, with Tudor monarchs, including Elizabeth I, associating themselves with its iconography and pageantry in order to portray themselves as heads of the chivalric order, surrounded by a body of loyal and noble knights. The iconography and imagery was primarily that of Arthurian legend in which the monarch sat at a round table surrounded by the noblest and strongest of his/her subjects. This encouraged a mythical sense of unity; for with the chivalric fellowship seemingly united around the monarch, it must follow that the government was stable and the nobility loyal in its allegiance to the monarch. The re-establishment of the Order of the Garter and its investiture ceremonies under Henry VII was one way of reinforcing this myth; others included the ever growing numbers of chivalric pageants and tournaments that took place under Tudor monarchs, including the Accession Day tournaments that were inaugurated during the reign of Queen

Elizabeth in 1581 (Strong 1977, 129-62, 165). Accession Day tournaments provided opportunities for the nobility to display their combative skills and their united strength in the presence of the monarch or his/her representative and, at the same time, to express loyalty and service.

By restricting such shows of force and aggression to the showgrounds, the pageants and tournaments had the advantage of constraining aristocratic dissent by supplying an authorised arena for the expenditure of martial energy. Moreover, public tourneys gave the nobility a sense of class pride and importance and served as a statement of their power and determination to maintain their traditional 'rights'. The balance between loyalty to the monarch and the assertion of the constitutional rights of the nobility, implicit in chivalric pageantry, has been referred to by some historians, notably Richard McCoy and Maurice Keen as a 'chivalric compromise' (McCoy 1989, 2-3; Keen 1984, 247). As Richard McCoy explains:

> *Its [chivalry's] ceremonial forms constitute a kind of cultural resolution of one of the central contradictions of Elizabethan politics, the conflict between honor and obedience, the 'customary rights' of knighthood and the duty to 'right royal majesty'. Through its conventions of feudal loyalty and romantic devotion, Elizabethan chivalry affirmed Tudor sovereignty. At the same time, it glorified aristocratic militarism and traditional notions of honor and autonomy. The chivalric ideology thus combined deference and aggression, accommodating these dangerously incompatible, often contradictory impulses within its codes and customs. When chivalric rituals worked, they allowed a compromise between the conflicting interests of the Elizabethan ruling class; this capacity to satisfy both crown and nobility explains the enduring popularity of chivalry in the sixteenth century. (McCoy 1989, 2-3).*

This compromise, which depended on a show of loyalty to the monarch, was often under severe strain, particularly during the latter years of Elizabeth's reign. Both Sir Philip Sidney and the Earl of Essex, for example, questioned the nature of the relationship between a monarch and his/her subjects. Sidney, according to Fulke Greville:

> *Left an authentical president to after ages, that howsoever tyrants allow of no scope, stamp, or standard, but their own will; yet with princes there*

> *is a latitude for subjects to reserve native and legall freedom, by paying humble tribute in manner, though not in matter to them. (Greville 1907, 69).*

The Earl of Essex believed that there had to be a 'proportion' between the queen and her powerful subjects that would represent a balance of power. In a letter to Sir Thomas Egerton, the Lord Keeper, he proclaimed, "What I owe as a subject I know, and what as an Earle and Marshall of England; to serve as a servant and a slave I know not" (Camden 1635, 494; McCoy 1989, 95-6).

As the success of the 'chivalric compromise' was dependent upon the portrayal of the monarch as the strongest and most powerful figure among the nobility there was always the threat that it would be undermined during the reign of a queen. Despite the attempt to fashion Elizabeth as a Boudicca or a Britomart leading her troops into battle (i.e. the Tilbury Docks speech of 1588) the myth of the queen's chivalric leadership was difficult to sustain.

The popularity of the Earl of Essex in the 1590s, especially after his sacking of the Spanish port of Cadiz in 1596, placed serious strain upon the chivalric compromise by establishing the Earl as a rival to the queen's position at the head of the chivalric fellowship. An 'old' queen, who despite attempts to maintain a youthful public persona was well into her sixties, could not compare with the dashing, youthful Essex who had recently achieved military success over the hated Spanish. The relationship between the two was not helped by Essex's own determination to construct for himself a position as leader of the war party in the English government and to build up for himself a following that included many of the discontented nobility who looked to Essex for positions of influence at court or in government. Essex had been warned against the dangers of such a position by his secretary Sir Francis Bacon in October 1596. Bacon advised Essex against seeking the military office of Earl Marshal and suggested that he should apply for a civil office instead. Bacon recognised the potential threat that Essex's position posed to the queen and suggested that although Essex might retain his martial greatness 'in substance' he should 'abolish it in shows' to the queen (Bacon 1857-90, IX: 43).

Bacon later claimed that the Earl was a "man of a nature not to be ruled; of an estate not grounded to his greatness; of a popular reputation; of a military dependence: I demand whether there can be a more dangerous image than this re-

presented to any monarch living, much more to a lady, and of her majesty's apprehensions?" (Bacon 1857-90, IX: 41).

Shakespeare's two parts of *Henry IV* respond to a similar conflict in which the monarch's position at the head of the chivalric order is under threat from the military reputation of a popular subject. It is appropriate that the leaders of the rebellion in Shakespeare's plays should be the powerful Percy family, as the descendants of the same family were significant participants in rebellion and conspiracy during the reign of Elizabeth. Thomas Percy, the seventh Earl of Northumberland was executed for his role in the Northern Rebellion of 1569 and his brother, Henry, the eighth Earl died in the Tower (officially from suicide) after he had been interned there for his part in the Throckmorton Plot of 1582. For an Elizabethan audience the Percys had a contemporary association with rebellion as well as being one of the oldest aristocratic families in the country. Even in the Tudor period the Percys felt secure enough to challenge the authority of the monarch when the intersts of the monarchy ran counter to their own. Their strength resided in the position of their stronghold, far distant from the centre of government, on the Scottish border, where a strong military presence was required to deter any threat from the Scots. The Percys could also rely upon the loyalty of their tenants in a region where a feudal type of seigneurial system remained intact. As Mervyn James points out, the continuing devotion of tenants to their lords was a special feature of northern society during the Tudor period (James 1986, 292). The apparent impregnability of the Percys in the north of England led to Lord Hunsdon's complaint in 1569 that Northumberland "knew no prince but a Percy" and that the Percy tenants there "loved" their earl "better than they do the Queen" (*CSP.Dom*, 1569-71, 159; *CSP Dom*, Addenda 1566-79, 117-9; James 1986, 292).

The role of the Percys in Shakespeare's plays would remind an Elizabethan audience that the nobility were not united in their loyalty to the monarch, that there had been a number of rebellions and conspiracies involving the nobility in recent years and that there remained the potential for future aristocratic rebellion.

In *Henry IV, Part One*, Harry Percy's (Hotspur) raw chivalric idealism and popularity can be seen as a direct contrast to the king's more politically motivated form of chivalry. Whereas Hotspur's chivalry is based on action, the

king's is dependent on rhetoric and show. As such, Hotspur's popularity and achievements in battle threaten the king's position as the head of the order of chivalry. The spectacle and pageantry of the king can only contain Hotspur's active chivalry if the latter submits himself to the king's authority. By refusing to relinquish his prisoners Hotspur is directly challenging that authority, upholding his rights under feudal law and establishing himself as an alternative authority to the king and as a focal point for opposition. By thus exposing the fragility of the chivalric compromise between king and nobility, Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays dissolve or deconstruct the myth of national unity.

As Graham Holderness suggests, the dispute between the king and Hotspur over Hotspur's prisoners pushes to breaking point the tension between royal and feudal power. "The feudal law of arms specified that prisoners could be kept and ransomed by the man who took them: unless they were of very high rank or royal blood. Hence Hotspur is prepared to hand over the Earl of Fife, a prince of the blood royal. But Henry insists on taking *all* the prisoners" (Holderness 1985, 70). Through his action the king is asserting royal authority over feudal custom and attempting to suppress the feudal rights of the nobility.

In the opening scene of *Henry IV, Part One*, the king's party is determined to associate chivalry only with loyalty to the king. Rebellion against his dubious legitimacy is represented only in terms of treason and barbarity. Thus the Welsh rebel Owen Glendower's defeat of the king's army under Edmund Mortimer must be passed off as the result of barbaric and unchivalric military tactics: Glendower is described as "irregular and wild" and "that great magician", while his followers are considered to be the "rude" butchers of Mortimer's army (1.1.40,41; 1.3.82).[1] By later accusing the defeated Mortimer of treachery ('revolted Mortimer') the king finds yet another excuse for the defeat of his army that does not compromise his own martial prowess (1.3.91). Not martial prowess but only disloyalty and barbarity can explain the defeat of English chivalry. The condemnation of Glendower's victory should be set alongside the praise that is lavished on Hotspur for his defeat of the Scots at Holmedon. As the succesful representative of the king's chivalry he is described as 'gallant' and

[1] All quotations from plays are taken from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed.by Stephen Greenblatt (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1997).

'young' (1.1.52-3). The defeated Scots, unlike the Welsh adversaries of Mortimer, can be acknowledged to have chivalric attributes too ("brave Archibald / That ever valiant and approvèd Scot" and "Ten thousand bold Scots") because this reinforces the achievement of Hotspur, the king's loyal subject (1.1.53-4, 68). That Hotspur's military successes make him a fitting leader is acknowledged by the king, who compares him favourably with his own wastrel son and perhaps already recognises in him a potential threat to his own popularity and supremacy (1.1.77-94). Hotspur is arguably, in practice, the most powerful subject in the country and by refusing to deliver his prisoners to the king is effectively challenging the monarch's authority.

The king's response to the dissent of Worcester and Hotspur is to assert his royal authority:

> *I will from henceforth rather be myself,*
> *Mighty and to be feared, than my condition,*
> *Which hath been smooth as oil, soft as young down,*
> *And therefore lost that title of respect*
> *Which the proud soul ne'er pays but to the proud.*
> *(1.3. 5-9)*

The effect of the king's words, however, is the opposite of what it appears. In other words, he will no longer be himself but fashion himself into the image of the powerful monarch. Having won the throne by a feudal challenge to the then monarch, Richard II, Henry makes it known to his nobility that he will not tolerate a similar challenge to his authority. Thus, he is enraged by Hotspur's praise of Mortimer's chivalric attributes as Mortimer – in the context of the play Richard II's named successor and by primogeniture next in line to the crown at Richard's death – poses a legally valid threat to the legitimacy of Henry IV's kingship. A full alliance, already initiated by the marriage of Hotspur to Mortimer's sister, Kate, would unite the main rivals for Henry's dual role as head of chivalry and state.

Hotspur's military successes give him the confidence to challenge the king. Believing his house dishonoured by the ejection of his uncle from council and the king's refusal to ransom his brother-in-law, Mortimer, and considering his victories insufficiently rewarded, Hotspur's pride leads him, under the guidance of his father and uncle, into rebellion against the king. Hotspur's position is

similar to that of which Bacon warned Essex and which was to lead to Essex's failed rebellion in February 1601. Hotspur, to some extent manipulated by Northumberland and Worcester, sets himself up as a rival power to that of the king and as the focal point of opposition groups who seek an opportunity for influence and privilege at court.

Hotspur, like Essex, does not recognize a conflict between the honour code of chivalry and rebellion against the monarch. On the contrary, the dishonour and disloyalty that he believes the king has shown to his house demands a response as it represents an infringement upon the feudal rights of the nobility. Under the feudal law that is recognised by Hotspur, the nobility's loyalty to the king is dependent on the king upholding the rights of the nobility. In effect the relationship between monarch and nobility is contractual and if the contract is broken by one party it is no longer binding upon the other. This illustrates the fragility of the chivalric compromise in which both monarch and aristocracy can seemingly promote their own interests and rights and at the same time acknowledge those of one another. Hotspur's success at Holmedon brought honour both to himself and to the king he served. However, that same success puts pressure upon his relationship with the king and results in Hotspur using his martial reputation to make demands of the king to which the latter, feeling threatened by the popularity and accomplishments of his subject, responds by asserting his monarchical power. This leads to a breakdown of the chivalric compromise with the interests of monarch and subject being exposed as incompatible.

In the context of Henry's challenge to the feudal rights of the nobility, Hotspur's rebellion can be seen as an honourable action in defence of the ancient rights of the nobility. These rights formed the basis of various sixteenth-century political theories of subaltern majesty, such as the *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* (1579) and the *Proclamation of Ripon* issued in 1569 by the aristocratic participants of the Northern Rebellion. Theories of subaltern majesty argued that monarchs were originally elected by the people (i.e. the nobility) to protect their territories and that thus they were the guardians rather than the owners of the land. The relationship between the monarch and the people was contractual in that the people gave their loyalty and obedience to the monarch in return for his protection. However, if the monarch betrayed that loyalty by acting against the in-

terests of the people, then the people had the right to resist his or her authority. In England the rights of the nobility that were set down in *Magna Carta* were held to be binding upon future monarchs. Sir Philip Sidney and the Earl of Essex both took the opportunity to remind Queen Elizabeth that the loyalty of her subjects was not unconditional. Sidney, objecting, in 1579, to the queen's proposed marriage to the Duke of Alençon (brother of the French king) warned her in an open letter that "virtue and justice are the only bonds of the people's love. And as for that point, many princes have lost their crowns, whose own children were manifest successors" (Sidney 1973, 54) . Likewise, Essex speaking during a trial at Essex House in 1599 regarding rival claims to a barony, suggested that there had to be a "proportion" between the queen and her nobility that would constitute a balance of power. In the speech Essex claimed that the monarch was bound by certain conditions: "God hath tied himself to the honor of men, and so should the prince do likewise." Essex spells out these conditions with some precision, arguing that "the favor of princes should be regular," "the upholding of nobility is a most necessary and a religious care", the nobility "are the very subaltern parts of the prince", and, finally, England was "most mighty when the nobility led and commanded in war and were great housekeepers at home"' (quoted by McCoy 1989, 89).

Under the same principles of subaltern monarchy and feudal rights, the leaders of the Northern Rebellion in 1569 issued a proclamation in which they claimed they had been forced to take up arms against the throne in order to defend their rights, religion and the kingdom from the "evil-disposed persons" who had misled the queen:

> *Foreasmuch as divers evil-disposed persons about the Queen's majesty have, by their subtle and crafty dealing to advance themselves, overcame in this our realm the true and Catholic religion towards God and by the same abused the Queen, disordered the realm and now lastly seek and procure the destruction of the nobility, we therefore have gathered ourselves together to resist by force, and the rather by the help of God and you good people, to seek redress of those things amiss, with restoring of all ancient customs and liberties to God's church and this whole realme ... (Williams 1964, 173).*

Thus, Hotspur's stand against Henry IV in Shakespeare's play is presented in terms reognizable to an Elizabethan audience, as a defence of the constitution against absolute monarchy and as a "noble plot" and "so honourable an action" (1.3.273; 2.4.28). As such it questions the king's monopoly of honour and chivalric values at the beginning of the play and offers an alternative understanding of these values.

A similar situation occurs in the second part of *Henry IV* when Mowbray defends his rebellion against the king as a defence of his honour. Why should not he and the other nobles take to arms to defend their rights when "the condition of these times / [...] lay[s] a heavy and unequal hand / Upon our honours?" (4.1.99-101). This episode also raises one of the main areas of conflict relating to the titles and honour of the nobility; whether they are inherent (the birthright of the nobility) or dependent on the king's favour. This represents another of the ambiguities of the chivalric compromise. When Westmorland tells Mowbray that the king has favoured him by restoring to him all the titles and honours that had belonged to his exiled father, Mowbray responds by asking: "what thing, in honour, had my father lost / That need to be revived and breathed in me?" (4.1.111-12).

Implicit in Mowbray's response is the belief that as his father had done nothing to dishonour his position, the honour of his house was intact. It was not in the power of monarchs to take away and restore the honour of the nobility, honour could only be lost by cowardice and the failure to defend one's rights. The position taken by Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, was very topical to Elizabethan England as the most recent Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Howard, had been executed and attainted in 1572 for his part in the Ridolfi Plot. His eldest son and heir Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel had, as recently as 1595, died in the Tower where he had been incarcerated, allegedly for treason in 1588. Furthermore, Norfolk's brother Lord Henry Howard (later, Earl of Northampton) was a prominent member of the Essex circle at the time of Shakespeare's plays and received encouragement and financial support from Essex to conduct research into the traditional rights of noble office and the inherent nature of 'native' nobility. Howard, like the younger Mowbray, might well deny the monarch's right to question the nobility of his family.

The king's praise of Hotspur's chivalric attributes in *Henry IV, Part One* continues after the initial breech with the Percy family. The king privately concedes that Hotspur's popularity with the nobility is not only a threat to his position as the head of chivalry but is potentially a threat to his crown. That Hotspur is acknowledged to have the qualities of military leadership that are normally associated with kingship can be seen in the king's private conference with Prince Hal:

> *Now by my sceptre, and my soul to boot,*
> *He [Hotspur] hath more worthy interest to the state*
> *Than thou, the shadow of succession;*
> *For, of no right, nor colour like to right,*
> *He doth fill fields with harness in the realm,*
> *Turns head against the lion's armèd jaws,*
> *And, being no more in debt to years than thou,*
> *Leads ancient lords and reverend bishops on*
> *To bloody battles, and to bruising arms.*
> *(3.2.97-105)*

Hotspur has, effectively, through his chivalric prowess replaced Hal as heir to the crown and the latter can redeem his reputation and restore his right only by adopting the values and language of chivalry and defeating his rival in combat. This is acknowledged by Hal himself:

> *For my part, I may speak it to my shame,*
> *I have a truant been to chivalry;*
> *And so I hear he doth account me too.*
> *Yet this, before my father's majesty:*
> *I am content that he shall take the odds*
> *Of his great name and estimation,*
> *And will, to save the blood on either side,*
> *Try fortune with him in a single fight.*
> *(5.1.93-100)*

As with Douglas in the first scene of the play, Hotspur is lavished with praise as a means of increasing the honour due to Hal if he defeats him:

> *Tell your nephew*
> *The Prince of Wales doth join with all the world*
> *In praise of Henry Percy. By my hopes,*

This present enterprise set off his head,
I do not think a braver gentleman,
More active-valiant or more valiant-young,
More daring, or more bold, is now alive
To grace this latter age with noble deeds.
(5.1.85-92)

In one of the many discrepancies between the play and history, it is arranged that Prince Hal should meet with and kill Hotspur in single combat during the Battle of Shrewsbury. In the providentialist reading of the play this is part of the natural process in Hal's progressive preparation for kingship. He defeats the main rival for his position as heir apparent and shows himself to be a worthy leader of English chivalry and to have the military accomplishments desirable in a future king. One such reading is provided by Tillyard:

> *... the Prince (who, one knows, will soon be king) is tested in the military or chivalric virtues. He has to choose, Morality-fashion, between Sloth or Vanity, to which he is drawn by his bad companions, and Chivalry, to which he is drawn by his father and his brothers. And he chooses Chivalry. The action is complicated by Hotspur and Falstaff, who stand for the excess and the defect of the military spirit, for honour exaggerated and dishonour. Thus the Prince, as well as being Magnificence in a Morality Play, is Aristotle's middle quality between the two extremes (Tillyard 1944, 265).*

However, the sparseness of the stage directions in the play leaves the details of the conflict open to interpretation and although many directors of the play follow the providentialist reading and show Hal defeating Hotspur fairly, others offer an alternative interpretation in which Hal uses unchivalric means to defeat Hotspur. In a production by the English Shakespeare Company in the mid 1980s, Hotspur, having deprived Hal of his sword refuses to kill his rival in cold blood and allows the prince to regain his grounded sword. When later in the combat the situation is reversed and Hotspur's sword is knocked from his grasp, Hal kills him as he stoops to pick it up. *Gävle Folkteater* in their 1997 Swedish production of the play performed the scene in a similar manner. Here, the actor playing Hotspur has Hal on the ground and at his mercy but offers his hand to help him up, only to be killed treacherously by the prince with a small dagger

that was concealed about his person. This interpretation emphasises the different values represented by Hotspur and Hal and suggests that whereas Hotspur would "better brook the loss of brittle life/Than those proud titles thou hast won of me", (5.4.77-78) Hal, like his father governed by *realpolitik,* sees only the political significance of chivalry and the value of fashioning for himself a chivalric identity. Hal's self-fashioning of a chivalric identity sits comfortably with a reading of his character, first suggested by George Bernard Shaw, which sees him as a calculating schemer using each situation to his own advantage (Davison, ed. 1968, 15). Just as Hal plays the wastrel in the tavern with Falstaff, he is equally able to play the role of military leader when it suits. In the fashioning of his role Hal can be compared with Achilles, in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, who having watched his Myrmidon soldiers murder Hector in cold blood shouts, "On, Myrmidons, and cry you all amain, / Achilles hath the mighty Hector slain" (5.9.13-14). In such a manner is the myth of chivalric accomplishment disseminated.

The political expedience of Henry IV, Hal and Achilles is also manifest in Prince John of Lancaster's deception of the rebel leaders in *Henry IV, Part Two*. Lancaster, after having given his word – "And swear here, by the honour of my blood" (4.1.281) – that the rebels' grievances will be addressed if they dismiss their army, has the leaders arrested and executed as soon as their army is disbanded. That chivalry is of only token value to the Lancastrian rulers is further illustrated in the king's advice to his eldest son "to busy giddy minds / With foreign quarrels" when he becomes king (*2H4* 4.3.341-2). Chivalry is a symbolic tool of convenience for the ruling faction, which is used to signify power, tradition, legitimacy, and unity without necessarily imposing the constraints of a code of behaviour. The Lancastrians associate themselves with the iconography and language of chivalry but act in accordance with political necessity.

This paper has argued that at a time when the growing popularity and military reputation of the Earl of Essex threatened to fashion him into a rival for the queen's position at the head of chivalry, Shakespeare's Henry IV plays represented on stage an historical moment when a powerful member of the nobility led a rebellion against a king. Shakespeare's plays illustrate the potential danger represented by Essex and the fragility of the 'chivalric compromise' between monarch and nobility. Furthermore, the plays, as I have suggested,

expose the incompatibility between chivalric values and the realities of political power. Characters such as Harry Hotspur and Lord Mowbray, who rigidly follow chivalry's code of conduct, are outmanoeuvred by King Henry, Prince Hal and Prince John of Lancaster, who despite associating themselves with the language of chivalry are prepared to use any means to achieve their political ends.

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EMBLEMS OF THE POLITY
THE WOUNDS OF RHETORIC AND OF THE BODY POLITIC IN SHAKESPEARE'S ROME[1]

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When at the end of *Titus Andronicus,* Lucius is requested to tell the tragic story of the Andronici to an audience apparently dumb-struck by the weird consecution of four on-stage killings within the span of something like 20 lines, he sums up his part in the events just about as precipitately, dwelling on his heroic struggle to preserve Rome, and then, as if realising the vulnerability of his claims, rather anxiously adds:

> *Alas, you know I am no vaunter, I.*
> *My scars can witness, dumb although they are,*
> *That my report is just and full of truth.*
> *But soft, methinks I do digress too much,*
> *Citing my worthless praise. O, pardon me,*
> *For when no friends are by, men praise themselves.*
> *(TIT 5.3.112-17)*

Lucius' speech, rather than merely providing a clarifying narrative at the end of a catastrophe, establishes him as the warrior who from Rome's "bosom took the enemy's point, / Sheathing the steel in [his] advent'rous body" (*Tit*: 5.3.110-11). The testimony of the wounds would commend him with such compelling force that the sheer gesture of offering to display them to the people seems to entitle Lucius to their unanimous vote; so much so, that there seems no point in actually asking them:

[1] The present paper grew out of research for an MA thesis submitted at the University of Bristol in 1994. The author is indebted for their support, help and comments on that paper to George E. Donaldson and John M. Lyon of Bristol University, Department of English, and for perceptive comments on this version to Géza Kállay and Zsolt Komáromy.

EMILLIUS Come, come, thou reverend man of Rome,
And bring our emperor gently in thy hand,
Lucius, our emperor – for well I know
The common voice do cry it shall be so.
(TIT 5.3.136-39)

The association of supreme power with the display of scars or wounds, the presentation of scars as absolute proofs of eligibility, is a characteristic *topos* of Shakespearean Rome, a distinctive feature of *Romanitas*, something comparable to suicide as the utmost proof of moral integrity in these non-Christian worlds. In the name of the entire family, Marcus does in fact offer to slaughter themselves, should Rome condemn the Andronici for any detail of their story:

Have we done aught amiss, show us wherein,
And from the place where you behold us pleading
The poor remainder of the Andronici
Will hand in hand all headlong hurl ourselves
And on the ragged stones beat forth our souls [...]
(TIT 5.3.128-32)

But Marcus' theatrical threats remain an unusual, indeed unique instance of the rhetorical exploitation of an essentially private response to moral rather than political exigencies. Unlike the stoic act of suicide, the disclosure of one's wounds is clearly a public, political act, intimately connected with the discourses of Roman patriotism and with the idea of a charismatic leader, who embodies the ethos of self-sacrifice for the sake of the country. In the present paper, I try to explore the contexts and implications of this custom for the stage-world of Renaissance Romans, focusing on *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*, both of them plays in which references to the wounds or scars of the hero are central to the unfolding of the plot. Coriolanus' reluctance to present his scars to the citizens of Rome in the marketplace forestalls his election for consul, turning the citizens and Coriolanus against each other, whereas Antony's funeral oration, circling around and pointing at the wounds of Caesar, effects a complete reversal in the emotions of the crowd. In both of these cases, as well as in the last scene of *Titus Andronicus*, wounds are exploited in crucial moments of the contention for power, and, as I shall argue, their effectiveness as means of persuasion hinges on their embeddedness in the discourse of patriotism, and on the emblematic

conflation of the wounded Roman body of the candidate with the Roman body politic threatened by some enemy.

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In 2.1, when news of the victory and of Caius Martius' return arrive, people seem rather excited about the wounds he has received:

> *MENENIUS [...] Martius is coming home. He has more cause to be proud. [To Volumnia] Where is he wounded?*
> *VOLUMNIA I'th'shoulder and i'th'left arm: there will be large cicatrices to show the people when he shall stand for his place. He received in the repulse of Tarquin seven hurts i'th'body.*
> *MENENIUS One i'th'neck and two i'th'thigh – there's nine that I know.*
> *VOLUMNIA He had before his last expedition twenty-five wounds upon him.*
> *MENENIUS Now it's twenty-seven. Every gash was an enemy's grave. [...]*
> *(COR 2.1.130-42)*

It is not just the awkward arithmetic that is of interest here, but the implications of its logic: what matters is to surpass the number that went before. The sheer number of wounds seems to be the chief concern of Caius Martius' supporters – who, as will soon turn out, want to see him consul: and the presentation of wounds in *Coriolanus* appears as a standard part of the consular candidates' appeal for the citizens' support. This is conspicuously so already in Plutarch's "Life of Coriolanus", a text that provides a concise account of the significance of this custom:

> *For the custom of Rome was, at that time, that such as did sue for any office should for certain days before be in the market-place, only with a poor gown on their backs and without any coat underneath, to pray the citizens to remember them at the day of election; which was thus devised, either to move the people the more by requesting them in such mean apparel, or else because they might show them their wounds they had gotten*

> *in the wars in the service of the commonwealth, as manifest marks and testimony of their valiantness (Plutarch 1964, 317).*

Wounds here appear as compelling and also necessary proofs of the worthiness of somebody – the tacit assumption underlying the custom seems to be that valiant soldiers, who have excelled in battles for the country, are eligible, indeed perfect candidates for consulate or any other office. Who has wounds is valiant, and the more wounds he has, the more valiant he is, and in the logic of this election procedure, testimonies of his valiance are somehow related to his appropriateness for the position. No sooner is Coriolanus back from the war, than his wounds are transposed and transubstantiated, utilised in the transactions of the marketplace, turned into props of political rhetoric. Quintilian suggests that persuasion is not sufficient as a definition of rhetoric,

> *since many other things have the power of persuasion, such as money, influence, the authority and rank of the speaker, or even* some sight unsupported by language, *when for instance the place of words is supplied by the memory of some individual's great deeds, by his lamentable appearance or the beauty of his person.*

Significantly, and for our present purposes rather helpfully, Quintilian's prime example for moving the audience with sights presented to them is Antonius' revelation of the wounds of Manius Aquilius:

> *Thus when Antonius in the course of his defence of Manius Aquilius tore open his client's robe and revealed the honourable scars which he had acquired while facing his country's foes, he relied no longer on the power of his eloquence, but appealed directly to the eyes of the Roman people. And it is believed that they were so profoundly moved by the sight as to acquit the accused (Quintilian: II.xv.6-7; emphasis mine).*

The priority of visual over verbal means of persuasion is an intriguing aspect of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*. Quintilian devotes Chapter 2 of the Sixth Book of his *Institutio* to questions of emotional appeal, stressing the importance of images (visions) for the effectiveness of eloquence. What follows is an outline of his argument:

> *The prime essential for stirring the emotions of others is, in my opinion, first to feel those emotions oneself. [...] if we wish to give our*

> *words the appearance of sincerity, we must assimilate ourselves to the emotions of those who are genuinely so affected, and our eloquence must spring from the same feeling that we desire to produce in the mind of the judge. [...] But how are we to generate these emotions in ourselves, since emotion is not in our own power? [...] There are certain experiences which the Greeks call* phantasiai *and the Romans* visions, *whereby things absent are presented to our imagination with such extreme vividness that they seem actually to be before our very eyes. It is the man who is really sensitive to such impressions who will have the greatest power over the emotions. [...] it may be possible to turn this form of hallucination to some profit. I am complaining that a man has been murdered. [...] Shall I not bring before my eyes all the circumstances [...]? [...] Shall I not see the fatal blow delivered and the stricken body fall? Will not the blood, the deathly pallor, the groan of agony, the death-rattle, be indelibly impressed upon my mind? From such impressions arises that enargeia which Cicero calls illumination and actuality, which makes us seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence (Quintilian: VI.ii.26-32).*

For Quintilian, visual images present to "the mind's eye" are central to persuasion. Persuasive communication is here a process moving from image through text to image, where the text, the spoken word is only used for the transmission of the "real thing", of the visual, which, once translated from the text, is present to the mind without further mediation. If the orator sees the scene before him, his speech will make him "seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene." According to Quintilian's account, these vivid images exert immense power over the emotions of the orator as well as of his audience because mental processes are evidently visual, and the medium of understanding is identical with that of visual perception: so the aim even of the non-emotional type of peroration, the enumeration and repetition of the facts is to "place the whole of the case before [the judge's] eyes" (Quintilian: VI.i.1).[2] Such an

[2] The idea is ubiquitous in Renaissance thinking about rhetoric; Sidney's theory of poetic language is based essentially on this idea, but cf. also Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique*: "In movyng affections, and stirryng the judges to be greved, the weight of the matter must be so set forth, as though they saw

understanding of the aims of rhetoric implies that visual impulses are compatible with, and can enter immediately, the process of thinking: which explains how Marcus Antonius could rely "no longer on the power of his eloquence, but appeal[ ] directly to the eyes of the Roman people." The supposed immediacy of vision accounts for its emotional effect, vision and its impact are indeed barely distinguished in this passage. Seeing, in this view, is being moved, but Quintilian is not concerned here with the direction in which one is pushed by the emotions; at this point, he tacitly assumes that the emotional response is controlled by vision only, and is thus unambiguous, i.e., there is only one way one can react to a certain image. *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus* problematize this notion to suggest a more rhetorical view of viewing things.

In Cicero's dialogue, *De Oratore*, this story about the impact of the sight of Manius Aquilius' wounds is narrated by Antonius himself. This Marcus Antonius, the grandfather of Shakespeare's Mark Antony, is easily mixed up, or simply identified with him, a *rhetor* whose most memorable performance is also marked by the unveiling of his client's wounds. At the end of his funeral oration, he descends from the *rostrum* to the body and thus enters among the crowd – a decisive contrast to Brutus – and unveils the corpse of Caesar to a similar, if more momentous effect:

ANTONY [...]
O now you weep, and I perceive you feel
The dint of pity. These are gracious drops.
Kind souls, what weep you when you but behold
Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here.
Here is himself, marred, as you see, with traitors.
[He uncovers Caesar's body]
FIRST PLEBEIAN O piteous spectacle!
FOURTH PLEBEIAN O noble Caesar!
THIRD PLEBEIAN O woeful day!
FIFTH PLEBEIAN O traitors! villains!
FIRST PLEBEIAN O most bloody sight!
FOURTH PLEBEIAN We will be revenged.
ALL THE PLEBEIANS Revenge! About! Seek! Burn!

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it plaine before their iyes..." (269 / S4v).

Fire! Kill! Slay!
Let not a traitor live.
(JC 3.2.187-197)

Shakespeare's play frames the revelation as a rhetorical one: it takes Antony's speech, his step-by-step, or rather stab-by-stab explication of what is there to be seen to turn his countrymen, people who not long ago were even willing to offer Brutus the crown. Wounds in *Julius Caesar* are not so much seen as shown: this is what Coriolanus is incapable of. A fiercely anti-rhetorical warrior, he refrains from any kind of persuasion, even if his own objectives, or – as now – tradition demand it. His wounds "smart / To hear themselves remembered" (*Cor*: 1.10.28-9), and even his enemies have heard him swear that

Were he to stand for consul, never would he
Appear i'th'market-place nor on him put
The napless vesture of humility,
Nor, showing, as the manner is, his wounds
To th'people, beg their stinking breaths.
(COR 2.1.218-22)

– which is just what he is expected to do, and what Antony in his complex rhetorical performance very successfully does. Coriolanus' failure results clearly from his refusal to disclose his body to the people: he is paid favourable attention by his audience when he first arrives home, "All tongues speak of him, and the blearèd sights / Are spectacled to see him" (*Cor*: 2.1.191-92). His success could be taken for granted, were he not, by avoiding showing his wounds, frustrating this initial benevolence and even turning the citizens against himself:

FOURTH CITIZEN You have received many wounds for your country.
CORIOLANUS I will not seal your knowledge with showing them. I will make much of your voices, and so trouble you no farther.
(COR 2.3.97-100)

What such showing could achieve is suggestively described in another passage from Quintilian:

Actions as well as words may be employed to move the court to tears. [...] it is with this in view that we see blood-stained swords, fragments of bone taken from the wound, and garments spotted with blood, displayed by the

accusers, wounds stripped of their dressings, and scourged bodies bared to view. The impression produced by such exhibitions is generally enormous, since they seem to bring the spectators face to face with the cruel facts. For example, the sight of the bloodstains on the purple-bordered toga of Gaius Caesar, which was carried at the head of his funeral procession, aroused the Roman people to fury. They knew that he had been killed; they had even seen his body stretched upon the bier: but his garment, still wet with his blood, brought such a vivid image of the crime before their minds, that Caesar seemed not to have been murdered, but to be being murdered before their very eyes (Quintilian: VI.i.30-31).[3]

Quintilian's account clearly emphasises the role of the wounds put on display in turning the tide in the market-place. But Antony's "staging" of the murder, also present in Plutarch's life of Marcus Antonius (Plutarch 1964, 189) is completely missing here (as it is, interestingly, in Plutarch's life of Caesar), emphasising the immediacy of the visual impact made by the garment rather than the rhetorical framing by Antony. Divested of the complicating intervention of elocution, of verbal rhetoric, the passage falls back on Quintilian's picture-theory of the mind outlined above: the image seen has such powerful effect on the spectators because it brings "a vivid image" of something "before their minds," because, that is, it powerfully reminds them of something. But a reading of Antony's oration and of his presentation of Caesar's garments as an exercise in the art of memory will effectively reshape this interpretation.

In artificial or 'place'-memory, texts and orations are memorised with the help of images. An image is appointed to each proposition and these images are then ordered in *loci*: i.e., the images are ordered spatially, in a building for example, and are recalled in the correct sequence by going over the places one by one in thought:

*The artificial memory includes backgrounds [*loci, *i.e. places] and images. [...] An image is, as it were, a figure, mark, or portrait of the ob-*

[3] I remember a Benetton poster out in winter 1993/94, a photo of a dead (?) Bosnian/Serbian soldier's blood-stained clothes, with a bullet-hole in the T-shirt. How did I know it had to do with Bosnia? Benetton posters are not usually verbose.

> *ject we wish to remember; for example, if we wish to recall a horse, a lion, or an eagle, we must place its image in a definite background. [...]*
>
> *[T]he backgrounds are very much like wax tablets or papyrus, the images like the letters, the arrangement and disposition of the images like the script, and the delivery is like the reading* (Ad Herennium *1954, 3.xvi.29-xvii.30).*

Antony first chooses Caesar's mantle for his papyrus, and the holes on it for letters. The papyrus, i.e. the *locus* where the images are placed, must be "such scenes as are naturally or artificially set off on a small scale, complete and conspicuous, so that we can grasp and embrace them easily by the natural memory" (Ad Herennium 1954, 3.xvi.29). And the mantle certainly answers this description:

> *You all do know this mantle. I remember*
> *The first time ever Caesar put it on.*
> *'Twas on a summer's evening in his tent,*
> *That day he overcame the Nervii.*
> *(JC 3.2.164-7)*

Now the images that stand for the statements can be mounted on this background:

> *Look, in this place ran Cassius's dagger through.*
> *See what a rent the envious Casca made.*
> *Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed;*
> *(JC 3.2.168-70)*

Antony turns Caesar's mantle into a background, with pre-fabricated images against it, and assigns to each image a statement. The images are felicitously chosen – gory slits are certainly memorable, fashioned almost after what the textbook prescribes:

> *We ought, then, to set up images of a kind that can adhere longest in the memory. And we shall do so if we establish likenesses as striking as possible; if we set up images that are not many or vague, but doing something; if we assign to them exceptional beauty or singular ugliness; if we dress some of them with crowns or purple cloaks, for example, so that the likeness may be more distinct to us; or if we somehow disfigure them, as by introducing one stained with blood or soiled with mud or smeared with*

red paint, so that its form is more striking (Ad Herennium 1954, 3.xxii.37).

The holes on the toga are images that stand for facts: for the daggers piercing through the toga and into Caesar's body. They are images or signs of the murderers, and also of their deeds, one by one. Their power is further enhanced by the fact that they are also the proofs of the murder, so the signs stand for an action they were a part of: as signs, they appear to signify themselves as well, thus, illusorily, abolishing the arbitrariness of signification.[4] These signs and proofs are then organised into a narrative whole, on the 'background' provided by the toga, which holds the bits of the story, memorised with the help of the holes, together: the story of the murder of Caesar, that is.

Wounds serve as the basis of political mnemonics in Shakespearean Rome: Coriolanus' wounds are utilised as elements in a construct similar to the one described above in the dialogue between Menenius and Volumnia, quoted above: they are enumerated as witnesses to a hero's valiantness, their list – with the events they are traces of and thus evoke – amounts to a narrative of the hero's deeds. According to Quintilian, who ascribes great importance to narration as a process crucial to rhetoric, one which contextualizes proofs, it is only against the perspective established in the narrative that proofs become more than "unpersuasive facts"[5]: the presentation of facts becomes meaningful only when it is interpreted by a story they prove.

The background, the *locus* of the art of memory frames disparate memories, so that they can be remembered as parts of a larger, visual structure, which – as Quintilian suggests – can then be read as a story. But it takes a *rhetor* to turn this larger visual structure into a narrative, to turn Caesar's mantle into a narrative of Caesar's assassination, or Coriolanus' body into an account of his valour.

[4] This abolition is illusory only, as it results from an identification of the sign with its material embodiment: it is like identifying the letter 'a' with the pigment on the page. But, although it is easy to point out the difference between the body of the sign and the sign, the fallacy is very common, and its working is essential to an understanding of the market-place scene. Caesar's body is identified with what it signifies in Antony's interpretation in exactly the same way. And this identification of the body of the sign with what it signifies is precisely what Puritans would term 'idolatry'.

[5] In stressing the importance of the narrative for Quintilian, I am following O'Banion's account.

Images remain dumb till they are spoken for by someone looking at them, and in spite of the inwardly visualised spectacles recalled by the sight of wounds, the Romans of these plays seem to demand that they be spoken for. The Third Citizen's insistence that "if he show us his wounds and tell us his deeds, we are to put our tongues into those wounds and speak for them" (COR 2.3.5-7), and Brutus' reference to the people's "stinking breaths" which must be "begged" (COR 2.1.222) by Coriolanus when displaying his wounds, seem strangely similar to Antony's soliloquy over the bleeding corpse of Caesar:

> *Over thy wounds now I do prophesy –*
> *Which like dumb mouths do ope their ruby lips*
> *To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue –*
> *(Caes: 3.1.262-64)*

Some human voice is inevitable for the wounds to perform their task: memories are only worthwhile if they find their way into language. Dumbness is dishonourable, ignoble, it is somehow offensive towards the very deeds that are represented by the images. It is not enough that the events or persons they commemorate are remembered, this remembering must be communicated, made public. Wounds demand of their beholders to turn them into *vox populi*: in Coriolanus' Republic as well as in Lucius' strangely republican Empire, this voice is to be heard in the election,[6] whereas in Antony's case, popular voice takes the form of mutiny – but in both cases, wounds, when put on display, are meant to be spoken for – in a rather ventriloquistic manner – by public opinion, by the people. The plurality of wounds figured as the multiplicity of mouths of the self-same body makes this ventriloquism, the association of an essentially plural voice with a single body, strikingly probable, and helps to make Caesar's body appear as the embodiment of the plural voice, his corpse the incorporation of multiple agents into a single figurative body. One dead body is figuratively made to speak, and speak in the voices of the people, which amounts to no less than sounding the *vox populi,* i.e., standing for the entirety of the people.

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[6] As we have noted above, in *Titus Andronicus* the election does not take place. There, Lucius chooses a completely different way to transform his own body into the figurative incarnation of Rome. He first allegorizes Rome as a woman by claiming that he "From her bosom took the enemy's point," and then refers to his own body as a substitute for hers: "Sheathing the steel in my advent'rous body." (TIT 5.3.110-11) This substitution proves so effective that there is no need of the public voice.

But this figurative process, taking place as if by itself, automatically, naturally, is made effective by Antony's rhetorical nudges. The actual processes of visual influences are thus at several removes from the immediacy of the sight Quintilian talks about. One could indeed argue that unmediated representation is one of the rhetorical devices deployed by Antony, a mask on the intricately rhetorical structure of the performance. An oration, if it wants to be successful, has to go out of its way to suggest its honesty, its truth. Absolute honesty is best achieved by cancelling out the *rhetor*, by denying the rhetoricity of the oration, that is, by making the facts as it were speak 'for themselves'. Facts cannot speak of course: even the ultimately successful, hence apparently totally unrhetorical oration is in need of some words. But these words should be uttered for the facts, not about them, and success is certain if it is the audience, rather than the orator who utters them, and so it actually ceases to be an oration delivered to a critical audience. Thus the deployment of the *vox populi* by the orator is itself a subtle way of oratorical self-effacement, used for purposes of rhetorical persuasion. In the context of the marketplace, *vox populi* is the voice of the things themselves, the voice of facts and truths. Popular voice is immediate, natural signification, undeterred by its medium or the strategies and interests of someone uttering it. This illusion of immediacy is appropriately represented by figuring *vox populi* as the voice of facts, by making the wounds, seen as mouths, uttering the popular voice by themselves. That the public voice is embodied inevitably, by the very logic of figuration, as a single individual, has of course frightening political overtones – but only for twentieth -century readers. For people participating in a political discourse emblematically represented as the incorporated body politic, it is only, well, natural.

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Antony's deployment of traditional rhetorical *topoi* thus transfigures Caesar's body into the Roman body politic with the uncanny inevitability of figuration. It is this figurative process that is eventually forestalled in *Coriolanus* – one could even argue because for Coriolanus, an obsessive literalist, a wound is a wound is a wound, whereas Antony does not hesitate for a moment before turning Caesar's wounds into mouths. His grand oration over the body in 3.2. completes

the process foreshadowed in the soliloquy (3.1.257-278) and makes "Caesar's spirit, raging for revenge" materialize as the Roman people raging for revenge, with the suggestive ambiguity of "We will be revenged" as implying both "we will take revenge" and "someone will take revenge for us":

> *FOURTH PLEBEIAN We will be revenged.*
> *ALL THE PLEBEIANS Revenge! About! Seek! Burn!*
> *Fire! Kill! Slay!*
> *Let not a traitor live.*
> *(JC 3.2.204-6)*

In 3.1, Antony first addresses the corpse as an inanimate object, as a dead, purely material body, as "ruins", a "piece of earth": but through the act of addressing it, through the figure of apostrophe, he is already resuscitating it. Jonathan Culler discerns "an intimate relation between apostrophes addressed to the dead or the inanimate and prosopopoeia that give the dead or inanimate a voice and make them speak."[7] Antony does in fact enact this relationship between the two tropes by shifting from apostrophe into prosopopoeic utterance, from addressing the dead Caesar into speaking for his inert body, lending his voice to the wounds begging for it:

> *A curse shall light upon the limbs of men;*
> *Domestic fury and fierce civil strife*
> *Shall cumber all the parts of Italy;*
> *Blood and destruction shall be so in use,*
> *And dreadful objects so familiar,*
> *That mothers shall but smile when they behold*
> *Their infants quartered with the hands of war*
> *All pity choked with custom of fell deeds;*
> *And Caesar's spirit, raging for revenge,*
> *With Ate by his side come hot from hell,*
> *Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice*
> *Cry 'havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war,*
> *That this foul deed shall smell above the earth*

[7] Culler 1981, 153. The suggestion is made by way of citing Paul de Man: citing, that is, summoning the dead master to appear before our critical judgement as witness to Culler's case.

With carrion men, groaning for burial.
(JC 3.1.265-78)

The voice given to the wounds, to the corpse of Caesar, is seen here raising the spirit of Caesar, or rather, as the above soliloquy is best understood as a rehearsal of Antony's funeral oration, it is the voice lent to the body that emerges as Caesar's spirit. Although only for himself – at this point, he is alone with the body – Antony is already seen here as raising the very spirit he is talking about – by talking about it. An immense power is ascribed here to voice, to words, showing them as agents of a strange conjuring or even necromancy: the spirit of Caesar, itself a verbal construct, engages in the affairs of humans through his "monarch's voice," crying havoc and thus making "carrion men" groan for burial: Caesar's spirit, the figure of the voice lent to him, is making these dead bodies speak by lending them his own, borrowed voice.

Our reliance on the figurative language offered by Antony's rhetoric is warranted by near-contemporary usage, which referred to the image and the text of the emblem as body and soul, respectively,[8] implying, in accordance with our reading above, the insufficiency of an image lacking a verbal soul, apprehending it as an inert body: and indeed, we find George Wither, for instance, describing his emblems as "quickened with metrical illustrations."[9] It is quite easy to see how

> *[s]uch usage testifies to the enduring strength of the belief, which rhetoric had encouraged, that it was words, not images, which gave the truest representation, and that it was only when pictures spoke that they could come to life (Bath 1994, 54).*

Pictures, however, cannot speak, nor can dead bodies. Somebody must speak for them in such a way that we may take those words to be their own. This is how the contexts of emblematics help us come closer to some sort of an answer to our original question: how come that the wounds of Lucius Andronicus, Caesar or Coriolanus seem so closely if not immediately related not only to Roman

[8] Cf. e.g. Gilman 1986, 15; Bath 1994, *passim*, esp. 138 ff.

[9] Cited by Bath 1994, 54.

patriotism but also to the question of sovereignty? These lacerated bodies are dumb images, visual aids of memory, icons of the valour of their bearers, reminding their beholders of the deeds of those who received them. Their spectators will then quicken the mute icons by narrating the story that left its traces on the bodies, that created these heroic bodies, that is. The publicly disclosed body is thus literally emblematized, turned into a clearly traditional image quickened by textual interpretation. The common, social contemplation of these emblematic bodies, the very act of public voicing of their narrative inscriptions ascribes a new, powerful meaning to them by turning the bodies from emblems of heroism into emblems of the body politic, of the people. They "beg the voice and utterance of [our] tongue" (JC 3.1.264) – but once they are made to speak, who could tell who is speaking for whom: is it the object, the image, that has begged our voice, or is it us, who are now bidding it "speak for [us]" (JC 3.2. 217)? This ambiguity and interchangeability of object and subject, instigated by a reliance on the emotional immediacy of vision and on the compelling force with which an image demands a voice, is what Antony's performance, and any figurative incorporation of the populace, hinges on.

But we should also notice the obvious: that such a performance can only be imagined over a human body, that – as the literal reading of Wither's statement suggests – only human bodies can effectively be quickened by lending them a collective voice. In other words, it takes a body to embody the body politic – but once the embodiment takes place, it acts as a very powerful medium of inclusion and exclusion, of victimisation and monumentalisation. To understand these mechanisms of political self-definition and delimitation, and to see just how powerful this identification is, how indisputable and forceful the connotations of such a wounded body are, the reaction to Coriolanus' only willing reference to the scars on a human body is essential.

After submitting to his mother's supplication, and thus to a highly rhetorical exploitation of the emblematic identification of country and family, Coriolanus makes his first attempt at some sort of a visual supplementation of his meaning. This indicates that, by now, he has developed some understanding of the rhetoricity of bodies, but still relies on it in a troubled, self-destructive manner, turning the figurative production of emblematic meaning against himself. He relies on the rhetoric of patriotic incorporation in a moment when these processes contradict his communicative aims. He tries to deploy the exposure of

wounds as means of persuasion, naively assuming, it seems, that the public effect of the wounds is always favourable for the person exposing them – that wounds are the receptacles of sheer rhetorical energy, that can be put to any use the orator intends for them:

> *Your judgements, my grave lords,*
> *Must give this cur a lie, and his own notion –*
> *Who wears my stripes impressed upon him, that*
> *Must bear my beating to his grave – shall join*
> *To thrust the lie unto him.*
> *(COR 5.6.107-11)*

His reference is thus to scars received from him: although he cites these as witnesses to his own case, oblivious of the patriotic contexts they invoke he really sets the scene for being lynched. But he has a keen awareness of the implications of this move, that by lending their voice to the wounded body, the people of Corioles identify with it, and Coriolanus' "stripes impressed upon him" will testify against Coriolanus. He actually invites such an outburst – "Cut me to pieces, Volsces" is his next line – and what proves his first and only successful performance in the marketplace achieves just what he asks for. This time he succeeds because the end to which he tries to put the wounds coincides with their significance for patriotic discourse: Aufidius' scars – and all the other wounds they remind the people of – eventually frame Coriolanus as the arch-enemy of the Volsces once again, assuring their unanimous support for Aufidius, by making him embody their political aspirations.

> *ALL THE PEOPLE Tear him to pieces! Do it presently!*
> *He killed my son! My daughter! He killed my cousin*
> *Marcus! He killed my father!*
> *(COR 5.6.121-3)*

The reaction of the Volscians is a re-enactment of the violent outburst of passion in Antony's Rome, the ecstatic union of the Roman plebeians that forced Brutus and Cassius to ride "like madmen through the gates of Rome." (*Caes*: 3.2.258) That Rome expels Marcus Brutus is a fatal, ironic inversion of Tarquin's banishment by the conspirators' role-model Lucius Junius Brutus – and it also re-enacts the founding moment of the Republic in that the political

change is in both cases motivated by the showing of bleeding bodies: in Shakespeare's *Lucrece*, the founding fathers of the Republic

> *... did conclude to bear dead Lucrece thence,*
> *To show her bleeding body thorough Rome,*
> *And so to publish Tarquin's foul offence;*
> *Which being done with speedy diligence,*
> *The Romans plausibly did give consent*
> *To Tarquin's everlasting banishment.*
> *(ll. 1850-55)*

In *Coriolanus* as well as in *Julius Caesar* and *Lucrece*, effective use of wounded bodies for political purposes involves the affirmation of corporate identity by exclusion: not only do these bodies embody the collectivity of the people of Rome, but this figural identification also casts those afflicting the wounds as enemies of this collective body. These emblems of the body politic become effective in the contention over sovereignty when their iconic nature is interpreted in a way puritan critics of iconic representation would perceive as idolatrous; i.e., when they are taken not only to stand for, but indeed be the body politic, when the damages done to them are understood as done to the body politic. That in *Julius Caesar*, Brutus – proving less constant than the self-destructively obstinate Coriolanus – manages to escape from turbulent Rome, and evade being slaughtered by an idolatrous crowd, only postpones the inevitable. Caesar's spirit, so far a figurative, and thus in a sense ghostly, personification, the creature of the complex processes of prosopopoeia and apostrophe, is now forced to undergo a final transfiguration: literalisation. The second half of the play could be read as the fulfilment of Antony's prophecy about Caesar's spirit, which, raging for revenge, come hot from hell:

> *Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice*
> *Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war,*
> *That this foul deed shall smell above the earth*
> *With carrion men, groaning for burial.*
> *(JC 3.1.274-78)*

But the spirit's will to revenge has been frustrated by Brutus' absence. Brutus being outside "these confines," i.e. the confines presumably of the city of Rome, the enraged Plebeians cannot kill him, nor would they follow with Octavius'

army to Philippi: so the spirit has to 'materialise' and engage in the revenge as a proper Ghost, hot from hell. Before the battle, Octavius is anxious to state that he is the revenging incarnation of Caesar, but the conspirators rather choose to commit suicide in the name of Julius Caesar, thus restating their *Romanitas* and accepting the judgement Rome passed on them, while clearly denying Octavius' explicit claim to being the embodiment of the body politic. By becoming the agents of Caesar's revenge, they act on behalf of Caesar's spirit, and thus on behalf of the community impersonated by it. But their action proves, as it can be expected, iconoclastic: it asserts – perhaps mistakenly, but that is not the point – that the spirit is in need of an agent, that it is not incorporated in any palpable sense: that no living human being can ever be the sovereign embodiment of the community.

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THE ANXIETY OF POWER AND SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH*

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In May 1603 the sharers in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, identified as "Lawrence Fletcher, William Shakespeare, Richard Burbage, Augustyne Phillippes, John Heninges, Henrie Condell, William Sly, Robert Armyn, Richard Cowly, and the rest of their associats," were licensed under a Royal Patent as the King's Players (Murray, 1:146; Chambers 1923, 1:311; Schoenbaum, 249). From henceforth they were designated as Grooms of the Chamber, associated with the household of the newly installed King James I, the son of Mary Queen of Scots who was himself a recent arrival from Scotland. James came to England with considerable Protestant and monarchist intellectual baggage, and within a little more than a year dissidents within his new kingdom would begin planning a spectacular challenge not only to their king's authority but also to the entire national government, both civil and ecclesiastical. The Gunpowder plotters, who by November 1605 were prepared to strike a blow that would destroy Parliament as the king addressed it, thus conspired to lop off the topmost branches of the British nation. Instead, the failed *coup d'etat* only succeeded in solidifying support for the monarchy and for the official ideology that was designed to support it. Catholics as well as Protestants roundly condemned the Plot as criminal and sacrilegious.[1]

[1] I recognize that the terms 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' are ambiguous in the context of Elizabethan and Jacobean England. A great many people were at heart Catholic and yet attended the services of the Church of England without objection; others did so only because they were coerced to do so. Recusancy, although encouraged by the Jesuit mission, was difficult, dangerous, and expensive. See Walsham, *passim*. There was also criticism by the more extreme Reformed element usually identified by the term 'Puritan' who tended to reject all forms of Catholic worship as well as the Church polity retained by the

The Protestant reaction to the Gunpowder Plot was immediate and hysterical, and its tenor may be gauged from the popular engravings which celebrated both the English victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588 and the discovery of the Plot on 5 November 1605 in side-by-side representations as signs that God was England's protector on each occasion.[2] In his speech before Parliament following the discovery of the Plot, James is reported to have compared the projected destruction of the entire national government to "*Domes-dayes*," like Noah's Flood and the coming day of the Last Judgment, "wherewith GOD threatned to destroy mee and all of you of this little world that haue interest in me" (James I 1918, 282). That this also resonated in the theater among the King's Men we cannot doubt, for in the play that their principal playwright had under construction in the coming months we find the story of the killing of a king whose murder is reported in terms which identify the act as eliciting the very image of Doomsday. "Up, up, and see/ The great doom's image," Macduff cries upon his discovery of King Duncan's bleeding body, and Lady Macbeth makes reference to the alarm bell as a "hideous trumpet [that] calls to parley/ The sleepers of the house" (*Macbeth* 2.3.77-78, 82-83). The play was apparently completed in the summer of 1606 or at least not earlier than May of that year – that is, following the execution of the plotters and also the Jesuit Father Henry Garnet, who had prior knowledge of the plot. Garnet, as is well known, was the centre of the controversy over equivocation that swirled about the sensational Gunpowder conspiracy – a controversy that is noticed in the drunken Porter's speech in which he imagines that he is porter of Hell Gate (2.3.9-12). Henry Paul believed, on evidence that seems more slender today than nearly half a century ago, that the drama was written and produced with the royal audience in mind and that the play's premier was a special production on 7 August 1606, during the visit of the King of Denmark, the brother of Queen Anne (Paul,

English Church. The Elizabethan settlement was in fact evolving, and with the philosophical base developed by Richard Hooker would develop into a more Catholic form of Anglicanism in the seventeenth century before the Civil Wars of the 1640s. I am here using the term 'Protestant' as shorthand for the Calvinistically and nationalistically inclined authorities and their wholehearted supporters.

[2] See, for example, the engraving designed by Samuel Ward, as illustrated in Tesimond, pl. facing 48; and the titlepage of *A Thankfull Remembrance of Gods Mercie*, illustrated in Williamson, pl. facing 156.

329-30). More recently Peter Thomson could still write that "*Macbeth* represents Shakespeare's most strenuous attempt to flatter James I" (177).

But if the play was intended *primarily* as a compliment to King James, one would hardly expect it to have focused on a regicide, the killing of a king of Scotland, especially since James was still king of that country in addition to his English crown. There is, to be sure, the patently flattering parade of the line of Banquo in act 4, scene 1, but even here it is a show put on by the witches, ambiguous creatures with powers derived from their devilish familiars – creatures who had been unequivocally condemned by the the king in his *Daemonologie*. While according to the prophecy the line of Banquo's descendants will "stretch out to th' crack of doom" (4.1.117) and thus will suggest a long rule for the house of Stuart, this "Horrible sight"(4.1.122) is credibly held to be demonic even by Macbeth, who pronounces the witches and their apparitions unreliable. When the "sisters" have vanished into thin air and Lenox has arrived on the scene, Macbeth curses even "the air whereon they ride" as well as those who, like himself, would attend to the witches' prophecies: "damned [be] all those that trust them" (4.1.138-39). Even the hour when the apparitions were set forth for him is to be "accursed in the calendar" (4.1.133-34).

The play, far from presenting the monarch as the rock upon which the realm might safely rest for generations hereafter,[3] reinforces a fear that the king's leadership would place him in a peculiar position of great danger in the realm – and that the danger to the king meant very real danger to the state which he represented. If James arrogated to himself the title of a "god" in little, set above his nation in the natural Chain of Being by the authority of the great God (James I 1918, 281), the Gunpowder conspiracy demonstrated that it was possible to challenge this order of things.[4] Indeed, the kingship might by itself prove to be

[3] The rock was traditionally a symbol of stability and strength, as in Whitney, 96.

[4] I am assuming that the Gunpowder Plot was not a conspiracy organized by the government of James as a propaganda ploy against English Catholics, but cf. Williamson, *passim*. In any case, there is no likelihood that Shakespeare or most of his contemporaries, Catholic or Protestant, would have immediately suspected a government conspiracy except in the sense that the government conspired to allow the Plot to go forward after its discovery until a convenient time at which it might be "discovered" by the wise king himself.

an irresistible magnet to draw forth conspirators against the crown. Macbeth's irrational urge to overthrow the king, abetted by the prophecies of the witches and perhaps inspired by their gift of the evil eye (Davidson 1970, 45), may thus be seen as a sign of the lack of stability inherent in kingly power. Previously Queen Elizabeth I had been threatened by conspiracies and rebellions, and now James too would be the target of assassination by English hands. The murder of

Figure 1
Fortune shakes down rewards for those who greedily grasp for them. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia* (Venice, 1669), p. 227.

Duncan, who at the beginning of the play already has required the help of the loyal Scottish aristocracy to put down rebellion and foreign invasion, may therefore appear to mirror a contemporary threat to good order and to stable monarchical government.

King James, who wanted very much to present himself as a wise monarch, also wished to be seen as the perfect embodiment of divine right. His sagacity was allegedly demonstrated, for example, in his decoding of the Monteagle letter that revealed the secret of the Gunpowder plotters. As a way of fashioning himself as an exemplary monarch he had himself represented on coins on horseback or seated on a throne, positioned between the pillars of Hercules (Goldberg, fig. 10), the latter originally borrowed from an *impresa* designed for Charles V and adapted by Queen Elizabeth after the defeat of the Spanish Armada (Yates, 54-58; Strong, 154). It would seem that thereby James wished to claim imperial power and, as a Protestant rather than a Catholic prince, wanted to position himself in relation not only to his people but also to the world beyond. Significantly, the king expected to be depicted as one raised up, either on a dais or throne, or on the back of a horse in an imperial pose. In the edition of his *Basilicon Doron* published in 1603 he had asserted that the role of the king involved being "*set (as it was said of old) vpon a publike stage, in the sight of all the people*," and in the main text of his treatise he had written that "It is a trew old saying, That a King is as one set on a stage, whose smallest actions and gestures, all the people gazingly doe behold" (James I 1924, 5, 43). The king's outward appearance and stature are the basis of the people's judgment and hence are seen to be of very great importance for the reality of royal power. But to be placed on a stage logically also exposes the king more surely to dangers – dangers that would not be shared by persons among the lower orders of people in the commonwealth, where safety lies in their humble station in life. Kingly power presupposes anxiety about its role and maintenance.

The great, particularly the king who is the greatest of them all, among the people of a nation conventionally were regarded as most subject to fortune and chance. The iconography of Fortune's wheel is very well known and hardly needs comment here. Commonly Fortune, blind or blindfolded, stands turning her wheel, on which the rising figure at the left is being lifted up as Macbeth was in the early part of the play; then the next stage is to rule, but only temporarily,

whereupon comes the fall of the one who has reigned, represented by the man tumbling from the right side of the wheel. Deep-seated suspicion of ambition was implied in such iconography, as articulated, for example, in Herrad of Hohenbourg's *Hortus Deliciarum* in which the final stage of man's fall shows a figure plunging into an abyss below (2:351). In Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* Fortune may be presented in a different way, as a nude figure, bald behind and with a flowing forelock like the traditional depiction of Occasion. A later woodcut (*fig. 1*), not present in the 1603 edition, shows Fortune aloft and shaking down crowns, scepters, miters, helmets, and other symbols of authority from a tree to those who greedily grasp for them below (*Iconologia* 1669, 227). In the Hertel edition of the *Iconologia*, the artist interprets Ripa's text in another way: Fortune is standing precariously on a ball, which is a common sign of instability (Ripa 1971, 152). The association of height and of trees with the winds of chance was likewise commonplace, and informs an emblem (*fig. 2*) in Henry Peacham's *Minerva Britanna* of 1612; here the "loftie Pines" which "support the state / Of common wealthes, and mightie government" are said to "stoope [...] soon'st, vnto the blast of fate" (60). This emblem is closely related to James's statement to Parliament in 1605 that "all mankinde, so chiefly Kings, as being in the higher places like the high Trees, or stayest Mountaines, and steepest Rockes, are most subiect to the dayly tempest of innumerable dangers; and I amongst all other Kings haue euer bene subiect vnto them . . ." (James I 1918, 282).

James, like the Tudors before him, was deeply concerned about the dangers against which the monarch lacked immunity. As the king explained to Parliament after the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, he had first been exposed to mortal danger while he "was yet in my mothers belly," and as a young king in Scotland he was in constant danger (James I 1918, 282). Following the Gowrie conspiracy in 1600 he had even more reason to remain continually fearful – a natural consequence of such a traumatic experience. Nor was he safe from treason upon his arrival in England. Further, he also had observed the fortunes of his mother, who was eventually executed by her cousin Elizabeth's counselors in 1587. When he became king of England, he made use of the system of informers which had been developed under the Tudors and had served in lieu of a police force to ferret out not only subversion but also, more significantly, religious nonconformity. The bad reputation of James's spies – and of Eliza-

Figure 2

An exposed tree is more susceptible to wind ("the blast of fate" described in the text below the woodcut) than one that is located in a more protected location. Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britanna* (1612), p. 68. By permission of the Glasgow University Library, Department of Special Collections.

beth's before him – seems reflected in Macbeth's tyrannical use of such agents in Scottish households: "There's not a one of them, but in his house/ I keep a servant fee'd" (3.4.130-31). Scotland has become a land of fear: "where nothing,/ But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile" (4.3.166-67). These lines seem to echo the state of things in many Catholic households, where priests said Mass and hid in special priest holes such as the ones still to be seen in the Throckmorton's Warwickshire house, Coughton Court (Pevsner and Wedgwood, 246). And when captured these members of the Roman clergy were subjected to terrible torture and bloody execution.

Leslie Hotson has linked Shakespeare to the network of Catholic families in the Midlands that suffered under the religious persecution of the reigns of Elizabeth and James I (172-202), and recent scholarship has tended to corroborate the connection (Taylor, 290-304; Wilson, 11-13). His mother's family was apparently solidly Roman Catholic, his father had literally pledged himself to the Old Religion in a document that was discovered in the eighteenth century, and one daughter Susanna, was cited in 1606 as "popishly affected" (Honigmann, 116)[5] while another, Judith, married into a family that was distantly related to the Gunpowder plotters (Hotson, genealogical chart facing 144). Indeed, Warwickshire was a center for Catholic missionary activity in the period when Shakespeare was growing up, and it has been speculated that the future playwright was possibly swept up in enthusiasm for the faith. In his childhood his schoolmasters, Simon Hunt and John Cottom, at the Stratford school were Catholic not only in sympathy but in fact (Honigmann, 40-49; Wilson, 11-13). His father's absences from church services at Stratford's parish church were, he claimed, due to his fear of attachment for debt. Adherence to the Old Religion may have been a factor, however, since to have been openly a recusant would have cost ruinous fines that would quickly have destroyed him financially. John Shakespeare's wealth was, however, substantial before the mid-1570s, when he apparently went into a period of decline (Thomas and Evans, 315-18). In c.1580 he had signed a Spiritual Testament, written by St. Charles Borromeo, by which he made a profession of loyalty to the Roman Church (Milward, 20-21, 44). He seems to have died a Catholic, and it is not absolutely certain

[5] Susanna was of course later to marry Dr. John Hall, regarded as a Puritan.

beyond all doubt that his son William also did not die "a papist," as Richard Davies, former chaplain of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, claimed (Chambers 1923, 2:257).[6] Recent discoveries have given support to the argument of E. A. J. Honigmann (18-39) and others that Shakespeare's "lost years" were spent in Lancashire in Catholic households. In London thereafter he associated with such men as Ben Jonson, who was for many years a Catholic and who supped with the Gunpowder plotters at William Patrick's house in the Strand in October 1605 (Hotson, 187). Yet, as a playwright and player in the King's Men, it would seem that Shakespeare never, at least as a mature adult, would have had sympathy for the radicalism of the plotters or with their agenda. In this regard he was much like the English Catholics, the majority of whom prayed for toleration though they had lost hope that the "Old Religion" would be actually restored as the religion of all England at any time in the near future. Still, the Catholic connection, tentative though we must be about defining many of the specifics, would seem to explain the uniqueness of the playwright's intellectual stance and his writing of plays that represent kingship as problematic in relation to matters of power and control even in dramas designed for staging in the royal presence.

Shakespeare, as a playwright working in the theater in late Elizabethan London, had frequently emphasized the precarious and ambiguous power of the throne in his history plays, including *Richard II* with its deposition scene that remained censored and unpublished while Elizabeth was alive (Chambers 1923, 1:353-55). On a well-known occasion in 1601 his *Richard II*, including its deposition scene, was revived in order to support the conspiracy of Essex and his co-conspirators, though Shakespeare's company, which had mounted the play at their request, insisted later that they had no knowledge of the abortive real-life coup.[7] By the time the composition of *Macbeth* was underway, however, the

[6] Honigmann, on the basis of Shakespeare's will, believes that he died a Protestant (9). It would probably be safer to say that he probably died an Anglican, submitting to the broader Church of England as it was evolving – a Church which had found room, if not particularly comfortable room, for people who would have preferred much of what the "Old Religion" represented. The matter is not settled.

[7] Essex and his fellow conspirators apparently, like many "post-modern" theorists, woefully overestimated the power of the stage. As Blayney has conclusively demonstrated, playbooks were not a particularly impressive part of the market for books (383-422, esp. 416) – a sign of a more modest role for the stage generally in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

playwright was in the midst of writing his greatest tragedies, which would analyze the problem of royal power in even greater detail than in the histories. In *Hamlet* the reigning monarch is the corrupt and slippery Claudius, who has murdered his way to the throne and whose authority therefore lacks legitimacy, and in *King Lear* the story focuses on a king who gives away his symbols of rule and his royal authority to his two evil daughters, who represent an egregious abuse of power thereafter. The themes of insecurity, legitimacy, and abuse, set off against a pattern of civil disorder and anarchy, had, of course, been already honed in the histories. The uneasy crown on Henry IV's head is taken from him only at his death, and then by his son Hal, but the king's ambition and Machiavellian rise are shown early in his reign to serve to draw forth rebellion to challenge the Lancastrian king. And the rebellion is no small matter. One rebel, the prominent Archbishop of York, Richard Scrope, who was regarded locally after his death in 1405 as a saint and whose image still appears in stained glass in the choir clerestory at York Minster (Davidson and O'Connor, 172), would be part of the conspiracy against King Henry. The subsequent internal history of England in the fifteenth century was likewise unstable and, for the monarchs, a slippery arena for the display of power. The chaos of the times was to culminate in the reign of Richard III, depicted by Shakespeare in one of his early plays as the villain unfit for rule of the Tudor history books, which had already transformed his reputation for piety into hypocrisy (Sutton and Visser-Fuchs). As a bloody-handed killer of children who have claims to royalty, Shakespeare's Richard is presented as a villain who seems to be a more slick cousin of Herod, a type which had in fact appeared in the splendid amateur theatre of Coventry in the pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors – a pageant that the boy Shakespeare from nearby Stratford would almost certainly have witnessed before the suppression of Coventry's Corpus Christi cycle in 1579. His description of theatrical ranting, "it out-Herods Herod" (in *Hamlet* 3.2.14), seems to be a remembrance of the Coventry Herod who, according to the stage directions of the Shearmen and Taylors' text, "ragis in þe pagond [wagon] and in the strete also" (l. 728 *s.d.*). Shakespeare's handling of kingship is, of course, more subtle than this since Herod's anxiety is of the broadest and crudest sort.

The focus of much earlier scholarship, including some of my own, was on the handling of rebellion as studied against the theory of an ideal monarchical poli-

tical order, but it also called attention to the providential British history of the period leading up to Queen Elizabeth. There is no doubt that the official royalist doctrines were reflected in *Macbeth*, written at a time – perhaps the only time after his initial arrival in the country – when King James achieved genuine popularity. The killing of Duncan, for example, is presented in imagery that embeds references to the betrayal and crucifixion of Christ, as Roy Walker suggested long ago (53-55), and the crime is unsuccessful in establishing civic order, as the Elizabethan *Homilies* said would be the case following the violent overthrow of a monarch. The orthodox Tudor and Jacobean political doctrines are part of the intellectual milieu of Shakespeare's plays. Nevertheless, it is absolutely true that there is much more than a mere display of the official party line to be seen in a play such as *Macbeth* or in Shakespeare's history plays, for the playwright's inherent interest in the consequences of the urge to power displays the futility of ambitious acts and the anxiety with which power will be accompanied. At the same time there is hope in his work for the achievement of a stable order in which religion and civil society can flourish. To be sure, then, Richmond's return to England, his marriage to Elizabeth of York, and his achievement of the throne are depicted as fortuitous in ultimately achieving peace and prosperity, which should endure in spite of vicissitudes through the reign of the granddaughter of Henry VII. Yet Shakespeare also confirmed his deep sympathy for St. Thomas More, martyred by Henry VIII, since his contribution to the play of *Sir Thomas More* displayed considerable feeling in favour of the legendary Londoner. Ambition in kings could be brutal and tyrannical, but nevertheless the playwright recognized that the lack of power, as in the case of Lear, only created a gap into which a more wicked person or persons could step. The dilemma is that royal power is necessary, while at the same time it is always capable of being abused to a lesser or greater degree.

Shakespeare's ambiguous attitude toward power, then, is part of the great attractiveness of his work, and more than anything this may be the reason that he was for so long celebrated for his "greatness of mind" and his essential humanity. He was one who could simultaneously give sympathetic treatment to Catherine of Aragon in his *Henry VIII* and celebrate, through Cranmer's words, the birth of Princess Elizabeth as a "royal infant" who "yet now promises/ Upon this land a thousand thousand blessings,/ Which time shall bring to ripeness" (5.4.17-20).

While it is also clear that he accepted a large portion of the Elizabethan ideal of kingship with its emphasis on the identification of the monarch with the people, he also saw the glaring ways in which the administration of Elizabeth acted when it regarded its authority to be threatened – ways that today would be classified as violations of basic human rights, anachronistic though it may seem to apply this Enlightenment concept here. In *Macbeth* the playwright would take the negative side of kingship as he knew it, and he would dwell upon the consequences of a truly bad king who in the course of the play must therefore totally lose the sympathy of his people. Macbeth is a king who represents the violation of his office from the very beginning of his reign, since his accession to the throne is tainted by an offense against the legitimate succession and by the criminal act through which he has placed himself on the throne. In the view of Rossaeus (William Reynolds) in the exposition of J. N. Figgis (183), the king's "power is given *in aedificationem*, it must not be used *in destructionem*." The king rightly is to serve the commonwealth, but Macbeth represents an extreme disjuncture between monarch and people which may legitimately result in his deposition, as Catholic political theory taught (Bossy, 237; Figgis, 184-85). This ruler therefore through his illegitimate acts makes himself particularly vulnerable and insecure, but the solution to the situation is hardly the one argued in the *Homily Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion*, which was written in response to the Northern Rebellion in 1569 (Bond, 40-45) and countered the bull *Regnans in excelsis* by Pope Pius V in 1570 (Elton, 414-18). The *Homily* proclaimed essentially that "the first founder of rebellion and graund captayne of all rebels" was Satan (Bond, 235). Since rebellion never has right on its side, the wrongs committed by a ruler must be endured in submission with prayers for the ruler's amendment. In its most rigid form, this political doctrine claimed that even disloyal thoughts are not to be permitted. As Sir Edward Coke argued at the trial of the Gunpowder plotters, "It is treason to imagine or intend the death of the King, Queen, or Prince" (Jardine, 2:123).

In his depiction of Macbeth as a thoroughly bad rebel-king, Shakespeare likewise depicted his character as similar to Lucifer, whose attempt at revolution in heaven led to his downfall and whose ambition was thereafter held to be the model for all earthly pride and rebellion (Ribner, 155-57). Also Macbeth's entrance into criminality further replicates in part the fall of Adam, especially in the

matter of the role of Eve as temptress (Cormican, 312-13). There are, in other words, human factors grounded in the post-lapsarian condition that serve to make life dangerous and precarious for even the most sainted kings – and in Duncan Shakespeare apparently wanted to create a monarch whose stature would differ significantly from the feeble king of Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Macbeth, in contrast to Duncan, is darkened in the course of the play's action to the point where he will also become linked with the archetypal figure of despair, the betrayer Judas, whose suicide and consignment to hell were the result of his total lack of hope, his belief in himself as one who was beyond the possibility of forgiveness. But the sickness unto death which Macbeth represents has also become the source of general disease in the body of the state, and health can only return from outside Scotland's boundaries – that is, from England, the country over which the sainted King Edward the Confessor reigns. If King James had been so bad a king as this, we would expect the dramatist to have approved the actions of the Gunpowder plotters. But Shakespeare was neither sympathetic to the lunatic fringe of Catholic society nor insensitive to the human cost of the success of such an endeavor. Further, as a member of the king's household at the time following the discovery of the plot when James's reputation was at a high peak, he apparently joined the overwhelming majority of people, Protestant and Catholic, in seeing the Gunpowder Plot as heinous. Revealing nervousness about the succession in the case of a *coup d'etat*, Shakespeare posits in his play the worst possible case, and he makes the bad ruler credible since he has opened the action with a character who represents a man of ideals whom we thereafter see corrupted by stages until in the end he is only a hollow shell of a human being.

The comparison between Herod and Macbeth is also useful but only up to a point. Macbeth, like Herod, attempts to cut off a young royal claimant, in this case Fleance, and furthermore at the crisis of the play he goes on a child-killing spree. In the Coventry Shearmen and Taylors' pageant, Herod's soldiers were sent by the irascible Herod on a mock-chivalric mission to kill all possible candidates so that "thatt kerne of Bedlem [...] schal be ded" and the event foretold in prophecy prevented (ll. 729-30). The killing of Macduff's children in *Macbeth* likewise follows upon a prophecy, in this case one derived from a demonic rather than divine source. The episode seems specifically designed to awaken the audi-

ence to the king's tyranny. Unlike the dolls apparently used in the Coventry play to represent the Innocents, actual child players are required in *Macbeth* and their murder signals the point where the audience is to abandon the king to his fate (Davidson 1970, 77-78). The scene is a powerful one, and it gives emphasis to Macbeth's extreme malevolence and, indirectly, to his sterility (see 4.2.216: "he has no children"). From this scene until he is "ripe for shaking" (4.3.238) the time will not be long, and thereafter the day is "near at hand,/ That chambers will be safe" once more (5.4.1-2). The comparison of the tyrant to a tree now to be shaken is consistent with the imagery of instability both in the play and in proverbial lore. Authority over a nation may be achieved by a tyrant like Macbeth, but its exercise as unalloyed power, unscrupulous and self-directed, can only lead to catastrophe. If power even in the most ideal of circumstances is synonymous with anxiety and insecurity, the mad "butcher" of Scotland, who has used all the techniques of tyranny, is all the more proof that political control is hopeless as a substitute for the willing obedience and loyalty of a people.

The predicament in Scotland under Macbeth is far more extreme than it was in Protestant England, where to be sure pursuivants were always available to betray lay Catholics and priests ordained abroad, the latter being subjected to terrible torture and brutal execution, as in the cases of Edmund Campion, whose direct contact with Shakespeare and his family has been argued, and of the playwright's schoolfellow Robert Debdale (Wilson, 11-12). Macbeth's Scotland is a land [w]here sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rent the air / Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems / A modern ecstasy" (4.3.168-70). The cure for this extreme illness, depicted as like a most terrible visitation of the plague, will come from outside, as noted above, from England where the Catholic king, Edward the Confessor, reigns. A scene in the play is devoted to Edward's touching for the King's Evil as a sign of his ability to bring health, and indeed he is represented as the ideal English king about whose throne "sundry blessings hang" (4.3.157). Shakespeare and his contemporaries would have been aware of St. Edward's shrine, which after its desecration had been restored, though not to its former thirteenth-century glory, by the last abbot of Westminster Abbey, John Feckenham. As a memorial to an English king, Elizabeth had allowed the shrine to remain, and it is still in its place in the abbey in the present day. Elizabeth and James had also both claimed the right to touch for the King's Evil (Paul, 368-

77), and it was an element in their claims to legitimacy as English monarchs – claims which Shakespeare does not deny. Yet the defence of revolutionary action against the evil king in *Macbeth* very much does run strongly counter to the Tudor and Jacobean doctrine of kingship which was designed in the first instance to counteract the bull *Regnans in excelsis* and also to proclaim as if by fiat a stable monarchy.

The inability of Macbeth and his wife to sleep in the play provides almost a parodying of the famous Rainbow Portrait of Queen Elizabeth at Hatfield House with its portrayal of her cloak emblazoned with myriad eyes and ears that represent her awareness of all that is occurring in the realm. In the portrait the queen appears as Astraea, who is the personification of Justice returned to the earth; she is the sun which is the source of the rainbow that she holds and that is a conventional symbol of hope (Strong, 50-53, and frontispiece; cf. Yates, 216-19). Light is implied in her chosen motto, *Veritas temporis filia*, which is connected with a popular emblem showing Time bringing Truth out of a dark cave (Saxl, 197-222; see also King, 229). In contrast, the paranoia ascribed to Macbeth, whose reign is spoken of in terms of darkness, causes him to remain always wakeful and fearful, always threatened by the fear that the truth will be revealed and his power taken away. Yet he has a perceived need to know his fate. Fearing "the worst," he will choose to seek "[b]y the worst means" to know what lies ahead (3.4.133-34). Yet it will need to be remembered that the Rainbow Portrait, painted for the Cecil family near the end of Elizabeth's reign, provides a sanitized and flattering representation of the aged queen's role in authorizing the ferreting out of information through the use of professional spies and of officially sanctioned torture. It is the dark side of the Tudor and Jacobean monarchy that finds its way into the distillation of evil in *Macbeth*, where the alertness of officialdom is transformed into paranoia far more extreme than James's, and the pursuivants and administrators of English justice into criminal death squads and total repression of a people.

Upon the establishment of a new regime by Malcolm at the end of the play, the exiles who "fled the snares of watchful tyranny" will be called home to Scotland (5.9.32-33), and those things are promised which are needful to be done to create a free society. As Macduff holds up the "usurper's cursed head," he proclaims: "the time is free" (5.9.21). While Time has indeed brought into the open

the crimes of the criminal (that is, what Macbeth's cunning has hidden) just as, according to Coke, it had revealed the perfidy of the Gunpowder plotters (Fraser, 225), there is nevertheless an element of uncertainty implied in the play's conclusion. It may be assumed that at the end the playwright intended the despairing Macbeth to be regarded as damned, his soul "[g]iven to the common enemy of man," a fate predicted by the usurper himself earlier in the play (3.1.68). His head, severed from his body, would presumably have been destined for the usual exposure (after boiling to preserve it). Thus the heads of the Gunpowder plotters Robert Catesby and Thomas Percy had been placed over the House of Lords as a deterrent to others' ambitions (Hotson, 199). But as the playwright knew from his reading of Holinshed and other sources, the death and deposition of Macbeth was not the end of the story, for Malcolm, whose reign did much to encourage Christianity in Scotland, was to be followed by his brother Donalbain, who initially had fled "[t]o Ireland" (2.3.138) and who upon his return was revealed to be, like Macbeth, an unsatisfactory ruler. When we look back at Donalbain's speech upon their flight in act 1, the irony becomes all the more evident: "our separated fortune / Shall keep us both the safer" (2.3.138-39).

Like most of Shakespeare's other tragedies, *Macbeth* has a plot which leads the audience (or readers) through a demonstration of the fragility of rulership and the instability of power to a resolution that more or less patches things over with the appearance of benign stasis. Here and elsewhere in Shakespeare's work the temptations of ambition and innovation are shown to be snares, while the will to power is an exercise in illusion in spite of the need for authority to help to regulate civic society. It is, then, in the nature of Shakespearean tragedy to "untune the string" of individual and/or civic harmony and to observe the dislocation that follows when the regular order of the society is fractured: "hark what discord follows" (*Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.109-10). The Great Chain of Being, an idea described at great length by Arthur O. Lovejoy, is one of the components of Shakespeare's plays, as we might expect from an author who was the son of the sometime chamberlain of Stratford-upon-Avon. Oligarchies that controlled towns in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were very conscious of status at the same time that they regularly participated in rituals affirming the unity of the civic organization (see Phythian-Adams 1972, 57-85). Merchants

and craftsmen alike took their position in the social hierarchy seriously, both in market towns like Stratford and in larger cities. At Coventry the guilds participating in the Corpus Christi procession through the city were given their specific places according to their prestige, which might differ considerably from their level of wealth (Ingram 1981, 16-17). But it was the rule in such processions that "the last shall be first," according to the biblical command in Matthew 19:30, a passage asserting the principle that humility is the greatest among the virtues and the way to peace of conscience. This is a precept that, in reverse, is demonstrated in the case of Macbeth and of Lady Macbeth, the latter seen rubbing her hands as if washing them and fearing even in her hallucinatory state that they shall "ne'er be clean" (5.1.43). Not all the pomp and wealth of royalty can cure her "disease," which would require not physical medication but confession and absolution. So too her husband reveals the profitlessness of ambition as he remarks on the futility of the days that merely creep onward "in this petty pace [...] / To the last syllable of recorded time" (5.5.20-22) – that is, to the final moment of history when the day of God's judgement has come. His remark again affirms his despair, his representation of his own life as desiccated, a waste land, and his actions but those of "a poor player [...] upon the stage" (5.5.24-25), terminology which strangely resonates with King James's words describing the elevated position of kingship in his *Basilicon Doron*.

An emblem by Crispyn de Passe from Gabriel Rollenhagen's *Nucleus emblematum selectissimorum* (c. 1611), reprinted in George Wither's *A Collection of Emblemes* (1635), 98, has the motto *Sic transit gloria mundi* and illustrates a great bonfire burning crowns, a tiara, a cardinal's hat, and various other symbols of power (*fig. 3*). Wither's verse comments on such things as "Scepters, Miters, Crownes" and on "Riches" – all "poore Vanities" which ultimately are seen to be "fruitlesse, mere "Bubbles" or "Smoke." Wither's English motto explains: "Even as the Smoke doth passe away;/ So, shall all Worldly-pompe decay." The deprecation of worldly power and of its symbols acquires significance when it is realized that Wither's book was dedicated to King James I's son and successor, Charles I, who was to be identified as a martyr in the *Book of Common Prayer* from 1662 to 1859. Not even a king could expect to live forever, even though he might be exemplary in every way. Only someone as foolish as the proud king who brags "I schal lyue evermo" in the fragmentary fourteenth-century morality

The Pride of Life (Davis 1970, 95) could expect to defeat death. And in the face of Death, the great leveller, the earthly symbols of power and power itself are but transitory things. So Prince Hamlet, standing with Horatio in the churchyard as the gravediggers prepare Ophelia's grave, is made to meditate on the skull of the jester Yorick (5.1.173-217). All, from the greatest to the lowliest, return to dust in the end of this earthly life, as the Ash Wednesday liturgy

Figure 3
"Sic transit gloria mundi." The symbols of earthly greatness are impermanent. George Wither, *A Collection of Emblemes* (1635), p. 98. By permission of the Glasgow University Library, Department of Special Collections.

asserts. The greatest monarch in the world thus must play his final scene on the world's stage and come to this. The graveyard scene in *Hamlet* may seem to lack high seriousness, but it ultimately makes one of the play's most serious statements, its iconography only a short distance away from that of the transi tomb. An early example of this type of double-decker tomb was prepared for Arch-

bishop Henry Chichele (*fig. 4*), who was buried in Canterbury Cathedral in 1424: above he appears in all his earthly splendor in his vestments with angels supporting his head and kneeling monks praying for him at his feet, while below he is depicted nude, as his body was when laid in earth, emaciated and lying on his shroud, no more handsome or grand than the lowliest beggar (Cohen 15-16). The lower level has an inscription which comments on Chichele's lowly origins, his elevation to the see of Canterbury, and, in Kathleen Cohen's translation, "Now I am cut down and ready to be food for worms/ Behold my grave./

Figure 4
The *transi* tomb of Archbishop Henry Chichele (1424) which shows him as he was in life, above, and with his body in decay, below. RCHME ©Crown Copyright.

Whoever you may be who passes by, I ask you to remember,/ You will be like me after you die;/ All horrible, dust, worms, vile flesh" (Cohen 1973, 16n).

Sometimes things which one has seen in childhood press themselves most securely on the mind and are vividly retained in the memory for one's entire life. Though it is not possible to prove that Shakespeare retained such a remembrance of the wall painting of the Dance of Death on the north wall of the nave in the Stratford Guild Chapel, one may at least speculate as much. It is known

that Shakespeare's father, acting to comply with iconoclastic legislation of the time, was responsible as Stratford's chamberlain in 1563–64 for whitewashing over and partitioning off the Guild Chapel wall paintings that were regarded as "papist" (Savage, 128).[8] Less well known is that all the wall paintings were not at this time thus removed from view, for in 1576 John Stow made an addition to Leland's *Itinerary* that reported the survival of the scenes in a Dance of Death series.[9] Fragments of this series were discovered in 1955 and described by Wilfrid Puddephat (29-35), who also provided a drawing documenting Death coming to the king with the words of John Lydgate's dialogue below the picture. Puddephat's drawing of the king is a reconstruction, but it nevertheless purports to be a reasonably faithful reproduction of the original illustration and a careful restoration of the text, which reports the king's reaction to being asked by Death to join the dance. Pride is of no value at this point, and "Grete and small" are alike summoned, with the meek having the "most avauntage, / For we shall all to dede ashes tourne" (Davidson 1988, 52). And there was more at the end of the Dance of Death series: a painting of a "Dead King eaten by worms" (op. cit., 52). The emphasis in all of this was on the insubstantial nature of the power and glory of kingship and on the kinship of all human beings up to the point of death. One may wonder, therefore, if this wall painting, along with the playwright's contact in his youth with intense Catholic religiosity in Warwickshire, might not together have served to provide a dimension crucial to the almost metaphysical linking of ideas and the thoughtful presentation of the instability and fragility of power in his dramatization of the history of "high plac'd Macbeth" (4.1.98).

[8] The royal injunctions that demanded the defacing of "superstitious" images "so that remain no memory of them" (Frere, 3:16) had been promulgated more than four years before, and it would seem that John Shakespeare and the Stratford corporation were slow about complying. That William Shakespeare probably felt strong revulsion at such iconoclastic acts, including his father's, may be gauged by Edward IV's words: ". . . and defac'd / The precious image of our dear Redeemer" (*Richard III* 2.1.123-24).

[9] Bodleian Library, MS. 464, vol. 5, fol. 60^{v}; see Leland 2:49.

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THE SEMIOTICS OF THE SKULL
EMBLEMATIC AGENCY IN *THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY*

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1

The argument of the present investigation is that images of *rulership* in English Renaissance tragedy do not exclusively relate to the figure and the metaphysics of the sovereign or the "ceremonious" offices of the aristocracy. Rulership in these plays is always represented in relation to the broader ideological mechanism of society. *Power* is a technology which is staged with complex networks of images that establish a parallel between high and low positions in the social hierarchy, turning the agency of power into a mechanism which equally effects all subjects of the social structures. Consequently, this is not that concept of structuralist determinism which localizes power in a center inhabited and controlled by those who exercise authority through disciplinary technologies. English Renaissance tragedy testifies to a very poststructuralist understanding of power, a decentered working of social energy which subjects strive to govern, but which always proves to be beyond the subject's capacity to master.

Here, I am not thinking only of the Foucauldian problematization of the reciprocity between subject and power. Renaissance scholarship of the past 20 years has produced outstanding studies that analyzed the way the metaphysical idea of sovereignty is decentered by English Renaissance tragedy. We have seen how the sovereign is the "impossible, missing element" in the cosmos of these dramas (Moretti 1992); how essentialist humanism is subverted through the questioning of transcendental motivation (Dollimore 1984); how the circulation of social energy is a process too heterogeneous to be fixated by a center (Greenblatt 1989); how the theatrical and social spectacle is deployed by ideology to infiltrate society with the presence of power (Orgel 1985). But this critical orientation approaches the problem of power mainly on the level of

what I will call the *macrodynamics of the subject*: they investigate the socio-historical positionality of subjects which is determined by specific technologies of power. The uncertainty of this positionality and of the signifying capacity of the speaking subject in the epistemological crisis of early modern culture is indeed foregrounded in English Renaissance tragedy. However, the thematic frameworks of these plays also penetrate that level of the subject's heterogeneity which I call the *microdynamics of the subject*.[10] On this level, power functions both as the Rule of the Symbolic Order and as a semiotic agency in the dialectics of drives and psychosomatic energies. The constitution of the speaking subject is governed simultaneously by the historical macrodynamics and the psychoanalytical microdynamics of the signifying process, and English Renaissance tragedy provides an elaborate demonstration of the interrelationship of these levels. Images of power are associated with the subject's (in)capacity to master the discursive space around itself, as well as the subject's attempt to master those drives and unconscious compulsions which are often manifested in these discourses. The discrepancy between the subject's conscious modality (the level of discursive and physical action) and the unconscious modality (the semiotic economy of drives that direct those actions beyond the subject's calculation) is thematized by polysemous emblems of desire. The desire compels the protagonist to engage in a network of roles that will in the end ironically overpower the role-playing subject who employs them.

1.1

Violence, death, torture, rape, murder: the most powerful images in these plays are the ones that are in relation with the subject as a psychosomatic entity, a socialized speaking body. If we apply a psychoanalytically informed iconographic approach to English Renaissance tragedy, we will discern recurring patterns of images that represent that power, that heterogeneity in the subject which is more difficult to subvert than the metaphysical position of the sovereign.

[10] Kiss 1995. Ch.2. "The Subject of Semiotics." 15-24. Ch.3. "The Subject of the Renaissance." 25-30.

It is possible to interpret the staging of violence in English Renaissance tragedy as a systematic representational technique. This technique is part of the semiotic attempt to establish that very presence of reality the experience of which becomes so questionable in the epistemological uncertainty of the age. Violence, in the first place, is done to bodies, the bodies of subjects, and it is this body, as Francis Barker argues throughout his book (Barker 1984), which lingers everywhere in the discourses of early modern culture. The suppression of this body, the expulsion of this corporeality of the subject from social discourses will lay down the foundation of the Cartesian cogito, the self-mastering subject of early bourgeois ideology. The violence done to this body on the English stage does not only serve to satisfy the audience's appetite for sensationalism. If we employ a performance-oriented approach to reconstruct hypothetically the representational logic of these plays, we find that the images of violence articulate an *emblematic logic* in which various iconographic traditions are employed to reveal the corporeality of the subject. The testing of this corporeality aims at penetrating the material basis of signification, the flesh behind the word, to bring the spectator back to the sentiment of the body. This representational technique provides the spectator with an experience that appears to go beyond the surface in the dichotomy of appearance and reality.

The staging of the abjected, violated, dissolved body often relies on central emblems which condense the imagery of the heterogeneous subject. Elements of the iconographic traditions take up emblematic values that express the subject's incapacity to master the power of its own heterogeneity. The corpse, the cadaver, the symbol with the greatest semiotic density from the *memento mori* and *ars moriendi* traditions, will be one of the key emblems to represent the power of the subject's inner antagonism.

2

In my paper I offer a short investigation into the complexity of the central emblem of *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the agency of which generates and controls all the meaning-making activities. Its polysemy encompasses the multi-layeredness of Vindice's character, the experimentation with the epistemological un-

certainty concerning the signifying capacity of the human being, and the metadramatic perspective which foregrounds the tension between roleplaying and authentic identity. In this capacity, the skull can be interpreted as an emblem of the power which is always beyond the subject's control. This power is, on the one hand, the ideological mechanism of social positioning, and, on the other, the heterogeneity of presymbolic drives. The interrelation of the two modalities is one of the basic concerns of contemporary critical theory. I maintain that this interrelationship is thematized in Renaissance tragedy through the agency of emblematic images.

2.1

The staging of violence as a representational technique focuses upon the human body with anatomical precision in the English drama of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Complex emblematic scenes of abjection establish a context of theatrical reception in which the spectator's identity is thrown into crisis by the psychoanalytical agency of the Abject. In the face of the unsignifiable Other, the cadaver, the subject's meaning-making activities fail to operate, and the comfortable symbolic fixation which is supposed to lend the subject a feeling of homogeneous identity now falters.

In Renaissance tragedy, flesh is rotted by poison, bodies are mutilated and disintegrated, tongues are nailed down and torn out, heads are crowned with hot iron, skins are peeled off. The product of these practices is, of course, the corpse, but the *corpus* itself would not have fascinated so much an audience which grew up on representations and every-day realities of death: epidemics, plagues, public executions, tortures, murders, high death-rate, and an elaborate iconography of the dead body. We should not fail to see that it is not really the display of the corpse that intrigues the imagination of the spectator, but the moments that witness the body turning into cadaver: the unsignifiable yet absorbing fluidity of the process that takes hold between the Wholly Other or Unrepresentable and the still-Meaningful. This is the process which marks the borders of identity and meaning, where the actor strives to arrive on the Renaissance stage. The *anatomizing and dissolving* of the body is a testing of the corporeal-material, an expulsion of signs in face of the Abject which does not re-

present but engulfs and repudiates the spectator at the same time. In order to dominate the flesh around him, the actor has to produce corpses, because Death is the Pure Signifier, the Wholly Other, which seems to suspend the insufficiency of representation for a passing moment. The staging of the abject is a prolongation of this lapse of time, a dramatic source of *jouissance*. Vindice is the director of that staging in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, but as such he will be servant to a higher psychological agency which is represented by the skull.

2.2

Vindice's character provides the spectator with a persistent undecidability which is unresolved until the end of the tragedy. He appears at the beginning of *The Revenger's Tragedy* as the satiric presenter of the morality play, as the Vice who involves the audience in an extra-dramatic prologue right at the start. This and the title itself already precondition the spectator, and put the very nature of the play under question marks. Are we expecting a moral allegory, a series of plays-within-the-play, or a drama about how to play the Revenger? Yet, the beginning of the play presents an even deeper complexity.

Vindice, besides being a platea-oriented Vice-like agent of involvement, is staged exactly like the allegorical Death of the moralities and interludes who *directs* everybody to a final destination in the grave. This is a very fitting *role* for Vindice, the Director, whose main preoccupation will be the manipulation and production of corpses. But, again: is Vindice playing a role, is somebody playing Vindice taking on a role, or are we manipulated into believing that actor, revenger, corruptor and death are separate? We have to attempt to restore the original *theatrical logic* of these scenes in order to understand the layers of Vindice's figure.

After the commonplace but also cynical ("go...Four ex'lent characters!" 1.1.5) moralizing with a dull skull in one hand (an *enumeratio* before symbolic action), Vindice becomes essentially grotesque, and, ironically, it is the grotesque that is capable of foregrounding the skull here. The death's head is the skull of the Death-presenter's beloved: a most unusual and morbid configuration, which would trigger as much laughter as terror among the contemporary audience. Precisely at this moment, Vindice turns the memento mori inside out.

He starts a pathetic but really comic speech over the skull, which should be definitely staged so that the scene foregrounds its double nature: memento mori *and* its burlesque.

As P. S. Spinrad points out, after the early Middle Ages the discourses about dying served to ward off the threatening presence of mortality, to internalize and thus neutralize the horror-capacity of death. By the time of the late Renaissance, and in the hands of Vindice, the skull has become a *memento mockery*, a joyfully tragic game in the hands of the Vice, the great manipulator.[11]

While mocking the presence of death in the hands of Death, the initial monologue also sets off one of the most important themes of the play: the signifying potential of the material body, and the marketing of commodified identities. Gloriana's most important signifying value here is a commercial one, and later, in the universe of the play, characters will be reduced to bodies that are exchangeable on the market dominated by the commerce of lust. When sexuality becomes equated with death in the drama, as early as the initial skull-monologue, libidinal drives are superseded by the death drive in Vindice.

2.3

Vindice's invocation to Vengeance and tragedy (I.i.39-40) further complicates the nature of the dramatic action.[12] Now he clearly occupies the position of the Director, the organizer of the performance, a role not alien to a Vice-like figure. But he is still outside the play: he is just about to enter, descend into the world of the Tragedy, a movement familiar from mythology, where mischievous supernatural agents trouble the lives of mortals. Vindice is not supernatural, but meta-dramatic: he enters the dramatic world to test the nature of identities, and to cast an ironical overtone on everything through the undecidable juxtaposition of the comic and the tragic. The central undecidability is how long he will be able to maintain this actor-director position. With a tone of almost intimate

[11] Spinrad 1987. Ch.2. "Answering the Summons. The Art of Dying." 27-49. "Memento Mockery. The Old Iconography Begins to Slip." 184-213.

[12] References are to Tourneur 1989.

personal attachment ("be merry, merry, / Advance thee, O thou terror to fat folks..." 1.1.44-45), Vindice "rolls" the skull, his real lover, into the world of the play, and follows it promptly to pursue his primary drive: the production of skulls. This drive finds its central signifier in Gloriana's skull, which becomes the origo of meaning in the entire play.

2.4

It is exactly at this point that the *memento mockery* becomes a mockery of all the efforts Vindice makes to assume a *metaposition* in the world of the play. These efforts are characteristically embedded in the metadramatic framework of the revenge-theme, a dramaturgical strategy of Renaissance tragedy to investigate problems of identity, authenticity and authority. The master-pattern is all there in *The Spanish Tragedy*, and a comparison between this older revenge tragedy and *The Revenger's Tragedy* will be very telling. In the framework of the revenge theme, the revenger strives to occupy a metaposition in a world of masking and role-playing, from which position he could control all the meanings and discourses around himself. The perfect revenger is always the perfect roleplayer who directs his own show. This framework is ironized from the very beginning by the fact that this metaposition is already occupied, fully controlled by an agency which is represented as a concrete figure in the dimensionality of the play, but which is also the active unconscious, psychological agency *within* the revenger. Hieronimo tries in vain to obtain the metaposition of the perfect revenger, since that position is already occupied by the allegorical figure of Revenge, who, at the same time, is always already within Hieronimo as the spirit of revenge, propelling him towards vengeance. In the course of role-playing, the revenger proves to be unable to control this psychological agency, the role he undertakes overpowers him, and the flow of events will take a direction which is beyond his capacity to direct.

The same framework we find in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, but in an almost endlessly complicated and, at the same time, a more explicit and purified format. By now it is obvious that *The Revenger's Tragedy* brings to an ironical short circuit all the macabre traditions that are crowded into it, but the play also provides a crystallized, synthesized emblem of the revenge theme, and thus the

theme of all the compulsions that the heterogeneous subject is exposed to. The memento mori is turned into a memento mockery in the show presented by Vindice, but during this show it will finally be Vindice who is mocked, since the spirit of revenge overpowers him to such an extent that, by the second half of the play, he will identify totally with the role, and loses any originary, authentic identity. "Man is happiest when he forgets himself.' - he tells his brother, and this self-forgetting is nothing else but total self-abandoning to the agency of the drive which is materialized in the emblematic skull. It is this skull which Vindice sets in motion, but he will fail to realize that it is always rolling at least one step ahead of him, and he himself falls victim to the agency of the skull, instead of just using it as a tool to his revenge. As far as the representational attempt of the play is concerned, Vindice functions as an agent of death, the director of the performance of abjection, which aims at engulfing the audience in the most powerful theatrical effect. At the same time, the skull as a purified emblem continuously occupies the metaposition of that agency which is located in the unconscious, uncontrollable modality of the subject.

3

A staging which restores the play to this representational logic can reveal the thematic structure of the play to the spectator. I would definitely stage Vindice wearing the skull of his beloved Gloriana throughout the entire play as a hat-like ornament on top of his head, just as the allegorical figure of Revenge should be continuously present in *The Spanish Tragedy*, presiding over the network of revenges. This would cast an incessant ironic perspective over the self-defining attempts of the protagonists.

It would be the subject of a separate psychoanalytic study to show Vindice's relations to the sexual and diverse psychological processes that are at work in the play. Vindice's father has just died: the Law of the Father, the Phallus gives way to the Law of the Skull, a perverted version of a psychic return to primary drives. Vindice's mental processes are structured around images of death. His pursuit of death engulfs him in a process of self-forgetting which deprives him

of his original coherent (imaginary) identity, and he gradually turns from director into a victim of the avalanche of skulls he started.

The fact that the attempt at discursive social control and self-mastery ends up in the primacy of death and self-forgetting demonstrates that it is not only on the level of social, symbolical positionality and ideology that English Renaissance tragedy is preoccupied with the idea of power. *The Revenger's Tragedy* serves as an example for the way Renaissance tragedy penetrates the micro-dynamic level of the constitution of the subject, and the way that constitution is represented, in a theatrical logic of iconographic traditions and staging techniques, by the agency of principal emblems.

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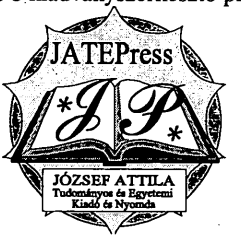

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