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Humanimality and Hyper-determination in Sophocles' Oedipus Plays

Abstract

In a discussion of *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus at Colonus* the essential question of Oedipus' identity remains unanswered. This paper addresses the topic, conceiving Oedipus as a "manimal", a point of intersection of nature and culture. Oedipus' hum*an*imality questions his common reception as a hero occupying a liminal space between nature and culture: rather, he seems to fully belong to the wild nature of Cithaeron, and also to the civilized world of Thebes. Born in a human family and raised by step parents, Oedipus is also the child of Cithaeron, which nurtured him like a mother (*OT* 1091: τροφὸν καὶ ματέρ᾽) and, according to this double origin of birth, a human puppy but also a nursling animal (θρέμμα: 1143); the mountain does not represent only his place of savage birth, but also the location where he would like to die (1451-4). Yet, despite his wild origins, Oedipus belongs to the city of Thebes more than anyone else. Thebes is not going to find salvation without him, even after acknowledging his incest. The Sphinx oppressing the city was defeated by him; Thebes' political balance relies upon him, who alone, by returning to Thebes, can prevent his sons' war. Whereas Oedipus is the citizen that Thebes cannot relinquish, Creon, Eteocles and Polyneices, the men in charge in Thebes, will cause havoc in the city, by waging a war for honour and dynastic power (*OC* 1416-23). As far as I am aware, the only paper discussing how a Greek play lends itself to the idea of hum*an*imality is Payne (2016). This paper aims to broaden this discussion to other dramatic plays, taking Sophocles' Oedipus plays as a key-study.

Keywords: humanimality, incest, parricide, Cithaeron, hyper-determination

> *Oedipus Tyrannos* overturns assumptions which seemed rock-solid. A citizen, one would have said, is not a stranger; a single brigand does not equal several; that which you leave on the mountain does not return to haunt you in the city. This is a tragedy about the disastrous failure of attempts to keep things separate.
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> R. Buxton, *Imagery Greek Mountains*
>
> It is as readers and writers that we fulfill the potential of Oedipus' paradigm of transgression.
>
> S.D. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy*

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In *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, the identity of Oedipus remains essentially undisclosed.[1] My suggestion to further research on the topic is to conceive Oedipus as a "manimal", a point of intersection of nature and culture. In this light, Oedipus' dramatic career is extremely modern: it discloses a notion of man prefiguring the contemporary exploration of the concept of the animal in man, as analysed in seminal works by Agamben 2002, Haraway 2003, Simondon 2004 and Derrida 2006. Within this frame, Oedipus' humanimality represents a conceptual metaphor that disentangles the notion of animal being as opposed to human being: the image of the humanimal as a metaphorical language, employed by humans to talk about themselves and animals alike, belongs to a symbolic order unsettling the human/animal distinction.[2]

Oedipus' humanimality, as we shall see, questions his common reception as a hero occupying a liminal space between nature and culture. In particular, my discussion differs from the seminal study of Bettini and Guidorizzi (2004) who argue that Oedipus, as the child of Cithaeron and of a human family, encompasses both animal and human qualities and, precisely for this reason, is a marginal figure inhabiting a liminal space between nature and culture.[3]

In the reading proposed here, the manimal Oedipus does not entirely assimilate the animal Otherness: the figure of Oedipus does not represent an animal; it represents a man who embodies the animal's difference. By disentangling the dichotomies of nature and culture, of man and animal, Oedipus' tragic action 'remaps these boundaries', deactivating strategies of cul

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[1] The Greek of *OT* and of *OC* follows the OCT edition of Lloyd-Jones and Wilson; the Greek of *Phoenissae* the edition of Mastronarde (for the λύσις the OCT edition of Murray). All translations are mine. My sincere thanks to my colleagues Chiara Thumiger and Emeline Marquis, and in particular Francesca Spiegel, for their advices and sharp remarks. But above all I am indebted to the anonymous reviewer whose theoretical rigor and knowledge of Greek has reminded me of how much I still have to learn.

[2] On animal being as a notion, an image and a conceptual metaphor, cf. Timofeeva (forthcoming): "Animal as a concept is born from the system of philosophical definitions and is linked to other concepts, such as human being (to whom animal is often opposed as the Other). . . . Animal as an image belongs to the order of symbolic mediations and appears as an element of metaphorical language on which humans talk to themselves either about themselves (thus, in humanist tradition the figure of the animal can refer to human passions) or about the Other (in this case the animal is to be found on the one side with the excluded, the vulnerable, etc., with migrants, or minorities, or the poor). When the image and the concept are bonded, i.e. when there is a concept or a system of concepts behind the image, the animal appears as a conceptual metaphor".

[3] Cf. Bettini and Guidorizzi 2004: 83-102.

tural domination upon nature, of man upon animal.[4] As I argue, Sophocles' Oedipus plays invite us to ponder if, and to what extent, Greek tragic thought questions anthropocentrism and the view of man as the measure of everything.

To my knowledge, the only paper discussing how a Greek play lends itself to the idea of humanimality is Payne in "Teknomajikality and the Humanimal in Aristophanes' *Wasps*" (in the *Brill Companion to Aristophanes' Reception*, 2016).[5] This paper aims to broaden the discussion to other dramatic plays, taking Sophocles' Oedipus plays as a key-study. In the first part ("Manimal"), I explore Oedipus as a humanimal whose destiny is hyper-determined; in the second part ("Remapping human/animal boundaries"), I discuss how savage nature, from Oedipus' perspective, is not what made him a parricidal and incestuous son.

1. Manimal

Why "manimal"? To begin with, Oedipus appears a "manimal" because of his double origin of birth: on the one side, a human origin (Laius and Jocasta, his biological parents, as well as Merope and Polybius, his adoptive family in Corinth); on the other side, an origin in the wilderness of the mountain Cithaeron, where Laius and Jocasta abandon him when he is only three days old (*OT* 717-29). As we are told by the chorus, the mountain's wooded valleys and gorges (1026: ναπαίαις ἐν Κιθαιρῶνος πτυχαῖς) are thought of as the hero's place of birth: as Bollack points out (1990: *ad loc.*), the noun πτυχή evokes the image of a cavity, and, by extension, of the womb. The Cithaeron is to Oedipus a mother and a nurturer (1091: τροφὸν καὶ ματέρ'). This mountain's description indicates in fact "how for a time the infant Oedipus was indeed in its care" (Finglass 2018: *ad loc.*).[6] We do not know how much time Oedipus spends on Cithaeron before the shepherd finds him. However, unlike Jocasta, the shepherd, who gave Oedipus

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[4] Borrowing from Haraway, we might say that Oedipus' tragedy implies, for the reader of the plays, to engage "the skillful task of reconstructing the boundaries of daily life, in partial connection with others, in communication with all of our parts" (2016: 67).

[5] Although Holmes (2015) is not concerned with humanimality, her paper is a groundbreaking and illuminating discussion of how the river Scamander, acting as a heroic figure, repeals the divide between nature and culture in the *Iliad*, pointing to their irreversible continuity.

[6] On Oedipus' double birth in a human family and on the wild space of Cithaeron, cf. also Bettini and Guidorizzi 2004 (esp. 83-90), with an emphasis on the mountain as the place of the passage between death to rebirth (p. 86: "place where the transition between death and rebirth takes place").

to the messenger, recognizes the hero immediately (1142-6), so it seems reasonable to suppose that they spent a considerable amount of time together.

In conformity with his double origin of birth on Cithaeron and in a human family, the baby Oedipus is referred to with words that point to his humanimality. The messenger asks the servant if he remembers having given him a boy to raise him up as if he was his own child:

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ   φέρ’ εἰπέ νυν, τότ’ οἶσθα παῖδά μοί τινα
              δούς, ὡς ἐμαυτῷ θρέμμα θρεψαίμην ἐγώ;

[MESSENGER   Come, tell me now, do you remember having given me a child
              / back in those days to be raised up as my own creature?]
              (1142-3)

In the figura etymologica ‘θρέμμα θρεψαίμην’, the noun θρέμμα, ‘fed animal’, is predicative to παῖς and singles out the animal and human origin of Oedipus: θρέμμα is a human nursling but also an animal puppy. The ambiguity is mirrored in the verb τρέφω, which is used in Greek for animals, such as cattle and dogs, as well as for children bred and reared in a household (cf. LSJ). Similarly, Oedipus’ investigations of Laius’ murder point to the hero’s humanimality. In his rational search for Laius’ assassins, in his *zetesis* (110), Oedipus looks for traces of blood (ἴχνος) (108-9)[7] behaving like dogs on the hunt for murderers (Aesch., *Eum.* 246-7). On the other hand, looking for blood traces is also what hunters typically do.[8]

The language of *Oedipus Tyrannus* points to Oedipus’ humanimality also towards the end of the play. When Oedipus laments the suffering for the terrible disgrace of incest and parricide, he traces his stabbing pain, metaphorically, back to his human and animal part: he asserts that his soul is pierced by the stab of goads, as well as by the memory of the committed crimes (1318: κέντρων τε τῶνδ’ οἴστρημα καὶ μνήμη κακῶν). In a similar vein, in passage 1349-50 (ὅς . . . νομάδ’ μ’ ἔλαβ’),[9] Oedipus is depicted like a grazing animal roaming through the mountains. In conformity with this

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[7] With ἴχνος taking up the αἷμα in line 101. For the representation of tragic characters as following traces of blood, cf. also Odysseus in Soph. *Ai.* 1-8 (with ἴχνος at line 6), and Cassandra in Aesch. *Ag.* 1093-4.

[8] Cf. Kicey 2014: 39-40 with n15. On Oedipus’ looking for traces leading to Laius’ assassins, cf. also *OT* 220-1.

[9] The codd. have νομάδος; Lloyd-Jones and Wilson print νομάς (*coniecit* Hartung); I follow here Pearson who prints ‘νομάδ’’ (*coni.* Elmsley *metri grati*a). Finglass *ad loc.* notes that “writing νομάδ’” (*coni.* Elmsley, text and p. 108) inappropriately applies the adjective to the immobile baby”. Yet, tying a baby with shackles does not mean necessarily to immobilize him but to hinder his movement. Stella prints νομάδος ἐπί πόας, but the adjective ἐπιπόδιος, as Finglass *ad loc.* observes, “is unlikely to have been inserted by mistake”.

association, the bonds trapping his feet (1349: πέδας) are the shackles commonly used for tying up humans, but also the hobbles that are tied to the front legs of animals to prevent them to running away (cf. *Il.* 13.36).

Further narrative elements highlight Oedipus' humanimality. His fate appears directly linked with animality. When he defeats the Sphinx, he brings happiness and good fortune (*tyche*) to the city with a good bird's omen (52-3).[10] The chorus affirms that Laius' murderer has feet stronger than those of storm-swift horses (466-68), and Oedipus tells Jocasta that he met a man (sic. Laius) on a cross-road on a chariot drawn by colts (802-3).

The understanding of Oedipus as a being with a double origin of birth questions his common reception as a hero occupying a liminal space between nature and culture. According to the critics, this child raised on the mountain will never fully belong to the civic world of his native city Thebes and his adoptive city Corinth.[11] In Corinth, he is king Polybius' foster son, and therefore, as he says himself, the most important under the citizens (774-6), but from another point of view, he is a foreigner coming from Thebes. He is citizen and king of Thebes, and yet, as Tiresias explains (452-3), he arrives at Thebes as a foreigner because he is not aware that he was born there.[12] He is a friend of Thebes (he saves it from the Sphinx) but also an enemy to its civic community (he spread a contagious illness with his incest). This interpretation of Oedipus' tragic role tacitly implies a dichotomy of nature and culture: his identity is profoundly ambiguous; as a human baby grown up in the wild, he does not completely belong neither to the city, nor to the mountain. However, as I shall illustrate, there are reasons to suppose that Oedipus fully belongs to the wild nature of Cithaeron and to the civilized world of Thebes.

Throughout all his life, the Cithaeron is always with Oedipus. The mountain represents not just his place of birth, but also the place where he would like to die (*OT* 1451-4). We can push this point further. When Oedipus begins to investigate Laius' murder, the search for the culprit on the basis of tangible and incontrovertible evidence, and hence the search for a rational explanation for this crime, translates for the hero into the collapse of the world he considers real. While Thebes and Corinth cease to exist for

[10] One of the example of tragic irony in *OT*: when Oedipus brings good fortune to Thebes, he simultaneously brings its disaster. On prophetic birds in *OT*, cf. also line 966.

[11] Cf. e.g. the influential contributions of Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1972, 1986 [1988]; Segal 1981, 2001; Delcourt 1981; Bollack 1990; Foley 1993; Bettini and Guidorizzi 2004: 83-102.

[12] Similarly, for the tension between "Oedipus the king of Thebes" and "Oedipus the stranger in Thebes", cf. *OT* 219-23: here Oedipus, still unaware of who he really is, affirms that he will speak publicly (ἐξερῶ) to the city as a stranger to the deed (ξένος δὲ τοῦ πραχθέντος), that is to Laius' murder.

Oedipus because they prove to be not what he believed they were, the Cithaeron does not. In fact, the mountain continues to be for Oedipus what has always been: the place that welcomes him, when humans drive him out from their world. Drawing on these remarks, we can put forward some further points on the identity of Oedipus. Oedipus is not just "hidden from himself", as McCoy (2013: 56) has recently suggested. In Oedipus' search for his own identity, we recognize a paradoxical progression: the more he tries to explain what is true and real for him, the more what is true and real for him disappears. In addition, if Oedipus' identity is an enigma (it poses a question that admits only a true or false answer: are you or are you not Laius' and Jocasta's son?), the case of Oedipus seems to illuminate us on the positive value of reduced awareness: full self-knowledge might push the subject to death. In this sense, Oedipus' investigation might represent a criticism of the Delphic wisdom of the *gnothi sauton.*

The Cithaeron remains a part of Oedipus' human life, also because the mountain safeguards the memories that bound the hero to his human family. When the messenger reveals Oedipus that he found him on Cithaeron while taking care there of Laius' flocks (*OT* 1026-30), he also reveals Oedipus that he freed his ankles that were pinned together (1034). Oedipus refers to his perforated ankles as an old trouble (1033) that he had from the cradle (1035); then, the messenger states that Oedipus' name, and therefore his identity, depends on his pierced ankles (note in line 1036 the correspondence between the verb to name/ὀνομάζειν and to be/εἶναι):[13]

> Αγγελος   ὥστ᾽ ὠνομάσθης ἐκ τύχης ταύτης ὃς εἶ
>
> [Messenger So much so that from that circumstance you were called be
>   that name which you still bear]
>   (1036)

Who gave Oedipus his name? Perhaps the foster parents in Corinth; hardly, his biological parents, as Bollack *ad loc.* explains at some length. Yet, regardless of who ever chose it, "Oedipus" is a sign of the hero's humanimality, in the sense that "Oedipus" names the child whose fate (τύχη) was to be exposed on Cithaeron, to be injured at the ankles in order to die on the mountain, and to be rescued instead by the mountain that nursed him. In this verbal exchange, the savage Cithaeron is invested with a cultural value. As the place that lets Oedipus' childhood memories flow back, together with his identity as the injured baby abandoned in the wild, the mountain is implicitly represented as the geographical point of the hero's emotional investment with his environment. Seen as 'the' element of Oedipus' *topo-*

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[13] Cf. also Eur. *Pho.* 25-7; Apollod. 3.5.7.

philia, the wild Cithaeron is part of the cultural geography of Oedipus' human life.[14]

Following this discussion, the text of *Oedipus Tyrannus* does not seem to establish a dichotomy of nature and culture, but rather a continuity in reference to Oedipus' identity. This should not surprise us. The Cithaeron is the savage space of the non-polis that man cannot penetrate (719). [15] It is also much more than that. For instance, shepherds live and work there (1028-9, 1044, 1125-7, 1133-9). After all, mountains in Greek culture do not symbolize only wilderness as opposed to civilization; they often epitomize the tensions between these two spheres. For instance, as Buxton has extensively shown (2013), mountains, in myth as in real life, were economically productive places (sources of wood, charcoal and sheep-farming); as Langdon (2000) carefully discusses it, mountains were privileged spaces for worshipping gods (notably, according to Pausanias (9.2.4), the Cithaeron was Zeus' sacred mountain; in the *Bacchae*, it is the place where the Maenads worship Dionysus).

Equally importantly, the Cithaeron is part of Oedipus' human life because it is the mountain that grants the hero the chance to become citizen and king of Thebes. Without Cithaeron, Oedipus would have never been accepted as a member of the community of Thebes. When his human family wanted him dead, his life was saved by the mountain which raised him, and precisely because Oedipus is a creature of wild Cithaeron, he defeats the Sphinx and becomes widely known and publicly respected (*OT* 8, 495; *OC* 305-6), the king of Thebes (*OT* 1380), the first among men (33-6), the most powerful and envied man in Thebes (1525-6). The Cithaeron is a wild and prodigious space: it harbors beasts and nomadic shepherds, but also the nymphs, Pan, Apollo and Dionysus (*OT* 1098-109), and benevolent animals such as sheep and goats (1135-6). In this world, simultaneously savage and benign, Oedipus acquires an outstanding power which exceeds the average abilities of a human being: having lived among animals in his infancy, he has the ability to understand the Sphinx, a talking animal, a ῥαψῳδὸς κύων, a dog chanting its riddle (391).[16] As Bettini and Guidorizzi

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[14] On *topophilia* and cultural attitudes towards mountains and wilderness, cf. Tuan 1974: 92 ff. (ch. 8: *topophilia* and environment); Schama 1995.

[15] Cf. the similar description of Cithaeron in Eur. *Ba.* 677ff., 1043-147.

[16] For the Sphinx as a dog, cf. also Aesch. fr. 236 Radt and Ar. *Ra.*, 1287. On the Sophoclean Sphinx as a dog, cf. Bollack ad *OT* 391-2: "The monster (that the 'dog' terms as such, in its animality, rather than in the aspect of woman, 'bitch' . . .)", to whom one has to add the important remarks of Bettini and Guidorizzi (2004: 178) and Finglass at *OT* 391-2. On the singing Sphinx, cf. also 36, 130, 1200. As a talking animal, the Sphinx is a wondrous animal. On wondrous animals, cf. Beagon (2014). In the *Seven against Thebes*, the Sphinx is described as a noxious and monstrous beast devouring men

have observed (2004: 88):

> The double birth gives the baby a surplus of powers and makes him a two-faced being, man and animal at the same time . . . a being that precisely for this reason can interpret the voice of animals and is therefore able to understand the question of the Sphinx, who is a speaking animal.

The solution of the Sphinx' enigma, which is the word "man",[17] can only come from a manimal. It is Oedipus' animality which allows him to interpret the Sphinx' animal language, and to defeat the wondrous animal. Additionally, the concept itself of man, amounting to the solution, implies the necessity of a human act on the part of Oedipus, in order to fully grasp the meaning of the riddle. The manimal Oedipus has a savage mind that masters animal language.

The *Phoenissae* seem to support this reading. In this play too, Oedipus seems to solve the unintelligible enigma thanks to his ability to understand what the Sphinx sings. On the one hand, Antigone affirms that he could understand the song of the songstress who is hard to be understood:

Ἀντιγονη   . . . ὅτε
          δυσξυνέτου ξυνετὸς μέλος ἔγνω
          Σφιγγὸς ἀοιδοῦ . . .

[Antigone . . . as he understood the subtle song[18] of the Sphinx, the
          songstress hard to be understood . . .]
          (1505-7)

On the other hand, Oedipus depicts himself as the one who solved the enigma, the solution of which nobody could grasp:

Οιδιπους   αἴνιγμ᾽ ἀσύνετον εὑρών

[Oedipus As he solved the unintelligible riddle]
          (1731)

To this line of interpretation, one might object that the Sphinx is not a talking dog, but an animal-human hybrid as in the famous attic *kylix* of the Oedipus Painter.[19] After all, the Sphinx is described as a winged and deadly

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(Aesch. *Th.* 541, 558, 776-7).

[17] Cf. *hypothesis* III of *OT*; *lysis* of *Phoenissae*; D. S. 4. 64.4; Apollod. 3.5.8.

[18] For ξυνετὸς μέλος as 'subtle song', cf. Mastronarde *ad loc.*: "ξυνετὸς (μέλος) is best taken as 'subtle, deep, clever'".

[19] In Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* she is said to have the face of a woman, breast, feet and tail of a lioness and wings of a bird (3.5.8); in Diodorus Siculus she is said to be a two-formed wild animal (4.64.3).

virgin (*OT* 507-8, 1999-201) as in Euripides' *Phoenissae* (806, 1019-25, 1041).[20] In conformity with this, one might argue that she speaks human language and, therefore, that every one in Thebes understands her but nobody is capable of solving the enigma. This seems to be suggested by Apollodorus who refers that the Thebans often met and discussed the answer to the enigma (3.5.8), implying that they could understand the language of the Sphinx but not the enigma. Yet, there are good reasons to suppose that Oedipus' capacity to crack the riddle, in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, is directly linked to his capacity to interpret animal language. In his attempt to denigrate Tiresias, Oedipus explicitly says that a seer's help was needed to solve the Sphinx' enigma, because to interpret (διειπεῖν)[21] it was not a task for the first comer; yet Tiresias was discovered not to have prophetic skills and Oedipus himself solved the riddle:

ΟΙΔΙΠΟΥΣ καίτοι τό γ' αἴνιγμ' οὐχὶ τοὐπιόντος ἦν
ἀνδρὸς διειπεῖν, ἀλλὰ μαντείας ἔδει·
ἣν οὔτ' ἀπ' οἰωνῶν σὺ προὐφάνης ἔχων   395
οὔτ' ἐκ θεῶν του γνωτόν· ἀλλ' ἐγὼ μολών,
ὁ μηδὲν εἰδὼς Οἰδίπους, ἔπαυσά νιν

[OEDIPUS and yet it was not the task for a passer-by / to interpret the enigma, but it needed prophetic skill / But you did not seem to possess any prophetic skill, either from the birds / or from the gods. But I came along / Oedipus, who knew nothing, and made her stop singing.]
(393-7)

In his reply, the chorus refers to the enigma as the god's prophecies (406-7: τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ μαντεῖ'). In this dramatic exchange, the capacity to understand the Sphinx is put in direct relation to the divine and divinatory powers. This is crucial. As Furlanetto has extensively shown (2005: 158-63), seers are known for understanding animal language, because animal language is traditionally linked with the knowledge of the future[22] and indeed this applies to the Sphinx too, who is said to be χρησμῳδός, that is chanting oracles, prophetic (1200).

To be sure, the priest says that Oedipus solved the enigma with the help of a god: he had no better knowledge than any one else in Thebes nor was

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[20] On the Sphinx as a deadly virgin, cf. also Pindar fr. 177a-f M. In this light, the description of the Sphinx as a dog alludes, metaphorically, to her female gender in an obvious gesture of denigration (cf. Bettini and Guidorizzi 2004: 175).

[21] On διειπεῖν as meaning 'to interpret', cf. the painstaking and elegant discussion of Bollack *ad loc.*

[22] For instance, Xanthus' foreboding of Achilles' future in the *Iliad* 19, which Furlanetto discusses extensively.

taught anything in this respect (*OT* 36-8). Oedipus himself contends that he solved the enigma thanks to his wit (γνώμη) only, without the help of the prophetic art (398). Yet, this seems to point to Oedipus as a figure whose humanimality comprehends the ability to understand animal language. For instance, we know from Oppian (*Cynegetica* 2.540-3) that a few human beings, gifted with special skills, are able to understand the language of elephants. Furthermore, Oedipus' γνώμη, his wit, marks a continuity with the Sphinx, who is depicted as a cunning animal: she is ποικιλῳδός (130), that is she sings cunningly.[23] Relying on Bettini 2009, the Sphinx' *poikilia* can be read as a visible sign of Oedipus' incest:

> The *poikilía* (of the rainbow, or other things) presents itself as an immediate symbol of all that seems to abolish the distinction, the opposition by intervals: as it happens in the enigma, or in the incest, where precisely the adýnata, that what is contradictory, coincide and every true distinction falls between father and brother. (198)

Cunning is not the only point of continuity between Oedipus and the Sphinx, the only sign of the hero's humanimality. There is also a body contiguity between them: as the hero is lame, so the Sphinx has crooked talons (1199). The vulnerability of their body intersects the boundaries between human and animal, showing how human and animal fate are bound together. Indeed, Oedipus' fate is indissolubly tied to the Sphinx: it is the killing of the Sphinx that gives Oedipus enormous reputation. Moreover, the Sphinx' cannibalism mirrors Oedipus' crimes since cannibalism, as Forbes Irving (1987: 103) and Thumiger (2008: 2; 2014: 86) have spelled out, is linked to incest and familial disorder.

So far, we have seen how Oedipus' tragic biography outlines a continuity between nature and culture: by saving his life and nursing him, the mountain grants Oedipus the opportunity to become a member of the civic community of Thebes, in fact its king. Yet, as the child of Cithaeron, which to him is a fellow-countryman (*OT* 1090: τὸν πατριώταν Οἰδίπου), Oedipus belongs to the city of Thebes more than anyone else. Thebes is not going to find salvation without Oedipus; the entire city relies on him, even after acknowledging his incest. He defeated the oppressing Sphinx; only he can save the city from the war among the hereditary princes Eteocles and Polyneices. This inseparable bond with Thebes is the reason why exile in the savage woods (*OC* 348-9) is not suitable to him (590). This also explains why Oedipus never forgives his sons and Creon for having expelled him from Thebes (427-44; 761-71; 1364), turning him into a man without a

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[23] On *poikilia* as inherently related to cunning, cf. the seminal study of Detienne and Vernant (1974) 1991: 24-54 ("The Fox and the Octopus").

city, an *apolis* (207, 1357). Whereas Oedipus is crucial to the life of the city, Creon, Eteocles and Polyneices, the men in charge in Thebes, will cause havoc, by waging a war for honor and dynastic power (1416-23). In Thebes, cultural values, power relations and military violence rank among the first causes of the city's devastation - certainly not Oedipus and his humanimality. Thebes' political balance relies upon the humanimal Oedipus, who alone can prevent his sons' war, by returning to Thebes. Here we trace a bitter criticism of state politics and human values, a major theme in all Euripides' plays, as Pucci (2016) carefully argues in his last book on Euripides.

The hypertrophy of Oedipus' birth origin - as a child of Cithaeron and as a child of a human family - is mirrored in the manimal's hypertrophic tragic actions. Oedipus' tragedy can be traced back to many factors: his abandonment at birth; his parricidal fate; his incest; his children conceived with his own mother; the self-blinding. In turn, this multiplicity of tragic actions ensues from Apollo's prophecy lurking on his fate (*OT* 376-7, 463-6, 896-910). As Oedipus' tragic actions are determined by a prophecy, and progress from a variety of factors, we can say that the hero's identity is hyper-determined. Unlike what critics usually assume, Oedipus' tragedy does not seem to amount to a conflict between individual freedom and external constraints:[24] he acknowledges his fate to be determined by Apollo's oracle (1329-30).[25] On the contrary, the tragedy of Oedipus' hyper-determined fate is consumed in an intersection of chance and finality: on the one hand, all his actions are determined by the prophecy; on the other, by *tyche*, of which he affirms to be the son (1080).[26] This convergence of finality and *tyche* is a feature of Oedipus' hyper-determination. As Pucci observes (1999: 166), even when he turns out to be responsible of parricide and incest, Oedipus is still the man who solved the Sphinx' enigma as well as the man who blinds himself and suffers an self-inflected pain rather than being punished by Apollo (1331-5). "The implication here", as Lawrence observes (2014: 504), "is that one can exist apart from one's destiny, which need not comprise an entire life".[27] But we can go perhaps a step further. Not even Oedipus' inquiry about his own origins is a consequence of the oracle: first the drunk man reveals the hero that he is not the son of

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[24] Cf. Dorati 2015, with a painstaking and very detailed overview of the research done on this topic.

[25] For a very careful and detailed discussion of Oedipus' story as determined by the god's involvement in human life and the "divine purpose that is immanent in human life", cf. Cairns 2013. Cairns' paper is a must-read as it painstakingly explains how the notion of free will or lack thereof are inherently modern and do not fit to the ancient Greek view of human action (esp. pp. 120-30).

[26] Compare Jocasta in *OT* 977-9, according to whom *tyche* rules human life.

[27] Cf. similarly, Woodruff 2009: 242-3.

Merope and Polybius, and then Oedipus decides to go to Delphi, in order to find out the truth about his parents (779-88). Oepidus' disposition to ascertain his origins, and the ensuing drama, seems to betray the paradoxical character of his destiny rather than the opposition between free choice and necessity: paradoxically, precisely by deciding to go to Delphi to investigate his origins, Oedipus fulfills the oracle and the destiny predetermined for him by the god Apollo.

2. Remapping Human/Animal Boundaries

I come now to discuss the second point of this paper: how does the tragic action of the manimal remap the boundaries between nature and culture? In the play we find a view of incest and parricide as savage acts, in contrast to their notion as cultural acts. The old men of Thebes recognize in Oedipus the perpetrator of savage crimes. Until the truth about Oedipus' identity is undisclosed, the chorus describes the murderer of Laius as a savage animal, that is a bull (ταῦρος),[28] and an invisible man hiding in the savage woods (*OT* 477-82). When his identity is finally revealed, the chorus describes the parricide and incest as "savage plagues" (1205). In this light, the killing of the Sphinx represents the achievement of the wild Oedipus because it is immediately conducive to the wedding of Jocasta and her own son (following the decision of the ruler in Thebes, the hand of the queen Jocasta is offered to anyone who would defeat the Sphinx). It is also worth mentioning the observation of Lévi-Strauss (1973: 31-5), according to whom once the enigma is solved, two oppositions are united: in the case of the incest, mother and son; in the case of the enigma, a question and an answer.

Oedipus, however, does not partake in the chorus' rhetoric of explanation of his wild nature and of his terrible actions. If we rely on how Oedipus talks about his crimes, the wild *tauros*, allegedly responsible for Laius' murder, belongs to the city.[29] Thus, for Oedipus, parricide and incest originate in the city. They are eminently cultural facts of human life in a social group, and in the civic formation of the polis. The problems of parricide and incest, from Oedipus' perspective, are problems of the city of The-

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[28] For ταῦρος as savage animal, mostly associated with emotional turmoil, violence and aggressiveness, cf. Thumiger 2014: 86, 89, 95.

[29] "Oedipus the ταῦρος", therefore, parallels the situation of the Aristotelian *tauros* shunning his herd and risking being hunted by predators (*HA* 611a2-3). The *tauros* in *HA* belongs to nature and culture at the same time: in his subjection to human ends, he is – like sheep and goats (610b35-611a1) – a domesticated animal belonging to a shepherd's herd which protects his members; however, as a roaming bull who abandoned his herd, he is an animal growing wild (cf. also 572b16-23).

bes. Oedipus' view of parricide and incest redesigns, then, the dichotomy of nature and culture, since his crimes are not to be ascribed to the world of savage nature, but to the civilized world of the polis. Culture destroys Oedipus; not the wild Cithaeron, which has been like a mother to him.[30] From Oedipus' perspective, the savage nature that raised him does not make him a creature in opposition to the human world: incest does not belong to the wild; it is, rather, a city's and a family's concern. In *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Oedipus accuses the Cithaeron of having kept him alive (1391-3), but he blames the adoptive father Polybius, the city of Corinth and his family in Thebes of feeding his depravity (1394-6). In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus argues that Thebes, although unintentionally, was the cause of his wedding and incest with Jocasta (525-6). In the same vein, Oedipus blames the city of Thebes, which he saved and protected, for a gift that he was not meant to receive: the union with his mother (539-41). Equally important, the course of the events questions Oedipus' savagery. Despite the chorus' belief that Laius' assassin is roaming through the woods, Oedipus is the king of Thebes and lives there. In this sense, quite interestingly, when Oedipus exhorts the citizen of Colonos not to look at him as an *anomos* (142), the hero is not referring to his past crimes; rather, as Guidorizzi (2008: *ad loc.*) poignantly observes, the hero is alluding to how the citizen of Colonos might see him *hic et nunc*, namely as man who might violate the rules to enter the city of Athens.

Since he does not blame the Cithaeron for his own crimes, but he blames the civic community instead, it is clear that Oedipus never feels like a wild creature, not even when he finds out about his violations. To be sure, he speaks of himself as the greatest scourge for men: this is the reason why he wants to be expelled from the city and confined the wild space of Cithaeron (*OT* 1290-1, 1340-5, 1350-5; 1381-2; 1409-15; 1432-41; 1449-54), as Tiresias once foretold him (417-20).[31] Yet, when Oedipus begs the old men of Thebes to banish him, since he is undeserving of the life in the civ-

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[30] To my knowledge, the scholarly discussion about Oedipus' guilt or innocence has the unfortunate consequence of dismissing the plays' ambivalent discourse on nature and culture. Critics have essentially debated whether or not Oedipus should be considered guilty according to the Athenian homicide law of the time, cf. e.g. Finkelberg 1997; Sommerstein 2011; Harris 2010 and 2018: 435-45. Yet, as Cairns poignantly puts it: "whether the killing of Laius is *phonos hekousios* or *phonos dikaios*, it is qua parricide and not qua homicide that it really matters. Oedipus suffers as he does not because he killed a man, but because the man he killed was his father; his anger and haste may have caused the killing qua killing, but not qua parricide" (2013: 168n90).

[31] Before discovering the truth, Oedipus affirms that the murderer of Laius is a filth and a wicked man (*OT* 138, 1381-3); when everything seems to indicate that it is the killer himself, he asks himself whether he is a bad and impure man who deserves only the exile from Thebes (822-5).

ilized world of the *polis*, the hero speaks like a man of the *polis* and not as a creature made unsociable by his wild undertakings. In the long exchange with the chorus (1320-90), Oedipus addresses the old men of Thebes as *philoi*, friends (1321, 1329, 1339), because, as citizen of Thebes, he considers them the highest good for him (63-4; 93-4). Precisely in virtue of his civic view of the concept of *philia*, Oedipus asks them how a man like him could possibly engage further in the civic life of his fellow citizens; and he begs them to force him to leave because he is a disgrace for the city and its gods (1378-90).

Perhaps even more importantly, from Oedipus' perspective, there is no clearly cut cultural boundary establishing the criteria to condemn a person as a parricidal and incestuous son. In the Oedipus' plays, the representation of Oedipus as a man that the city of Thebes has to condemn is very unstable. Oedipus considers himself 'νόμῳ καθαρός', innocent before the city's law (*OC* 547-9), since he was unaware of the crimes he committed: he did not know that Laius was his father and Jocasta his mother (266-72; 971-5, 982-4, 991-6). From his perspective, since he did not act voluntarily, parricide and incest are lawfully not condemnable. The men who accuse him are instead disrespectful of the laws of the polis: they are disregardful of Oedipus' will, hence unjust and slanderers (973-1002). Once he is aware of the terrible truth about himself, Oedipus begs Creon to expel the worst of men (*OT* 1432: κάκιστον ἄνδρ') from Thebes. But, again, for Oedipus, being a bad person is a consequence of *bad* parents (1397: κακός τ' ὢν κἀκ κακῶν εὑρίσκομαι), and not of his past experience in the wild. When time has passed since the discovery of his true identity, he does not feel a bad man anymore. He says that he is γενναῖος, a noble person of origin and character (*OC* 8-9), and that he is not base (κακός) by nature, that is by *physis* (270-2).

The characters in *Oedipus at Colonus* agree with Oedipus' self-representation as a good and noble man. The stranger who first meets him at the sacred grove in Colonus describes Oedipus as a noble man (75-6); Theseus says he is benevolent (630-1) and the chorus that he is χρηστός, good (1014), which, notably, is the opposite of κακός.

The play's assessment of Oedipus as a noble man asks us to reassess the way the characters interact with him - for instance, the behaviour of the people who, as Oedipus fears, might refuse to marry their daughters, since they are children begotten by an incestuous father (*OT* 1496-502). As I would like to suggest, this is how the transgression of the parricide and incestuous Oedipus becomes the transgression of the reader, raising the question of how to ascertain the limits of nature and culture. By remapping these boundaries, the figure of Oedipus relinquishes the investigation

of man's place in the world to the reader.[32] Is the *locus* of man to be found in a cultural opposition to nature, in a separation attributing to nature the cultural violence (incest, parricide) that society can only handle through the exclusion and the marginalization of the "savage" subject? Is Oedipus the "savage man" committing incest and parricide? Or is, rather, the *locus* of man in the world to be situated at the continuity of nature and culture and, therefore, is "savagery" inherently cultural, to the point that a reversal takes place, whereby nature preserves man and society destroys him? Is Oedipus the child of wild Cithaeron that Thebes tries to obliterate by exposing him on the mountain and, as we have seen, by pushing him towards incest and parricide, as Oedipus tells us (*OC* 525-6)? - "with an ill wedlock, the city bound me, although knowing nothing, to the doom of my marriage". Disentangling strategies of domination of culture over nature, Oedipus becomes a subversive subject: he reminds the reader that justice based on laws runs the risk to be arbitrary, and he raises the suspicion that societal life, and not wild nature, might end up reducing the members of a community to wanderers without a locus, as Thebes did with him (*OC* 3: πλανήτην Οἰδίπουν).

Conclusions

In Greek, ὄρος ("mountain") derives from the verb ὁρίζω ("to divide, to separate"): mountains, in Greek thought, separate the civilized world of the polis from the savage dominion of nature. In Sophocles' Oedipus plays, however, the meaning of Cithaeron compromises this dichotomy by displaying its ambivalence. For the chorus, the savage crimes of Oedipus are signs of the mountain "invasion" of the space of the polis of Thebes. In this view, parricide and incest epitomize the horror that might ensue from the collision or implosion of ὄρος and polis. For Oedipus, the Cithaeron represents a refuge, the place he wishes for his own death, when his true identity is disclosed and he no longer considers himself worthy of a life in Thebes. Nonetheless, the hero traces his parricide and incest back to his life in the city and never accuses the Cithaeron of turning him into a parricidal and incestuous son. Consequently, Oedipus' tragic voice proves in this regard to be inherently transgressive, since it invites the reader to remap the boundaries between nature and culture.

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[32] On a reading of *OT* as a play about the place of man in the order of things, cf. famously Goldhill 1986: 221, with the important discussion of Goldhill's reading by Kicey 2014: 34-6.

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DAVID LUCKING*

"The Elements so Mix'd": Empedoclean Cosmology in *The Tempest*

Abstract

This article examines the manner in which the elemental images that constitute a recurrent motif in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* evolve in accordance with the cosmic cycle propounded by the pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles, and how this serves to adumbrate the psychological process undergone by the protagonist Prospero in the course of the events depicted in the play. Prospero is a character who, dedicating himself exclusively to his arcane studies in Milan at the expense of his practical duties as a prince, has implicitly repudiated what he considers to be the inferior elements in his own being in favour of the more elevated aspects of his personality, this schism in the self being represented symbolically in the contraposition between Ariel and Caliban, associated respectively with air and fire, and earth and water. This corresponds to the phase in which Strife (*neikos*) gains ascendancy in the Empedoclean cycle, and in which the elements are segregated out from a primal unity and set in opposition to one another. The phase in the Empedoclean cycle in which the process reverses itself and Love (*philia*) begins to assert its sway is what appears in the here and now of the drama, as the disparate elements both within Prospero himself and in the world surrounding him undergo a process of convergence that eventually makes possible the reunification symbolized in Prospero's charmed circle.

KEYWORDS: Shakespeare; *The Tempest*; Empedocles; cosmic cycle

> . . . and the elements
> So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, "This was a man!"
> *Julius Caesar* 5.5.73-5

The Sicilian pre-Socratic thinker Empedocles, in some respects a seminal figure in the history of philosophy and at the same time a poet who exercised a significant influence on such successors as Lucretius and Ovid,[1]

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[1] See Hardie 1995 for a discussion of the debt owed to Empedocles by Lucretius and Ovid, as well as by other Roman poets.

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makes his first explicit appearance in English literature as the protagonist of Matthew Arnold's *Empedocles on Etna*, a dramatic poem published anonymously in 1852. Arnold's poem is loosely based on Diogenes Laertius's account of the suicide of the philosopher by throwing himself into the crater of Mount Etna, a lurid enough anecdote that over the centuries has also inspired a number of other works of art and literature. Diogenes Laertius's story of how Empedocles met his end has the philosopher determining to annihilate his body in the flames of the crater so as to "confirm the report that he had become a god" (2005: 383), a stratagem that fails however when one of the bronze slippers he has been in the habit of wearing, cast up again by the volcano, reveals to the world the real reason for his disappearance. Borrowing the outlines of the story, but construing its significance in terms that are wholly different, Arnold's work represents the suicide not as an act of self-aggrandizement but as the final gesture of a thinker racked by doubts as to the value of the intellectual quest on which he has been engaged throughout his entire life, and yet who precisely because of the obsessive nature of that quest has lost the capacity to lend himself unreflectively to the less complicated pleasures of human existence.

This is the legend of Empedocles as it was adapted for modern consumption. But as an intellectual presence Empedocles haunted English literature long before Arnold enlisted him into his poetry as an emblem of philosophical doubt and disillusionment, and in the following discussion I wish to examine the manner in which his influence can be felt in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. One of the doctrines with which Empedocles is most closely associated is alluded to in Arnold's poem itself, as the philosopher, about to hurl himself into the crater of Mount Etna, contemplates his own imminent extinction:

> To the elements it came from
> Everything will return.
> Our bodies to earth,
> Our blood to water,
> Heat to fire,
> Breath to air. (1922: 122-3)

It was Aristotle who credited Empedocles with originating the distinction between the four material elements of which all things are constituted (1933: 29), a taxonomy which he himself elaborated and transmitted to posterity in so meticulously articulated a form that it is more often attributed to him than to its original author. As proponents of the Elizabethan World Picture have often repeated, the Aristotelian notion of the four elements was one of the central tenets of Elizabethan thinking, however much it was being undermined by the new (or rather recently revived) atomistic

theories that were gathering momentum during this period. While it is not necessarily the case that the ordinary individual in Shakespeare's time was aware of the precise genealogy of the idea, the conception of the world as being constituted by four primal substances was one of the commonplaces of the epoch, as was the concomitant notion that earth and water were the heavy elements that gravitated downward, while air and fire were lighter and tended upwards.[2]

Shakespeare explicitly alludes to this scheme at various points in his work, although there is sometimes a tinge of caricature in his invocation of it that might possibly betray a degree of diffidence as to its validity, as when Sir Andrew in *Twelfth Night* responds to Sir Toby's question "Does not our life consist of the four elements?" with "I think it rather consists of eating and drinking" (2.3.9-12).[3] When the French Dauphin in *Henry V* extols his horse in extravagantly fulsome terms as being "pure air and fire, and the dull elements of earth and water never appear in him" (3.7.21-2), his comments provoke a sardonic response even in those who might be expected to sympathize with his equestrian fervour. In *Antony and Cleopatra* the Queen of Egypt, aspiring to escape the trammels of the world by ending her own life, exultantly exclaims that "I am fire and air; my other elements / I give to baser life" (5.2.287-8), but overlooks the fact that in so doing she is rejecting the very elements upon which her poetic identity as the "serpent of old Nile" depends (1.5.26). In much the same vein is the carefully crafted image pattern based on the four elements found in the companion sonnets 44 and 45, in the former of which the poet laments the fact that the "dull substance" of his flesh is unable to traverse the distance separating him from the person he loves as "nimble thought" would be able to do:

> But that so much of earth and water wrought,
> I must attend time's leisure with my moan;
>   Receiving naughts by elements so slow
>   But heavy tears, badges of either's woe. (11-14)

The identification of his flesh with the heavier elements of earth and water is a purely poetic conceit, of course, yet it is one which serves the poet's imaginative purposes so appositely that he makes even more extensive use of it in Sonnet 45, which opens with an invocation of the higher elements as well:

> The other two, slight air, and purging fire,

[2] E.M.W. Tillyard makes this one of the foundations of Renaissance orthodoxy regarding the constitution of the universe (1963: 77-83).

[3] All references to Shakespeare's works throughout this discussion are to the single volume Arden Shakespeare *Complete Works* (2001).

> Are both with thee, wherever I abide:
> The first my thought, the other my desire,
> These, present absent, with swift motion slide;
> For when these quicker elements are gone
> In tender embassy of love to thee,
> My life being made of four, with two alone
> Sinks down to death, oppressed with melancholy,
> Until life's composition be recured
> By those swift messengers returned from thee (1-10)

"Life's composition" is re-established, albeit temporarily, only when all four elements are simultaneously present in the same body, and harmoniously balanced among themselves. It may be something of the sort that Mark Antony has in mind as well when, in his eulogy over the dead body of Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, he concludes with the affirmation that "the elements [were] / So mixed in him that Nature might stand up / And say to all the world, 'This was a man'" (5.5.73-5), although, since the word "element" is often used by Shakespeare in the more generic sense of constituent rather than with reference to the four elements as such,[4] this is not necessarily the case.

In the majority of the instances in which it is invoked by Shakespeare, then, the four-elements doctrine is thus recruited more as a metaphor for what is occurring within the self than as a principle of physics as such. It is in this respect closely affined with the theory, originating with Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Galen, and still very much extant in Shakespeare's day, according to which elements absorbed by the body in the form of food are converted into the humours that in their various combinations determine the personal dispositions of individuals and the fluctuations to which their temperaments are subject (Tillyard 1963: 86ff.). Whether he believed that such processes occur in a strictly physiological sense or not, what is often implicit in Shakespeare's allusions to the doctrine of the elements is the idea that the primordial substances of which an entity is composed can be separated from one another at least on the figurative level, segregated into what are hierarchically conceived as being the nobler and the baser categories. The higher two, air and fire, are mobile and even volatile, while the lower two, earth and water, are slow and, in the absence of these others, inclined to sink downwards. Though in the properly constituted organism the elements are in equilibrium with one another, different factors might intervene to precipitate a process of separation. In the case of Cleopatra, as in that of the Dauphin's remarkable horse, this might be the

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[4] For the various meanings that the term can convey, see Crystal and Crystal 2002, s.v. "element".

spurning or repudiation of what are disparaged as the "baser" ingredients
of being in favour of the higher. In Sonnet 45, on the other hand, the cat-
alyst for the separation of the elements is the poet's yearning for a belov-
ed but absent person, towards whom the more mobile elements of air and
fire, associated with thought and desire respectively, are irresistibly drawn,
leaving the poet at the mercy of those residual elements that drag him
downwards into melancholy and figurative death.

In certain respects such imagery is perfectly congruent with the ac-
count of the elements elaborated by Aristotle, who maintained that each el-
ement tends to migrate towards its natural position with respect to the oth-
ers, that – as they align themselves according to the geocentric scheme of
things – "Fire and Air form the body which is carried along towards the
'limit', while Earth and Water form the body which is carried along to-
wards the centre" (1955: 277). The stratification of the elements is deter-
mined by the inherent properties of the elements themselves rather than by
any active principle of division operating either among them or from with-
out. Not infrequently in Elizabethan literature, however, the elements are
conceived as being more violently in tension with one another, so that the
impetus towards division and separation assumes a more drastic character.
When Marlowe's Tamburlaine asserts that "Nature, that framed us of four
elements / Warring within our breasts for regiment, / Doth teach us all to
have aspiring minds" (1963: 1.2.7.18-20), for instance, he is invoking elemen-
tal conflict as a principle endemic to the universe at large, one that consti-
tutes a kind of cosmological precedent for conflict in the human world as
well. But it is not the only such principle. Just short of a decade after Mar-
lowe composed the first part of *Tamburlaine* in 1587 or 1588, Sir John Davies
issued his *Orchestra* (1596), a long poem celebrating the dance as the re-
flection in the human domain of the harmony of the spheres. Here Davies,
once again alluding explicitly to the four elements,[5] introduces the alle-
gorical figure of Love as the principle that imparts order where previously
there was only confusion and enmity:

> *Dauncing* (bright Lady) then began to be,
> When the first seedes whereof the world did spring
> The Fire, Ayre, Earth, and Water did agree,
> By Loves perswasion, Natures mighty King,
> To leave their first disordred combating;
> And in a daunce such measure to observe,

[5] For an analysis of the cosmological scheme involving the four elements in this po-
em see Manning 1985, esp. 177-83. It is perhaps worth observing that in the course of
his discussion Manning draws attention to what would seem to be echoes in Davies's
poem of the passage in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* cited above (181-2).

As all the world their motion should preserve. (1975: 17.1-7)

In the same year, Edmund Spenser published a revised version of his poem "An Hymne in Honour of Love", which contains the following:

> The earth, the ayre, the water, and the fyre,
> Then gan to raunge them selues in huge array,
> And with contrary forces to conspyre
> Each against other, by all meanes they may,
> Threatning their owne confusion and decay:
> Ayre hated earth, and water hated fyre,
> Till Loue relented their rebellious yre.
>
> He then them tooke, and tempering goodly well
> Their contrary dislikes with loued meanes,
> Did place them all in order, and compell
> To keepe them selues within their sundrie raines. (1970: 78-88)

This is no longer Aristotelian. As Evelyn May Albright pointed out nearly a century ago in connection with Spenser's poem, what we would seem to have here is, in effect, a partial adumbration of the cosmogony envisaged by Empedocles, who in addition to distinguishing between the four elements also posited the opposed cosmic principles by which these combine to form all the entities existing in the universe (1929: 737, 739).[6] These are the forces of Love and Strife. The most complete enunciation of Empedocles's cosmology in his own words is that found in fr. 17:

> I shall tell a double tale. For at one time [they] grew to be one alone

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[6] Spenser's indebtedness to Empedoclean cosmology is also discussed in Wolfe 2005. This is not the place to investigate in depth the extent to which Empedocles's philosophy was known in Elizabethan England, nor the avenues through which such knowledge was disseminated. For a detailed discussion of these issues, see Sacvan Bercovitch's excellent account (1968), which maintains that "the Empedoclean cosmology was readily accessible to English poets from Spenser to Milton" (77), and which cites numerous instances of writers of the period who not only evinced considerable familiarity with Empedoclean ideas, but also appropriated them for their own purposes. In a later article Bercovitch (1969) illustrates this by examining the Love/Strife opposition as it informs Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*. For more recent discussions of the influence of Empedocles on Spenser and Kyd on the one hand, and on Christopher Marlowe on the other, see Ardolino 2002 and Steggle 2009. Also relevant in this connection is Drew Daniel's discussion of what he calls the "Empedoclean Renaissance" (2014), which includes Nicholas Breton and John Milton in its purview. It might be mentioned that one important route through which Empedoclean ideas entered general circulation in early modern England was Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which as Jean E. Feerick points out "enacts and embodies this elemental philosophy both explicitly and implicitly" (2017: 177), and which opens with a cosmogony similar in many respects to Empedocles's.

from many, and at another, again, [they] grew apart to be many from one —
fire and water and earth and the boundless height of air;
and destructive strife apart from these, like in every respect,
and love among them, equal in length and breadth.
And you, gaze on her with your understanding and do not sit with stunned
eyes

For she is deemed even by mortals to be inborn in [their] bodies
and by her they think loving thoughts and accomplish works of unity
calling her by the names Joy and Aphrodite. (2001: 16-24)

From such surviving fragments of his work as this, as well as from the summaries and critiques of his thought supplied by later commentators, it is possible to reconstruct with reasonable confidence the salient features of Empedocles's philosophy, although there is no perfect consensus as to some of the details. Empedocles held that the four elements, which he called the "roots of things", were themselves eternal and imperishable, but that the universe as a whole oscillates endlessly between two extreme states. The physical cosmos, and everything in it, are created and destroyed by the influence exerted upon the elements by those forces of attraction and repulsion which Empedocles called Love and Strife. At certain points in the history of the universe all four elements are mingled together in the form of a perfect sphere in which Love reigns supreme, but then Strife enters and initiates a process of differentiation. The elements are separated into the four components of the cosmos within which each predominates, with earth settling at the centre, water and air forming successive layers, and fire shifting towards the periphery. In the course of this progressive process of segregation, things, plants and animals come into being which are composed of compounds of these elements mingled in varying proportions. But as time goes on the elements become increasingly dispersed, until eventually a terminal point is arrived at in which individual bodies no longer exist, but only the ultimate constituents of being. At this stage the process reverses itself: Love begins once again to assert its sway, and material entities come again into existence as the elements are drawn together into different combinations. Finally the original homogeneous mixture is restored with Love again in the ascendant, before the cycle begins anew with the fresh irruption of Strife.

The opposition of Love and Strife is a familiar topos in Renaissance art and literature, and is one which, in various forms, is recurrent in Shakespeare from the beginning of his career to the end. "Here's much to do with hate, but more with love" (1.1.175), remarks Romeo at the beginning of *Romeo and Juliet*, establishing what amount to being the thematic coordinates not only of this work but of others as well. In *Macbeth* very much the same opposition appears in different form when Nature is viewed under its

contrary aspects of kindness and nurturing, on the one hand, and of pred-
atory violence on the other, represented symbolically as the "sweet milk
of concord" (4.3.98) and blood respectively. But there are numerous other
instances to be found in Shakespeare's works. In describing how such a
contraposition operates in *King Lear*, A.C. Bradley interestingly invokes
Empedocles himself:

> If Lear, Gloster and Albany are set apart; the rest fall into two distinct
> groups, which are strongly, even violently, contrasted: Cordelia, Kent, Ed-
> gar, the Fool on one side, Goneril, Regan, Edmund, Cornwall, Oswald on the
> other. . . . Here we have unselfish and devoted love, there hard self-seeking.
> . . . The members of each group tend to appear, at least in part, as varieties
> of one species . . . and the two are set in conflict, almost as if Shakespeare,
> like Empedocles, were regarding Love and Hate as the two ultimate forces
> of the universe. (1971: 215)

The words Love and Hate are of course approximations. Empedocles him-
self uses the terms *philia* and *neikos* to designate the two forces he sees as
operating in the universe. Though the word *philia* does not itself bear erot-
ic connotations – it is most often translated into English by phrases such
as "brotherly love" – it is significant that in fr. 17 Empedocles should invest
the former with a divine character by associating it with Aphrodite, as Lu-
cretius (who may well be emulating him) would later, notwithstanding his
disbelief in the active presence of the gods in the world, make Venus an al-
legorical representation of the creative forces in nature in *De Rerum Natu-
ra* (2006: 3-7). Love is associated with order as opposed to chaos, with what
draws things together rather than drives them apart, with what Empe-
docles calls the "works of unity" in fr. 17. It is Love understood in such
terms as these that Davies would seem to have in mind when he describes
"Dauncing the child of Musick and of Love, / Dauncing it selfe both love
and harmony, / Where all agree, and all in order move" (1975: 97.2-4). Of the
role played by music in this process more will be said in due course.

   A number of Shakespeare's explicit references to the four-element doc-
trine have already been mentioned, and there are so few others in the can-
on that they can be canvassed in a few words.[7] In *Twelfth Night*, which as
I have mentioned is a play in which the doctrine of the four elements is
overtly, if somewhat derisively, alluded to, the clown remarks that he is re-
fraining from using the word "element" at a certain juncture because "the

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[7] There are also of course numerous other instances in which the doctrine is tacit-
ly invoked as a poetic commonplace without mentioning the word "element" itself, as
when Horatio in *Hamlet* says that "Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air, / Th'extrava-
gant and erring spirit hies / to his confine" (1.1.58-160) at the crowing of the cock.

word is overworn" (3.1.59), and this might almost be construed as a cunning hint deftly insinuated into his text by the playwright himself. As it happens, there is an earlier reference in *Twelfth Night* to "the elements of air and earth" (1.5.268), which is also a clear allusion to the traditional theory of the elements, but on the other occasions in the same play in which the word is used it is in a more general sense. Indeed, of the thirty-eight occurrences of the words "element" and "elements" in Shakespeare's plays and poetry, the majority refer not so much to the primordial substances of the philosophers as to the constituents of the world in general. There are however notable exceptions, as when Nestor describes a ship "Bounding between the two moist elements" in *Troilus and Cressida* (1.3.41), the description of both water and air as being moist clearly recalling the Aristotelian classification of the elements according to their qualities (Aristotle 1955: 275). In *King Lear* the protagonist is described at one point as "Contending with the fretful elements; / Bid[ding] the wind blow the earth into the sea / Or swell the curled waters 'bove the main" (3.1.4-6), while later, having acknowledged that "Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters", he says that "I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness" (3.2.15-16). A somewhat more studied invocation of the theory of the elements is to be found in *Richard II*, when Bolingbroke, besieging Flint Castle in which the king has barricaded himself, says:

> Methinks King Richard and myself should meet
> With no less terror than the elements
> Of fire and water, when their thund'ring shock
> At meeting tears the cloudy cheeks of heaven.
> Be he the fire, I'll be the yielding water;
> The rage be his, whilst on the earth I rain
> My waters – on the earth, and not on him. (3.3.54-60)

Here the elements are described once again as being in a state of radical conflict, and as thereby – like the ceaselessly competing elements in which Tamburlaine finds a natural sanction for his own relentless ambition – constituting a kind of pattern for conflict in the human world as well. This anticipates some of the imagery of *The Tempest*, in which the symbolic resonances of the four-elements doctrine are orchestrated to maximum effect.

Although there are only three occurrences of the word "elements" in *The Tempest*, none of them making direct reference to the four-elements doctrine as such, it has frequently been observed that implicit allusions to this doctrine constitute one of the most pervasive strands of imagery in the play, although it is seldom the case that Empedocles is mentioned in this

connection.[8] Up to a point, the use of elemental imagery in the drama lends itself to interpretation in terms of Aristotelean physics. As has long been recognized, the character of Ariel is associated with air and fire, and Caliban with earth and water.[9] Caliban, addressed at one point by the unflattering epithet of "Thou earth" by Prospero (1.2.316), is quite obviously "terrestrial" in character – Trinculo first encounters him while he is lying prone upon the ground (2.2.16ff.) – although the subsequent reference to "thou tortoise" (1.2.318), the fish-like aspect that both Trinculo and Antonio make such sport of (2.2.25-8; 5.1.265-6), and his intimate knowledge of "Where the quick freshes are" (3.2.69) link him also with water. The habitually airborne Ariel, on the other hand, is according to the dramatis personae "an airy spirit", and referred to by Prospero as "which art but air" (5.1.21), while he repeatedly describes himself and his activities in an imagery of fire. But there is more in this than a mere delineation of the properties of the elements as they are embodied in the two characters. In Ariel's own description of the role he has played in the storm with which *The Tempest* opens, the elements are represented not only as being qualitatively different from one another, but as being embroiled in a state of violent contention among themselves:

> I boarded the king's ship; now on the beak,
> Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,
> I flam'd amazement: sometime I'd divide,
> And burn in many places; on the topmast,
> The yards and boresprit, would I flame distinctly,
> Then meet and join. Jove's lightnings, the precursors
> O'th'dreadful thunder-claps, more momentary
> And sight-outrunning were not: the fire and cracks
> Of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune
> Seem to besiege, and make his bold waves tremble,
> Yea, his dread trident shake. (1.2.196-206)

The words "flam'd", "burn", "flame", and "fire" make their own point. Though inverting those Ariel employs in describing himself as a spirit of fire assailing the realm of Neptune, Miranda similarly describes the storm she has witnessed in terms that convey a sense of elemental strife:

[8] An exception is Grace Tiffany's introduction to the Evans edition of *The Tempest* (2012: 29).

[9] One of the first to introduce the idea into English criticism was Coleridge, who remarked that Caliban "is a sort of creature of the earth", and that "Caliban gives you images from the Earth – Ariel images from the air" (1971: 112-13). Coleridge's editor R.A. Foakes points out that Schlegel makes a similar observation (113n). For more recent treatments of the elemental imagery of *The Tempest*, see Marnieri 2013, and Feerick 2017: 179-84.

> The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch,
> But that the sea, mounting to th' welkin's cheek,
> Dashes the fire out. (1.2.3-5)

The question of why the imagery of the play should from the very beginning insist so strongly on this dissension among the elements is best addressed by referring once again to what was said earlier about the use of the theory of the elements as a psychological metaphor. In the works that were previously cited, the separation of the elements serves as a figure for a process occurring within individual subjects themselves, whose exclusive identification with what they consider to be the higher elements entails the implicit rejection of the lower. Cleopatra thinks of herself as having been sublimated into air and fire, relegating her other elements to the "baser" life she now scorns, and the Dauphin's horse evidently does very much the same. Latent in this disavowal of the lower elements is the possibility of a more violent antagonism. It is this we see in *The Tempest*, which opens with the most dramatic possible depiction of elemental conflict, in which a spirit of air and fire besieges the god of the sea in his very citadel. We quickly learn, however, through an extended exposition of past events which Prospero delivers for the benefit of Miranda, that the condition of strife long predates the opening of the play, that the real drama of *The Tempest* begins many years before, with the expulsion of Prospero and his daughter from Milan after a rebellion on the part of Prospero's brother Antonio. Indeed, it begins even earlier than that, because what has occasioned this act of usurpation is the ambition kindled in his brother by Prospero himself, who as Duke of Milan was invested with a public function that he failed adequately to perform. The nature of Prospero's responsibility for what occurred many years before in Milan is something that the audience must infer *inter alia*, because Prospero's own version of events is glaringly one-sided. Nonetheless Prospero does, almost despite himself, disclose information that makes it possible to see events in a perspective considerably at variance with his own, and to understand in fact that the magician's persisting failure to recognize his own guilt is yet another symptom of the problem that has led to his exile from Milan in the first place.

Prospero's share in the responsibility for his overthrow in Milan is revealed in the second scene of the play. What we learn in the course of his long retrospective account of events is that he has delegated all executive authority to his brother Antonio in order to devote himself without distraction to what he describes as his "secret studies" (1.2.77). The symptoms of Prospero's estrangement from his political function in Milan are evident enough notwithstanding his attempts to attenuate his own faults. "The government I cast upon my brother / And to my state grew stranger" (1.2.75-

6), he relates, admitting that he looked upon his library as "dukedom large enough" (1.2.110), and that there were books "I prize above my dukedom" (1.2.168). Not only has he been deficient in his role as a prince, fastidiously "neglecting worldly ends" (1.2.89) in order to dedicate himself single-mindedly to his studies, but in psychological terms he has through this same withdrawal been denying an aspect of himself, distancing himself from those aspects of his own humanity which cannot be accommodated within his exalted world of pure intellect. Both as a governor and as a human being he has proven himself inadequate, and is consequently ejected not only from his position of responsibility but also from his place in the human community. The island on which he is now marooned with his daughter is the emblem of the spiritual isolation to which he has condemned himself, and the characters of Ariel and Caliban the projections of the scattered segments of his own riven personality.

Without wishing to imply that Shakespeare is seeking to dramatize philosophical ideas in any overt manner, I would suggest that it is Empedocles's cosmology which lies in the background of the play as a kind of symbolic correlative to the process taking place in Prospero's mind, which has been fragmented by his factitious division of what he calls the "liberal Arts" (1.2.73) from the real world. The four elements which, according to the Empedoclean scheme, make up in their various combinations the composition of all things, are symbolically separated within himself as well, and there is perpetual strife between what he conceives to be the "higher" and the "lower" of them. In his library in Milan Prospero has withdrawn into his studies, into an abstract realm of pure thought, with the consequence that what he repeatedly refers to as his Art, uprooted from its basis in the world, has assumed the ideal form of magic. Ariel, the disembodied spirit of air and fire, is the agent of that magic, which does not seek to negotiate with the world on its own terms but only to dominate it through sheer application of will. The negative facet of this renunciation of the material domain is figured in the subjugation of Caliban, the creature of earth and water, who embodies the anarchic imperatives of the flesh. Though acknowledging perfunctorily that he cannot entirely be dispensed with – "We cannot miss him: he does make our fire" (1.2.313) – Prospero degrades the relation into one of mere servitude, keeping his despised slave "confin'd into this rock" (1.2.363) and subjecting him to regular castigation. Permitting his intellectual faculties to hypertrophy into remote magical virtuosity on the one hand, and his disowned natural aspect to degenerate into a deformed and frustrated monster on the other, Prospero has himself created the schism which is reflected in the various divisions in the world that surrounds him. Prospero may well be Aristotelean in his view of the elements, believing the separation between the higher and lower of them to be the

inevitable consequence of their intrinsic properties, but in a larger perspective it is the Empedoclean principle of Strife that is responsible for such segregation, and he himself who is responsible for its advent. The tempest with which the play opens, in which the elements are depicted as being violently at war with one another, is the tangible emblem of that Strife.

This is the situation at the outset of *The Tempest*. The second phase in the cosmic cycle described by Empedocles commences when the force of Love begins to assert its sway, "love" once again being understood to be that attractive force which draws things together, creating order and harmony where previously there was anarchy. It is just such a process that we see occurring in *The Tempest* as well. If the storm-imagery pervading the play is suggestive of the tendency towards dissolution and chaos, it is music, associated in particular with Ariel, that symbolizes this countervailing movement towards convergence and unification.[10] Music opposes itself to storms within the self no less than in the physical world, and it is to be noted that while it operates throughout the play to reconcile all the elements it is itself associated with the higher of these. Ferdinand remarks of Ariel's songs that "This music crept by me upon the waters, / Allaying both their fury and my passion / With its sweet air" (1.2.394-6), and that "This is . . . no sound / That the earth owes" (1.2.409-10). And as if to leave us in no doubt as to the exact position occupied by music with respect to the elements, the play contains a number of other subdued puns on the word "air" – "Most sure the goddess / On whom these airs attend!" (1.2.424-5) – which associate the musical airs which Ariel ("which art but air") sings with the element of air itself. Later Prospero refers to the "heavenly music" he has conjured up as an "airy charm" (5.1.54), thus fusing once again the two meanings of the word "air". It is this music, operating through the agency of Ariel, that is the force drawing the various characters scattered in groups about the island together.

The musical imagery of *The Tempest* rises to one of its moments of greatest intensity in the third Act of the play. In a scene marked by elaborately choreographed allusions to storm and music, Ariel appears before Alonso and his entourage in the guise of a harpy, and announces to the king that his sufferings are just retribution for the crime he has committed in abetting Antonio in his rebellion against Prospero. Alonso's response to this discovery is notably different from that evinced by Sebastian and Antonio, and suggests that he is genuinely susceptible to the redemptive influ-

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[10] For a classic account of the "tempest-music opposition" in *The Tempest* see Knight 2012: 247-66 (this quotation 247). Northrop Frye similarly points out that in Shakespeare "the tempest symbolizes the destructive elements in the order of nature, and music the permanently constructive elements in it" (2010: 116).

ences operating on the island. It is the language in which Alonso express-
es the distress provoked in him by Ariel's words which indicates the sea-
change that is being wrought in him:

> O, it is monstrous, monstrous!
> Methought the billows spoke, and told me of it;
> The winds did sing it to me; and the thunder,
> That deep and dreadful organ-pipe, pronounc'd
> The name of Prosper: it did bass my trespass. (3.3.95-9)

This is the moment, then, in which the remorse is kindled in Alonso that
will eventually make possible his reconciliation with Prospero, and it is
therefore significant that a kind of harmony should at this point assert it-
self even in the apparent dissonance of a storm. The winds now sing, the
thunder becomes an organ pipe, and in Alonso's tormented words, as G.
Wilson Knight observes, "the tempests of guilt themselves become music"
(2012: 257). It is the workings of this impulse towards concord which pre-
dominate in the remainder of the play.

The impetus towards unification, like the tendency towards dissolution
imaged in the tempest, realizes itself in all domains at once. Physically the
separate groups of men are drawn together, impelled by Ariel's music until
they stand at last in a charmed circle of Prospero's devising. Points of view
also converge to some extent, as characters as diverse as Alonso and Cali-
ban recognize the error of their ways and repent. Since the symbolic func-
tions discharged by some of the characters are, as I have argued, reflective
in their ensemble of a divided condition, it is only to be expected that these
personages will to some degree compromise their own symbolic identities
as the impulse towards unity begins to prevail: thus in the fifth Act the in-
corporeal Ariel evinces something suspiciously resembling empathy for
the plight of Prospero's enemies, while on the other hand Caliban, hith-
erto the personification of unregenerate nature, suddenly decides to turn
over a new leaf and seek for grace. The climax of this process of encounter
and reconciliation occurs only at the conclusion of the play, but it is vividly
presaged in the imagery of the fourth-Act masque, in the course of which
the "queen o'th'sky" (4.1.70) descends to consort with an earth-goddess, a
meeting which, as Stephen Orgel points out, implicates the overcoming of
one of the chief oppositions delineated in the drama:

> Goddess of earth and goddess of air, patronesses of agriculture and of mar-
> riage, opposites and complements, together they resolve the dramatic ten-
> sion implicit in Caliban and Ariel. When earth is seen as Ceres, it is no
> longer intractable, but productive and nurturing; when air is seen as Juno, it
> is no longer volatile, but universal and majestic. (1998: 48)

There are various other intimations in this scene that the elements are mingling together, and thus that the Empedoclean cycle is entering the phase in which the principle of Love begins once again to assert its sway. The goddess Iris, who presides over the masque, is of course the rainbow, compacted of water and air, and the bridge between heaven and earth.[11] Nymphs are summoned from their watery habitats in order to dance with "sunburn'd sicklemen" emerging from their labours in the earthly "furrow" (4.1.134-8), this once again recalling the image of the elements dancing together under the auspices of Love in Davies's *Orchestra*. Even the cycle of the seasons seems to be subordinate to the general process whereby opposites merge into one another, and spring and autumn to be mysteriously conjoined in Ceres's prayer that "Spring come to you at the farthest / In the very end of harvest!" (4.1.114-15).

The negative aspect of this process of convergence manifests itself however when Caliban, advancing menacingly towards Prospero's cell together with Stephano and Trinculo, obtrudes himself as a challenge that must be confronted once and for all. Prospero abruptly breaks off the masque with the comment that "I had forgot that foul conspiracy / Of the beast Caliban and his confederates" (4.1.139-40), and it is clear from the angry agitation he displays at this point that the beast with which he must contend is surging up from within him and not only approaching from without. Ferdinand observes that he is "in some passion / That works him strongly", and Miranda corroborates this with the remark that "Never till this day / Saw I him touch'd with anger, so distemper'd" (4.1.143-5). Prospero's summons to Ariel – "We must prepare to meet with Caliban" (4.1.166) – has a portentous ring about it which seems out of all proportion to any tangible danger that the monster presents, and in view of the ease with which the rebellion is suppressed it is not easy to understand why the magician should be so perturbed unless the threat he is dealing with is of a more profound character than the merely material. The abrupt disintegration of the masque that Prospero has aptly described as "Some vanity of mine Art" (4.1.41), and the imminent arrival of "the beast Caliban", would thus appear to be correlated. The Prospero in the grip of this ungovernable fury has in a sense fallen prey to the "beast" he has hitherto kept rigidly confined within himself but which now, during this moment of convergence and unification, can no longer be kept at bay. And it would appear to be for this reason that the palace of Art that Prospero has tried to erect in the disembodied world of pure imagination tumbles to ruins, the masque vanishing "to a strange

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[11] Interestingly, though presumably only coincidentally, Iris is mentioned in connection with both elements by Empedocles himself in fr. 50: "And Iris brings wind or great rain from the sea" (2001: 1).

hollow and confused noise" (4.1.138 SD) that reminds us once again of the tempest.

The three conspirators are routed with effortless dispatch, and the threat they represent apparently dispelled definitively. Although the interior aspect of the process is not revealed to us in any depth, but only as it were sketched out in brief outline in the unfolding sequence of external events, it would seem that Prospero himself achieves some sort of inner resolution in consequence of his summary handling of Caliban. The clearest token of such an adjustment appears in the shift in Prospero's professed intentions from revenge to mercy. I am not here concerned to debate the thorny question of whether Prospero has seriously been meditating revenge at any point in the course of the play, though there are moments in which the audience is given every reason to suspect that he has. What is important is that his comments at this juncture of the drama recapitulate, even if they do not actually represent, a process of decision in which revenge does figure as a genuine possibility, and that Prospero is fully conscious of the nature of the alternatives available to him even if his choice has perhaps already been made:

> Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th'quick,
> Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
> Do I take part: the rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,
> The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
> Not a frown further. (5.1.25-30)

This contraposition of "reason" and "fury" might seem to betray a reversion to the old dualistic conception of things that has prompted Prospero to distance himself from those aspects of his own nature which are embodied in Caliban. In fact however an important development is to be discerned in the circumstance that Prospero now recognizes his fury to be no less intrinsically a part of himself than his reason is, and that he possesses at the same time a faculty of conscious volition which enables him deliberately to choose the facet of his own being he will "take part" with against the other. By confronting Caliban directly he has transcended the division within himself that is the consequence of rejection and denial, and achieved the self-knowledge and effective autonomy that makes it possible for him to forgive his enemies.

The overcoming of this inner schism is reflected in the dialogue itself, for when Caliban and his Neapolitan confederates appear to join the group of men gathered before his cell, Prospero makes a remark to the assembled company that has been seized on gratefully by more than one critic anxious to read the play in psychoanalytic terms:

> Two of these fellows you
> Must know and own; this thing of darkness I
> Acknowledge mine. (5.1.274-6)

In this acknowledgement of a component of the self which has hither-to been denied, what the play would seem to be enacting at this point is that phase in the process of individuation described by C.G. Jung as the as-similation of the shadow, "that hidden, repressed, for the most part inferi-or and guilt-laden personality whose ultimate ramifications reach back in-to the realm of our animal ancestors" (1979: 266). The recognition is in fact a reciprocal one, and Caliban himself, suddenly marvelling at "how fine my master is!" (5.1.262), resolves to "be wise hereafter, / And seek for grace" (5.1.295-6). At the same time Ariel, who except for a momentary lapse has throughout the play been faultlessly "correspondent to command" (1.2.297), is finally granted the liberty he yearns for, and allowed to be free "to the el-ements" (5.1.320). In their different ways, both Caliban and Ariel cease to function as the symbolic projections of Prospero's divided self.

This release of his ethereal servant marks the final stage in Prospero's abandonment of what he himself admits to be his "rough magic" (5.1.50). In announcing this momentous decision, Prospero recalls the prodigies he has accomplished by means of his "so potent Art" (5.1.50) in terms that are evocative, once again, of a fierce contest between the elements:

> I have bedimm'd
> The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
> And 'twixt the green sea and the azur'd vault
> Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
> Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
> With his own bolt; the strong-bas'd promontory
> Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluck'd up
> The pine and cedar (5.1.41-8)

It is magic thus conceived as an exercise of brute power that Prospero promises at this point to surrender, and if the language in which he does so continues to allude to the elements it is now in tones suggestive of a reso-lution of the tension between them:

> But this rough magic
> I here abjure; and, when I have requir'd
> Some heavenly music, – which even now I do, –
> To work mine end upon their senses, that
> This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
> Bury it certain fadoms in the earth,
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound
> I'll drown my book. (5.1.50-7)

The staff and the book, symbols of a magic that throughout the play has been associated with air and fire, are now to be incorporated with the elements of earth and water, while the "roaring war" which Prospero boasts he has instigated among the elements is to give way to celestial music of a kind that even the ostensibly obdurate Caliban is fully sensitive to (3.2.137-45).

An important point to be noted about the words with which Prospero renounces his magic is that they not only convey a sense of music emerging out of storm very similar to that discernible in Alonso's anguished response to Ariel's "three men of sin" speech in Act III, but actually echo those pronounced by the king on that occasion:

> Therefor my son i'th'ooze is bedded; and
> I'll seek him deeper than e'er plummet sounded,
> And with him there lie mudded. (3.3.100-2)

What Prospero's reiteration of Alonso's words would seem to do is establish an imaginative link between his own experience and that of the king, and suggest that he too must somehow expiate the error in the past that precipitated the crime for which the others are now being punished. We have already seen in what that error consists. Prospero's immoderate addiction to esoteric learning has induced him to seclude himself from the world and his responsibilities, and thus divorce the higher from the lower components of his being, a division he has re-enacted on the island by disowning Caliban and working his will exclusively through the disembodied agency of Ariel. Like Cleopatra, in his own way, he has aspired to sublimate himself into air and fire, consigning at the same time his other elements to baser life. The only way that this schism can be healed, and Prospero's psychic equilibrium re-established, is for him to recognize the natural part of himself as an essential ingredient of being and at the same time relinquish his magic, which is precisely what he does when he acknowledges Caliban and releases Ariel. Through his repudiation of those powers that merely separate him from reality, and divide him from his own self as well, Prospero achieves personal integrity and wholeness, and is prepared to resume his place in the world even if this necessarily entails accepting his own mortality (5.1.314). At the same time, and as part and parcel of the same process, it is through his decision to "drown" his book that an enemy's son supposed to be drowned can be symbolically restored to life, and that Prospero, revealing Miranda and Ferdinand intent upon their game of chess, can "bring forth a wonder" (5.1.170) by exhibiting the children of strife united at last by love.

Such a conclusion would appear to be profoundly affirmative, but this is perhaps not all that there is to the matter. In fr. 27 Empedocles asserts

that at that point in the cosmic cycle in which Love has attained complete ascendency, and in which the elements are perfectly blended together "in the dense cover of harmony", the whole of creation exhibits the form of a "rounded sphere, rejoicing in its joyous solitude" (2001: 3-4). In view of this, it is interesting to observe that an image accorded some prominence towards the conclusion of *The Tempest* is that of the circle, one indeed that at moments takes on the properties of a sphere. At a certain point in the final act of the play – though it is not specified in the Folio text exactly where – Prospero traces a circle upon the ground. It is into this circle that, to the accompaniment of "solemn music" (5.1.57 SD), all of Prospero's enemies are drawn, and in which, with greater or lesser degrees of conviction, the magician bestows upon them his forgiveness. On a certain level the circle might be regarded in positive terms as symbolic of a regenerated human community in which the rifts between human beings have been healed, but there are perhaps more ominous overtones to the image as well. On the stage of the Globe theatre the circle would have appeared as a kind of *mise en abyme* in what is described in the Prologue of *Henry V* as the "wooden O" (13) of the theatre itself. Structurally equivalent to a play within a play, the image of one circle enclosed within another recalls the terms of the earlier speech in which Prospero draws an analogy between the melting of his masque into thin air and the dissolution of what he calls "the great globe itself" (4.1.153), a phrase which assimilates the world in its entirety to the circular theatre in which he is standing. The cumulative imaginative effect of such images might seem to be that of a series of spheres radiating outward from Prospero's charmed circle to include what is described in *Antony and Cleopatra* as "the little O, the earth" (5.2.80), and ultimately the whole of Creation itself. But as Prospero himself implies in a speech that concludes with the resonant description of "our little life / . . . rounded with a sleep" (4.1.157-8), the circle he has been at such pains to construct is neither perfect nor destined to endure. Though they too have been admitted into that circle, Antonio and Sebastian show little sign of repentance for their crimes, and Prospero must resort to coercion in order to ensure their good behaviour in the future (5.1.126-9). Caliban will seek for grace, but there is no indication that Stephano and Trinculo will follow his example. The union of Miranda and Ferdinand might seem to constitute the perfect image of concord, but Miranda is already finding occasion to accuse, though very mildly, her future husband of deception (5.1.172). The ascendancy of Love in the Empedoclean cosmology is only one phase in a recurring cycle which must inevitably be succeeded by another, and the suspicion might be that the prospect of Strife irrupting again to destroy the fragile equilibrium that Prospero has established is not in the least a remote one.

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Lucia Nigri*

"I have translated from the English".
Shakespeare in Eighteenth-Century Italy

Abstract

In eighteenth-century Italy negative responses to Shakespeare's plays are not to be found exclusively in matters of aesthetics, but in the country's political and cultural subordination to France. It is not surprising, then, that a new strand in the reception of Shakespeare in Italy could only really begin when the death of Voltaire (1778) and the geographical redefinition of part of the central Europe encouraged Italian intellectuals to reconsider France's role as a 'necessary' cultural(-historical) mediator. The robust reappraisal of Shakespeare that took place in the last two decades of the century was indeed deeply involved with the different responses that were prompted by the socio-political context and the gradual shattering of libertarian ideals. In this context, the work of an unconventional translator, Giustina Renier Michiel, definitively hustled the gradual reappraisal of Shakespeare's plays in Italy. Her translations of specific Shakespearean plays are the repositories of ideological, political, and social messages sent by a Venetian woman to her fellow-citizens struggling to position themselves in a new geographical and political panorama.

KEYWORDS: Eighteenth-century Italy; France; Shakespeare; translation; Venice; crisis; politics; Giustina Renier Michiel

Eighteenth-century relations between the Italian States and the national French State were complex and changeable. France represented more than a simple aesthetic model: its influence extended to religious, socio-political, and cultural issues. It provided the leading voice in the European Enlightenment and, after 1789, its Revolution inspired and inflamed political hopes abroad. Even though those hopes gave way to disenchantment with the rise of Napoleon, France proved a catalyst and co-protagonist of cultural and ideological dialogues on national identity and nationhood. Arguably, the French ascendancy provoked the construction (and, equally, de-construction) of a politically-oriented 'Shakespearean narrative' in late eighteenth-century Italy. After mixed fortunes, mostly depending on the Italian

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response to Voltaire, Shakespeare established himself as the symbol of a nation that Italy could eventually oppose to France. It is not coincidental that at the turn of the century, in a cultural milieu torn between a wish both to adhere to and to oppose the Napoleonic project, Giustina Renier Michiel produced a peculiar translation of Shakespeare in which its avowed educational value was, in fact, secondary to its political intentions. At that moment in Italian history, an atmosphere of disillusion provoked by the outcomes of the revolutionary aspirations favoured an interest in Shakespeare precisely in terms of a political and intellectual reaction. Renier Michiel's belonging to an aristocratic and intellectual class internally divided between contrary positions, moreover, is emblematic of this crisis and cannot be separated from her choice of carrying out that translation, even aside from the intrinsic value of this work and its contribution to the affirmation of women in the intellectual panorama.

Why her choice was so daring becomes clear when it is set against the eighteenth-century history of Shakespeare's reception in Italy. As we know, his reputation was generally negative, especially in the first half of the century. In Italy, Shakespeare's work registered an almost unanimous adverse reaction, and even when the atmosphere began to change from the 1770s onwards that unenthusiastic view was hardly eradicated. Scattered examples taken at random across the century confirm this widespread resistance: in 1735, for instance, Francesco Algarotti criticized Shakespeare for the "faults innumerable and thoughts inimitable" contained in his plays (qtd in Graf 1911: 316). Only three years later, in *Réflexions historiques et critiques sur les differens théâtres de l'Europe*, Luigi Riccoboni, in what looked like a sociological study of the mental and moral qualities distinctive to the English people, reiterated that

> Les Poëtes Dramatiques Anglois ont ensanglanté la Scène au-delà de l'imagination, j'en donnerai deux seuls exemples. La Tragédie, qui a pour titre *Hamlet*, a cinq Acteurs principaux, qui pendant l'action meurent tous de mort violente. . . . Dans la Tragédie qu'on appelle *Le More de Venise*, entre autre chose le More transporté de jalousie va trouver la femme qui est dans son lit éveillée, il parle avec elle, & après plusieurs combats entre l'amour & la colere, il prend la résolution de se venger, & l'étrangle aux yeux des Spectateurs. (Riccoboni 1738: 164-5)[1]

> [The English dramatic poets have covered the stage in blood beyond belief. I will only give you two examples. The tragedy entitled *Hamlet* has five protagonists who all die a violent death during the action. . . . In the tragedy entitled *The Moor of Venice*, among other things, the Moor, seized by jealousy, goes to his wife, who is awake in bed, speaks to her, and, torn be-

[1] All translations are mine.

tween love and anger, resolves to be revenged, and strangles her before the
spectators.]

In a letter to the same Algarotti dated 30 January 1760 Agostino Paradisi
claimed that in Shakespeare's work "the defects are too great and too nu-
merous" (qtd in Collison-Morley 1916: 24). As late as the 1780s, Shakespeare
was even awarded the epithet of "bestial, though sometimes sublime" in
Saverio Bettinelli's *Dialoghi sopra il Teatro Moderno* ("quel bestiale talor
sublime"; 1788: 8). His inclination for horrors was generally condemned;
equally, his disrespect for the so-called Aristotelian units was clearly at
odds with neoclassical poetics. Similar critiques were voiced persistently
by, among others, Pietro Napoli-Signorelli's *Storia Critica de' Teatri Antichi
e Moderni* (1777) and Giovanni de Gamerra's *Osservazioni sullo Spettacolo in
generale* (1786) (see Collison-Morley 1916: 25, 68).

And yet the reasons for this negative response were not exclusively aes-
thetic, nor were they confined only to the Italian taste. As noted above,
France's cultural prestige in Europe was largely responsible for this reac-
tion. French intellectuals dictated literary tastes, circulated foreign works,
commented upon them, and they included in their transmission a strong
critical narrative. Promoter of the ideals of liberty, equality, and humanitar-
ianism – values which would eventually become key rallying cries of the
Revolution – France also acquired an intellectual leadership which creat-
ed consensus abroad and further reinforced its own image of cultural and
political power. In this context, Voltaire's treatment of Shakespeare quick-
ly became authoritative and set the standard in criticism for decades. It can
even be argued that Shakespeare's reception in Italy was, at least until the
turn of the century, largely dependent on one's attitude towards Voltaire.

Voltaire's vehement devaluation of Shakespeare's work marked his crit-
ical statements (Willems 2010: especially 455-65). The most famous attacks
were contained in the eighteenth of his *Lettres Philosophiques* (1734; *Sur la
tragédie*), a work which was otherwise inclined to cast a positive light on
many aspects of English culture. Voltaire resided in England from 1726 to
1729, and his writings soon met with success on British soil, which he re-
paid with an equal show of appreciation. As Gustave Lanson details in his
commentary on Letter Eighteen, Voltaire's negative judgment on Shake-
speare built on a vocal opinion in England supported by eminent figures
such as Thomas Rymer and John Dryden. Indeed, their negative commen-
taries might have been the direct source for Voltaire's own virulent cri-
tique, including the definition of Shakespeare's tragedies as "monstrous
farces" – a possible borrowing from Rhymer (Voltaire 1917: 79; 91n6; see al-
so Lombardo 1997: 455). Famously in that same letter, Voltaire tolled the bell
for Shakespeare's reputation, contemptuously pegging him as "un génie

plein de force et de fécondité, de naturel et de sublime, sans la moindre étincelle de bon goût, et sans la moindre connaissance des règles" ("a genius full of strength and fertility, of the natural and the sublime, without one slightest inkling of good taste, and without the least knowledge of rules"; Voltaire 1917: 79).

During the September 1726-February 1729 theatre seasons, when Voltaire resided in London, *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar* were staged once and three times, respectively, while Othello was acted five times (Voltaire 1917: 92-5). Socially active, he might have had occasion to see them performed. Certainly, he both commented and worked on them. In his *Letter Eighteen*, he ironically pointed out the unbearable incongruity and unlikelihood of those plays: "dans la Tragédie du More de Venise", which he conceded to be a "pièce très-touchante", he observed that "un mari étangle sa femme sur le théatre, & quand la pauvre femme est étanglée elle s'écries qu'elle meurt très-injustement" ("in the tragedy of the Moor of Venice, a very touching piece, a husband strangles his wife on stage, and when the poor woman has been strangled she cries that she is dying very unjustly"; Voltaire 1917: 80). "[I]n *Hamlet*", instead, "dans *Hamlet*, des Fossoieurs creusent une fosse en bûvant, en chantant des vaudevilles, & en faisant sur les têtes de mort qu'ils rencontrent, des plaisanteries convenables à gens de leur métier" ("some gravediggers dig a pit while drinking and singing vaudevilles, and cracking jokes, appropriate to those doing their job, on the skulls of the dead they come across"; ibid.). Similarly, in *Julius Caesar* he found fault with "les plaisanteries des cordonniers et des savetiers Romains introduits sur la scène avec Brutus & Cassius" ("the Roman cobblers' and showmakers' jokes introduced on stage with Brutus and Cassius"; ibid.: 80-1).

To these critical comments the Italian literati generally responded so deferentially that occasional opposition proved courageous. In the late 1780s, in fact, not only did France continue to exert a leading role (Calvani 2009: 16, and Collison-Morley 1916: 35) as Carlo Goldoni confirmed in his *Mémoires* (1787) – significantly written in French, but in 1786, a Shakespearean enthusiast, Reverend Martin Sherlock, did not fail to point out Voltaire's fundamental role in blotting Shakespeare's reputation over Europe:

> I should not have said so much upon Shakespeare, if from Paris to Berlin, and from Berlin to Naples, I had not heard his name profaned. The words *monstrous farces* and *grave-diggers* have been repeated to me in every town; and for a long time I could not conceive why everyone uttered precisely these two words, and not a third. One day happening to open a volume of Voltaire, the mystery disappeared; the two words in question were found in that volume, and all the critics had learned them by heart. (1786: 33; also discussed in Collison-Morley 1916: 17-18)

What is surprising is that such a comment came at a time when new

pre-Romantic stances were already about to reverse the negative reception of Shakespeare's savage genius into utter praise, thus still witnessing Voltaire's vital influence. It is also noteworthy that Sherlock, while acknowledging it, ironically pretended to have come across his criticism by mere coincidence.

Despite the dominance of the Voltaire critical paradigm, towards the end of the century Italian critical attitudes towards Shakespeare were no longer ruled by Voltaire's judgments. In fact, this reappraisal did not come entirely unprepared. Attempts to defend his work occurred sometime before Voltaire's destructive intervention: Antonio Conti (1726) and Paolo Rolli (1739) – the latter Accademico degli Intronati in Siena and Pastore Arcade in Roma, but also Italian tutor to the Prince of Wales and the Royal Princess – published the first printed comment on Shakespeare as well as the first translation of a Shakespearean piece (Hamlet's "to be or not to be" monologue) (see Collison-Morley 1916: 6-10; Nulli 1918: 10-11; Rebora 1949: 213; Petrone Fresco 1992: 111; Calvani 2012: 123). In 1726, Conti wrote in his *Answer to Mr Jacopo Martelli* (*Risposta al Sig. Jacopo Martelli*) prefixed to his tragedy *Il Cesare* that "Sasper è il Cornelio [Corneille] degli Inglesi ma molto più irregolare del Cornelio, sebbene al pari di lui ripieno di grandi idee e di nobili sentimenti" ("Sasper [*sic*] was the Corneille of the English, but much more irregular than Corneille, albeit like him in being full of great ideas and noble sentiments"; qtd in Crinò 1950: 33). Interestingly, Voltaire also referred to Shakespeare in his *Letter Eighteen* as "le Corneille des Anglais" (1917: 79), though Shakespeare clearly received that nickname earlier. In any case, from then on he came to be addressed as such, as if, till largely unknown in Italy, he needed the French imprimatur.

It has often been contended that Conti's *Giulio Cesare* was fundamentally unconnected with Shakespeare's play; yet, as Sestito points out, when considered in conjunction with his other three Roman plays (*Giunio Bruto*, *Marco Bruto*, *Ottaviano*, 1743-1748), Conti's Giulio Cesare reveals the extent to which the English play affected its design, as well as the extent to which its complexities were emptied out (Sestito 1978: 11-25). In turn, in 1729 Paolo Rolli included an extraordinary eulogy of Shakespeare in his *Life of John Milton* (*Vita di Giovanni Milton*) which he prefaced to his translation of *Paradise Lost*, an edition published in London in 1735 and again in 1736 by the printer Bennet. The praise, albeit proudly tinged with an awareness of the superiority of Dante's language, cast Shakespeare as the English dramatist who "elevò il teatro inglese a insuperabile sublimità" ("raised English theatre at its most sublime and unsurpassable heights"; Rolli 1736: 11-12) and produced the most profitable tragic histories for the education of Princes.

If such testimonies of a positive reception of Shakespeare remained sporadic, another moderate change was registered in 1756 with the first trans-

lation of *Julius Caesar* into the Tuscan tongue by Domenico Valentini. To call it a translation, in fact, does not do justice to what should rather be considered as a rewriting of a 'literal translation' provided by somebody else. By his own avowal in the *Preface*, Valentini was indeed ignorant of the English language and had to rely upon the help of some English gentlemen, who presumably 'explained' the play to him (Valentini 1756: <D4v>). No matter if this procedure belied the author's good intentions to devote the initial pages of his *Preface* to a demonstration of the absolute relevance of linguistic competence; what emerges from that *Preface* is Valentini's defence of Shakespeare's irregularity in the name of his "strong, rapid, and vivacious imagination" ("una Immaginazione così forte, così rapida, così vivace"; ibid.: D2-<2v>), a statement that implicitly set him against Voltaire's verdict of barbarity. Thus, his choice of a play on whose subject Voltaire too had tried his hand may not have been a coincidence. In a relatively short time span, from 1726 to 1756, the story of Julius Caesar had been recast twice in Italian, and in either case it either derived from or bore a closer relationship to Shakespeare's play. True, both versions were connected to Voltaire's own play, which followed by five years Conti's drama (it was composed in 1731 and first staged in 1735) and anticipated Valentini's by two decades. In turn, Voltaire's own position proved in this case ambiguous. In a letter to Abate Franchini, Algarotti commented on Voltaire's adoption of Shakespeare's manner (Voltaire 1773: 410-11), while Voltaire himself, in the preface to his 1736 edition, admitted, under the disguise of anonymity, that the play had been inspired by Shakespeare: "a great genius" who "lived in a crude century". Because of the roughness of Shakespeare's "monstrous work", the author had composed this new play "in the English taste", translating only "Antony's scene" from the original. On the whole, Voltaire claimed to have captured the "dominant love of freedom" of the English people ("un grand génie, mais il vivait dans un siècle grossier . . . au lieu de traduire l'ouvrage monstreux de Shakspeare [*sic!*], [Voltaire] composa, dans le gout anglais, ce *Jules César*. . . . On y voit cet amour dominant de la liberté"; Voltaire 1854: 261-2), thus offering a significant tribute to a country which he would soon attack in the name of Shakespeare. But that is an episode which was to occur a few decades later.

The importance of this triangulation between Italy, France, and England over *Julius Caesar* is testament to a mutability of opinions (see Griffin 2009; Biskup 2009). Conti praised Shakespeare only a few years before Voltaire's criticism appeared in his *Lettres Philosophique*s, where Conti's work had been acknowledged (Voltaire 1854: 262). Conti smoothed his position by both recognizing Shakespeare's greatness despite his shortcomings and praising the English sense of freedom and "taste" (on this see Agarze Medeiros 2013). In turn, twenty years later, deviating from Voltaire, Valentini

justified Shakespeare's violation of rules, yet offered a 'translation' proving in many respects far more classical than his theoretical premises had suggested (see Sestito 1978: 21-8).

This wavering between disdain for and appreciation of a typically English (and peculiarly Shakespearean) untamed energy, unbridled and unbridgeable, was politically perceived as standing on the side of liberty, and it continued to be voiced in those years in ways that resounded with Voltaire's critical jargon. For instance, in his 1739-52 *Della storia e della ragione d'ogni poesia*, Francesco Saverio Quadrio wrote that

> il Cornelio di quella Nazione . . . nonostante che un genio avesse pieno di fecondità, e di forza; e d'uno spirito fosse dotato, che univa alla naturalezza la sublimità; non aveva a ogni modo, come scrive il Signor di Voltaire, veruna cognizione delle buone regole; e niun lume di buon gusto si vedeva nelle sue Poesie apparire . . . sue Farse mostruose, che si chiaman Tragedie. (Quadrio 1743: 149; see also Dionisotti 1998: 30-1)

> [the Corneille of that Nation . . . despite being endowed with a genius full of productiveness and force, and with a spirit that combined naturalness with sublimity, did not have, as Monsieur Voltaire wrote, any knowledge of the good rules, nor any glimmer of good taste could be seen in his Poems". His Tragedies were, again, but monstrous farces.]

Later Italian critics also claimed to prefer Voltaire's and Conti's dramas to Shakespeare's (Sestito 1978: 20), and the same Melchiorre Cesarotti did not expunge from the 1808 edition of his Works a piece he had written in 1762, at the age of thirty-two, in which he had declared preference for Voltaire's own *César* (Cesarotti 1801: 229).

Thus, despite the fact that 1756 cannot be considered as a turning point in the reappraisal of Shakespeare in Italy, it is the year when Domenico Valentini proved to be "one of the very few Italian men of letters totally immune to Voltairean ideas" (Petrone Fresco 1992: 117; see also Rebora 1949: 217). Even so, his preference for the same play on which Voltaire had worked before him and his continuous allusions in his preface to the tragedy to the Voltairean accusations of Shakespeare's unconcern about the Aristotelian units – "difetti provenienti dal vizio del Secolo, in cui viveva" ("imperfections originated from the vice of the century in which he lived"; Valentini 1756: <D2r-v>) – raised doubts about his 'immunity'. Hardly any eighteenth-century thinker was 'totally immune' to the French philosopher's influence, even when, as in Alessandro Verri's case, their intellectual efforts forcefully – and directly – raised objections to Voltaire's judgment.

Verri was the author of the first two Italian close translations of *Hamlet* (1769) and *Othello* (1777), although he never published them (Colognesi 1963; Petrone Fresco 1992). Other translations carried out in France and It-

aly slightly earlier or concomitantly offered very free renderings of Shakespeare's plays, as in the cases of Pierre-Antoine de La Place's 1745-48 *Théâtre Anglais* and Francesco Gritti's 1774 Italian rendition of Ducis' *Hamlet* (1769). Pierre Le Tourneur's translation of Hamlet, instead, was published in 1779, two years later. The reason why Verri never published this translation has been traced to "an almost pathological lack of self-confidence when it came to making his work known to the public, coupled with the radical change in his political and literary opinions away from the revolutionary extremism of his youth" (Petrone Fresco 1992: 114). Yet, regardless of the reason, Verri's three prose versions of *Hamlet* demonstrated unusual textual accuracy, as he himself acknowledged in a letter to his brother, Pietro, dated 9 August 1769: "Io sono stato alla lettera precisa, per dare una giusta idea della lingua e dell'autore" ("I have been translating word by word to give a faithful idea of the language and the author"; Novati and Greppi 1911: 17; see also Rebora 1949: 214, 217; Petrone Fresco 1992: 118 and ff.). Free from any specific political message or social observation on contemporary reality, Verri's translation may well be the result of the author's disillusionment with the current political climate and of an urgency to "seek", as Petrone Fresco points out, "consolation in that world of fantasy and sentiment that was to lead to the romantic era" (1992: 114). In this same letter, though, Verri harshly commented on Voltaire's prejudice against Shakespeare, accusing the French philosopher of misunderstanding the English poet and, indeed, the English language too:

> Quest'autore è tanto difficile, che neppure la metà degl'inglesi lo intendono bene, come pochi italiani intendono Dante . . . Ho veduto che Voltaire o non sa bene questa lingua, o ha voluto, a tutt'i conti, mettere in ridicolo Shakespeare. Ma a torto, perché con tutte le sue stravaganze è un grand'uomo. (Novati and Greppi 1911: 16-17)

> [This writer is so difficult that not even half of the English people understand him properly, as few Italians understand Dante . . . I have realized that either Voltaire doesn't know this language very well or wanted to ridicule Shakespeare at all costs. But he is wrong because, with all his extravagances, he is a great man.]

The same charges against Voltaire's (mis)understandings appeared a few years later in Giuseppe Baretti's *Discours sur Shakespeare et sur Monsieur de Voltaire* (written in French and published in London and Paris in 1777), probably the most important literary dispute between an Italian-born critic and the French colossus of the eighteenth century. The occasion was provided by Voltaire's attack on Le Tourneur's translation of Shakespeare's plays, which Voltaire perceived as the last effect of a crisis in the cultural prestige of France already beginning in 1760 (see Willems 2010: 455-62). Its

account by Neil Rhodes deserves to be cited in full:

> The last scene in Voltaire's struggle against British bardolatry took place in 1776. This was the year that saw the complete translation of Shakespeare into French, by Pierre Le Tourneur. Published in twenty volumes by subscription, Voltaire was appalled to see the king, Louis XVI, at the head of the list of sponsors. . . . In France a notable example of treachery was Diderot, who put himself down for six copies. So now the barbarian was no longer at the gates, but inside the citadel, and Voltaire decided to address the French Academy on the subject of this almost apocalyptic threat. What particularly incensed him was the nagging awareness that he had himself been responsible for letting the genie out of the bottle . . . The letter to the French Academy was read out on 25 August 1776 in the presence of the British ambassador and Elizabeth Montague, who had specifically attacked Voltaire in her *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* (1769). (2004: 217-28)

Infuriated by Voltaire's letter, Baretti responded violently, claiming that Voltaire only knew little or no English ("ne sait que peu ou point d'Anglois"; 1777: 9) and that Shakespeare could not be translated in any of the Romance languages, even less into French, because it was "trop châtiée, trop scrupuleuse, trop dédaigneuse, pour rendre Shakespeare" ("too refined, too scrupulous, too snobbish [a language] to translate Shakespeare in" (23). He also criticized his ridiculous translations of Shakespeare's individual piece which "sinon qu'en les retraduisant de son François en Anglois, ou ne le reconnaitoit pas plus pour des morceaux des Shakespeare, que s'ils etoient tirés des livres de Zoroastre" ("if translated back into English . . . would resemble Shakespeare no more than Zoroaster" (110). This included Hamlet's famous monologue, which, after a prose translation, Voltaire "le retraduit en vers avec un tapage d'éloquence e de sentiments à la Scuderi, qui s'éloigne beaucoup trop de l'original" ("recast it in verses with an excess of eloquence and sentiments in the manner of la Scudéri, by a long shot far from the original" (12). Finally, he noted ironically Voltaire's daring falsehood in saying "à ses Confrères Académiciens, qu'il a traduit une pièce toute entière de Shakespeare d'une manière à leur donner une idée veritable de l'Original" ("to his Fellows Academicians that he had translated an entire play by Shakespeare so as to give them a true idea of the Original"). "En verité", he continued,

> cet homme se moque de nous, et s'imagine pouvoir nous conduire par le nés comme des buffles! Il n'a point traduit le *Jules César* de Shakespeare: il l'a assassiné. Le *Jules César* de Shakespeare plait à tous ceus qui entendent l'Anglois. La Traduction de Monsieur De Voltaire fait render les boyaux à quiconque entend le François. (89)

> [Truly, this man laughs at us, and thinks that he can lead us by the nose as

buffalos! He did not translate Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* at all: he mur-
dered it. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* is liked by all those who understand
English. Mr Voltaire's translation makes anyone who understands French
puke.]

Although isolated, Baretti's critique of "Monsieur de Voltaire" (as he ad-
dressed him throughout his essay) made the year 1777 into a sort of *an-
nus mirabilis* for the Italian emancipation from French classicism. Only two
years later, in 1779, the name of Shakespeare was being hailed triumphant-
ly in Lorenzo Pignotti's *Tomba di Shakespear*e (*Shakespeare's Tomb*), which
he dedicated to Mrs Elizabeth Montagu "in occasione della di lei applau-
ditissima opera in difesa di quel poeta" ("on the occasion of her much ac-
claimed work in defense of that poet"; Pignotti 1823: 45). Pignotti described
him as a "Sofocle britannico" ("British Sophocles"; 51) whose works will on-
ly be misunderstood by the many "miseri umani ingegni" ("wretched hu-
man minds") who are driven by "l'error de' ciechi che si fanno duci!" ("the
mistake of the blind who make themselves into leaders"; 70). The allusion
to Voltaire as that "blind leader" of the ungifted whose "malignant rage / In
vain barks against" the "exultant Ghost" of Shakespeare – nobly defended
by "The great Woman" (Lady Montague) – is unequivocal ("Dunque invan
contra te, Spirto felice, / Il maligno furor de' bassi ingegni / Latrando va,
che a te sicura e salda / La gran Donna approntò nobil difesa"; 72).

At the same time, departing from Baretti, Pignotti did not hesitate to
comment on the beauty of certain passages in Voltaire's *La Mort de César*
and in the main plan of his *Semiramis*, although the praise was clearly, and
mainly, addressed to their Shakespearean sources (54-7). The poem contin-
ued with mention of the greatest characters and finest scenes invented by
Shakespeare, including *Julius Caesar* (54-5), *Othello* (55), *Hamlet* (ibid.: 56-7)
and all of the plays where "alate portentose forme" ("winged, extraordinary
shapes"; 58) appeared alongside *The Tempest* (58-9), *A Midsummer Night's
Dream* (60), and the historical plays. Reference to tyranny in *Richard III*
drove him to compose passionate lines on the future overthrow of tyrants
– a comment which may sound strangely evocative of a not too distant fu-
ture (62-3).

In the 1780s, in fact, criticism upon Shakespeare's works was rarely
free from reflections upon their social, historical, and political dimension.
In 1782, Ranieri de' Calzabigi's remarks on Shakespeare's *modus operan-
di* conveyed more than a purely aesthetic analysis of his plays. He still ech-
oed disapprovals of their imperfections which rendered his tragedies "assai
più difettose delle nostre" ("far more defective than ours"; 1801: 3), but he
acknowledged the originality of his 'monstrosities' ("produsse de' mostri,
ma degli originali"; 20). Even if Shakespeare wrote in "una maniera stra-

vagante, rozza, selvaggia" ("an extravagant, unpolished, undisciplined manner"; 63), he continued, as well as with a "sregolata fantasia" ("unruly fantasy"; 68), these 'faults' did not undermine his fervent admiration for the "Eschilo inglese" ("English Aeschylus"; 21). He was the architect of "sublimi pezzi" ("sublime passages"; 3), a prodigy who "dipinge al vivo, al vivo rende i caratteri e le passioni de' personaggi" ("portrays life, make the characters and the passions of the characters alive"; 63). In essence, de Calzabigi's words of appraisal were only more emphatic than Conti's, Rolli's, or Valentini's; and, following Voltaire before he turned Anglophobic, de Calzabigi did not miss the occasion to praise the English peoples' noble aspirations for freedom. He also established a direct link between the English intolerance of slavery and Shakespeare's own rejection of poetic fetters, judgments which indicate a stronger intent than his predecessors' to connect national politics, culture, and art:

> This illustrious nation, which affects a manner and system of thought different from all others, a nation free and proud, has been eager to prove its independence, even in tragedy. As with its government, it has adopted a special tragic constitution of its own for its theatre. It is satisfied with it, nay, proud of it, in spite of the outcries of all the others. For the famous Shakespeare, author of this new constitution, the unities are fetters fitted for slaves. (translated by Collison Morley 1916: 44)

In de' Calzabigi's words, England became an ideal place: it hosted neither persecutors nor persecuted; it was as "free and proud" as its theatre; and it was extremely dissimilar from all other countries, especially France, whose drama, in spite of being 'the best', was characterized by "molta narrativa, molta declamazione, poco movimento, pochissima azione" ("much narrative, much declamation, little movement, very little action"). Besides, "[d]i rado vi si trovano i gran pensieri di quell'anime libere [dei greci, dei romani, degli sciti, degli africani, degli asiatici], di quelle costituzioni virtuose, di quelle politiche d'allora: tutto è del nostro tempo" ("[v]ery rarely one can find in it the great thoughts of those free spirits [of the Greeks, the Romans, the Scythians, the Africans, the Asians], of those virtuous constitutions, of the politics of those times: everything is of our time"; de' Calzabigi 1801: 22-3). The implicit message of this assessment of the weakness of French drama was an appeal for renewal in both Italian theatre and society. Shakespeare's disrespect of the unities and the combination of comedy and tragedy were no longer reasons for scandal. As Luigi Lamberti was to write in his 1796 dedicatory letter to Augustus Frederic of England of his *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Shakespeare ranked with Sophocles "who, the further he departs from the too studied regularity of modern tragic poets, the nearer does he approach the strength and vividness of the ancients" (qtd in Colli-

son Morley 1916: 68). In the previous year, 1795, Pierantonio Meneghelli, albeit not a Shakespeare enthusiast, suggested yet another comparison with a Greek playwright – Aeschylus: "for the fire, concentration and energy of his style, and the strong, virile, concise nobility of his thoughts" (*Dissertazione sopra la Tragedia Cittadinesca*, qtd in Collison Morley 1916: 66). That Shakespeare overlooked "the rules" at that point was tacitly ignored, by simple mention that he paid "no heed to Aristotle" (ibid.). On the contrary, Meneghelli praised Shakespeare as being a close follower of Nature, drawing attention to the mixing of comedy and tragedy, as well as being capable of "inspir[ing] terror by cleverly-contrived pauses – an art now most successfully imitated by the Germans", thus filling "our minds with forebodings of what is about to happen by holding the action in suspense" (ibid.). Shakespeare's loss of his French nickname in favour of the Greek ones of Sophocles and Aeschylus (already proposed by Pignotti and de' Calzabigi) bespeaks a new attitude clearly in opposition to the previous French tradition that had turned him into an English Corneille. The years 1796-1797, not coincidentally, also registered Napoleon's campaigns in Italy.

The change of attitude towards Voltaire's cultural monopoly, which began in the 1770s, with Baretti's, Pignotti's, and de' Calzabigi's critiques and, later, in the 1790s with overtly anti-French voices should be considered in the context of diverse intellectual and ideological drives. In this respect, it may be observed that the initial response to an idea of 'liberty' of French derivation, embodied by Voltaire, rested upon a conception of rationality advocated by the Enlightenment which was entirely different from the type of liberty that would gradually take shape in terms of closeness to Nature and power of the imagination. Yet another different attitude was elicited after the Revolution by Napoleon's increasingly clear anti-libertarian politics and military campaigns. At that point, in Italy, Shakespeare came to represent an anti-France symbol, rather than an anti-Voltaire one: in this respect, his plays pointed to the moral and political supremacy of England. Thus, the robust reappraisal of Shakespeare that took place in the last two decades of the century cannot be reduced to a generic change of taste; rather it was deeply involved with the different responses that were prompted by the socio-political context and the gradual shattering of libertarian ideals.

As suggested above, in the 1780s allusions to Shakespeare's works began to appear more frequently. They can be found in Vincenzo Monti's *Aristodemo* (1786) and Galeotto Manfredi (1788), in Vittorio Alfieri's *Virginia*, *La Congiura de' Pazzi*, and *Bruto secondo* (1789) (see Sestito 1978: 34-42), as well as in works published in the 1790s: for instance, in Ippolito Pindemonte's *Arminio* (1797) and in Giovanni Pindemonte's *Orso Ipato* (1797), to name but a few (see Scherillo 1920: 49; Thorne 1967; Carlson 1993; Hargreaves-Mawdsley 1967: 1-28). A new impetus for his re-evaluation came

also from the translation carried out by two Venetian women: Elisabetta Caminer-Turra and Giustina Renier Michiel. In 1794, Caminer-Turra translated Louis-Sébastien Mercier's *Les Tombeaux de Vérone* (1782), a play loosely echoing Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and, as Minutella claims, rewritten to include "a happy ending [which] brought Shakespeare's tragedy into conformity with the rules of contemporary theatre" (2013: 77). Only a few years later, in 1798-1800, Renier Michiel published what is the first "systematic translation" in prose of Shakespeare's plays: namely, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Coriolanus* (Collison-Morley 1916: 76). Belonging to the family of the last two Dogi of Venice (her grandfather was Paolo Renier and her uncle Lodovico Manin), she married the nobleman Marcantonio Michiel. Aristocratic and well-versed in studies of botany, physics, and chemistry, as well as in the humanities, she published a historical study of Venetian feasts (*L'origine delle Feste veneziane* 1817, re-edited and augmented in 1827). Significantly, she hosted a cultural salon in Venice frequented by intellectuals and artists such as Ugo Foscolo, Antonio Canova, Ippolito Pindemonte, Mme de Stael, Melchiorre Cesarotti, Lord Byron, and Vincenzo Monti, whom she first met in Rome when residing for a year at Palazzo Venezia as daughter of the Venetian ambassador. Her *Opere Drammatiche di Shakespeare Volgarizzate da una Cittadina Veneta* were inspired by Pierre Le Tourneur, whose translation she used alongside the original in Pope's edition (see Crinò 1950: 95-8; Calvani 2009: 17; 2010: 3-4; 2012: 125ff.). According to Cesarotti's biographer, Vittorio Malamani (1890: 49), her versions of *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Coriolanus* were greatly improved by "Cesarotti's hand" (himself a translator of Homer and Ossian), who also added details in the commentary and notes (Crinò 1950: 93; for a revision of this position see Calvani 2009: 17; 101).

Far too much emphasis has recently been laid on Renier Michiel's wish to engage in these translations mainly for the educational purpose of offering her daughters instructive examples of how to control one's passions (Renier Michiel 1798: 1, 24). Of course, in a context where female agency was 'regulated' by male authority, Renier Michiel's plan may have sounded revolutionary (Calvani 2009, 2012; Bassi 2016: 18). Yet the same collocation of her remark at the end of the first section simply as a brief, occasional mention underplays its role while reinforcing the initial presentation of her work as a 'course of theatre' addressed to the Nation (1798: 9). It is especially Cesarotti's letter to her of 1 September 1799, though, that suggests that her interests might have resided elsewhere. In that letter, he praised her accurate preface to Coriolanus, but at the same time condemned her excessive attention to the historical events leading to the extinction of the Republic:

La *Prefazione*, come già le scrissi, è sensata e mostra ingegno e sagacità: ma temo che sembri intrusa ed estranea. Parea che dovesse bastare l'espor brevemente il corso degli affari di Roma dall'espulsione dei Tarquinij fino al tempo di Coriolano, servendosi di questo compendio ragionato come d'una introduzione alla storia di questo eroe dell'aristocrazia. Ma il diffondersi sulle cose precedenti, e specialmente sulle posteriori fino all'estinzione della Repubblica, può parer alieno dal soggetto, e far perdere alla *Prefazione* quel pregio che sogliono dar agli scritti d'ogni spezie due gran ministri dell'eloquenza: l'aproposito e il quanto basta. Quindi è ch'io crederei opportuno di accorciar lo scritto della metà in circa. (Cesarotti 1885: 4)

[The *Preface*, as I wrote to you, is reasonable and shows intelligence and ingeniousness: but it may look intrusive and extraneous, I'm afraid. It seems enough to draw the course of the events in Rome from the expulsion of the Tarquini to the times of Coriolanus by using this reasoned companion as an introduction to the history of this hero of aristocracy. But writing at great length about previous things, and especially the following ones until the extinction of the Republic, may appear alien to the subject and deprive the *Preface* of that merit which is afforded to any piece of writing by the two great ministers of eloquence: appropriateness and as much as necessary. Therefore I believe it appropriate to shorten your writing by about a half.]

As a matter of fact, Cesarotti also sent Renier Michiel the outline of a new preface, but she declined to use it (Cesarotti 1885: 4n1). The only reason why she should have written profusely about the history of the Roman Republic and its ending may be that she was also concerned with the fate of another Republic: Venice. Renier Michiel was no remittent housewife entirely dedicated to family care, but an intelligent and active intellectual whose interest in her daughters' education, and fulfilment of the obligations towards her family, complemented her political and cultural commitments (she also acted as *dogaressa*), while not suffocating them (see Dalton 2003: 79ff.). Her social and political engagements often led away from home and contributed to harshening her relationship with her husband, from whom she eventually separated in 1784 mainly because of gender tensions deriving from Marcantonio's ambivalence "about women's intellectual abilities [and] his wife's extravagant socializing" (Dalton 2003: 92).

Thus, to argue that her choice of these three plays among those ones made available by Le Tourneur in his 1776-1778 volumes (including *Othello*, *The Tempest*, *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus*, and *Macbeth*) was dictated by Shakespeare's emphasis on three strong women – Desdemona, Lady Macbeth, and Volumnia – would mean to misrepresent both their roles in those plays, and Renier Michiel's own more complex position. In her *Preface* to *Othello*, her focus indisputably was on the Moor's delicate and passionate nature, as well as on Iago's devious mind, while no major space was re-

served to Desdemona. She was mentioned cursorily with reference to Cassio's amiability – a trait which made for the verisimilitude of Desdemona's possible love for him (1798: 47) – and as the object of Othello's cruelty (48); she was also called "virtuous" (44) and "full of sweetness and naïve simplicity" (45), qualities which were further highlighted in the notes on the text. On the first page of the *Preface* to *Macbeth*, Renier Michiel made clear that the hero was not Lady Macbeth who, compared to her "sweet and amiable" husband, appeared "inflexible and vain" as she "meditate[d] and propose[d] the most atrocious murder without the least internal conflict, without the least pain" ("il carattere di Macbet è dolce ed amabile: quello di sua moglie è inflessibile, e vano; ella medita, e propone il delitto più atroce senza minimo contrasto interno, senza minima pena"; Renier Michiel 1798: 5). Lady Macbeth's impassionate nature was entirely responsible for his tormented resolution to commit the murder. The rest of the *Preface* was devoted to a discussion of Macbeth's own conflicts and the role of the witches and the supernatural. Similarly, Volumnia in *Coriolanus* was afforded the same space as Virginia, both appearing only in a comment from Le Tourneur where "Volumnia accoppia la tenerezza di una donna, ad una certa dignità qual si conviene alla madre di un Eroe", and "Virginia ha tutta la soavità, la decenza, che rendono seducente una Sposa" ("Volumnia combines the tenderness of a woman with the dignity appropriate to the mother of a Hero" and "Virginia has all the suavity, the decency, that render a Bride seductive"; Renier Michiel 1800: 22-3). The main focus of the *Preface* was, again, on the male hero: an inflexible, unreproachable, and proud aristocrat who, eventually, was not ruined by his own despicable betrayal of Rome and league with the Volsci, but by his compassion for his mother. Coriolanus was sacrificed on the altar of his own pity (15) and, similar to Achilles, who felt tenderness for his friend, he felt a fatal tenderness for his mother so that "both [were] punished for their previous hardness" ("Ambedue sentono un solo affetto umano, la tenerezza; quello per l'Amico, questo per la Madre; e questa tenerezza appunto è la cagione ond'entrambi incontrano la punizione della loro precedente durezza. Achille è punito colla morte di Patroclo, e Coriolano colla propria"; ibid.: 19). As can be seen, Renier Michiel placed limited attention on women and gender issues; rather, she explored the representation of passions in the dominant male figures.

In fact, comments on women were contained elsewhere. They occur right at the beginning of the general preface to the first volume, where Renier Michiel vindicated a privileged relation between Shakespeare and the fair sex on account of their closeness to Nature. Hence, Shakespeare's beautiful portraits of "sweet" Desdemona, "tender" Juliet, "brilliant" Rosalind, "unfortunate" Ophelia, "naïve" Miranda, "lively" Beatrice, "constant" Helena, "tender" Cordelia, and the many constant mothers and faithful brides

(1798: 6). Nature, after all, was Shakespeare's own model, which he depicted in order to achieve truth and to instruct us by the surprising "magnificence and fecundity of his Poetry", as well as by his extraordinary capacity to offer a "faithful mirror to life" ("sorprende per la magnificenza e fecondità della sua Poesia: egli istruisce, perché offre al Lettore uno specchio fedele della vita"; 11).

Accordingly, Renier Michiel's *Preface* to *Coriolanus* confirms her political preoccupations with the history of the Republic: it is no surprise that she chose a play which was concerned with both domestic and foreign politics. In 1796, Napoleon Bonaparte had started his long-advocated invasion of Italy, winning over Piemonte, Genoa, and Milan, to name but a few of his successes in the North and Central Italy. His presence on the peninsula was first greeted with enthusiasm by those revolutionary spirits who saw in him a liberator. Of course, not everybody shared the same excitement for this foreigner who, as it was soon made clear, was driven by dreams of power rather than of freedom. The Serenissima – the now worn-out Republic of Venice – showed scepticism (or, more accurately, fears) about the successes of this commander: it hoped that a neutral approach to the last chaotic events would suffice to grant its survival throughout this difficult time. But weakness is punished in times of war, and the ancient Republic soon realized – and paid for – its poor judgment. In 1797, with the excuse of vindicating an act of rebellion against the French authority, Bonaparte challenged the Serenissima to war. The Senate, summoned for a special meeting by the Doge, Ludovico Manin, rejected Marcantonio Michiel's argument in favour of war and voted instead for the approval of all the abusive requests tabled by Bonaparte. Marcantonio Michiel, by then separated from Giustina, was one of the few politically forward-thinking figures who directly expressed their desire to defend Venice and its Republic from the unavoidable tyranny of Napoleon. Marcantonio was indeed a strong supporter of the rearmament of the mainland, believing that a more moderate position would not secure the peace (and the survival) of the Republic (see Francesco Lippomano 2008; Boni and Calbo Crotta 1798). He was right. The French supreme commander urged the old Republic to expel the English minister from Venice and finally to declare their alliance either with Great Britain or with France. The outburst of the 'Pasque Veronesi' (which occurred during the Veronese Easter when the enraged inhabitants of Verona rebelled against the French abuse of power) and the attack on the French ship named *Liberatore d'Italia* (*Liberator of Italy*) served Bonaparte's plan. Unable to resist the French invasion, the thousand-year old Republic had to accept the establishment of a provisional municipal government, ending the Serenissima's leadership and ideals. The new government, as Madden sums up,

ordered that every image of the winged lion of St. Mark was to be destroyed, including even those on the exterior of the Ducal Palace depicting Doge Andrea Gritti and Doge Francesco Foscari kneeling before the lion . . . Merely to utter "Viva San Marco" was punishable by death. The new government outlawed the famous Venetian festival, Carnevale and Sensa. A Liberty Tree – the symbol of the French Revolution – was placed in the center of the Piazza San Marco, where a relatively small group of French supporters danced and celebrated the "liberation" of the Venetian people. Not far away a bonfire consumed the Book of Gold, which for four centuries had recorded the names of Venetian patrician families, as well as the doge's corno and vestments. Most Venetians watched the ceremony with disdain. For more than a millennium they had been the freest people in the world. They had no need of liberation. Still, given the circumstances, it was much better to let the French have their party and say nothing. (2012, Chapter 18, n. p.)

The French occupation of Venice was only temporary, though, because Bonaparte had other plans. When Napoleon signed the Treaty of Campoformio, on 17 October 1797, thus selling Venice to the Austrians, the dreams of all those Italians who still supported Bonaparte and his politics died. According to Madden, the Venetian French supporters believed that Venice would play an active role in the new remapping of Italy "as nationalism spread out across Europe, [thus] kindl[ing] the dream of a united Italy across the shattered peninsula" (ibid.). The Treaty of Campoformio killed that dream. The proud Serenissima was not only destroyed by foreign powers but, even worse, was now sold to the old regime of the Habsburgs. In a few months, Napoleon had betrayed everybody: first and foremost, the 'negotiators' of the old Republic who thought that a dialogue with the general was possible; then, his Venetian supporters. Apart from recognizing Venice as part of the Archduchy of Austria, the Treaty also recognized France's rights to annex Belgium (former Austrian Netherlands) and acknowledged the existence of two newly created republics: The Cisalpine Republic (also absorbing Verona and part of the Veneto), and the Ligurian Republic. This Treaty, in other words, sealed the end of a great Republic and of a democratic vision.

Renier Michiel did not sympathize with the French cause for obvious political reasons linked to her public role and prominent patrician position. Her attachment to the Republic also emerges from her *Origine delle feste veneziane* whose "goal", as Dalton points out, "was to show her patriotism and to express a sense of loss over the fall of the Venetian Republic" (2003: 76). Nor, moreover, was she left untouched by the French, who ordered the closure of her literary salon, one of the best-frequented in Venice. Thus, her choice of translating Shakespeare is her declaration of alliance with Great Britain, a country which, in a letter to the Abate Bianchi of January 1802,

she was to hail in the name of Shakespeare's genius: "Viva la Gran Bretagna nella quale il Genio d'un uomo forma l'ebbrezza e la delizia di un popolo" ("Hail to Great Britain where the Genius of a man fashions the euphoria and the delight of the people"; Cesarotti 1801: 29). To make such a public stance in favour of Englishness in these crucial years, which saw a French general determine the destiny of the Republic of Venice, was not devoid of momentum. As Collison Morrey recalls, when Napoleon visited Venice in 1807, he was not pleased with Renier Michiel's translations:

> he sent for her and asked her why she was distinguished. She answered that she had made some translations of tragedies. 'Racine, I suppose?' 'Pardon me, Your Majesty, I have translated from the English.' Whereupon, with his usual good breeding, Napoleon turned his back upon her and she was armed back to her place among the spectators by her Venetian friend. (1916: 78)

By appropriating Shakespeare's plays to develop her narrative about the current socio-political crisis, Renier Michiel contributed to the shaping of a new cultural milieu and, by doing so, she eventually accomplished her political duty.

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Aleksandra Boss*

Temperance Beyond Discipline: Considerations on the Functions of US Temperance Drama

Abstract

The essay investigates the functions of representing the near destruction of nuclear family structures and values in nineteenth-century US temperance drama. The thesis underlying this investigation postulates that the embodiment of the quasi-wilful destruction of the nuclear family on stage gives expression to socially unacceptable desires of escaping that structure in the face of its oppressive potentials in antebellum middle-class society. Taking the text of the most prominent temperance play, *The Drunkard, or The Fallen Saved* (1844), as a point of departure, and amplifying it with readings of *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* (1858) and *Fifteen Years of a Drunkard's Life* (1828), the thesis assumes further that various instances of ambiguity and irony warrant an understanding of temperance plays as more than one-dimensional, didactic cautionary tales upholding given status-quo power structures. Basing itself on theoretical approaches from Cultural Studies, this thesis departs from the established interpretations of the genre as part of an ideological apparatus in tune with hegemonic imperatives of self-discipline mandated by an economy industrializing in the context of a mainstream culture determined by an Evangelical ethos. The essay first provides a historical, socio-political contextualisation of the development of the genre. What follows is an introduction of relevant precepts of Cultural Studies as formulated by John Fiske. The special focus of this theoretical lens lies on the interface of play text and the processes of encoding and decoding, excorporation and incorporation that result in ambiguous and conflicting interpretations of encoded messages. An analysis of character constructions as well as of sensationalized scenes depicting the main character's personal downfall and decay with the concomitant damage to his family form the main part of the investigation.

KEYWORDS: temperance drama; antebellum literature; cultural studies; John Fiske; incorporation and excorporation; encoding and decoding

Introduction: The Socio-Cultural Context of Temperance Drama

There is hardly a dramatic genre that is as straightforward and transparent in its meaning and purpose as temperance drama. On the surface, tem-

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perance plays seem little more than variations on the same cautionary tale whose main goal is to deter the audiences from overindulging in alcohol on account of the detrimental effects to health, family, and social status. Emerging in the first half of the nineteenth century in the US-American context, the temperance ideology, from which temperance drama evidently drew, was impacted chiefly by the invigoration of Evangelical spirituality during "the ferment of the Second Great Awakening" (Carlson 1998: 660-1), by the concomitant general proliferation of reform movements to amend social ills (ibid.), by the status anxiety of former elites who "sought in temperance a means of social control" (660-1), and by the emerging middle class "which found in temperance a vehicle to respectability" (660-1). While the somewhat dissimilar factors that shaped the temperance movement seem to belie the straightforward and transparent appeal of temperance drama, its invariable deep structure has often been read to corroborate its ideological simplicity. In their temperance-themed encyclopaedia, Blocker, Fahey, and Tyrrell identify the unchanging "dramatic devices" of contemporaneous temperance drama on both sides of the Atlantic to be "battered wives, abused and/or neglected children, the decline of an entire family from prosperity to poverty and degradation, and the drunkard's social and physical deterioration to a point of crisis" (2003: 201). The authors note that American examples of the genre tended to end in the protagonist's restoration and therefore "espoused a more assimilative brand of reform" whose upbeat message was "reflective of a young country in which social mobility and a bright cultural and economic future were guaranteed to the sober and the 'good at heart'" (ibid.).

If it is said that temperance plays function as ideological tools that stabilize the socio-political *status quo* and its upbeat narratives, it is only on their surface that they do so by their overt didactic message. They fulfil this function much more profoundly by virtue of their capacity to provide a space, albeit an imagined one, in which impulses potentially destructive to the *status quo* can be contained, into which they could be safely channelled and remain materially ineffectual. They could thus provide some relief, allowing spectators to vent the counter-societal and counter-hegemonic, even antisocial impulses and stirrings, posing as didactically valuable and morally edifying entertainment. The present essay argues that temperance drama was not only popular because it provided moral fortification against the temptations of alcohol, then so ubiquitous in American society, but also, and even centrally, because it visually depicts the quasi-wilful destruction of family structures on stage and so subversively gives expression to clandestine, even repressed, desires to escape the family structure. This argument unfolds on the basis of a Cultural Studies-informed reading of the most successful American temperance play of the antebellum period, *The*

Drunkard (Smith 1844), as well as on complimentary readings of *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* (Pratt 1858) and *Fifteen Years of a Drunkard's Life* (Jerrold 1828), which are among the most widely cited representatives of the genre. After a brief historical contextualisation, the essay elucidates how John Fiske's concepts of incorporation and excorporation (1989) can be employed to highlight the ambivalent instances in temperance-play texts as well as to focus on the inconsistencies that thus grow apparent in the encoding of the purportedly transparent message. In this manner, a rather more differentiated evaluation of the socio-political uses of temperance drama as a literary dispositive can take place. Rather than understand it as an efficient ideological discursive instrument politically aligned with the various points on the agenda of the antebellum temperance movement in a monolithic way, the essay proposes to re-evaluate the genre's specific function and operational mode.

A sketch of the history of *The Drunkard* habitually begins with some note on the play's overwhelming success. D'Alessandro refers to "unprecedented audiences" (2014: 252) attracted to the theatre in 1844, the year of the play's opening in Boston, and subsequently in 1850, when "it became America's first play to reach 100 uninterrupted performances" (253). Similarly, Judith N. McArthur reports that "[n]ineteenth-century audiences loved *The Drunkard*" (1989: 520) and that this circumstance helped in building up the Boston Museum, the relatively new theatre that staged the production, to a notable presence. The theatre, as McArthur further explains, profited from professional and political gatherings proceeding in the city, on the occasion of which it arranged special reproductions, enthusiastically received by these target audiences.

The favour with professional and political audiences is not coincidental according to scholars investigating the ideological messages of the temperance movement in general. Such scholars notice that in all parts of the country, temperance movement messages overlapped with the ideological underpinnings of the emerging market economy and the concomitant socioeconomic changes gradually becoming visible during the decades in question. As Ian Tyrrell points out, "[s]outhern temperance reformers . . . were as quick as their northern counterparts to explain economic dislocation in terms of individual moral inadequacies", stating further that "[e]qually prominent in the southern temperance movement's economic arguments was the assertion, common also in the North, that intemperance hindered all kinds of businesses by rendering the labor [*sic*] force less efficient" (1982: 498). And this connection between temperance and the emerging city-based market economy was no purely American phenomenon. Writing about nineteenth-century England, Peter Mathias states that the "temperance movement . . . was one of the more important influences up-

on the social attitudes current in Victorian England. It sprang to life in an age dominated by the problems of housing, feeding and disciplining the unprecedentedly growing numbers of a society increasingly committed to life and labour in industrial towns" (1958: 107).

Clearly, temperance plays intimated that sobriety and productivity depended on each other and were, generally, favourable qualities to be individually cultivated. Nonetheless, the relation in which temperance drama stands to the political aims and expedient ideological alliances of the temperance movement as a larger dispositive is not one of straightforward propagandistic affiliation. In other words, the supposition that temperance plays were little more than advertisements for the movement would be an erroneous one. After elucidating the development of the temperance movement's various organisations, Jeffrey D. Mason reports that "[b]y the mid-1840s, many believed that the temperance battle was won; from 1830 to 1845, consumption of absolute alcohol declined from 7.1 gallons per capita to level off at 1.8, and teetotalism had evolved from a radical notion to a standard practice in middle-class respectable families" (1990: 97). Mason's most interesting observation regarding the histories of the temperance movement and temperance drama concerns the sequential relation between them, for

> by the time the first popular American temperance play appeared in 1844, the movement had already effected a significant change in America's drinking habits, and indeed would not achieve further measurable success until the beginning of Prohibition in 1920. In other words, the temperance dramas, no matter what the intent of their creators and supporters, rather than helping to change attitudes to a significant degree, were instead affirming a vision that had already come true; they were conservative rather than revolutionary. (ibid.)

In short, temperance plays were at their most popular and successful well after the temperance movement had become a mainstream part of American antebellum society. This means that the task of convincing and educating the viewers on the matters close to the temperance movement's heart had been successfully completed before the emergence of the most successful temperance plays.

To recapitulate: the temperance plays' popularity was contingent upon several factors, among which their instrumental usefulness to the proliferation of temperance ideas figured only peripherally, as these ideas had already been accepted and were more likely to have served as a factor that conditioned the popularity of the plays. Much more decisive was the fact that temperance plays had the image of being didactic and wholesome, and therefore rendered a night out at the theatre to view one such play as ac-

ceptable entertainment, in contradistinction to other forms of drama which still had the image of frivolity and undue gaiety in a society that ostentatiously valued the puritan origins of many of its cultural mores (cf. Augst 2007: 312). Before this temperance-aided transformation of the theatre in America took place, theatres and other entertainment venues were regarded as disreputable and dangerous, as the gaiety "could and on occasion did rise to the level of a riot" (Block 2008: 196) and "audiences were noisy, more anarchic than democratic, and often violent" (ibid.). The redefinition of American antebellum theatre in which temperance drama played points to the fact that the entertainment rather than solely the didactic aspect drew the impressive numbers of viewers reported to have attended, as this genre represented the transmogrification of a temperance message into a merger of "sensational forms of civic enlightenment and popular entertainment" (Augst 2007: 313).

Cultural Studies and Temperance

It is important to acknowledge the fact that temperance drama developed and functioned in a cultural context that was predisposed to accept its didactic message at face value and to consider it proper and decent entertainment. However, one must also keep in mind that this cultural context was not monolithic, but determined by extremely contentious, vigorous, and forceful efforts in American nation-building. Thomas Augst's research expresses the crucial function of the discursive space provided by the temperance movement in such an environment:

> At a moment when the ideological status and social uses of written texts were themselves the objects of critical debate, technological innovation, and institution-building, the drunkard's story generated larger contests for moral authority that were waged between professional elites and ordinary people within relatively new forms of mass communication such as the newspaper and the popular lecture, as well as across the evolving literary genres of sermon, novel, autobiography, and stage melodrama. (Augst 2007: 298)

Augst presages the potentially promising pairing of Cultural Studies as an analytical approach and temperance drama as an object of study. Augst focuses on the mass cultural aspect of the antebellum temperance movement, and on the extent to which the proliferation of media and venue formats dedicated to temperance topics impacted social and political institutions during that time of American nation-building. While not himself proposing the use of Cultural Studies in looking at temperance-related phenomena, Augst nonetheless identifies all of the elements as central to the issue

that would be identified as universally important by Cultural Studies proponents: mass circulation, popular formats, the impacts of readerships recruited from different classes, and the contentious negotiation of norms.

Centrally, the purview of Cultural Studies encompasses not only processes of collective political negotiations of meaning and value, but also looks at such processes on a more refracted and individual level. This field postulates the dynamic and destabilized nature of meanings, which rarely remain unaltered in the processes of their en- and decoding. John Fiske makes an interesting point concerning consumers' uses of cultural products on the basis of his observation of the various implications of wearing jeans and tearing them in order to make individual statements of style and, ultimately, of culture (15). He writes that such a "disfigurement of a commodity in order to assert one's right and ability to remake it into one's own culture" (ibid.) can be transferred to any area of consuming and making sense of culture. Fiske refers to this phenomenon as "excorporation" (ibid.) and defines it as "the process by which the subordinate make their own culture out of the resources and commodities provided by the dominant system, and this is central to popular culture, for in an industrial society the only resources from which the subordinate can make their own subcultures are those provided by the system that subordinates them" (ibid.).

Yet when the "subordinates", as Fiske calls consumers and readers, engage in such acts of excorporation to create their own meanings out of the hegemonic products presented to them, the "dominant system", as he further explains, tends to reinsert that very excorporated element back into its hegemonic structure of meaning. This process is termed, consistently, "incorporation", and, among other things, it "can also be understood as a form of containment – a permitted and controlled gesture of dissent that acts as a safety valve and thus strengthens the dominant social order by demonstrating its ability to cope with dissenters or protesters by allowing them enough freedom to keep them relatively content, but not enough to threaten the stability of the system against which they are protesting" (18). Analysing a specific instance of incorporation in advertising for the aforementioned torn jeans, Fiske concludes that "[i]n such ways, the theory of incorporation tells us, signs of opposition are turned to the advantage of that which they oppose" (19).

To reiterate Fiske's ideas, the finding and defending of pleasure in the process of decoding play a major part in these strategies of reading polyvalent signs. According to that viewpoint, reading processes, in fact all processes of interpretation, entail contentions and negotiations in which readers try to wrestle something meaningful and helpful, some form of pleasure, from the cultural products that they consume, even if these products seem to possess an overwhelming hegemonic and disciplining quality.

This view often casts the recipient or reader as fundamentally opposition-al, refusing whenever possible the overtly encoded hegemonic message and engaging instead in decoding practices that allow for a more personal-ly useful and enjoyable experience of whatever cultural product is at hand. Ambiguities, inconsistencies, ironies, and ambivalences in the encoded he-gemonic message thus become opportunities to engage in alternating read-ing practices.

Assuming this view on the reception of cultural products often predis-poses the scholar to adopt a reader-oriented methodology, as Fiske's case clearly shows. That approach, however, did not manage to sway main-stream literary scholarship into its direction. Nor does the approach em-ployed here feature reader-orientation. That said, it is hardly conceivable that the temperance play is devoid of any vestige of its audience. As Augst points out, temperance venues have always been spaces of exchange, nego-tiation, and participation. The approach of the proposed analysis is there-fore text-oriented, employing close reading to identify the internal incon-sistencies between the overt message and its particular encoding that high-lights the opportunities for the recognition of inconsistencies, ambiguities, and ambivalences. This essay sees the temperance play itself as an instance of simultaneous ex- and incorporation, in which the hegemonic ideology of temperance is transformed in potentially transgressive ways through poly-valent and tellingly ambiguous encoding, but ultimately serves to contain those transgressions in the confines of the art form.

Family Conflict in Temperance Literature

One such matter of ex- and incorporation concerns the normative struc-ture of the nuclear family. The fact that the representation of uneasy fam-ily relations is highly symbolic in temperance literature is a well recog-nized one. In his analysis of the complex negotiation of the American Rev-olutionary period and the hero worship it engendered in temperance texts, William Breitenbach notes that "[t]he most striking thing about the treat-ment of children in temperance literature . . . is the frequency with which writers described hostile and antagonistic relations between parents and their offspring" (1983: 69). This observation stands at the beginning of Bre-itenbach's explanation of the parallelism between the "clashes between fa-thers and sons" (ibid.) and the charged negotiation of social and cultural in-fluence and prestige between the "Revolutionary Fathers" (74) and the men who came of age during the first decades of the nineteenth century. Bre-itenbach contextualizes this peculiar representation of father-son hostility not only in the legacy of the Revolution, but also in the various transmuta-

tions of the socio-economic landscape of the Antebellum. With fathers increasingly absent and incapable of the same level of providing the prosperity and security necessary for the social reproduction of Early-Republic structures, "[t]he public, patriarchal family of the colonial period gave way to the private, maternal family" (Breitenbach 1983: 74). These developments that so drastically shifted the sphere of economic agency from the countryside to the city for many men and disengaged the rest of the family from a responsible part in the socio-economic production, and the safeguarding of the family's survival, were not only stoking antipathy toward the fathers; they also transformed the family into a burden for the male agent, which is finally channelled into the representations of violent family relations in temperance literature and especially in temperance plays.

The destruction of families and its ambiguous rendition was not the purview of temperance drama alone. The gradient of destruction emanating from fathers and targeting families was also represented in the short poems often included in temperance materials distributed by the different clubs and societies dedicated to the cause. The piece quoted by Michael R. Booth in his seminal 1964 essay on temperance culture is a case in point:

> 'Tis but a drop, the father said,
> And gave it to his son;
> But little did he think a work
> Of death was then begun.
> (qtd in Booth 1964: 206)

Clearly, these lines aim to warn parents against instilling dangerous patterns of consumption into their children. Yet the plot structure of the minimally developed and poignantly used epic mode simply suggests that fathers use alcohol in a manner that brings about the disintegration of the family. Such verse, which, as Booth puts it, "built up horror and pathos stanza by stanza" (1964: 205), also established responsibilities and unmasked, wittingly or not, the negligent and irresponsible, but at the same time knowing way in which fathers put their children at risk.

Certainly, this type of verse resonates with the sentiment of generational conflict, as it highlights the elders' failure to care appropriately for their offspring and to provide them with the required protection. At the same time, the particularity of the image and character constellation invoked by the verse should not be completely eclipsed by the aforementioned abstraction and generalisation that casts fathers as fore- and Founding fathers. The particular image refers the readers of temperance pamphlets and the viewers of temperance drama to the nuclear family, which is negligently jeopardized by its very head. And while such verse unfolded "horror and pathos," as Booth put it, to boost the appellative function of the message and

scare viewers into a more careful relationship with alcohol, it certainly also lured and excited them. Horror and pathos certainly bind the audience's emotions and thrill the viewers, relying on a desire to be shocked and disgusted while presented with a relatable premise for a story.

The gradient of destruction depicted in verse did not direct itself to children exclusively, but described the fate of wives, as well. The temperance tune anthologized by Edwin Paxton Hood as "The Bridal Feast" presents itself in the epic mode, as well, and recounts the macabre story of a wedding whose turning point from dream to disaster comes upon the serving of wine. Its consumption first leads to an increase in gaiety, yet finally induces the demise of the couple:

> The bridegroom, tho' he can scarcely stand,
> Seizes the glass with a trembling hand,
> And drinking long life to his lovely bride,
> He falls down a corpse by her father's side.
> (Hood 1850: 8)

The bride finally dies of grief. While the verse clearly blames the "destructive wine" (ibid.), the husband's overindulgence is highlighted as the element that finally causes two deaths and precludes a family from forming. Surely, all of the elements referenced by Booth are expertly invoked in this ballad and speak to the potential of temperance literature to serve as lurid entertainment.

And while the bringing about of the children's descent into alcoholism was not presented in any unusual terms as far as its moral valuation and verbal phrasing is concerned, the wives' fates are subject to an almost upbeat twist, as this stanza of "The Inebriate's Lament" shows:

> Sally, my wife, bow'd her beautiful head,
> Long, long ago; long, long ago;
> Oh, how I wept when I knew she was dead,
> Long, long ago; long, long ago;
> She was an angel, my love, and my guide, –
> Vainly to save me from ruin she tried;
> Poor broken heart, it was well that she died,
> Long, long ago, long, long ago.
> (Hood 1850: 3)

What presents itself as an instance of solace, suggesting that the wife's death precluded her from witnessing her husband's further descent, is likewise a rather matter-of-fact, if not cheerful, description of an event that can well be expected to be more traumatic for the speaker in this instance. This seems particularly the case since he is speaking from a position of final so-

briety. A much more believable lament in the circumstances invoked may be the sadness regarding the wife's inability to witness her husband's final betterment and healing. And this reaction of relief upon the death of a member of the nuclear family is equally present in instances of temperance drama. In so far, the potentially regressive pleasures of destruction and aggression inform the encoding of any of the genres used to convey the message of temperance.

Escaping Nuclear Family Pressure

A subtle indication of the identification of the family structure with unease and restraint offers itself in the climax of the delirium scene of *The Drunkard*. Commonly, the tremor-scene in which Edward hallucinates that snakes entangle him is regarded as the culmination of the performance and the climatic moment of the play. Writhing on the floor in what seems a delirious fever induced by alcohol, Edward shouts to William Dowton, Edward's foster brother and friend, who came to his rescue, but whom he hardly recognises:

> Edward   (*on ground in delirium*) Here, here, friend, take it off, will you? –
>   these snakes, how they coil round me. Oh, how strong they are!
>   there, don't kill it, no, no, don't kill it! give it brandy, poison jus-
>   tice, ha, ha! justice! ha, ha!
> William He does not know me.
> Edward   Hush! gently – gently, while she's asleep. I'll kiss her. She would
>   reject me, did she know it, hush! there, heaven bless my Mary,
>   bless her and her child – hush! if the globe turns round once
>   more, we shall slide from it's [*sic!*] surface into eternity. Ha, ha!
>   great idea! A boiling sea of wine, fired by the torch of fiends! ha!
>   ha!
>   (4.1)

In Edward's delirious fantasies, the paranoid frame of the snakes that restrain his body is immediately followed by images of his wife asleep, and subsequently resolve into what seems to constitute an apocalyptic vision of burning floods of alcohol set ablaze by demons. The communications of these terrifying images are accentuated by occasional interjections that indicate laughter. Certainly, they can be read to convey Edward's delirious confusion and exuberance, leading him to introduce the incongruous images of infernal catastrophe with expressions of approval and amusement. Allowing for more ambiguity and therefore for the possibility that a literal understanding of these interjections is not off the mark, one can also suggest that this approval is generated not solely by Edward's delirious con-

fusion. The sequence of images invoked by Edward in the quoted section is of special interest in applying this second reading. As said, the images of Mary and the daughter are followed by the image of slipping from the earth "into eternity", upon which the first approving interjection of "Ha! ha! great idea!" is uttered, before finally the image of a "boiling sea of wine, fired by the torch of friend" is once again intensified by the poignant interjection of "ha! ha!".

The image of Edward's family is introduced in his mind by the intimidating frame of serpents entangling his body and it is followed by metaphorical invocations of death and hell. By arranging his speech and thoughts in that manner, Edward aligns his family with the semantic fields of restraint and hell. One cannot but surmise upon reading this passage that snakes, family, and the alcoholic hellfire are meant to be mutually evocative. They clearly are for Edward. The text works to establish this association between the family and physical restraint not only through the specific arrangement and sequence of concepts in the quoted scene, but also through the construction of structural similarities between different scenes. More specifically, a scene in the second act in which Edward intends to leave his family's home on account of the shame he feels for his shortcomings and alcoholic transgressions seems to mirror the climatic experience of the delirium:

> MARY   (*springing forward and clasping his nec*k) Edward, dear Edward, do not leave me! I will work, I will slave, anything; we can live; but do not abandon me in my misery: do not desert me, Edward, love! husband!
>
> EDWARD Call me not husband – curse me as your destroyer; loose your arms – leave me.
>
> MARY   No, no! do not let him go. William, hold him!
>
> WILLIAM (*holding him*) Edward, dear brother!
>
> JULIA   (*clinging to him*) Father! father!
>
> MARY   You will be abused. No one near to aid you. Imprisoned, or something worse, Edward.
>
> EDWARD Loose me; leave me; why fasten me down on fire? Madness is my strength; my brain is liquid flame! (*breaks from her – William is obliged to catch her*) Ha! I am free. Farewell, forever! (*rushes off, C. D.*)
>
> MARY   Husband! Oh, Heaven! (*faints*)
>
> WILLIAM (*bursting into tears*) Edward! brother!
>
> JULIA   Father, father! (*runs to the door, and falls on the threshold*)
>   (2.5)

The melodramatic, tear-provoking quality of this scene is heightened to maximum effect as Edward's wife, Mary, his daughter, Julia, and William

together and simultaneously hold on to him and implore him not to relinquish the family. They call on Edward using both his given name and, hoping to appeal to his sense of love and duty, the familial terms that denote their respective relations to him. Yet those appeals manage not to sway or hinder Edward's guilt-induced resolve to abscond. Mary's calling him "husband" even provokes a direct and harsh imperative not to do so, replacing the familial term with the threatening appellation of "destroyer". While the situation implies that Edward's shame and desperation motivate this imperative, the seemingly spiteful and aggressive tone indicates that the distance between Edward and his family has grown to a degree as to render him unresponsive to their pleas. This distance between them is once again underlined in the exclamation declaring his freedom after he manages to escape his wife's restraining embrace. The alliteration employed to mark this exclamation when Edward declares "Ha! I am free. Farewell, forever!" adds an almost harmonizing ring to the finalisation of this discordant scene and fortifies the impression of Edward's apparent satisfaction with his exit. His freedom is clearly associated with his "Farewell", while Mary's invocation of imprisonment only serves to bring her into conceptual and metonymic association with a lack of freedom. At the same time, this scene's representation of Edward's thought processes already anticipates the climax by letting the protagonist reference "fire" and "liquid flame", thereby once again associating an intense encounter with his family with images of hell.

This implies that the protagonist perceives the family as a threat to his physical and emotional wellbeing, for they are metonymically aligned with danger and torture and increase both in Edward's delirium. It seems like the scene of the wife, the brother, and the daughter holding and restraining him, reminding him of his familial obligations to them, while being the reason for his experience of guilt, is mirrored in the image of Edward's delirious vision of serpents that wind around him. In both scenes, Edward cannot but invoke hell and death. Only after the cathartic moment of this association has been experienced, only after the delirious, phantasmagorical realisation of the equation of the family and the entanglement by snakes could be invoked, could the restitution of the hero into the structures he wanted to escape begin. The admission, however figurative and veiled, of his repressed emotions could reconcile Edward enough to render Rencelaw's influence and the subsequent restoration possible. And Rencelaw makes his first appearance immediately after Edward's described climatic delirious breakdown.

What is enacted in the instance of the climatic scene is thus a convoluted, self-referential conjunction of two catharses. The first to be mentioned is the expected one experienced by the viewers: their identification with

Edward as he enacts the emotionally and physically painful convulsions of his delirium. The second catharsis is the rather more subtle and indirectly mediated one brought about by the hallucination, which can be read as an implicit realisation of the source of Edward's real unease. Edward's delirium is therefore comparable to a virtual stage of self-perception, in which his hallucination, rendered in his words, provides him with the needed cathartic moment to leave behind the self-destructive habit and understand, albeit not entirely consciously, his own motivations. And, of course, that more subtle catharsis with its relieving lesson galvanizes onto the viewers.

Evidently, this phantasmagorical space of the delirium exceeds the space that serves as an escapist refuge and is often cited when it comes to the kind of cultural product that aims at reconciling the consumers with the *status quo* or restoring them back to it after a phase of increasing unease and discontent with the same. In this manner, *The Drunkard* does not only provide a commentary on the antebellum connotations and the socio-economic significations of the family structure, it also provides a comment on its own genre's socio-cultural functions in the specific context of its productions. That socio-cultural function is one of containing destabilisation by allowing its monitored and ab-reactive enactment in a setting marked as phantasmagorical and fictional. It fosters understanding and relief and thereby eases resistance toward the structures that compelled the flight into the theatre, or the theatre of the delirium, in the first place.

The perception of unease in family relations is equally, and less metaphorically, depicted in the case of *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*. Both the novel of 1854 and its dramatisation of 1858 seem to portray the stress which alcoholism puts on families. The story follows the rise and downfall of Simon Slade, who has sold his mill to become an innkeeper. The play also introduces the downfall and vindication of Joe Morgan, whose story of improvement from drunkard to respectable man includes the inadvertent murder of his daughter Mary at the hands of Slade.

Slade's professional history, of which he informs the audience in a casual chat with Romaine, the temperance advocate and benefactor, is particularly indicative of the propagandistic tying of a discourse of work with that of sobriety, but conveys a link between enjoyment, drink, and upward mobility at the same time. As Slade tells Romaine,

> SLADE   I am a miller by trade; and a better miller, though I say it myself, is not to be found in Bolton county. I got tired of hard work, and determined to lead an easier life; so I sold my mill, bought this house with the money, and I find it an easy life, and, if rightly seen after, one in which a man is sure to make money.
> (1.2)

What points to the character of the tavern to be a place of specifically male happiness is the fact that Mrs. Slade, the innkeeper's wife, appears to be longing for the old days of the mill and distrust her husband's cheer, which she suspects to be affected. The sequence of ideas and emotions in their exchange is thus particularly revealing:

> Mrs. Slade   Ah, Simon! we shall never be so happy again as when we were at the old mill. The tempter has entered our paradise of peace and joy.
>
> Slade   Devil take the women! they are never satisfied. What's the matter with me to-day? I've got a touch of the blues coming on; I'll mix me a nice drop to drive them away.
>
> (1.2)

Mrs. Slade's expectations and evaluations of the change cause Simon Slade to consider alcohol as a coping mechanism that helps him endure the underlying conflict with his wife. The frustration expressed in Simon's first two sentences manifests itself in a generalisation that blames womankind for a lack of comfort and recognition perceived by men. While the consumption of alcohol presents itself as the aforementioned coping mechanism, it also has an aspect of active, though defensive, aggression. While the phrasing of "I'll mix me a nice drop to drive them away" directs its defensive aggression at the "blues" that would be fought with the help of alcohol, one cannot help but surmise that the actual target is the actual cause of the "blues," namely the women in the lives of the men referred to in the said generalisation. Here, a particularly relevant parallel can be seen with the treatment of Morgan's family. How to drive away Mary is a very real concern for both Morgan and Slade and receives a great deal of attention from all of the men present in the inn when Mary tries to persuade Morgan to leave.

In many ways, Morgan portrays the fulfilment of these destructive fantasies, while Slade only articulates them in an impending stage. Slade's is a polyvalent role: on the one hand, he represents the upwardly mobile entrepreneur keen on and successful at improving his social standing, while facing diffuse and insufficiently articulated pressures and demands from the family. But he also serves as the personification of alcohol and its destructive force. What perspires in this nearly metaphorical transfer of meaning is that middle-class upward mobility and the prioritizing of the trade of consumption goods are detrimental to the ideal of a production-oriented economy and the mechanic class that stands for it. Quite clearly marked as morally superior, the production of goods is shown to be derided and destroyed by those representing trade and alcohol.

And it is precisely those latter classes that are shown to cling to the ide-

al of the nuclear family. Particularly the idealized descriptions of Slade's family life in the very beginning of his acquaintance with Romaine draw attention to this link. *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* makes this association particularly clear by portraying Slade's family as having specific functions in the inn. The business is dependent on the labour of family members – a structure which might not differ from the organisation of labour on farms or indeed mills, but which still evokes a sense of danger in the face of the character of goods traded. The narrative of this association between trading upwardly mobile middle-class males and the nuclear family as it is constructed in *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* contains a revealing ending in Slade's case. The fact that his proximity to alcohol finally casts his son, Frank, into addiction, promising though he is as a youth, shows that the presented structure of the middle-class nuclear family is detrimental to children. But the much more fatal end seen by the senior Slade, finally killed by his son, reveals that the nuclear family structure is fundamentally opposed to male interests.

The exposition of *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* also introduces some significant messages by the mere sequence of characters and topics they introduce. One such message seems to be that the presence of the nuclear family, either in character or in discourse, is followed by some form of strife. After the conversation with the nostalgic and cautious Mrs. Slade, Simon feels depressed and seeks to remedy this condition with a drink. And after Mary Morgan makes her appearance and mentions in both speech and song her mother, who is worried to tears and alone at home, thus managing to take her father away with her, a fight between the remaining party of men breaks out, caused by a disagreement over how to best respond to Morgan's disruptive presence in the tavern in the future.

Mary's death, however, starts Joe Morgan off on a path of righteousness and enables a final state of marital bliss. Years after the fatal incident, the audience receives a glimpse of Morgan's life:

> MORGAN Dear wife – have I not faithfully kept the promise given to our angel child?
>
> MRS. MORGAN Yes, you have, and the years that have passed since she was taken from us have rolled by like some sweet dream, adding every day some new joy to our happy home.
> (5.4)

Clearly, these words are meant to signal Morgan's success at following the narrative of improvement and using the traumatic moment of his child's death as a pivotal experience to escape the addiction. The particular phrasing, however, with the markers of time and the choice of positively marked nouns such as "sweet dream," "new joy," and "happy home" seem to con-

nect the child's departure and the ensuing happiness in an almost causal, not merely temporal way, on account of the repetition and strength of the upbeat depiction of the time after the child's death. One would expect at least a minor degree of sadness when faced with characters thinking of that traumatic an event; yet no trace of sadness can be found in either Morgan's or his wife's presentation in this instance. Once again, the destructive urge is contained and not even reprimanded, as the destruction itself was not administered by the protagonist directly. The disruption of the nuclear family through the death of the child, it seems, can thus function as the hallmark of marital happiness in *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*.

Unmasking Deceptive Temperance Virtues

However, not only the scenes depicting direct interaction between husbands and wives, fathers and children suggest the fundamental unease with and ambivalence toward the family structure and its concomitant obligations in general to be encoded in the message of the plays. In *The Dunkard*, the same unease and ambivalence are encoded into one specific though peripheral character called Patience. Its synopsis, published together with the play text, describes this character by stating that "[f]litting in and out, like a bird of ill-omen, is a conceited spinster, PATIENCE, who is sharp-set for a breach of marriage suit against any specimen of the male gender. She occasions much fun – relieving the sombre shades of the very affecting drama" (Smith 1844: 3).

Patience is clearly intended as a laughing stock. Yet the fact that the ridicule is here connected to what appears to be the hyperbolic urge to contract matrimony appears as ambivalent messaging in the context of the play. The play boasts a character whose main objective is the illegitimate and cunning tricking and pressuring of men into marriages that they clearly do not want. If marriage and the starting of a family are clear indicators of middle-class respectability, the presence of a character who constantly reminds the audience of a scenario in which that estate is the result of fraud and deception seems ironic, if not outright inconsistent with the purported agenda of the play of fortifying and glorifying those very features of middle-class life. The scenario invoked by the presence and particular construction of Patience as a character implies that marriage is desirable for women, but potentially harmful for men. In some ways, this putative scenario resonates with Edward's proclamation of freedom in the second act upon disentangling himself from his family and commanding his wife not to refer to him as "husband". While this scenario is clearly marked as preposterous and this character's inept endeavours at carrying it out foster

the comic relief referred to in the play's synopsis, a certain resonance with Edward's energetic escape and his declaration of freedom in the second act cannot but at least insinuate itself.

In that manner, Patience's status as a laughing-stock character derives its intensity from the awareness of a subtle inconsistence in encoding a message that professes to affirm family and middle-class values. In a sense, Patience represents the incorporation of an oppositional impulse of making meaning of marriage. The process of incorporation has rendered the initially oppositional message as the object of ridicule in a hegemonically structured context, but it has not bereft it completely of its destabilising potential, thereby allowing a highly ambivalent construction of a peripheral character. As Fiske has been shown to argue, the potential for destabilisation has been contained through ridicule and marginalisation, but at the same time the issue at hand, namely the dissatisfaction with the hegemonic nuclear family structure and the nature of marriage, is not entirely obliterated from view. Negative though the character may be represented, Patience still contains some of the original oppositional vestige of dissent, and therefore acknowledges, rather than thwarts, potential dissenting impulses in the audience.

The often-noted circumstance that *The Drunkard* employs telling and highly emblematic and evocative names bears some repeating when it comes to regarding the character of the spinster. Much has been made of the symbolic import of Edward's surname, Middleton, and its apparent function to categorize the protagonist as a representative of the middle class and its corresponding values. In a similar manner, William's surname, Dowton, classifies him as aligned with the sturdier working class and marks him as Edward's adjuvant, who necessarily occupies a lower social position than the protagonist. Mary's Biblical first name implicitly references her purity and glorified maternity, the benefactor Rencelaw's name's last syllable invokes justice and order, and the villain Cribb is but one letter "b" away from being called a cheat directly.

The name of the spinster who continuously endeavours to entangle males in a breach-of-engagement suit is no less telling in that respect, but possesses, in contrast to the others, a highly ironic quality. As said, her name is Patience, which alludes to socially accepted, valorised expectations and values. These, however, are ridiculed in the play along with the character that allegorically stands for them, bearing the telling name. That name invites the audience to find different interpretations for its relation to her attempted course of action. Her presence seems to constitute a negative comment on the quality of patience itself: pursuing the goal of getting married is certainly discursively connected to that quality for the middle-class woman of the Antebellum. Barbara Welter's eminently famous canon of

the four core features of purity, piety, domesticity, and submissiveness constituting "The Cult of True Womanhood" (1966) of the time certainly would not chafe against its expansion by the quality of patience. This quality and the uncomplaining passivity that it connotes is likewise consistent with the "physical leisure and spiritual nurturing in the home" (Newbury 1995: 691) that normative femininity increasingly entailed as it differentiated itself from the normative ambit of the antebellum middle-class male, whose "professional work was not only the crucial sign of his social status but also a sign of the stature and well-being of his family" (684). Yet that quality is here represented not as consistent with a normative femininity to be extolled, but with a cunning and scheming, while fundamentally inept, disposition. In that manner, the apparent invocation of normative femininity through the character of the inept impostor can prompt a destabilising reading of the unequal distribution of socio-economic outside stressors and pressures on husbands and wives in middle-class married couples.

On a phonetic level, some assonance between 'patience' and 'temperance' infuses the character with even more potential for self-reflexive irony and ambivalence. The homophonous suffixes, the etymological similarity as well as the correspondence in meaning of these two conceptually adjacent nouns that both refer to commonly positively connoted strengths of character render inferring some form of ironic, self-referential comment fairly uncomplicated. What further adds to the association of this character with temperance is the sole fact of her gender. As is commonly noted in the research on the many reform movements of the antebellum period, temperance activism grew to become a sphere of increasing female agency and influence, as its professed goals did not contradict the norms of domestic femininity centred around the wellbeing of the family (e. g. Dannenbaum 1981: 236; Alexander 1988: 764). With the assonance and the membership of temperance in mind, such an ironic and self-referential comment could postulate that to incorporate Patience is to implicitly concede that the play's apparent project at hand, namely to imbue the audience with a fervour for resisting destructive temptations for the sake of family values and a rigorous work ethic, is indeed as deceptive, inelegant, and graceless as the character that bears the name of a quality that stands in connection with the movement of which the play is a part.

Such plays on names that invoke the values of the temperance movement are not rare. In *Fifteen Years of a Drunkard's Life*, the protagonist's wife Alicia and his sister appear dressed up as such virtues on the occasion of a fancy-dress ball, the former choosing 'Temperance' and the latter 'Prudence' (see below). The protagonist's reaction to such masquerade clearly conveys the underlying tension under which he feels placed by the females of his family, and foreshadows the impending though impermanent rift:

> VERNON Oh, sisters! Prudence and Temperance – well, my fair ladies, these are virtues I have been between all my life, but could never yet come over to either of them. Adieu!
> (1.5)

The aspect of masquerade seems to add a component of reproach, suggesting that women adopt such personae to exercise a certain power and pressure over men, which in the context of the play is mostly of an economic nature. The scene in which Alicia confronts Vernon about his inability to provide for her and reports that she had to pawn her wedding ring in order to supply the family with food is a case in point. Upon receiving this information, Vernon is shocked and swears to forego alcohol. In their embrace of reconciliation, Alicia inadvertently drops a full purse, which reveals to Vernon that he has not been told the truth but manipulated instead. Just as Alicia tries to explain, Vernon interrupts her:

> VERNON Not a word – 'tis all explained. The wife would reclaim the truant husband; and with a subtle story lure him back again to home and obedience. You had no money?
> (2.1)

The association of "home" and "obedience" shows that the family structure proves coercive for Vernon and that he understands the appeals to his role as a provider to be first and foremost ploys to ensure his subjection to his wife's interests and culturally enshrined moral and disciplining superiority. This association therefore amounts to an excorporating unmasking of 'Prudence' and 'Temperance' as ideological tools to fortify a certain structure of socio-cultural organisation that may outwardly boast patriarchal power, but nonetheless puts men under pressures they are unwilling and unable to bear.

    In stark contradistinction to these family relations are the relations between men that form around alcohol and the spaces dedicated to its consumption in *Fifteen Years of a Drunkard's Life*. In addition to the aforementioned quality of the inn as a space of male happiness, it further becomes the space of male solidarity in this play, as it is the Landlord who furnishes the returned drunkard Copsewood with shelter, in spite of knowing of his failures. The words with which he offers Copsewood a place are particularly expressive of that attitude of mutual understanding and support and the awareness of outward pressures:

> LANDLORD Yes. I like prudence, and have practiced it – but not that cold and calculating foresight which you, and rightly, too, condemn. You may have done wrong once. Well, show me the man that has not,

> and let him tell you to starve on the highway – I have committed
> many an error, and have no right to say so, nor will I.
> (3.2)

Copsewood's gratitude-induced sobriety lasts barely into the next scene
and does not break with the general portrayal of alcohol-related profes-
sions as detrimental to health and respectability. Nonetheless, the Land-
lord's benevolence does betray a deeper understanding and sympathy than
is portrayed to operate between family members. Especially his reference
to "prudence" seems to take up the aforementioned play on names and im-
plicitly reference Alicia's persona during the masquerade. By implication,
the characters that personify the virtue of "prudence" are classed as repre-
sentative of a "cold and calculating foresight" – a description which does
not stand in conflict with the ruse employed by Alicia to persuade Ver-
non to quit drinking. While she is still convincingly portrayed to be moti-
vated by a concern for Vernon's well being, there is still an aspect of a ma-
nipulative intent, which is very strongly felt by her husband. In this man-
ner, and mirroring the use of names in *The Drunkard*, the virtues associated
with temperance and the characters that personify them are cast as agents
of coercion.

Conclusion: Tempering the Destructive Impulse

To conclude it can be said that temperance drama sets out to advocate cer-
tain kinds of impulse control and disciplines. However, the practices in
question do not solely pertain to the consumption of alcohol, and the shap-
ing of social practices does not only aim at curtailing this consumption.
The social practices at stake here pertain to the markers of antebellum mid-
dle-class status, most prominently family life. And the analyzed narra-
tive structures and character constructions are not used to present an im-
age worth of emulation, nor to construct images capable of deterring from
the vilified practice of alcohol abuse. Much rather, they are used to con-
struct an opportunity to vicariously experience that which is overtly repre-
sented as reprehensible. This opportunity provides the viewers with a space
that establishes itself in the process of viewing to fulfil the same stages of
the destruction of family life completed by the protagonist. In this man-
ner, temperance operationalises drama for the purposes of social control
through ex- and incorporating processes for the containment of antisocial,
destructive urges.

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Metatheatrical Possibilities in a Re-Consideration of Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*

Abstract

A discussion of metatheatre in Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good* illuminates interpretive possibilities beyond the scope of its original British contexts. Though not conceived in Australia, the play was first performed in the Australian Bicentennial year and was based upon Australian author Thomas Keneally's *The Playmaker* (1987), a novel about the first British colonial theatre production in Sydney. *Our Country's Good* boasts an extensive, international, production history. It has assumed canonical status in the UK where it was first staged under the direction of Max Stafford-Clark at the Royal Court and is now taught regularly in British secondary schools (Bush 2013: 118-19). Due to its thematic relevance to Australian postcolonial history, this work also occupies a place in Australian theatre that, while recognised, has been little examined. Despite wide recognition of its Australian origins in Keneally's novel, reception of the play has been guided by the multiple contexts – theatrical/industrial, political and social – of its first production in Britain. Despite Sara Soncini's recognition of the usefulness of metatheatre to the play's critical discourse (1999), the question of how metatheatre relates to the play's Australian elements remains largely under examined. This discussion of *Our Country's Good* repositions it within the context of Australian drama. By offering a closer examination of metatheatrical strategies in *Our Country's Good*, including in the play's Australian productions, the article demonstrates how metatheatre contributes to the work's distinctively Australian cultural value. In particular, it argues that the role described in the *dramatis personae* as the "Aboriginal" can be understood as one of the play's metatheatrical interventions. A more thorough understanding of this role as metatheatrical is vital to a full realisation of the play's critical capacities.

Keywords: metatheatre; Timberlake Wertenbaker; *Our Country's Good*; Australian theatre

Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good* (1988a) is a thoroughly metatheatrical play, staging, as it does, the convict rehearsals for the

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first theatre production in the British penal colony of Sydney Cove. As the play's final scene depicts the convict cast successfully beginning their production of George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* (1706), it ostensibly celebrates the power of art in the face of various hardships. Such has been at the heart of the work's British reception, beginning with its first production in 1988. Conceived by Max Stafford-Clark for the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre, the play has largely been interpreted as a metaphor for the fraught conditions faced by theatre producers under the late 1980s Thatcher government.

As plays naturally attract new interpretations in foreign contexts, a point also made by Elizabeth Schafer (2010: 63) in relation to this work, it is unsurprising that *Our Country's Good* has done so in its Australian productions. Whereas British productions have largely approached the play's Australian setting and historical premise as secondary (if not incidental), Australian readings of the work have tended to focus on colonial themes. Although the play did not originate in Australia, it was written at the time of that country's celebration of the Bicentenary of British settlement. Additionally, the work was based upon Australian author Thomas Keneally's *The Playmaker* (1987), a novel which gives an account of the first theatrical production in the British colony. George Farquhar's abovenamed Restoration comedy was performed by convicts on June 4, 1789, just one year after British arrival in Sydney Cove. Through its depiction of this theatrical event, *Our Country's Good* thus straddles multiple temporalities (eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries), and nations (Australia and Britain).

A discussion of this play's metatheatrical strategies offers insight into ways it can usefully be read beyond the scope of its original, British, contexts. By offering a closer examination of metatheatre in *Our Country's Good*, I illustrate how metatheatre is connected to the work's Australian cultural value. In particular, I argue that the role described in the *dramatis personae* as the "Aboriginal" can be understood as one of the play's metatheatrical interventions.

Defining Metatheatre

The term metatheatre was conceived by Lionel Abel in 1963, in a now widely known study entitled *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form*. As indicated in his title, the author presented an argument and hypothetical nomenclature for what he considered to be a new dramatic genre. While Abel does not draw upon Australian examples, the texts that inaugurate Australia's metatheatrical argument were written in the decades from which

he draws his contemporary examples and from which he writes.[1] The dramatic works of Patrick White (such as *The Ham Funeral*, 1965) and Dorothy Hewett (*The Chapel Perilous*, 1971), for example, both illustrate the ongoing dialogue regarding life and art that Abel suggests is central to metatheatre. Abel's work provides a history and a first definition of metatheatre that have been elaborated and debated by subsequent critics seeking to understand the evolution of metatheatre in the post-war period. Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, in "'Metatheater': An Essay on Overload", critiques Abel's use of the term "metatheatre" to define a genre, outlining problems of "latitude" in the ways in which the term itself has been defined (2002: 87-119). Despite the often compelling criticisms of Abel's theoretical premise, the term metatheatre has gained strong critical currency in the decades since its inception. The publication of several key texts devoted to the subject, including a collection of essays edited by Gerhard Fischer and Bernhard Greiner in 2007, indicates that the term remains current, if not to denote a genre, then to describe actual dramaturgical devices used by present and past practitioners. Hornby suggests that metatheatrical techniques might include: the play-within-the play; the ceremony within the play; role playing within the role; literary and real life reference; dramatic self-reference; and the depiction of perception as a theme within the play (1986: 32).

My own discussion of metatheatre, for the purpose of this argument, views the term not in the Abelian sense, in relation to a genre, but as a series of dramaturgical techniques including those outlined by Hornby, in particular the play-within-the-play. I also discuss the depiction of "backstage" as a metatheatrical strategy particularly vital to the play's cultural discourse.

Production and Perception

When *Our Country's Good* is viewed, as traditionally it has been, as a metaphor for the status of British theatre and society in the 1980s, the Australian setting of its events can appear secondary. Yet certain aspects have been crucial in cementing its position in Australian theatre history. The specific historical circumstances of this play's origins are frequently reiterated in critical discussions (Feldman 2013; Bush 2013). Wertenbaker's depiction of the first performance of a play by British convicts in the new colony is clearly significant in this respect and, as Hiley observes in a review of the original London production, it is in the play's final moments as the Recruit-

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[1] I have discussed the use of metatheatre in Australian Drama, and its prevalence in recent decades, more extensively elsewhere. See Clode 2015.

ing Officer "goes on" that Australian theatre "is born" (1988). Central to this depiction of the "birth" of British colonial theatre in Australia, is the play's indebtedness to Keneally's novel and the research on Australian history which, through the Royal Court's ensemble workshops, became incorporated into the play (Stafford-Clark 1989a; Sigal 2013). Historical source material drawn from Robert Hughes' popular history *The Fatal Shore* (1988) along with extracts from the diary entries of First Fleet officers, were not only referred to by the company but, through improvisations and analysis, worked into the scenes and dialogue of Wertenbaker's text. Similarly, accounts of the Fleet's experiences on the journey to Australia were embedded in the play's dialogue. The result is more than an account of this history; rather, the play is a celebration and theatrical examination of this moment in Australia's history, granted from an outside perspective.

This has led to diverse interpretations, both in production and reception. In its metatheatrical depiction of the rehearsal of *The Recruiting Officer*, *Our Country's Good* has typically been viewed as a celebration of theatre and an argument for the social value of the Arts during the fraught political climate of late Thatcherite Britain (Weeks 2000: 147). Despite the arguments of some critics that *Our Country's Good* privileges this celebration of theatre and theatricality at the expense of the more critical examination of the process of British colonisation offered in Keneally's *The Playmaker*, others have contested that the play engages with the power politics of empire in ways that challenge and, at moments, subvert, its celebratory theme. Soncini, for example, argues that the play's metatheatrical depiction of the rehearsal of *The Recruiting Officer* can be viewed as a project of empire building in which the convict cast, despite their apparent enjoyment of and temporary sense of liberation gained from rehearsals are, ultimately, oppressed colonial subjects (2000: 94-5).

In Australia, while reviewers continued to focus to some extent on the play's celebration of theatre, there was a marked shift in emphasis from this theatrical theme to the question of how the play engaged with the nation's colonial history (Soncini 2000: 279-82). One idea that resonated strongly in the Australian setting was that of the metatheatrical rehearsal for the convicts' play as a metaphor for rehearsal for nation. This echoes one of the key themes of Keneally's *The Playmaker*.

Our Country's Good was first performed in Australia in June 1989, in two simultaneous productions, one a touring production by Stafford-Clark's British ensemble, performed at the Sydney Theatre Company (STC) Wharf Theatre, the other an Australian production for the Melbourne Theatre Company (MTC), directed by Roger Hodgman and performed at The Playhouse. These productions, staged in the aftermath of Australia's Bicentennial celebrations, garnered a range of critical responses on their position-

ing relative to that event. The metatheatrical project was also noted for its commemoration of the bicentenary of the first convict production in Australia, the performance of *The Recruiting Officer* in Sydney Cove for the occasion of King George III's birthday (Stafford-Clark 1989a: xi). By staging productions of the same play two hundred years on, alongside Wertenbaker's metatheatrical exploration of the convicts' rehearsal process, the companies, both of which performed *The Recruiting Officer* and *Our Country's Good* in repertory, offered what was at once a celebration of, and an opportunity to critically reflect upon, a moment in Australian theatrical history.

An understanding of the intertextual relationships between *The Recruiting Officer* and *Our Country's Good* is useful in demonstrating how this repertory pairing opens up colonial themes for investigation (Feldman 2013: 155). First performed in London in 1706 at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, *The Recruiting Officer* is set in 1704 during the War of the Spanish Succession (Shugrue 1966: xi). Irish playwright George Farquhar, a former lieutenant and recruiting officer for the British Army, is believed to have drawn upon his own military experience when writing the play. Locating its action in Shrewsbury, then a remote country town, Farquhar satirises the pursuits of Captain Plume and his fellow officers as they cannily recruit the town's men for military service, while simultaneously (and in a play upon the meaning of 'recruitment') pursuing romantic affairs with its women. As Feldman explains, part of Farquhar's comedy lies in his characters' manipulations of contemporary social boundaries. Heiress Silvia, for example, plays with class and gender boundaries, disguising herself as an officer in a scheme to marry Captain Plume.

The range of meanings effected by the repertory pairing of classic and more recent works has been of interest to critics, notably Soncini who, examining the use of metatheatrical techniques such as character doubling (which occurred both within and between productions in the Royal Court staging) skilfully articulates the repertory and its entire production process as a "dialogue with the Restoration" (Soncini 1999: 73). This perspective is reflected in Stafford-Clark's published account of the company's rehearsals, structured as an imaginative correspondence with Farquhar and titled *Letters to George* (1989a).

Set at the moment of Australia's British colonisation, *Our Country's Good* begins on board the hold of a convict ship. The play is comprised of twenty-one short, episodic scenes, each with its own explanatory title. The use of scene titles is one of the Brechtian metatheatrical techniques indicated by the text and which critics and reviewers have frequently noted in their broad recognition of the play's theatricality.[2] Employed as a way of

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[2] Peter Kemp described the production as "stagily artificial throughout", referring

foregrounding the action or theme within each scene, the idea behind the use of such titles is that by hearing the scene announced in advance of its performance, audiences will be detached from the narrative and freer to engage critically in the action at hand.[3] Wertenbaker's scenes are accordingly given titles indicative of their key themes and events, for example "The Voyage Out" (1.1) and "The First Rehearsal" (1.11). When performed by the Royal Court ensemble, these titles were announced by the play's officer characters (Stafford-Clark 1988). Together, the scenes dramatise the making of the theatrical production commissioned by Captain Arthur Phillip, first Governor General of New South Wales. As well as depicting the convicts' challenges in performing Farquhar's characters, the play presents arguments from the colony's officers, both for and against the production of the play. Phillip, whose conception for the production aligns with his plan for the foundation of the new colony underpinned by the principles of reason exemplified by the Enlightenment, sees the project as a means of establishing a social "contract" with the convicts (Wertenbaker 1988a: 59).

It is to these ends that Phillip appeals to Lieutenant Ralph Clark to oversee the project of staging *The Recruiting Officer* and, while rehearsals do proceed, his plan for the convict production is met by oppositional views from several officers, in particular Robbie Ross. These responses can be interpreted as a critique of the late 1980s conservative government's attitude towards the kind of political theatre traditionally produced by the Royal Court. Ross' objections can also be read in relation to the play's portrayal of empire. He, unlike the more liberal and, in Wertenbaker's depiction, sympathetic character of Phillip, considers his role in the foundation of the colony as being to oversee the convicts' exile and punishment. His concern, shared in varying degrees by other officers, is that the liberties afforded to convicts by participation in the play will lead to "insubordination, disobedience, revolution" (Wertenbaker 1988a: 26).

In response to his opposition, Phillip argues for a less punitive approach to nation making.[4] As he explains to Lieutenant Clark during the play's second act, "I want to rule over responsible human beings, not tyrannise over a group of animals" (40). In presenting a view of theatre as a civilising agent, he determines that the largely illiterate convict community will ben-

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to the company's method of introducing scenes "with Brecht-like summaries of their content" (1988). Several other reviewers commented upon *Our Country's Good*'s use of metatheatrical techniques as being 'Brechtian', including, for example, Charles Osborne (1989).

[3] For discussion of the theory behind Brecht's use of scene titles, see Willett 1959: 74

[4] Ann Wilson (1991: 23) sees Wertenbaker's treatment of Governor Phillip as largely sympathetic, particularly when compared with Keneally's depiction of the Governor General in *The Playmaker*.

efit from the opportunity to learn the refined language of the nation's theatrical heritage. Phillip argues:

> The theatre is an expression of civilisation. We belong to a great country which has spawned great playwrights: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and even in our own time Sheridan. The convicts will be speaking a refined, literate language and expressing sentiments of a delicacy they are not used to. (25)

In offering these sentiments, Phillip articulates a vision of theatre as a socially beneficial, democratic and ultimately educative force.

In view of the Royal Court ensemble's approach when researching the play, the critical reception of this work as an argument for the transformative power of theatre is hardly surprising. That the convict rehearsal proceeds in spite of the protests outlined above and that, ultimately, the convicts stage their production, appear to support this reading. Importantly, the production of the play-within-the-play as depicted by Wertenbaker can be seen as mutually transformative; not only does the production allow the convicts to transcend their immediate circumstances, but its rehearsal also effects change among the officers, notably the director Ralph Clark.

Although the transformative power of theatre has remained the focus of British productions, the work has naturally taken on different meanings in new production contexts. This was particularly the case in Australia where, despite the Royal Court's attempts to explain the play as a British and not an Australian story, it was interpreted in relation to Australian colonial and post-colonial history and the politics of empire. The production's 'cultural transfer' from London to Sydney was complicated by several factors, one of which was its physical dislocation from the Royal Court (Carlson 2009: 279). At the Royal Court, staged amidst funding cuts and the related threat of closure, the play had operated as a subversive celebration of theatre (Bush 2013: 133-4; Nightingale 1998). In the tour to Sydney, this impact was inevitably dissipated by the production's change in location and also, significantly, its material circumstances. The Royal Court production in Australia was made possible via the support of producer Diana Bliss, corporate sponsorship and the coproduction of the work with the Sydney Theatre Company. As one of Australia's two major subsidised theatres at that time, the host venue was relieved, both physically and fiscally, from the pressures that had impacted upon the Royal Court. In this sense, the production was distanced from the industrial and political contexts that it had first set out to critique.

In addition, although the Royal Court's production remained essentially unchanged, its interpretation by Australian audiences was guided by a different set of social and theatrical circumstances from those that had in-

formed the play's London reception. Notably, the setting of late eighteenth century Sydney Cove, which had served as a metaphor for contemporary Britain, was no longer historicised in the same way. Upon arriving in Sydney, Stafford-Clark and the Royal Court ensemble were struck by the fact that their performances at the STC's Wharf Theatre would be taking place just "half a mile away from the site of the original historical performance" (Carlson: 279). Moreover, the "historical names" of the play's *dramatis personae* were names familiar to Australian audiences (ibid.). This level of immediacy, disrupting as it did, the reading of the play as British metaphor, explains the Australian production's focus upon colonial history. As mentioned previously, this effect was likely heightened by the production's proximity to the Bicentenary, an event that had brought the politics of Australia's colonial and post-colonial history to the forefront of national consciousness.

The play's connections to Australian history were mediated by the Australian media's coverage of the Royal Court tour. Our Country's Good was billed as both a convincing "Convict Play" (Carmody 1989) and the "Inside story of the birth of theatre in Australia" (Lateo 1989). The play's immediate relevance to Australian audiences was further foregrounded by references to the historical characters and events referred to within it. For example, the S*ydney Morning Herald* mentioned "Robert Sideway", explaining how this character, a convict and former pickpocket, had become "the colony's first theatre producer after making his debut in *The Recruiting Officer*" in 1789 (Evans 1989). In the history from which the play is drawn, Sideway is notable for having opened Australia's first colonial playhouse, only seven years after the convict production of *The Recruiting Officer* (Jordan 2007: 42).

"Backstage"

A critical focus on one of the play's metatheatrical dimensions, the scene titled "backstage", allows us to better realise the potential of the indigenous Australian role, a role which carries particular nuances in the context of an Australian production. Wertenbaker's "backstage" scene depicts not only the convicts' position within the colonial project, but the marginalisation of the Aboriginal Australian within the new society. The treatment of the Aboriginal Australian both here and throughout the text, contains the potential to disrupt the play's otherwise celebratory tone. Critics have viewed Wertenbaker's depiction of the Aboriginal Australian as one of the work's most problematic aspects (Bush 2013: 118-19). Even prior to *Our Country's Good* being staged in Australia, Billington and other review-

ers had expressed disappointment in the play's diminution of what had oc-
cupied a more central place in Keneally's novel (see Billington 1988). In *The
Playmaker*, the impact of British colonialism upon Australia's Indigenous
inhabitants is explored at length. Indeed, the importance of this theme is
highlighted by a dedication to "Arabanoo", the Indigenous Australian man
whose "real-life" capture and secondment to Arthur Phillip occupies one
strand of Keneally's narrative.

   The treatment of the Aboriginal Australian in *Our Country's Good* was
viewed by many critics as tokenistic (Asquith 1988; Kemp 1988; Billington
1988). Unlike the novel, Wertenbaker's play does not include any active ex-
change between the Indigenous and British colonial communities, despite
the fact that she had explored this possibility when writing the play (Bush
2013: 119). Bush explains that Wertenbaker had initially wanted to allocate
more space to exploring the relationship between British colonial and In-
digenous cultures. Evidence of this is found in early draft material, in par-
ticular a scene in which an Aboriginal Australian and a convict attempt
to communicate with one another, each speaking in their own language.
Within this draft scene, both the convict and the Aboriginal Australian ex-
press their wish to "go home" – a mutual sentiment designed to highlight
a shared status as 'subjects' of the colonial experiment. As Bush explains,
the ultimate omission of this material from *Our Country's Good* reflects
Wertenbaker's realisation that she lacked "the language" to accurately rep-
resent the Aboriginal voice (119). Consequently, although the play does not
ignore the question of colonial/Indigenous relations, the depiction of the
Aboriginal Australian is vastly reduced. Verna Foster describes this as "a
reduction [of the novelist's] treatment of colonization to four brief choric
appearances by a lone bemused and ultimately diseased aboriginal" (1997-
1998: 418), and while critics have broadly viewed this aspect of the play as
being under-written, it is nonetheless worth considering further. In what
follows, I argue that with the very stripping away of the Aboriginal role to
four brief choric appearances, Wertenbaker imbues the role, consciously or
otherwise, with a metatheatrical function. Within this function lies the po-
tential for a powerful social critique.

   Wertenbaker's Aboriginal Australian appears in four short moments
throughout the play. Upon the first appearance, which occurs in Act One
scene two, Wertenbaker uses a metatheatrical scene title to establish the
character's function from the outset. As the "Lone Aboriginal Australian
describes the Arrival of the First Convict Fleet in Botany Bay on January
20, 1788" (Wertenbaker 1998: 4) he is established as both an on-stage audi-
ence to the colonial project and a character who exists outside of it.[5] From

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[5] In the first edition the scene is titled "Convict Fleet in Botany Bay on January 20,

this moment, the Aboriginal Australian plays a similar role to a Greek chorus (a point acknowledged by several critics) in providing commentary on the events at hand (Soncini 1999: 92-3; Carlson 2009: 280-1; Bush 2013: 118-19). Soncini argues that this use of the Aboriginal Australian as an on-stage audience member foregrounds the act of viewing for the audience at-large (92-3). This metatheatrical strategy highlights the spectacle of the First Fleet's arrival and allows the audience to see the process of colonial arrival played out as though it is a theatrical event (ibid.). The language used by the Aboriginal Australian, along with his physical placement (always at a distance from other characters) enhances this effect.

The convict Fleet's arrival is described as a kind of other-worldly vision, or nightmare: a "dream which has lost its way" (Wertenbaker 1988a: 17). As the Aboriginal man watches this historical event unfold, he interprets it using language evocative of Aboriginal "Dreaming" mythology.[6] This language signifies the character's use of his own cultural understandings as he attempts to make sense of the unfamiliar event before him. His conclusion, perhaps based on a sense of impending danger, is that it would be "best to leave it alone" (Wertenbaker 1988a: 17).

Wertenbaker's use of the word "dream", as well as evoking an idea relevant to Aboriginal culture, creates a link with another notion of 'dreams'. Notably, dreams had been part of Keneally's inspiration behind *The Playmaker*. The novelist had been drawn to the diaries kept by Lieutenant Ralph Clark, in which Clark describes the vivid and often disturbed dreams he experienced during the early days of settlement in Sydney Cove. Consequently, Clark's dreams, and his attempts to purge himself of them, are incorporated into Keneally's narrative in *The Playmaker*. Beyond this, dream imagery is central to the play's metatheatrical staging of British colonial settlement. In describing the arrival and subsequent activity of the convict Fleet as a kind of dream, the Indigenous man casts the event into a kind of spiritual realm, a realm that, like theatre itself, is somehow suspended from everyday reality. Here through his metatheatrical narrative, the Aboriginal Australian creates the analogy of the Fleet's activities as a performance – specifically, the performance of British colonisation upon

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1788"; see Wertenbaker 1988a: 17. Despite their differing scene titles, the same action occurs in both editions.

   [6] For discussion and definitions of Australian Aboriginal "Dreamtime", or "Dreaming", see Elkin 1974, and also Korff 2019. Here, Australian Aboriginal Mudrooroo's definition of 'Dreaming' is offered as follows: "'The Dreaming,' or 'the Dreamtime,' indicates a psychic state in which or during which contact is made with the ancestral spirits, or the law, or that special period of the beginning". It is noted that there is, in fact, no exact English equivalent for the ideas contained within this Indigenous spiritual concept.

Australian shores.

The beginning of the play's last scene represents an important moment in the Aboriginal Australian's viewing experience. Here he questions the relationship between dreams and reality in his interpretation of the British community's presence. By this time afflicted with smallpox, a disease unknown in Indigenous communities before British settlement, the Aboriginal man appeals to the off-stage, contemporary audience "Look. Oozing pustules on my skin, heat on my forehead. Perhaps we have been wrong all this time and this is not a dream after all" (Wertenbaker 1988a: 51). Not only does the character describe his condition, but by directing the audience to "Look", he once again highlights the act of viewing. Here, though, rather than outlining what he sees (as he has done in each previous appearance), the character turns the audience's gaze upon himself for the first time. In viewing the dream that "is not a dream after all" but ultimately the historical event of Australia's British colonisation, the audience is in this way invited, in the final scene, to consider the impact of colonisation upon the Indigenous people. The character's metatheatrical direction of the audience to "Look" at him, effects both a different kind of viewing (as the subject of the gaze has changed) and a looking back, upon Australian history. Here the final scene's title, "Backstage", is significant and, to some extent, explains the limited representation of this character throughout *Our Country's Good*. The relegation of the Aboriginal Australian to this kind of 'behind-the-scenes' appearance can be read as a comment on the minor part into which he has been cast by the British settlers. Wertenbaker's metatheatrical depiction operates as a comment on the marginalisation of Indigenous Australians both in the play's historicised 1789 setting and beyond. Moreover, that the Aboriginal character belongs to the 'other' world, a world outside the British colony, enables a kind of metatheatrical performance that challenges both his status as 'other' and the dominant hegemony itself.

The Aboriginal man's exclusion from the performance event (in both senses – both the convicts' production of *The Recruiting Officer* and the performance of the new society that this performance represents), is emphasised in the lines that follow. Observing that the local tribespeople have gathered around before the pending production, the convicts remark:

MARY   Are the savages coming to see the play as well?
KETCH   They come around the camp because they're dying: smallpox.
MARY   Oh.
SIDEWAY I hope they won't upset the audience.
(Wertenbaker 1988a: 51)

Sideway's comment relates, on one level, to the on-stage audience of the

1789 performance. On another level, however, it can be applied to the wider audience of the present-day viewer. If recognised by the viewer in the moment of performance (or even afterwards) this comment may work to engage the audience in a critical reflection upon Indigenous Australians' marginalisation.

In expressing his concern about the audience's response to an Aboriginal presence, Sideway places the needs of the production, and arguably the colonial project, ahead of the Indigenous community who are visibly dying. As Soncini argues, this moment, in spite of its brevity, complicates the reading of the celebratory ending that follows. In her analysis of this scene she explains that "the convicts' solidarity", though enhanced significantly by their involvement in the theatrical project, "does not comprise their Indigenous fellow oppressed, who are therefore automatically banished from both the enjoyment of culture and the colony's social experiment" (1999: 93).

In an early draft of the play now held in the British Library, the convicts' concerns with the Indigenous presence at their first performance were even more detailed than they are in the play's published editions (Wertenbaker 1988b). Following Sideway's announcement that after his sentence he intends to "start a theatre company", Mary says "there are some sick aborigines around the stage, can we have them removed?" (Wertenbaker 1988b: 137). The deletion of this line from the script before the Royal Court premiere can be seen to soften the play's critique, particularly as it alludes to the historical 'removal' of Aboriginal people from Australian society due to sickness and by other means. Yet the deletion of the line between rehearsal and first production has not been accounted for in any relevant criticism to date. One possible explanation for this is that it may have been seen as likely to reduce audience sympathy for the character of Mary, or to detract too much from the play's celebratory ending. As demonstrated above, Wertenbaker uses the strategy of metatheatrical narration to encourage audience reflection on this subject. The fact that this reading, if realised, sits uncomfortably alongside the celebratory tones of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, and the related mood of theatrical triumph that ends this play, ultimately demonstrates the play's capacity to hold multiple perspectives in tension. As the following discussion of approaches taken in production illustrates, this tension is a productive one in the sense that it invites reflection upon the play and ultimately upon society, long after the production ends.

The Metatheatre of "The Aboriginal Australian" in Production

The approach taken to the Aboriginal role was a major point of contrast between the Royal Court's Sydney production and the simultaneous production by the Melbourne Theatre Company in 1989. Unlike the Melbourne production, Stafford-Clark's cast did not include an Indigenous Australian actor but rather maintained the original casting, as it did for the majority of roles. Thus, in Sydney as in London, the Aboriginal Australian was played by Jude Aduwudike, a British actor of Nigerian heritage, who also played Captain Watkin Tench and the convict Black Caesar. During the planning of the Royal Court's visit to the Sydney Theatre Company, the casting of a non-Indigenous actor in an Aboriginal role was perceived to be a potential problem by Richard Wherrett, then Artistic Director of the STC. Wherrett's concerns were acknowledged by Stafford-Clark in a facsimile sent in March 1989, three months before the company's tour. The British director writes:

> I certainly understand your concern about the aboriginal role although I'm not sure how to set about resolving it. There seem to be three possible solutions: the first would be to confront criticism, say this is an English company and to point to the lack of aboriginal actors in London. A second could be, as you suggest, to re-cast. I am loath to do this as part of the impact with both pieces is in seeing a close company at work, and absorbing an eleventh actor with a few days rehearsal would work against that. Our budget is stretched already. A third possibility would be to drop the part altogether. I think it's one of the least successful themes of the play: ironically, we had therefore been preparing to expand the role! In any case, I will talk to Timberlake and the actors as soon as we begin rehearsals. (Stafford-Clark 1989b)

This letter, previously unexamined by scholars, highlights the role as a particular challenge in the cultural transfer of *Our Country's Good* to Australia. Wherrett's suggestion that it be re-cast to incorporate an Indigenous actor is understandable in light of the Bicentennial celebrations that had just passed and which had been a site of particular anxiety for many Australians.[7] As Maryrose Casey explains, the climate of cultural tension in the lead up to the events of 1988 had culminated "in a march by 30,000 Indigenous Australians in Sydney on Australia Day, 26 January 1988, protesting the treatment of Indigenous Australians and celebrating their survival" (Casey 2004: 175). In his managerial capacity, Wherrett was attuned to

[7] Also the fact that there were, at this time, a number of outstanding Indigenous actors working in Australian theatre. For a further discussion of the Australian Bicentennial contexts see O'Brien 1991.

what, in the aftermath of the Bicentenary – an event viewed by many as commemorating two hundred years of Indigenous cultural dispossession, could be perceived as a further colonising project (O'Brien 1991: x). Wherrett's concerns belie his awareness of immediate social, political and theatrical contexts that had brought heightened public sensitivity to issues affecting Indigenous Australians. Within these contexts, Casey suggests, "the bicentenary was used by a range of artists as an opportunity to communicate through the forum of theatre" (175). Indeed, as critics have acknowledged, the bicentennial year saw a proliferation of works "dealing with Aboriginal experience", written by Indigenous and non-Indigenous playwrights (Milne 1991: 64). Plays by Indigenous writers included Jack Davis' Barunguin, first staged in February at the Playhouse, Perth, then later as the finale of a Davis trilogy in Melbourne (Milne 1991: 64; Casey 2004: 175-6). Davis' plays brought to light a range of issues including the problem of Indigenous deaths in custody, addressed most powerfully in Barungin (Casey 2004: 177). Notable works by other Indigenous playwrights included Eva Johnson's *Murras*, Bob Mazza's *The Keepers*, Vivian Walker's *Kadi*, and a number of plays staged at the 1988 World Expo in Brisbane (175-6). In discussing works written and produced at the time of the Bicentenary, Casey explains that "the initial invasion and settlement [of Australia by British colonists] were not [typically] the focus", with most addressing "contemporary issues" (177). Nonetheless some, among them Barungin, could be seen as an "ironic counterpart" to the Bicentennial celebrations (177). In a similar manner, the revisionist histories presented by a number of non Indigenous playwrights offered a counter-discourse to the celebration of British settlement; Michael Gow's *1841* and Stephen Sewell's *Hate* are two such works (Gilbert 1994: 29-30).

Bearing in mind the contexts discussed above, Stafford-Clark's focus on the importance of the British ensemble, a focus which was maintained in spite of Wherrett's concern, could be construed as an echo of the very colonial project that is played out in the final scene of *Our Country's Good*. Here, as in Wertenbaker's "backstage" scene, the bonds between the British cast who had worked on the making of the production were privileged over and above the inclusion of an Indigenous Australian actor in the theatrical event. In a further colonising gesture, these concerns were countered by the British company, who emphasised in publicity material that this was a British, not an Australian production and that, as such, Australian audiences "shouldn't be looking for a specifically Australian experience" (Stafford-Clark qtd in Schafer 2010: 63). In this way they reclaimed this moment of Australian history as particularly British.[8]

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[8] See also Morley 1989. Morley quotes Stafford-Clark's statement that: "An Aus-

While the British touring production was received in largely positive terms by Sydney reviewers, the Royal Court company's emphasis upon the contexts that had shaped the play originally did not prevent some critics from expressing anxieties about the colonising aspects of the project itself. Schafer, for example, has examined what she terms the unfortunate "rein-scribing of empire and colonial politics" (2010: 63) that occurred during the Royal Court's Australian tour, describing how, at the invitation of one of the British cast members, the "cast and audience at the matinee on 12 July stood in respect and marked the death of Laurence Oliver, by applauding him" (64). This event, doubly commemorated via its reporting in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, exemplifies the way in which the production reinscribed empire by celebrating an icon of British theatre whose "relations with Australia" and Australian theatre, as Schafer argues, "were always in the high colonial vein" (ibid.).

Although the Aboriginal Australian's casting seems to have been accepted in Sydney on the understanding of this being a touring production, reviewer John Carmody observed that the treatment of the role itself seemed "gratuitous … neither long nor artistically secure enough to make any worthwhile dramatic or ethical contribution to the play" (Carmody 1989). Carmody was also among the few critics to qualify the play's depiction of the "first Australian play" beginning his review with the observation that "theatre, in the form of the corroboree, has an exceedingly long history in this country; by contrast, English-language theatre is, according to our best records, precisely two hundred years old" (ibid.).

In drawing attention to corroboree as an ancient cultural – and theatrical – practice, Carmody highlights a further colonising dimension of the Royal Court British tour.[9] In relegating the Aboriginal Australian to the margins of the stage, Wertenbaker's play occludes an acknowledgment of corroboree as both cultural practice (a form of theatre) and intercultural exchange. Moreover, given that the Royal Court's repertory staging of The Recruiting Officer and *Our Country's Good* was billed as commemorating the bicentenary of a colonial theatrical event, the production might be seen, in the same way as the Bicentenary of nation had been seen by many

tralian audience shouldn't be looking for a specifically Australian experience – be it of prisons, or of the social history. Improvisation sessions have come from the performers' and director's own experiences and, inevitably, 'Australian' element were not as familiar to us. We were less able to explore that sort of experience. We would have liked, for example, to take the Aborigine-Governor relationship further, but that would have called for a type of understanding we couldn't tap into."

[9] For a discussion of corroboree as one of the earliest forms of inter-cultural contact between Indigenous communities and British settlers, and also a continuing tradition in Australian theatre, see Christine McPaul 2009.

Australians in 1988, as a sidelining of Indigenous Australian culture.

While several critics have commented on the colonising dimensions of the Royal Court project, few have examined how the Aboriginal role was handled in the Australian production, nor how, when the metatheatrical dimensions of this role are realised to full effect, the role can lend a powerful element to the play's production.[10] The recent contribution to a chapter on stagings of *Our Country's Good*, written by Roger Hodgman (director of the MTC production), describes how this role was cast differently from its casting in the British touring production (qtd in Bush 2013: 161-6). This casting, I suggest, reveals the metatheatrical potential of the role of the Aboriginal Australian, through which the play's critique of the process of British colonisation can best be realised in production.

The simultaneous timing of the 1989 Sydney and Melbourne seasons attracted considerable attention from reviewers, some of whom combined their assessment of each company's approach into a singular, comparative, review (e.g. Neil 1989). Most significant among the differences observed was the MTC's all-Australian casting, including popular Indigenous actor and musician Tom E. Lewis, who doubled as the Aboriginal Australian and Black Caesar. At the time of casting, Lewis was best known for his lead role in the 1978 film *Chant* of Jimmie Blacksmith, a film that adapted Thomas Keneally's Booker-nominated novel of the same name. Also highly regarded for his theatrical roles, Lewis' casting brought a new emphasis to the role, lending it both authenticity and authority (IMDB).

It is not surprising that Australian directors of *Our Country's Good* have wanted to make more of the Indigenous role. Hodgman, for one, was acutely aware that in the aftermath of the Bicentenary, many Australians had renewed appreciation for the fact that what to some had been a "celebration" had, to others, been "the anniversary of an invasion and the beginning of a threat to their ancient civilization" (qtd in Bush 2013: 163-4). In discussing his direction of the 1989 MTC production, Hodgman describes how, rather than focusing on the fact that the role appeared to be "under-written", he tried to approach the play's inclusion of an Indigenous character as an opportunity to "at least touch upon this vital strand of our history" (164). Without altering Wertenbaker's dialogue in any way, Hodgman emphasised both the Aboriginal man's presence and, paradoxically, his marginalisation in the society depicted within the play. The casting of a well-known actor was one of the ways in which the character's presence was enhanced. In addition, rather than have the actor exit between his few brief speeches, Hodgman had Lewis remain on stage throughout. Highly visible, the Ab-

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[10] Schafer (2010) offers a discussion of the role of the Aboriginal as realised in the MTC production but does not discuss its metatheatrical dimension.

original Australian was perceived as a "powerful presence" (Larkin 1989) "hovering at the fringes of most of the action" (Neill 1989), a contrast with the Royal Court's "minimal, perhaps token" representation.

Hodgman further extended the presence of the Aboriginal Australian by having Lewis incorporate sound into his performance. The actor/musician, whilst still visible in his position on the margins of the stage, played a didgeridoo as an aural motif throughout the play. Besides adding a strong, distinctive, Indigenous sound to the production, what is remarkable about this staging is the way in which it physically incorporated Indigenous performance into the play's own theatrical celebration. By staging Lewis' performance of the didgeridoo, Hodgman's production played out a resistance to the idea of the colonial performance as Australia's first theatre. Here, as a metatheatrical performance within a metatheatrical performance, the MTC acknowledged a theatrical tradition that long pre-dated the one celebrated in *Our Country's Good*'s convict production.

The Melbourne Theatre Company's staging of the Aboriginal Australian was undoubtedly one of the factors that contributed to observations among reviewers that this production had a darker edge than the Royal Court production. Another, related, factor was the different approach that Hodgman took to staging the "backstage" scene. Feldman has discussed how this scene, as written by Wertenbaker, works to involve the theatre audience in the play's celebration of theatre and its transformative effect upon the convict cast (2013: 153). In line with this view, the Royal Court production, as described above, showed the convict actors on stage, as though preparing to go out in front of a curtain (positioned up stage). The theatre audience was thus positioned as though they were part of the on-stage convict cast. From this vantage point, they were both included (and arguably swept up) in the convicts' preparations and excitement as the play ends and the production of Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* begins.

While this approach to staging encourages the audience to participate in the exciting energies of the backstage moment, a different approach, as taken in the Melbourne production, invites a more qualified response. Here the staging was reversed to show the convict cast upstage, facing the theatre audience who thereby became analogous with the audience of the 1789 convict production. Oakley, reviewing the production, argued that the result was "anti-climactic" – suggesting that the celebratory energies of the play were complicated by this change in spectatorial position (qtd in Carlson 2009: 282). However, positioned this way, audience members were forced to take up the subject position of a British convict and, as a result, were also implicated in the marginalisation and exclusion of the Aboriginal man. Carlson argues:

because this second staging maintains a traditional distance – and a tension between those on stage and those off, and because it conflates those in the audience with the oppressive colonizer, it is more in keeping with the hard edge of the Melbourne production. (282)

As demonstrated in these key differences between the British and Australian productions of 1989, Wertenbaker's play resonates in differing ways depending on the approach taken in its staging. In particular, the treatment of metatheatrical dimensions including the "backstage" scene and the Aboriginal character, can impact upon the extent to which the play is received as celebratory, critical, or indeed as Soncini argues, both (1999: 95-6). Soncini maintains that, even when the backstage scene is presented from its more engaging perspective, locating the audience alongside Wertenbaker's convict actors:

> [the play's] festive ending could be understood as a shrewd trick to involve, and thereby implicate the audience. It is upon leaving the auditorium that disturbingly mixed feelings about the meaning of one's response to *Our Country's Good* begin to surface. (95)

It is in this post-show reflection, the critic argues, that audiences are best able to reflect upon the play and here, too, that they realise that the celebration of theatre is at once a celebration of its transformative powers, its colonising powers, and a comment on its exclusion of Indigenous Australian culture.

Conclusion

While *Our Country's Good* offers a celebration of theatre and theatricality that was compelling in its original British contexts, over time and particularly in its Australian production contexts, more critical elements connected with colonial themes have become salient. This discussion has illustrated the importance of the play's metatheatrical strategies in realising these themes in production. In particular, the recognition of the Aboriginal Australian as a vital metatheatrical component of the play opens up opportunities for more nuanced productions of *Our Country's Good.*

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Roberta Mullini*

Bianca Del Villano, *Using the Devil with Courtesy. Shakespeare and the Language of (Im)Politeness*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2018, pp. 196

Abstract

This review of Bianca Del Villano's *Using the Devil with Courtesy. Shakespeare and the Language of (Im)Politeness* highlights the interdisciplinary approach used in the volume, so that the pragmatic research at its basis is enlivened with a vast series of theoretical perspectives. The detailed study of im(politeness) phenomena goes hand in hand with the Author's cultural awareness of the deep changes in early modern English society, thus shedding new light onto the interpersonal relationships revealed by dramatic dialogue both in *Hamlet* and in *The Taming of the Shrew*, the two plays chosen as case studies.

Keywords: Shakespeare; politeness theories; historical pragmatics; interdisciplinarity; *Hamlet*; *The Taming of the Shrew*

When commenting on the Shakespearean phrase from *Twelfth Night* used in the title of Del Villano's volume, Keir Elam observes that Feste, the speaker, "makes fun of the politeness and gentility that are so central to the play's concerns" (Shakespeare 2008: n. 33 to 4.2.33). Feste is mock-exorcising Malvolio in the famous dark-room scene of this play and, feigning to be speaking to the devil himself to whom Malvolio has allegedly fallen prey, claims to be "one of those gentle ones that will use the devil with courtesy". The original Shakespearean text and its editorial comment encapsulate the two main keywords of this study: "politeness" in its contemporary meaning, and "courtesy" with its early modern semantics, connected to the transformation of courts and courtiers between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Two words (and two concepts) that Del Villano analyses in depth from both the pragmalinguistic and the cultural side of their meaning and usage. It is clear, then, that the investigation carried out by the Author involves Shakespeare studies, pragmatics and in particular politeness theories, semantics, and cultural studies. The interdisciplinarity of the approach is, therefore, evident as early as the title itself and becomes more and more manifest along the four chapters into which the book is divided.

The first chapter offers a well outlined panorama of politeness studies, showing their use in defining interpersonal and social relationships. Politeness theo-

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ries, from their onset in the early 1970s in the wake of John Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) implemented with Erving Goffman's definition of "face" and Paul Grice's "cooperative principle", were applied to natural conversation and, generally speaking, to speech. But soon it became evident that other linguistic territories could be explored with these tools, especially when dealing with the language of the past, i.e. with those times when audio technological recording was impossible. This resulted in drama becoming a privileged research field to study, both synchronically and diachronically, the features of conversational interactions. Of course researchers have always been well aware that plays are fictional constructs and that playwrights build up their dramatic situations 'artificially' so to speak, and make their characters move in a pre-defined context. Nevertheless (and possibly just because of that), this does not prevent the application of pragmatics tools to drama, given that all the aspects necessary to analyse conversation are there: there are speakers involved in dialogues and there is a context. Del Villano, grounding her research on a multitude of studies from Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson's seminal *Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena* (1978) and the same authors' revised version of their study in 1987 to the most recent developments of the idea of (im)politeness offered by Jonathan Culpeper's *Impoliteness. Using Language to Cause Offence* (2011), delves through a vast background of theoretical positions in order to detect the most suitable research paths for her exploration of *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, the two Shakespeare plays chosen as case studies.

Before investigating the plays in chapters 3 and 4, however, the Author devotes chapter 2 to the historicisation of our contemporary concept of politeness. Here she approaches not only the linguistic problem of exploring early modern forms and strategies of (im)polite conversational behaviour, but also the context of Elizabethan and early Jacobean society with its religious, political and cultural turmoils. In this way Del Villano explores the intriguing phenomenon of social mobility inside which the "culture of courtesy" was an essential pass to promotion, also foregrounding a "new sense of the Self" and the concept of subjectivity connected to its Reformation origins (16). The *facework* (in the Goffmanian sense) necessary to create and preserve speakers' social image results at the centre of the Author's analytical concerns. In this perspective the plays selected as case studies present a multifaceted range of (im)politeness strategies, from the court(esy) language in *Hamlet*, to the lower classes' speech in *The Shrew*, where gender issues are also focused through the powerful highlighting of a female subject.

Although for her detailed study of the two Shakespeare plays Del Villano has deftly made use of the whole apparatus of historical pragmatics, the categories mostly employed derive from Brown and Levinson's research of politeness strategies and from Culpeper's later focus on impoliteness. To these she also adds specific works devoted to Shakespeare plays, such as Roger Brown and Albert Gilman's "Politeness Theory and Shakespeare's Four Major Tragedies" (1989). Well equipped with these and other tools, she copes with the complexities of the two plays in so scrupulous a way as to be able to add many insights to the traditional readings of *Hamlet* and of *The Shrew*.

Courtesy in *Hamlet* is investigated as "a performative social practice that

formed part of the fabric of the English monarchy and State in the aftermath of the War of the Roses" (73), rising from "one's position in the discursive structure – a structure that obviously reflected class hierarchy" (74). The value of the inter-disciplinary approach employed by Del Villano is evident from these historical notes (constantly in the Author's mind and text), complemented by a skillful re-sort to politeness studies. In my opinion, one of the major results of the Author's analysis of *Hamlet* is the application not only of the category of affection (as in-troduced by Brown and Gilman 1989) in order to disentangle the intricacies of courtly discourse between Hamlet and Claudius, but also of the "reflexivity cour-tesy" variable, i.e. a positive politeness strategy used by "people of high rank": "the more polite a lord, the more powerful he appeared to those around him" (96). The most strategic dialogues in the tragedy are focused by Del Villano in particu-lar when Hamlet dissembles his words under the mask of folly (for example when the Prince talks to Rosencrantz and to Osric so as to reveal their hypocrisy, but al-so when he dialogues with the Gravediggers and arrives at admitting to his own discursive defeat). Hamlet's frequent recourse to off-record strategies and to mock politeness is underlined as distinctive of his speaking, while his counterfeited madness allows him "to exploit off-recordness strategically to offend others or to defend himself" (122).

The relations of power, which play a great role in *Hamlet* because of the trag-edy's courtly context, are examined from a different standpoint in *The Shrew*, where the context is given by a 'middle-class' patriarchal family and by gender relationships. After summarising the traditional position of shrews in early mod-ern patriarchal society when such derisive and dangerous forms of scolding as 'carting' and 'ducking' were adopted, Del Villano proceeds to the analysis of some dialogues in the play from its very beginning, i.e. from the Induction. Actually, here the playwright seems to experiment contrasting class positions (and there-fore contrasting politeness strategies) in the relationship between Sly the tinker and the Lord, as a prelude to the stronger discrepancies of the gendered exchang-es between Petruccio and Katherine in the play. Furthermore, the Lord's long speech to his servant (Ind. 1. 104-22) contains in a nutshell the picture of the ide-al wife and of the behaviour such a woman must have to show her whole obedi-ence to her husband: "the speech offers a description of the proper behaviour of wives, characterised by humility, courtesy and 'low tongue'" (147). It is not difficult to project, by contrast, this portrait of the ideal wife onto Katherine's subsequent ways of dealing with the other characters in the play. While Hamlet's pragmatic strategies are mainly labelled as indirect and off-record, those of the protagonist in *The Shrew* are read as direct, on record and ready to offend the addressee. This is why Del Villano interprets Katherine's speeches as due to willful impoliteness. However, since Petruccio is "a direct and bald speaker" himself (158), their dialogic struggles often result in "flyting", i.e. a competitive ritual game of insults (see 161), seasoned with mock politeness.

What contemporary gender studies like the least, i.e. Katherine's final speech signalling her acceptance of the traditional patriarchal hierarchy, is also readable, according to the Author's study, as mock politeness, joking on Petruccio's posi-tive face (169): "Politeness has emerged as a 'dress' that Petruccio forces on her

but which she eventually appropriates by performing it as a self-defensive-strategy. In the end, she plays the obedient wife." (170). One might say that Petruccio's efforts to impose a new identity on Katherine (his renaming her 'Kate' witnesses to this) results in her strong defence of her own inner identity through a clever use of all linguistic strategies at her disposal, from excessive face-threatening acts to excessive (and therefore imitative) gestures of polite deference.

As a whole, on the one hand Del Villano's research shows how an integrated theoretical and methodological apparatus is always able to offer fresh insights even about such a widely studied subject as Shakespeare plays. On the other, while revealing new results as far as the chosen plays are concerned, it highlights the potentialities of Historical Pragmatics to shed new light into early modern language and its social, power and gender interconnections. And it also invites further research.

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Kerstin Pfeiffer*

Re-Writing the Script: Updating the Massacre of the Innocents for the Twenty-First Century

Abstract

Mystery plays constitute an important element in the heritage practice of York and Chester, two English cities with surviving medieval play cycles, which have been at the forefront of mystery play revivals since 1951. In their historic and their modern incarnations, the York and Chester mystery plays are considered vehicles for the celebration of community. However, the medieval and modern plays seek to reach out to their spectators in different ways, not least because modern mysteries are performed for an increasingly diverse audience, drawn from a wider constituency, both in cultural and religious terms, compared to their medieval antecedents. Drawing on theatre studies scholarship and performance observation, this article explores the challenges that contemporary productions have to overcome in order to engage twenty-first century audiences. It focuses on dramatizations of the Massacre of the Innocents, a particularly popular episode in the Middle English Corpus Christi cycles, which remains a firm favourite with modern directors. By exploring the strategies that historical mystery plays and their recent incarnations in 2013 (Chester) and 2014 (York) use for managing feeling, it illustrates how modern productions seek to build a sense of community – not necessarily a religious but an ethically engaged sense of community. Modern versions of the Massacre of the Innocents emerge as exemplary sites for exploring the ways in which re-appropriating the culture of the past in the present through performance creates spaces for negotiating contemporary senses of community.

Keywords: Mystery Plays; York; Chester; Innocents; revival; affect; community

Modern productions of medieval mystery or Corpus Christi plays constitute an important element in the cultural heritage industries of York and Chester. Since the 1951 Festival of Britain, both cities have staged large-scale performances of their mystery plays at regular intervals, drawing on their surviving fifteenth- and sixteenth-century cycles of play texts. These productions attract large audiences: the 2013 Chester Mysteries were seen by around 11,000 people, for example (Henwood 2015). Beyond the Chester and York performances, over the past four decades, smaller-scale productions of extracts and condensed or hybrid versions of extant Corpus Christi play cycles across the UK have also contributed to a vibrant contemporary afterlife for medieval biblical drama. This may seem surprising, since dramatic conventions and social structures have changed enormously since the later Middle Ages, when these plays were originally performed. The popularity of revivals and re-imaginations of medieval biblical drama has been linked to two aspects in particular: firstly, the creative opportunities that this dra-

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matic form provides, and, secondly, a sense of its continued relevance in the modern world.

The staging requirements of many extant medieval plays allow for experimentation with outdoor staging and the re-purposing existing public spaces within cities as performance spaces, which makes them popular with producers, as Normington (2007: 19-21) points out. Thus, many modern incarnations of Corpus Christi plays, especially those linked to arts or community festivals, consciously continue medieval street performance traditions in order to create more intimate and immediate performance experiences for their audiences. Like their medieval predecessors, they also draw on large numbers of local amateur players and volunteers whose 'realness' and potential familiarity to the audience as members of the local community encourages an emotional connection between spectators and performers, thus blurring the boundaries between play world and real world even further (Snyder-Young 2009: 101; Nicholson 2014: 77-9). For example, the 2013 Chester Mysteries involved around 300 local participants (Henwood 2013); the York Mystery Plays a year later included over 500 local people as actors, builders, and musicians (YorkMix 2014). Theatre and heritage studies scholarship frequently invokes such community involvement as a key factor in ensuring the contemporary relevance and sustainability of modern mystery play productions. Building a play becomes coterminous with building a community – a community of performance based on the shared experience of creating or participating in a play, and a community with a (medieval) past. "In York today, when the wagons roll through the streets of the city," Alexandra Johnson notes, "there are bonds stretching back through the centuries – bonds of race memory, of shared physical space, of common history" (2011: 157). There is a perception in existing scholarship that modern mystery plays, like their medieval predecessors, are first and foremost plays for and of the people of a specific locality (McGavin 2010; Normington 2007; Rogerson 2015), that they "stage for the city a spectacle of itself" (Beckwith 2001: 13). At times, this seems to somewhat downplay the fact that contemporary large-scale mystery play festivals like those in York and Chester are dual in nature: they are local events as well as major tourist attractions, drawing thousands of visitors from all over the country and from all kinds of cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Tyler 2010; "Behind the Scenes at the York Museums Trust 2012-14" 2014: 6; Henwood 2015). The emphasis on modern mysteries as pieces of theatre that have special resonances for a particular local community also detracts from other mechanisms which may be at play in facilitating a sense of shared experience among the participants.

Their popularity of modern mystery play festivals confronts us with the question of how this centuries-old dramatic form found in the mystery plays sustains its appeal to the diverse audiences of multi-cultural twenty-first century Britain, in which audiences may have multiple faiths or indeed none. After all, in medieval England, mystery plays were considered a means to transmit Christian doctrine and to inspire devotion. Perhaps the answer lies in the way these plays mobilise affect. While the shared emphasis in biblical drama and in the medieval practice of affective piety on affective experience, imaginative reconstruction, and the performance of feeling is well established (Davisdon 2007: 141-67; McNam-

er 2010; Rogerson 2011; Stevenson 2011), the question of how modern productions deal with this dramatic legacy has received considerably less scholarly attention. Normington notes that in many professional productions, the religious dimension of medieval civic religious drama becomes merely "a framework through which to discover contemporary resonances" (2007: 21) and cites Bill Bryden's production *The Mysteries* at the Royal National Theatre in London (1977-85 and 1999-2000), which aligned medieval guilds with modern unions, as an example of such a strong conceptual reading. What interests me here is the question of how predominantly *non-professional* productions with strong community involvement grapple with the fact that the religious scope of medieval mystery plays no longer necessarily provides an easy bond between people.

In this article, I will explore how two specific contemporary productions deal with the dramatic legacy of affective piety. Both productions reimagine versions of the Massacre of the Innocents. They were performed, respectively, as part of the Chester Mysteries in 2013 and the York Mystery Plays in 2014. This story of Herod's killing of all male children under the age of two in Bethlehem was a popular dramatic subject in late medieval Britain. As an "iconic event" which shaped the public's perception of the past, present and future, it served as a means through which ideas of community were negotiated (Tolmie 2010: 285). The Massacre of the Innocents remains a firm favourite with modern directors choosing playlets for abridged mystery play cycles, even though the combination of knockabout humour, violent infanticide and vocal grief that characterises many existing medieval versions makes it perhaps one of the more challenging episodes to adapt for a modern audience.

Attention to the question of how plays bridge the gap in the conventions and expectations that exist between medieval and modern audiences can help us to understand how modern productions prompt their audiences to find affective affiliations. The reinterpretations of the Massacre of the Innocents in Chester (2013) and York (2014), I argue, seek to do so, first and foremost, by relocating the atrocities at the centre of the story in the performative present. At a time when concepts of community are being rethought as a result of new cultural, political and economic realities, the ways in which these modern productions of the Massacre of the Innocents project ideas of community in and through performance merit particular scrutiny. Approaching the aesthetic and cultural challenges that modern mystery play productions have to negotiate with enquiries into the dynamics between affect and social change in community-based theatre in mind, my larger aim is to contribute to our understanding of how the heritage practice of mystery playing can become a social and cultural agent by creating 'affective transactions' (Thompson 2009) between people.

Invitations to Feeling

The Massacre or Slaughter of the Innocents is one of the very few biblical episodes to survive in six different Middle English dramatic versions, all of which embellish the sparse account in Matthew 2:16-19 considerably. The latter simply

states that Herod was angry with the three kings for disobeying his order to return, and that he sent his henchmen to kill all boys under the age of two. In contrast, the surviving Middle English pageants examine Herod's motivations, confront the audience with the bloodlust of some soldiers and the scruples of others, and, most importantly, give voices to the mothers of the children as they struggle to resist Herod's soldiers. The York and Chester massacre pageants are perhaps the best-known versions because of their long modern performance history. The York *Slaughter of the Innocents*, formerly 'brought forth' by the Girdlers and Nailers, is a self-contained pageant in a cycle of forty-seven.[1] The Chester *De Occisione Innocensium ex Heredis Tirannica Persuasione* was produced by the Goldsmiths and embeds the flight into Egypt into the narrative of the massacre.[2] These two pageants provide examples of the earliest and the latest surviving medieval play texts: the York manuscript can be dated to 1463-77 (Beadle 2009: xii); the extant Chester play texts all date from the late seventeenth century (Lumiansky and Mills 1974: ix). Both were originally staged in processional performance on pageant wagons which stopped at various points in the city along a predetermined route. While there is scant evidence for the precise staging of these two pageants, implicit and explicit stage directions, documentary evidence, and iconographic conventions suggest that Herod and his court occupied the wagon, while the scenes between the soldiers and the mothers were played out in the street.[3]

The staging conventions for civic religious drama helped to turn performances of a biblical past like those at Chester and York into explorations of the medieval present. The use of the city as a flexible playing space, combined with the use of contemporary dress, language and references, blurred boundaries: those between play and real life, stage and auditorium, and actors and spectators, who were members of the same civic community (McGavin 2010). These staging conventions now create aesthetic and cultural challenges that modern productions have to negotiate. One such challenge arises from the handling of distance – including physical proximity and linguistic distance. Medieval mystery plays make regular use of audience address which breaks the mimetic frame and draws the audience into the play-action. In the surviving Middle English versions of the Massacre of the Innocents, it is the character of Herod who turns directly to the spectators. In the Chester play, Herod acknowledges the nearby audience in the street in his opening monologues as "subjectes all that here bene sett" (*De Occisione Innocensium* 10.9) and makes it clear that he will not tolerate objections to the plan for mass murder he goes on to delineate (*De Occisione Innocensium* 10.13-14). The York

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[1] In the following, all quotations from this play will be given as *Slaughter of the Innocents*, followed by the number given to the pageant in the edition prepared by Beadle (2009) and line numbers.

[2] Quotations from the Chester *De Occisione Innocensium ex Heredis Tirannica Persuasione* are taken from Lumansky and Mills' (1974) edition and will be given as *De Occisione Innocensium* followed by the pageant number and line numbers.

[3] The stained-glass panel depicting the Massacre of the Innocents in the east window of the Church at St Peter Mancroft in Norwich gives an indication of how contemporaries imagined the scene. Herod, shown here as a medieval ruler, watches as the massacre carried out by armoured knights unfolds around him. See "The Church of St Peter Mancroft".

Herod similarly demands silence: "And still as stone you stand / And my carping recorde" (*The Slaughter of the Innocents* 19.4-5). McGavin argues that Herod's demands for silence offer "encouragement to disobey authority" to the spectators in the safe, controlled and fictional space of the play world while at the same time inviting "theatrical complicity" in the subsequent killings (2010: 210, 209). Yet the character of Herod provides more than a social release valve, not least because his audience address vies with a number of factors which have distancing effects. Firstly, Herod is a type rather than an individualised persona.[4] In both plays, he is portrayed as an almost farcial figure, a ranting and raging tyrant obsessed with earthly power. Secondly, as a member of the civic community, the actor playing Herod in these plays may have been familiar at least to some members of the audience. While such familiarity allows the spectator to develop a potentially closer relationship with the performer and the performance, it also reinforced the notion that the actor *represented* the character of Herod.

A second challenge for modern productions arises from the handling of violence against children in medieval plays of the Massacre of the Innocents. For fifteenth- and sixteenth century audiences, the massacre was first and foremost a traumatic event which foreshadowed the death of Christ. Dramatizations of the massacre sought to breathe life into this typological reading of the story (Tolmie 2010: 285) and thus frequently indulge in recounting the manner of the children's deaths. In the York *Slaughter of the Innocents*, the children are stabbed with swords; the Chester play sees them speared on lances. Documentary evidence for plays with similarly gruesome subject matter such as Thomas Becket plays or the pageants depicting the Passion, as well as implicit and explicit stage directions, suggest that the actual massacre was staged with a degree of realism. Moreover, the amateur actors and producers of the mystery plays across Europe were no strangers to elaborate stage props such wooden dolls and hidden bags of animal blood which could conveniently spurt out when the stage action required it (Owens 2005: 40; Enders 1999: 193; Gatton 1991: 82). Yet, as Owens points out, "clinical accuracy" in the depiction of violence is not necessarily what makes it seem authentic; rather, it is the "distortions and fictions" that create the illusion of reality and truth (2005: 34).

The staged violence against children in the massacre plays has been decried as sadistic and Other (Gatton 1991) on the one hand, and rationalised as pedagogically useful (Enders 1999) or "doctrinally motivated" (Owens 2005: 60). In other words, it is considered to be enacted for the spiritual benefit of the individual and the Christian community which it reaffirms – not least through the anti-Semitism that accompanies it (Beckwith 2001; Hill-Vasquez 2007). Yet, as Enders cautions, any attempts at condemning or explaining graphic violence on the medieval stage as merely part of a larger teleological pattern may serve only to mask a somewhat disturbing affinity with violent spectacle in modern film, borne out of a "false notion of our own moral superiority" (Enders 1999: 21). If all the fifteenth-century playgoer would have wanted or needed was the biblical story and its doctrinal

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[4] The medieval European traditions of portraying Herod on stage are discussed in Skey (1979) and Godfrey (2016).

meaning or its moral message, a sermon for the twenty-eighth of December, Holy Innocents Day, may have sufficed. What dramatizations such as the York and the Chester Massacre pageants offered the citizens of these towns was an opportunity to add themselves and their daily lives imaginatively into the religious tradition's soteriological view of the world. The simulated brutality of these plays permitted them to contemplate the violence that paves the way to Redemption in a protected frame and, at the same time, to witness and experience its effects on a human level through non-scriptural scenes focussing on the mothers' affective responses.

Both the York *Slaughter of the Innocents* and the Chester *De Occisione Innocensium* involve at least two mothers and two soldiers as speaking parts. The York pageant foregrounds maternal protectiveness through an extended lament over the death of their children. The mothers' laments are drawn from the formulaic repertoire traditionally associated with mourning the dead and were probably visually underlined by familiar gestures of grief (Burrow 2002; Davidson 2001). The women start almost every turn with "allas", an exclamation signalling sorrow, and express their intense grief in laments such as this, spoken by the first mother immediately after the murder of her son: "Allas, I lose my liffe, / Was neuere so wofull a wyffe" (*The Slaughter of the Innocents* 19.215-16). In the Chester play, the death of the first child is similarly followed by a lament:

> Prima mulier Owt, owt, and woe is me!
> Theeffe, thou shall hanged be.
> My chyld is dead; now I see
> my sorrowe may not cease.
> (*De Occisione Innocensium* 10.345-8)

In contrast, the Chester play combines murder and lament with an energetic battle of the sexes in which the soldiers and the mothers trade earthy verbal insults before the mothers set upon the Herod's henchmen with shoes and household implements.

It has been suggested that scenes like the one quoted above, which are replete with exclamations and "emotion words" (Rosenwein 2006) that signal intense grief, can provide cues for meditative imagination, the central technique of affective piety, for actors and audiences alike (Rogerson 2012). In other words, they are considered to provide (quite literally) the script for the performance of feeling on stage or to elicit potential contagion responses among the audience (Lerud 2008; McNamer 2010). However, emotional expressions such as the mothers' grief are not the embodied evocations of actual experiences that modern audiences have come to expect, or, in Richard Schechner's terms "twice-behaved behaviour" (1985: 36). They do not objectify subjective emotional experience but are modelled instead on pre-existing, theologically and devotionally informed ideas about emotions and feeling. Hence, they draw attention first and foremost to the devotionally relevant elements of the story, in this case an empathetic engagement with the death of children considered types of Christ.

How do modern productions of the York *Slaughter of the Innocents* and the Chester *De Occisione Innocensium* challenge their audiences to respond to this story of infanticide? I would like to explore this question by looking at two mod-

ern productions which take rather different approaches to reimagining the blood-soaked visions of the medieval play-texts they are based on. While the Chester Mysteries of 2013 represent a very clear departure from the medieval text and performance context, the 2014 York Mystery Plays production of *The Massacre of the Innocents* retains close links with the original medieval script. Exploring the strategies used in these modern productions to encourage the audience to define for themselves the meaning of the story in their own contemporary communities allows us to see how they can function as a means of community building.

Reframing the Massacre for Modern Audiences

The 2014 York Mystery Plays were performed on 13 and 20 July at four stations around the city. It was a wagon production: starting at Dean's Park next to York minster at noon, the individual plays were performed on pageant wagons which were moved through the city along a predetermined route after the performance by teams of pushers guiding them from venue. Two stations, Dean's Park and the Museum Gardens, included covered, tiered seating. The College Green allowed for picnics and the Kings Square (13 July) and St Sampson Square (20 July), allowed spectators to gain an insight into the intimacy of medieval street performance. The Mystery Plays included twelve plays in two parts of six plays each, which were chosen from the medieval cycle by artistic director Deborah Pakkar-Hull to tell the story of the world and humankind from the Creation to Doomsday. Each play was performed by a local group or modern-day guild, some of which have medieval roots. It derived its overall shape from the surviving medieval text and mostly retained the existing dramatis personae, albeit with some notable exceptions: The Doomsday play included Steampunk Morris dancers, and at each station, a group of three enacted chorus written by Ged Cooper, which commented on the stage action and thus mediated between the performance and the audience, not unlike the expositor figures known from other cycles. While the chorus may have helped the audience relate to the plays, there was a clear spatial separation between performers and spectators, especially in the Museum Gardens, where stewards monitored the ticketed access to a scaffold stand, which afforded uninterrupted views of the play action and generally ensured that specific spaces would be free for the performers.

The *Massacre of the Innocents* is the fourth play in part one which covers the *Creation* to the *Agony in the Garden*. It is the last play based on the Old Testament and was produced by Heslington Church, an ecumenical partnership between the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the Roman Catholic Chaplaincy to the University of York. It involves a cast of twelve and lasts for approximately seventeen minutes. The production highlights some of the challenges inherent in retaining medieval theatrical devices and strategies for managing feeling in the twenty-first century. The Heslington Church version of the massacre makes a reverential nod to medieval performance traditions not only through its staging but also by localising the action in space and time: the massacre takes place in the present, outside Heslington Church. Herod appears as a contemporary,

suit-clad dictator; his portrait in white military uniform in the background ech-
oes images of former Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi. The modern dress per-
formance seeks to "draw parallels between Jesus' time and today" and to illustrate
that neither dictators or massacres of innocent people are a thing of the past (Ty-
ler 2014: 24), which is in keeping with the overall aim of the festival voiced by di-
rector Deborah Pakkar-Hull: to tell "a human story that . . . will resonate with a
21st-century audience as much as it did for the original audience" (Laycock 2014).
More importantly, however, the production retains the Middle English play script
almost in its entirety.

The dialogue follows the surviving play text closely, with only minor cuts
from Herod's boasting opening monologue and some concessions to the mod-
ern ear in terms of pronunciation. In medieval York, the use of contemporary lan-
guage on stage fostered a dynamic relationship between character and specta-
tor and underlined the contemporary relevance of the biblical story. Here the de-
cision to retain the medieval script, albeit slightly modernised, risks reinforcing
boundaries between the play and the audience by drawing attention to the alter-
ity of the Middle English dialogue. The use of audience address may serve as an
example. For modern British audiences, particularly those unfamiliar with more
avant-garde productions, direct audience address may seem transgressive of ex-
pected theatrical conventions outside pantomime, rather than a means of evoking
'theatrical complicity' and of drawing them into the performance. Moreover, di-
rect audience address is all the more effective the closer the spatial proximity be-
tween spectator and performer. The increased distance now required by health
and safety concerns (among others) at outdoor performances results in reduced
immediacy and intimacy, not least because of the acoustic consequences. On the
stand in the Museum Gardens, from where I watched the performance, the ac-
tors were sometimes rather difficult to hear, not least because of the traffic-relat-
ed background noise which almost inevitably accompanies outdoor performances
in modern cities. Anecdotal evidence suggests that quite a number of people, in-
cluding those I attended the performance with, also struggled to hear the actors.
In addition, they found the at times archaic language challenging, leading them
to 'switch off' from the performance. In other words, mostly retaining the medie-
val play script bore the risk of reinforcing linguistic distance between the perfor-
mance and the spectators.

The production retains a representation of the massacre, but one which de-
viates significantly from the fifteenth-century York pageant. Where the medie-
val York script insist on the stark brutality of the killings, the 2014 version of the
Massacre of the Innocents is presented as a highly stylised, silent tableau. The ac-
tion is frozen for a few moments as one soldier in the foreground raises his ma-
chine-gun as if to strike a woman and her child, here represented by a cloth bun-
dle lying on the ground; a second soldier similarly attacks a woman in the back-
ground. The only voice that can be heard is that of the first woman singing the
Coventry Carol, which is now traditionally sung at Christmas, although it is not a
Christmas carol. The song is associated with the Coventry Shearmen and Tailors'
pageant, which enacts the story of Herod's massacre of the male children of Beth-
lehem, and represents their mothers' mourning. The use of the *Coventry Carol*

underscores the action of the play but also holds the potential to create a more receptive mood for affective responses to the stage action among the audience. In terms of the affective work the play does, the addition of music helps to compensate for the fact that, as in most other modern productions of this play, no blood is spilled on stage. For the medieval playwrights, for whom the Massacre of the Innocents was typologically linked with the Crucifixion, the children were martyrs, and "the truth of [their] martyrdom, it was felt, could be reproduced and thus witnessed again, through the mimetic art of theatre" (Owens 2005: 34). Yet the reactions to depictions of violence on stage, for example the 2016 production of Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* at the National Theatre, or the Globe's 2014 *Titus Andronicus*, have shown that performed violence today has the potential to overshadow the context in which it is shown. With the decision to downplay the graphic violence of the medieval *Slaughter of the Innocents* in the 2014 Heslington Church version, the emotional fervour of the mothers' laments in the original script, which is resumed after the tableau of the massacre, loses its visual corollary to a certain degree.

The second deviation from the medieval script takes the form of an interpolated, silent scene just before the massacre itself. After Herod has given his orders for the massacre, the background cloth is dropped to reveal a church entrance which is identified as Heslington Church in the programme (Tyler 2014: 14). A vicar, played by the actual Reverend Jan Nobel, opens the door, steps out of the church onto the pageant wagon followed by women holding cloth bundles. When Herod's soldiers arrive on the scene via the side steps, the vicar tries to stop them but is killed. His lifeless body remains on stage throughout the ensuing scene of the killing of the children. As a result of this interpolated scene, the 2014 York *Massacre of the Innocents* provides a narrower modern interpretation of the massacre than may be expected from Heslington Church's stated intention to make connections with the present time quoted above. The scene shifts the emphasis of the play away from the idea that the problems highlighted by the narrative – such as tyranny and the killing of innocent people – are problems for all humankind across the ages. This change of emphasis stems from the desire to highlight a third issue in the production, that of religious persecution (Tyler 2014: 14). While religious persecution may be directed at many different groups, it is framed here as a Christian problem by the setting – a church – and the presence of the vicar on stage. This explicitly Christian framing of the massacre was topical at the time, alluding as it did to the persecution of Christians, for example the Copts in Egypt, following the Arab Spring. Yet it does, of course, also hark back to religious functions of biblical plays in medieval England – to foster devotion and a faith-activated sense of communality, and bears similarities to modern Passion Plays, that is newly-written religious plays which are independent of medieval antecedents and frequently have an evangelising purpose (Rogerson 2015: 33).

It is perhaps reasonable to assume that a spectator at the York Mystery Plays would be aware of their basis in the Bible and thus that such a spectator would not be fundamentally opposed to this kind of dramatic activity. Presenting the story of the Massacre of the Innocents first and foremost as a story of religious persecution of Christians should have special resonance for members of Chris-

tian congregations among the spectators, but it also runs the risk of exacerbating the distance between the performance and the audience rather than bridging it. Applied theatre scholarship stresses that in order to connect with the messages a play seeks to communicate, its audience needs to 'play along' (Snyder-Young 2013: 101; Thompson 2009). The interpolated scene involving the vicar just before the killing of the children may provide a reason for some audience members not to 'play along', not to be drawn into the performance, because they do not subscribe to, or feel embraced within, the idea of a Christian community that pervades the production. As Normington (2007: 19) reminds us, the notion of a community united by shared myths is "tenuous" in modern, multicultural Britain. Hence the presence of a vicar on stage holds the potential for an affirmation of difference between the spectators and the performers and he characters they represent which can – but does not necessarily have to – occasion the breakdown of a sense of being part of a performance community (Snyder-Young 2013: 102).

Reimagining a Bloodless Massacre

The performances of the Chester Mystery play cycle since 1951 are characterised by "increasing secularisation" (Normington 2007: 65). The 2013 production, which ran between 26 June and 13 July, continues this modern tradition, although it was staged inside Chester Cathedral rather than in a secular public space like many previous performances. The 2013 Chester Mystery plays present a lively three-hour musical re-imagination in two parts of the medieval Chester cycle. Written by Stephanie Dale and presented under the guidance of artistic director Peter Leslie Wild, they retain the familiarity of the narrative cycle format but they are otherwise largely independent from the medieval text and its staging conventions. The action takes place mainly in the rather narrow Cathedral nave, where the choir's stained-glass windows provide the backdrop for a multi-levelled, fixed stage with a balcony that is flanked by two sets of stairs. The balcony is used as a kind of thorough fare and as a space for a choir. Like the York Mystery Plays a year later (and indeed the original medieval plays), the Chester Mysteries depict a decidedly local version of the Holy Land, complete with Snowdonian shepherds and a scene with Christ at the Chester Races. The dialogue is entirely in modern English but emulates the diction and the rhyme of the medieval script. Mid-twentieth century costumes and musical styles are combined with references to modern issues such as David Cameron's image of "broken Britain", thus underlining the idea of the biblical narrative having timeless resonances unlimited to any one period; unlike in many other productions, including those of the York Mystery Plays of 2014, the audience is not invited to respond to the plays as being centred on a relationship with any one specific historical community or era.

The Massacre of the Innocents concludes the first part of the 2013 Chester Mysteries. Each individual scene in the Mysteries flows seamlessly into the next, partly through the use of simultaneous staging; the Massacre follows on directly from the Adoration of the Magi. The scene constitutes a complete departure from the medieval play text. The sixteenth-century text of *De Occisione Inno-*

censium combines death and mourning with sexual and scatological humour. Its mothers are physically and verbally aggressive, and above all funny, when they attack Herod's henchmen with household items like distaffs and kitchen pottery. This gendered violence, which is complicated by the fact that all female roles were played by cross-dressing men, can function as momentary relief, and as a deflection from the violence against the children, as Tolmie has argued (2010: 289). The transgressive and transvestite humour of *De Occisione Innocensium* also raises potential questions about the particular relevance of this play for women members of the audience (Coletti 1990). The combination of knockabout, scatological humour and Christian doctrine that characterises not only the medieval Chester play but also other versions, most notably the Digby *Candlemes and the Kyllyng of þe Children of Israelle*, is entirely absent from the 2013 reimagining of the massacre – and from most modern productions of the Massacre of the Innocents for that matter. In Dale and Wild's version, humour is (partly) transferred to preceding scenes between a hen-pecked Herod and his wife and family, which are somewhat reminiscent of scenes of conjugal strife in some of the Middle English Noah plays. Gone, too, is the graphic violence imagined by the sixteenth-century play text. The 2013 Chester Massacre of the Innocents itself is presented with a similar degree of stylisation and control as its York counterpart a year later, and conveys the idea of violence without mimicking. As one reviewer observed, it was all the more unnerving to watch for that – "a punch in the stomach", and, at the same time, "the highlight of the night" (Green 2013). In what follows, I will explore how the strategies used in this production to make audiences feel and connect with the performance open up an ethical dimension to the story of the massacre.

The scene begins with Mary and Joseph being led "upstairs" into Egypt by the angel while, to the sound of a drum, five soldiers in fatigues and ten women holding bundles take their positions towards the back and in the middle of the stage respectively. The foreground is dominated by the figure of what appears to be an elderly woman with a stick, her back to the audience and her identity cloaked by a large black cape. The figure suddenly turns around to face the audience, throwing off the cape to reveal Lucifer.[5] Here, he walks calmly through the rows of silent, motionless mothers, stopping to caress a child on his way towards the soldiers. When he reaches the back of the stage, the drum stops. After a brief silence, Lucifer speaks only one word: 'Kill!' The order provides the auditory climax of this scene in which the sound of the drum, reminiscent of war drums, not only provides the rhythm for the actors' movements but creates a heightened sense of tension. His order is also the cue for the massacre which here starts with the sound the disengaging of gun safety catches. This representation of killing avoids the physical implications of the relevant actions – pain and gore. As the soldiers slowly approach the mothers and place a hand on their shoulders, each of the

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[5] Lucifer appears at various points throughout the production to influence the action. His involvement in the massacre constitutes a deviation from the original Chester script and harks back to the devilish affiliations attributed to Herod in many of the Middle English plays and pageant cycles. However, the Chester Vintners' play of the Magi and the Goldsmiths' *De Occisione Innocensium* portray Herod as a consummate tyrant who justifies the massacre as a means of eliminating a rival and securing stability throughout his realm.

women unfurls her baby bundle to reveal a flag. Each of the flags visible on stage represents a nation or country which, during the past three decades, has been associated with either armed conflict or natural disaster and where consequently many people – more often than not children – came to harm: Guinea, Uganda, Somalia, Kosovo, Libya, Palestine, Sudan, Israel, Haiti and Syria. The resulting stage image is made all the more captivating by the use of music. Like the 2014 production of the York Massacre of the Innocents, the Chester version uses the *Coventry Carol* to underscore the massacre, but it starts here with the lone voice of a girl, with other voices –those of a children's choir and then of an adult one – being added gradually in the lead-up to the final scene before the interval. This last scene makes a sophisticated point about the Incarnation as it shows Mary, who is visible on the left throughout the massacre scene, unravelling the bundle she holds into a cloak which she places around the shoulders of the adult Jesus, who suddenly appears on stage for the first time. The degree of stylisation with which the killing is presented here with its measured, slow movement and partial stasis of the actors stands in stark contrast to the horror of the actions it refers to. The latter is underlined here, too, through the lyrics in the *Coventry Carol* which recounts the massacre as well as maternal grief. In other words, the stage image confronts the spectator with the suffering of others who are spatially removed, not through the realistic representation of violent acts, but rather by tapping into the knowledge or memory of the media images of suffering which the flags (may) evoke. Music again replaces violence and blood as a means to reinforce the dramatic action and to heighten the affective impact of the play: the *Coventry Carol* provides quite literally the soundtrack to the many modern massacres alluded to in this production, too. Connecting the stage action to real-life events in this way adds extra force because the affective dimension of the performance can prompt further critical engagement (Thompson 2009: 125).

Both versions, the *Massacre of the Innocents* produced by Heslington Church, and the Chester Mysteries massacre scene, draw on civic dramatic heritage as a resource to convey an idea of narratives that embody what are perceived as timeless issues: death, oppression and suffering. While both versions humanise the killing of the children of Bethlehem for the twenty-first century, they also politicise it by re-contextualising the affective centre of the biblical narrative through referencing contemporary events in which children have been or are being killed *en masse*. The 2014 York production of the Massacre of the Innocents invokes a shared cultural history with its medieval antecedent by presenting the massacre as the killing of Christian children. In doing so, it presents an image of a community in and through performance which can be seen as religiously or culturally narrower than some other productions of this play, because it appears to appeal, first and foremost, to a faith-based sense of community. Rather than 'taming' the Massacre of the Innocents in an adaptation of the medieval script, the 2013 performance of the Chester Mysteries reimagines and universalises the story of Herod's massacre by removing the religious element almost entirely: the death of children is not presented as a problem restricted to a specific faith group, as in the York play, but as an ethical problem in conflict zones around the globe. In their different ways, both versions of the Massacre of the Innocents discussed here encour-

age spectators to draw links between the action on stage and off-stage events and thus to reflect on their connections with these and the people involved in them. Modern re-imaginations of the biblical narrative of the Massacre of the Innocents can therefore serve as an 'iconic event' even for diverse twenty-first-century audiences of modern Britain, an event that encourages thinking about our own ideas of community and sharing with others and how we narrate and understand these.

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Teresa Lobalsamo, Adriano Pasquali*

Drama-Based Foreign Language Learning and the Modern *Mandragola*

Abstract

Experiential learning is on the rise at post-secondary institutions across North America. Course instructors across all disciplines are implementing a wide variety of high-impact practices to investigate the transformative effects of experiential learning modules and student-centered environments on undergraduate education. At the University of Toronto Mississauga, experiential learning is the foundation of Italian Theatre and Performance, an upper-year Italian Studies course that uses drama and performance-based learning to reimagine the shape and function of foreign language education. Students work towards the shared goal of a live foreign theatrical performance by collaborating on product-oriented tasks such as scriptwriting, rehearsals, set design, and community outreach, which provide a professional and immersive context in which to refine their language skills. Through this emphasis on active learning and practical interactions, the theatre course transforms the passive humanities classroom into a vibrant student-centered environment that demonstrates how a comprehensive integration of drama and performance-based learning into foreign language education can greatly enhance student development of linguistic, sociocultural, and pragmatic competence in the target language.

Keywords: experiential learning; performance-based learning; drama-based pedagogy; foreign language theatre; *La Mandragola*; Machiavelli

Introduction

Language instructors have historically made extensive use of dramatic exercises such as role-playing skits, improvisation, and peer-to-peer dialogue writing in their classrooms, but performance-based learning has predominantly been seen as complementary to "self-study" language acquisition, which emphasizes the rote memorization of core vocabulary and repetitive drilling of grammatical structures. While the pedagogical value of these traditional methods cannot not be overlooked, recent years have seen the publication of a considerable body of work on the benefits of incorporating drama and performance-based learning into all aspects of foreign language education. Scholars such as Even have praised the approach for its ability to develop and strengthen learners' communicative

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and interactional skills through a more practical and immersive classroom setting (2008: 162). The learning environment, which actually sees the classroom transformed into a theatre, gives learners a chance to immediately transfer what they have learned into experience (166) and attain a more pragmatic knowledge of the language through contextualization (Essif 9). Semke maintains that dramatic activities are specifically beneficial in the way that they afford students more time on pointed tasks through repetition (1980: 139), which moreover leads to improvements in the learners' L2 fluency and comprehensibility (Galante and Thomson 2017).

Much of the research around drama and performance-based learning has emerged in the larger context and growing international popularity of experiential learning at post-secondary institutions. Responding to a variety of factors ranging from economic pressures, government mandates, and institutional academic plans, course instructors across all disciplines are launching a variety of high-impact practices[1] to investigate the transformative effects of experientially engaging learning modules and student-centered learning environments. What follows is a case study of one such practice that has paid significant dividends for students in the Department of Language Studies at the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM). Experiential learning has for thirty years been the foundation of Italian Theatre and Performance (ITA413), an upper-level Italian language course that uses drama and performance-based learning to reimagine the shape and function of foreign language education. Through its emphasis on active learning and practical interactions, ITA413 transforms a traditionally passive humanities classroom into an effective student-centered and action-oriented environment in which students apply their Italian language skills to accomplish a vast number of diverse tasks that finally culminate in the live production of a foreign language play. Such tasks, which range from scriptwriting to rehearsals to set design to community outreach, provide a professional and immersive context for students to refine their language skills while collaboratively working towards a shared goal. By having students work through various language-focused tasks in order to put on a successful theatrical production, ITA413 demonstrates how a comprehensive integration of drama and performance-based learning into the foreign language classroom can greatly enhance student development of linguistic, sociocultural, and pragmatic competence[2] in the target language.

1. Experiential Learning through Theatre and Drama

Experiential learning as a pedagogical framework provides students with a pragmatic and/or professional context in which to apply an otherwise abstract cur-

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[1] The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) defines a high-impact practice as any course which provides students with hands-on field experience, community service-learning, and involvement in a formal project with a faculty member.

[2] The three pillars of the Common European Framework for Reference of Languages - linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competence, will serve as a qualitative metric for evaluating the effectiveness of this pedagogical approach and will be defined in section 2.

riculum. Depending on the format, experiential learning can take place inside or outside of the classroom, but in both cases it implies a break with traditional modes of knowledge transmission (such as note-taking in lecture halls) to expose students to hands-on applications, emphasize learning-by-doing, and encourage them to reflect on their progress and accomplishments.[3] In regards to foreign language education, experiential learning comprises of any activity in which students engage in action-based immersive and practical contexts. By experiencing how foreign languages are applied to everyday situations, students come to internalize the linguistic and sociolinguistic features of the target language in ways that go beyond the rote memorization traditionally promoted within the language classroom, which helps them to build confidence in their own foreign language skills and motivates them with a clear real-world goal in sight.

It is easy to see how theatre and drama might lend itself to experiential learning in the foreign language classroom, simply by how the stage offers a clear context for students to practice and engage their interpersonal communication skills in the target language. Of course, some instructors may be apprehensive of using performance-based learning if it appears to limit students' creative potential or to be too contrived or static. The presence of the script may predispose the conversation and impede real engagement with the foreign language or "become a barrier to communication" (Cortazzi and Jin 1996: 185). Criticism that memorizing and regurgitating lines does not constitute real communication[4] perhaps explains why dramatic exercises have continued to be a footnote to the grammar textbook rather than being employed in a more comprehensive fashion towards foreign language acquisition. Such criticisms, however, are misguided and drawn from a fundamental misunderstanding of theatre as functioning around a paradox of simultaneous reality and artifice. Actors do not merely recite the script; rather, a successful actor internalizes the existing material and improvises a new expression tinged with their own creativity. Each expression is further inflected by the on-stage presence of fellow cast members, whose counter-expressions result in a dynamic environment in which communication is constantly evolving in different and sometimes unexpected ways. Rather than predetermining how the communicative event will unfold, the three components of theatre — the script, the stage, and the live audience — provide a structural context in which artifice gives way to reality: the students deconstruct the linguistic features of the static script, refashion the language in their own image, and articulate new expressions that are validated by the audience as a legitimate exchange in the target language.

Experiential learning, in its emphasis on hands-on applications, also implies a break from traditional classroom formats, which in the humanities have historically been instructor-focused with knowledge being disseminated in a top-down

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[3] Experiential learning is a well-known practice, often encouraged for inclusion in curricula (Ontario Ministry of Education). Foundational works in this area can be read in Kolb and Lewis and Williams.

[4] As highlighted in Bancheri 2010: 101, 105, the performative classroom at the centre of our case study also rebukes this reductive view of drama since students are encouraged to experiment with language as they contribute to script changes and the ability to improvise is a necessary skill to possess in any live performance. We will explore these ideas further along in this paper.

fashion through lecture halls and seminars. Julia M. Furay has stated that drama can help instructors to realize "the transformative potential of our classrooms" by moving students from a passive to an active learning context (2014: 211). Certainly those dramatic activities appended to grammar textbooks perform such a function by positioning students on a stage (physical or metaphorical) and having them demonstrate the extent of their language skills through performance. Such activities are limited, however, in how much of an impact on foreign language acquisition can be made because the transformation is not maintained: once the exercise is over, the stage is immediately disassembled and the students return to their seats to passively await the instructor's next lesson. In order to be truly effective, drama and performance-based learning demands a comprehensive integration into the foreign language curriculum; the stage must not be transitory, but should instead be the central focus of the foreign language education. As anyone with a background in theatre will attest, the stage is a natural catalyst for self-reflection, self-improvement, and – if truly successful – self-discovery.[5] From a pedagogical perspective, the stage provides a highly intrapersonal and interpersonal context that transforms the passive instructor-focused classroom into a student-centered learning environment in which students collaboratively inform the shape of their education. In this comprehensive dramatic experience, students become active participants in their own language education and exert control over how (and how much) they improve their language skills. This, in turn, raises their confidence levels and contributes to a sense of autonomy within and outside the classroom—practices that are, moreover, "implicit and explicit recipe[s] to improve future action" as well (Wiliam and Thompson 2007: 12).

2. Evaluating Italian Theatre and Performance[6]

Pedagogical scholars have proposed the "theatrical workshop," in line with the structure of ITA413 Italian Theatre and Performance, as one solution to how language instructors can integrate drama and performance-based learning into their classrooms in a more comprehensive fashion. Popularized by the work of Salvatore Bancheri,[7] the theatrical workshop is a product- and clear goal-oriented approach to foreign language acquisition in which students prepare and perform a complete theatrical production in the target language before a live audience consisting of their peers, family, and local community (2010: 85). Distinct from traditional language classrooms in which an instructor guides students through a series of grammatical units prescribed by a textbook and expects students to un-

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[5] Espinosa, drawing from the works of Glisan et al. and Herrera et al., writes, "The philosophy behind performance-based assessment is that knowledge is constructed during learning, and that students discover knowledge for themselves rather than receive knowledge from the teacher" (2015: 2442).

[6] This section includes contributions by Larysa Bablak (University of Toronto Mississauga).

[7] See Bancheri 2010 on the successful pedagogical experiments conducted in this format at Middlebury College and the University of Toronto Mississauga, the latter of which will be addressed at length in the second half of this paper.

dertake rigorous self-study to master lessons between classes, the theatrical workshop achieves language learning through active on-site engagement with the target language using interpersonal interactions that are integrated into every aspect of the course material. By studying and subsequently performing a literary work, the theatrical workshop provides a practical context for language learning that enables a full immersion into the target language and its surrounding culture. For the final theatrical production to be a success, students must familiarize themselves not only with the play script but also with the historical moment in which it was written and performed, and they must think carefully about how to accurately represent the meaning of the play for a contemporary audience. From an experiential perspective, Italian Theatre and Performance places students in constant engagement with the linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of the foreign language. Students participate directly in language formation and articulation through repeated rehearsals that help them decide how to interpret the play's script and what precise language to use, according to the specific context.

In line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the theatrical workshop asks students to operate as "social agent[s]" (1) by assigning different tasks in addition to rehearsals, which function in lieu of graded assignments and encompass all of the responsibilities (costume and set design, community outreach, etc.) needed to realize a successful theatrical production. Each of these tasks are experiential in nature and include a significant oral or written component intended to build linguistic and sociolinguistic competences in the foreign language. CEFR defines linguistic competence as not only the quality of lexical, phonological, and syntactic knowledge of the foreign language as a system, but also how that knowledge is organized in the brain and made accessible for communication (13). Effective communication on- and off-stage requires an advanced linguistic competence in the foreign language that goes beyond memorizing and reproducing a script. Students must be able to follow the conversation in the foreign language at all times so that they can position themselves appropriately in relation to their interlocutors and reconstruct the language of the script as needed. Linguistic competence is interdependent with sociolinguistic competence: that is, the student must also have comparable knowledge of the social and cultural factors that govern communication in a foreign language. Such factors include the ability to switch registers depending on the interlocutor at hand, which plays an important role in establishing on-stage relationships between characters and an even more important role when interacting with members of the community. A sociolinguistically competent speaker does not view language as separate from culture, but rather builds a holistic communicative competence in which all aspects of language learning interact.

CEFR refers to this holistic communicative competence, which is upheld by linguistic and sociolinguistic competence, as the student achieving pragmatic competence in the foreign language. Pragmatic competence is the end goal of language learning and refers to a practical ability to communicate in the foreign language according to real-world situations. Experiential learning can significantly help students achieve pragmatic competence by providing them with a practical context that leverages both linguistic and sociolinguistic competences in

the production of foreign language communication. If rehearsals function as a space in which students can practice employing the linguistic structures of a language as well as identifying the social and cultural cues that govern their usage, then the experiential tasks (script writing, radio interviews, etc.) and final performances before a live audience constitute situations in which students develop and demonstrate pragmatic competence in the foreign language. Such tasks that require them to exercise their language skills to engage the community outside the classroom are important for helping students to become comfortable with and build confidence in communicating in the foreign language. Receiving negative feedback in a practical setting helps students to understand and correct their precise mistakes, while receiving positive feedback further motivates them in their language education. As the case study that follows demonstrates, the theatrical workshop is conducive towards developing pragmatic competence by providing an environment in which language is put to practical use, mistakes are immediately corrected, and the students gradually come into an understanding of how to more effectively communicate in the foreign language.

3. Italian Theatre and Performance at UTM

Bancheri and Pugliese have written extensively[8] on the process by which the theatrical workshop was first introduced into the Italian curriculum at UTM, beginning as an extracurricular activity in 1986-87 with the formation of the theatre troupe Maschere Duemondi.[9] The immense success and growing popularity of the "Italian Play" (as it is referred to among the community) would lead to the extracurricular activity being reimagined in 1992 as the full-year credit course ITA413: Italian Theatre and Performance, in which students are given the opportunity to critically analyze, rehearse, and perform a five-run theatre production of an Italian-language work. The course serves as a pivotal cornerstone with which the Department of Language Studies at UTM continues to distinguish itself through the experiential nature of its founding vision and, consequently, of its course offerings. Since taking on instruction and direction of the course in 2010, we continue to maintain the mission of the theatrical workshop as a student-centered space for optimal language and cultural acquisition while also introducing new approaches to experiential learning.[10]

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[8] For Bancheri and Pugliese's early experiments with the theatrical workshop at UTM, see Bancheri and Pugliese 1996 and 1993.

[9] Maschere Duemondi was established by Pugliese and Bancheri, who jointly directed theatre productions from 1986 through to 1999 and then alternating until 2009. Since 2010, I (Teresa Lobalsamo) have become director of the course and its shows. With its performance of Niccolò Machiavelli's La Mandragola, Maschere Duemondi celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 2017. For more information on the history of the Italian Play's productions, please see the troupe's web page on the Department's web site: www.utm.utoronto.ca/language-studies/programs/italian/italian-play-maschere-duemondi.

[10] The course's overall approach to experiential learning resonates with students. Academic evaluations are remarkably positive year over year, with students citing the impact that the course's experiential learning approach has had on their ability to communicate in the foreign

Through discussion-based learning and close readings, the first trimester of the course is a preparatory phase in which students engage with the text to be performed by learning critical theories of theatre and Italian Renaissance comedy; positioning the piece within relevant historical, socio-political, and cultural contexts; and introducing the play script and its adaptations. Students are then quickly immersed into the product-oriented structure of the course as the three hours of class time each week are repurposed to allow for two hours of rehearsal followed by a one-hour production meeting. During meetings, previously assigned individual or group tasks – composing proposals for fundraising, advertising, community liaising, set designs – are discussed in terms of progress made, challenges encountered, and next steps. Once all communications have been approved by the instructor, fundraising letters and "save-the-date" e-mail blasts are rolled out in October, soon to be followed by the launch of the website as well as final drafts of any promotional and/or educational materials.[11] November marks the beginning of table reads, once students have successfully auditioned and been assigned their roles. In addition to memorizing lines, students are encouraged to contribute to script modifications as they embrace their character and envision his or her place on stage interacting with others. Major revisions end when the process of blocking begins.

To ensure that lines have been memorized and that students have a strong grasp of their respective character's motivations, oral examinations serve to evaluate their readiness in assigned roles. By this point, students will have demonstrated their commitment to and capacity for performance sufficiently enough to continue on in their role or be asked to relinquish it in favour of different, production-specific responsibilities. With six weeks to showtime, an intensive rehearsal schedule (of approximately 15 hours of rehearsal time distributed over three days per week) is rolled out, with each session beginning with a student-led improvisational warm-up exercise in the target language.

4. Adapting Machiavelli's *La Mandragola*[12]

Preparing the play script is a dense research project that begins six to eight months prior to the start of the course. While most course materials are prepared by the instructor, we have in recent years framed compiling the script as a faculty-facilitated experiential research project for senior-level (C1 Italian) undergraduate students. Under the close supervision of the instructor, the students review several publications and multimedia adaptations of the play as part of an editorial process that makes practical use of critical-thinking, foreign language, and crea-

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language. One such student, having taken the course twice in his academic career, states, "There is certainly no course like it. This course succeeds in integrating language, acting, people skills, teamwork all in one and can change you as a person, only in a positive way."

[11] One performance is held specifically for area elementary and high school teachers and students.

[12] This section includes contributions by Dr. Adriana Grimaldi (University of Toronto Mississauga).

tive writing skills. Linguistic and sociolinguistic capacities are strengthened as the students read through and, in the case of movies, transcribe scripts in the original Italian, breaking down the strongest interpretations of scenes, characters, and dialogue from a variety of different texts and incorporating them into a new amalgamated version that will serve as the basis for ITA413.

For its most recent (2017) production, Maschere Duemondi anticipated a return to Renaissance comedies. Work on Niccolò Machiavelli's *La Mandragola* began in January 2016 as part of an undergraduate research project, which produced character descriptions and plot summaries that would help ease the transition into scriptwriting the following summer. We decided early on to use Guido Davico Bonino's 1964 edition of the text, which features modern Italian spelling and publishing conventions—something that we try to offer our students when possible, so that they might practice the language in the same form that they will encounter off-stage. Following in the classical style that it imitates, *La Mandragola* is incredibly condensed in action, time, and space; taken as is, it would have easily been one of the shortest plays that Maschere Duemondi has ever staged. Wanting to flesh out the script in ways that might inspire the incoming ITA413 students, we decided to add scenes and dialogue from Alberto Lattuada's 1965 film adaptation featuring Italian actor Antonio De Curtis (stage name Totò). Lattuada's adaptation excels in world-building and character development, particularly in regards to its handling of Lucrezia, which is a revolution upon Machiavelli's original script.

At the risk of being reductive, *La Mandragola* is a play about men that finds comedy in the outlandish, deceitful, and even contemptible things that young men will do to win a woman's heart. Despite her importance to the plot, Lucrezia is conspicuously off-stage for most of the play; in his prologue, Machiavelli does not even list her among the major players of the comedy.[13] Coupled with the fact that the plot hinges on Lucrezia being tricked into drinking a mysterious potion and ushered off to bed with a strange man, we were concerned that Machiavelli's original portrayal of this crucial female character might carry with it some unintended baggage in 2015.[14] From the beginning, then, we decided that Lucrezia would have a more prevalent on-stage presence and increased agency in her interactions with the predominantly male cast of characters, for which the 1965 film provided the perfect model. Unlike Machiavelli's behind-the-scenes symbol of untainted virtue, Lattuada portrays Lucrezia as holding a degree of power over her husband, refusing to be led along by his whims and repeatedly mocking him for his naiveté towards word-of-mouth pregnancy methods. We would also make use of the film's more balanced interpretation of the events between Act IV and V, in which Lucrezia scolds Callimaco for his deceit before voluntarily taking him

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[13] "Uno amante meschino, / un dottor poco astuto, / un frate mal vissuto, / un parassito di malizia el cucco, / fien questo giorno el vostro badalucco. [Machiavelli 1964: 4; "A wretched man in love, / a judge devoid of craft, / a friar of sinful life, / a parasite beloved of nought but guile / will be your entertainment now awhile", trans. Newbigin in Machiavelli 2009: 4]

[14] We resurrected this play around the same time that allegations of sexual misconduct against Bill Cosby had begun to pick up steam, and without any way of knowing how the coming years would radically bring similar discussions to the forefront of public consciousness.

as her lord. Both of these measures would serve to diffuse the uncomfortable elements in Machiavelli's original tale.

We knew that empowering Lucrezia would resonate with ITA413 students, as the course has historically enrolled a higher ratio of female-to-male students—a reality that has always posed a challenge for casting Renaissance plays dominated by male characters. While the director can mitigate this issue by swapping the gender of minor characters, the November auditions for *La Mandragola* revealed many strong female candidates for leading roles. Candidates could have been placed into drag roles, but the troupe agreed that the strength of the female performers could best be matched if they also commanded the sexual dynamics of the plot and, with that, the genders of all major characters were reversed. Whereas Machiavelli had written of Callimaco cuckolding the older Nicia to steal the heart of his young and virtuous wife Lucrezia, the students were excited to stage the reverse story in which the passionate Cleandra would cuckold the overbearing Lucrezia and rescue the noble Nicia from the prison of a sexless marriage. Rather than remaining off-stage, Lucrezia would step out from the curtains to become the central antagonist of the play. Ligurio, Siro, and Timoteo would likewise be genderswapped as Liguria, Sira, Timotea, who would operate alongside Cleandra to facilitate her less than noble and benevolent motives, thus resulting in something of a feminist spin on the classic tale that even Machiavelli himself could never have imagined.

Excited by the comedic opportunities that a genderswapped cast would bring to the play, the students began a massive rewriting of the script in November that put to work their linguistic and sociolinguistic understanding of the Italian language. Before even thinking about rewriting scenes, the students were required to take a more fundamental look at the precise language used by each character and replace all of the gendered elements (including adjective and verb agreement) with their appropriate counterparts. Changing the genders of the cast also required the students to consider the cultural function of social class in the Renaissance: for example, would the same standards of politeness between male characters still apply to female characters? Was it necessary for Liguria to address Cleandra using formal modes of address, just as Ligurio submits himself into the service of Callimaco? In order to write believable dialogue, the students had to apply their understanding of the Italian language and Renaissance culture to make decisions about how a character's background would affect their interactions with others. An example of the students' sensitivity to cultural and historical expectations is recognizable in how Liguria's dialogue was modified when presenting "il medico Cleandra" to Lucrezia:

LIGURIO Come io vi ho detto, io credo che Dio ci abbia mandato lei perché adempiate il desiderio vostro.
LUCREZIA Sì, giusto ed è proprio così… lei? Lei chi?
LIGURIO Lei. Il medico. Sapete che in Francia sono molto più moderni.
LUCREZIA Certo.

[LIGURIO As I told you, I think she is a godsend, sent down just for you!
LUCREZIA That's wonderf… she? She who?

Ligurio She's the doctor. The French are very modern.
Lucrezia That's true.]
(Translation ours)

By recognizing an emergent problem in the genderswapped script and using their knowledge of Machiavelli's text and its Renaissance context to invent a suitable (and rather comedic) solution, the students illustrate how a practical activity such as script editing can provide an opportunity to refine linguistic and sociolinguistic competences in the foreign language.

When the time came to introduce new scenes and dialogue to fit this new plot direction, the troupe flourished in their ability to invent and convey realistic character interactions that would resonate with their contemporary audience. It is through the introduction of new content, particularly in the original gags that emerged directly from the genderswapped context, that the students made visible strides towards achieving pragmatic competence in the foreign language. Machiavelli's original play gestures towards the possibility that Nicia is actually impotent and in denial, blaming Lucrezia for his own failure of masculinity. In the 1965 film, Nicia grapples with his impotence by subjecting Lucrezia to increasingly absurd pregnancy remedies,[15] all the while refusing to believe the problem could lie with him.[16] Playing with the reversed gender dynamics, the revisioned *Mandragola* rewrote Lucrezia to be convinced that Nicia's impotence prevents him from making sexual advances on her, when in reality he is repulsed by the thought of sleeping with his wife, whom he only married by arrangement given their mutual status in aristocratic singledom and to whom he is forced to invent excuses night after night. It is with masterful subtlety that the students integrated this recurring joke into gags that demonstrated an ability to distill comedic elements from the original play and make practical use of them in their new script. In Act I Scene 1, for example, Lucrezia has Ramondo and Sostrata warm Nicia's abdomen with heated stones, a scene taken directly out of Lattuada's 1965 film. Ramondo assures his son that "niente è meglio del sasso caldo per favorire la passione di un uomo che è più mulo che cavallo," ("There is nothing better than the pain of hot rock to stimulate a man, who is actually more of donkey than a man") which prompts a panicked response from Nicia: "Ho detto che era solo un mal di pancia!" ("I said it was only a stomachache!"). Similarly, Act II Scene 2 opens with Nicia's back to the audience and his hands engaged in some sort of strenuous activity at waist level; he turns and it is revealed that he is actually grinding pepper into soup, which is followed up with a series of emasculating battute from Lucrezia: "Ma non perdere la speranza, amor mio, perché questa zuppa... con pepe tritato... zucchini schiacciati... peperoncino piccolo piccolo..." ("But don't lose hope, my love, because with this soup... made with ground pepper... crushed zucchini... tiny little peppers...", translation ours). The script and performative contributions

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[15] Lucrezia "Sassi cotti sul ventre, bagni speziati e altre diavolerie!" (Lattuada) [Lucrezia "Heated stones on the womb, spiced baths, and other crazy ideas!", translation ours].
[16] Nicia "Impotente io? Ha! Io non credo che ci sia in Firenze un uomo più ferrigno, sano e rubizzo di me! No!" (Lattuada) [Nicia "Me, impotent? Ha! I don't believe that there is a man in Florence more robust, healthy, and lively than me!", translation ours].

that the students made to such scenes demonstrate pragmatic competence in understanding how comedy functioned in Machiavelli's play and further communicating that function within a fresh and contemporary context.

In portraying Lucrezia as the dissatisfied spouse seeking an heir, which is essentially Nicia's primary motivation in the original text, she also inherits some of the necessary naiveté of that character without losing any of the agency that has been bestowed upon her by virtue of the genderswap. The scenes in which her home remedies are employed in order to cure Nicia of his infertility, to cite one example, now gain a heightened comedic sense as his "impotence" is played as a cunning visual gag. The eventual fulfilment of Cleandra's plan, and consequent cuckolding of Lucrezia, is also softened; as while our erstwhile Lucrezia had indeed been duped, much like the original Nicia, she is convinced the mandrake has helped to cement her status in society as she will now be able to bear a much-needed heir, after her husband's "curing." In the adapted version, Lucrezia's gain is not necessarily Nicia's loss either, as the latter, now inhabiting the subordinate role, has inherited some of the cunning and pragmatism associated with Machiavelli's Lucrezia. While he is seen to be at the mercy of his domineering wife and parents, this submissiveness is necessarily mitigated by the fact that he is male and, as such, would have more power and agency in the world just outside the boundaries of the play. It is with this knowledge that the audience's entertainment is heightened, as is the satirical element of the adaptation.

This up-ending of the male-female dynamic within this Renaissance marriage is indeed a subversion of the roles of authority generally attributed to husband and wife, a subversion that Machiavelli would have appreciated.

5. Language Learning through Rehearsal

Once the script had been sufficiently revised to accommodate the role-reversed cast, rehearsals shifted from a round table setting to a designated stage space in which the students began practicing their lines with the accompanying stage directions. We introduce the stage early in the rehearsal process so that the students learn the language of the script as part of a complete communicative event that has a clear setting and real-life interlocutors.[17] By stepping onto the stage and interacting with their peers, the students quickly come to realize that a successful performance will not depend on how well they know the script, but rather how well they have internalized the linguistic structures and sociolinguistic conventions of the language, which affords them varying degrees of flexibility in how they can engage their interlocutors. We must here reiterate that theatre is not the scripted language production that pedagogical scholars tend to imagine; Galante recognizes that drama places the greater emphasis on improvisation, which provides a space for students to experiment with their linguistic constructions and practice realistic conversations with their peers (Galante and Thomson 2017: 119).

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[17] As opposed to table reads, which are disembodied in nature and have more in common with the dramatic exercises often sidelined in language textbooks.

As evidence of this, Bancheri directs critics to the clear differences between the script and the words actually spoken by the students on stage (2010: 105), which we likewise observed in all of the performances of *La Mandragola*. Being able to readily access and recall lines from a foreign language script requires that the students possess advanced linguistic competence in the language, such that the lines are not being recalled but are instead linguistically reconstructed on the spot. In the event that something unexpected occurs on stage, students must have mastery over their own linguistic abilities so that they can recover from the deviation and confidently proceed with the scene. Students rely on the script only insofar that it guides their language learning; once they have internalized the grammatical patterns and social nuances that inform the language, the script is voluntarily cast aside so that they may perform "unrestricted" and utilize the transformative potential of the stage to its full extent.

Rehearsals are closely supervised and supported by the instructor in her capacity as the director of the play. She ensures that the learning experience meets the expectations of both the Language Studies curriculum and CEFR goals in respect to developing linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competence in the foreign language. In addition to guiding them through early rehearsals and helping them to find their characters on stage, the director provides students with immediate feedback on pronunciation, delivery, retention, and improvisation. Her presence initiates a continuous feedback loop throughout rehearsals that maintains an active learning environment in which each individual student is constantly working to correct their mistakes and increase their proficiency in the language. In a traditional lecture-style classroom, students spend the majority of class time copying notes in preparation for periodic tests; as a result, they only come to recognize their weaknesses immediately before and after such tests. During rehearsals, however, the director is available for immediate consultation. When a student mispronounces a term, for example, the director can interrupt the performance to demonstrate the proper pronunciation, or provide corrections at the end of each scene, which will have a more immediate and lasting impression on the student's memory than does red ink on a returned test that the student may have written weeks before. Being forced to stop the play and correct their pronunciation not only provides the student with the opportunity to correct the error and prove their linguistic competence to their peers, but it further reminds them that they—the students, not the script—are the driving force behind the play and that a successful performance will not manifest unless each of them works to improve their competences in the language.

Realizing that the success of the final performances will be intimately linked to each of their individual successes in the language component of the course, the students are motivated to take initiative within their own language learning and perpetuate this continuous feedback loop amongst themselves and their peers. Much writing has been done on the benefits of increasing peer-to-peer interaction in the classroom and the theatrical workshop is an ideal setting for this as rehearsals place students in constant face-to-face interactions with one another (see Christensen 1991). As rehearsals progress, the students not only serve as interlocutors for their peers but also as instructors, offering constructive crit-

icism to bring out the best in each other's performances. Following the director's example, the students learn to recognize linguistic and sociolinguistic errors in their own language formulations (such as verb conjugation and formality) and hear those same errors in the formulations of their peers. Bancheri describes this moment as the director receding into the background to allow the students to take centre-stage in the classroom (2010: 100), such that the continuous feedback loop between instructor and student evolves into a collaborative exercise that engages the entire class in language learning. This 'collaborative language learning' also diffuses the pressures of the traditional classroom, where each individual student must prove their mettle to the instructor, instead substituting a more balanced power dynamic in which the students work together to develop their language skills and where the only pressure is a shared desire to put on a strong public performance.

Complementing this collaborative and student-centred approach to language learning, ITA413 places a heavy emphasis on self-reflection and self-evaluation. Unlike traditional language courses that maintain a clear distinction between lectures and tests or assignments, ITA413's continuous feedback loop ensures that students are constantly evaluated for their efforts during rehearsals by the instructor, their peers, and — most importantly — themselves. We have already noted how this collaborative process can help students to identify areas in which they may presently be lacking and motivate them to learn the language for the sake of the final performance. It is important to remember, however, that this process is indeed cyclical: it allows students to visibly see the improvements in one another, which prompts further self-evaluation and creates a learning environment in which students are always striving to do better. In order to facilitate this culture of self-improvement, the instructor provides students with a "Readiness Skills Rubric" that helps them to keep track of their learning progress throughout the year. The Readiness Skills Rubric is not an optional document but integrated into the course evaluation so that students are actually in partial control of their grades and therefore invested in their own improvement. Students evaluate themselves on how their language skills develop, the dedication that they bring to their individual tasks, the impact of their attitude on their peers, and their willingness to challenge themselves further. Students are encouraged to credit themselves where they feel that credit is due, but with this responsibility comes an increased awareness to the areas in which they are still lacking and require further improvement. In this sense, the product-oriented theatrical workshop provides an ideal space and arc of time in which a learner can practice language in an interpersonal context, recognize their intrapersonal strengths and weaknesses, and develop those skills alongside their peers towards the ultimate goal of putting on a successful performance.

6. Language Practice through Community Engagement

If the on-stage rehearsals enable the students to practice their language skills in a safe and supportive environment, then we might view the theatre production

tasks that are run adjacent to rehearsals as experiential and evaluatory checkpoints that ask them to apply their language skills beyond the classroom to engage the local community. Because the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is home to a sizeable Italian immigrant community, Maschere Duemondi has historically framed the Italian Play as a biannual cultural event that leverages a steady network of patronage consisting of area schools, small businesses, cultural centres, and (most importantly) foreign-language media outlets. From the very beginning of the course, the students are expected to establish and maintain continuous contact with patrons in order to complete a range of theatre production tasks from fundraising and advertising to generating and disseminating foreign-language teaching materials. Community engagement is carried out in the foreign language, often out of necessity (rather than to meet a learning objective) in order to reach the community members that the Italian Play routinely brings in, many of whom primarily speak Italian in their households and get their news from Italian newspapers, magazines, and radio stations. Students must utilize linguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge to communicate effectively with the patrons, which further provides an opportunity to demonstrate pragmatic competence in the foreign language and build confidence operating in a professional context.

Having the students interact with patrons encourages the students to begin thinking about language acquisition not as something that occurs through a textbook or within the classroom, but as an ongoing process of active communication that comes to inhabit every part of their daily lives. CEFR identifies this as the moment in which a student "recognises that language learning is a lifelong task [. . . and that] a young person's motivation, skill and confidence in facing new language experience[s] out of school comes to be of central importance" (5). ITA413 looks to effect this change immediately in its students by having them take on the responsibility of raising funds for the play, which go towards creating the set, costumes, and promotional materials. Beginning in September, the students write emails, social media posts, and magazine articles which are intended to advertise the shows and attract patronage in the form of sponsorship and, later down the line, ticket sales. While operating in this public relations role, the students learn to write concise copy and translate ideas from English to Italian; they learn to be aware of their target audience and experiment with adapting their language depending on the age, sex, or ethnicity of the interlocutor, which often requires moving between formal and informal registers or taking advantage of social or cultural colloquialisms that will elicit a favourable response. Through these pragmatic rhetorical exercises, the students experience firsthand how their foreign language skills can be usefully applied to real-world situations.

While drawing attention to the accuracy and effectiveness of their written productions is important for getting students to think critically about the function of the language that they use, a greater challenge yet lies in preparing the students for in-person interactions, which will often require them to improvise speech on the spot in order to effectively respond to their interlocutors. CEFR makes a point of highlighting the importance of adaptable communication by expressing the need for "flexibility upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor," which goes hand-

in-hand with developing pragmatic competence in the foreign language (4). Rehearsals are critical in providing a space for students to experiment with different language formulations; this becomes a crucial skill for the final performance and enables them to recover from mistakes and unexpected events that might occur on-stage. In order to familiarize students with real-time thinking and the pressures of real-world communication ahead of the final performance, a variety of in-person interactions are integrated into the production tasks. Some of the most important tasks are live television and radio interviews on premier multicultural media stations in Toronto, where actors and actresses introduce themselves and encourage the local community to attend their upcoming performances. While the information about the shows to be communicated is scripted well in advance of the show, it is up to the students to exercise their creativity in how they respond to questions from the interviewer and generate excitement about their upcoming performances. In each and every case, these in-person interactions provide a valuable opportunity for the students to test their pragmatic competence in the foreign language and showcase the strides they have made in the classroom before a live community audience.

Conclusion

All of the on-stage rehearsals and off-stage production tasks carry the students towards the final performances, which serve as the point of convergence for the various language skills that they have developed and refined over the course of the year. Needless to say, the students are once again in charge of managing both the front house and the actual performance. They will by this time have created and mailed out a program, sold tickets, arranged group transportation, and even printed t-shirts for the event. The final performances, which usually bring in an average of 150 patrons per show, transition the students from an educational to a completely professional context in which experiential learning is fully realized. In front of an audience that consists of their university peers, family members, and patrons from their local community, the students conduct themselves as professionals while engaging attendees in the foreign language; this extends to selling raffle tickets, guiding people to their seats, and mingling with attendees during intermission and after the show. Their on-stage personas are no different: the students become actors, ready to put all of their language skills — their linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences — on display for the theatregoers. It is under these real-world pressures that the final performances unfold; it is within these real-time interactions that real communication is realized and their capacity for foreign language communication is illustrated before the entire community.

Through each task, from community outreach to the final performances, students hone and improve their skills in ways that offer answers to the new-age-old question "What am I to do with a degree in Italian?" as they come to acknowledge, instead, what they are indeed capable of doing with a degree in Italian. In fact, student opinion surveys not only report improvement in foreign language skills and overall communicative abilities, but they further remark on the mean-

ingful bonds that have been created and express pride over the dedication and work ethic that they have developed. The students who engage in the high-impact practices associated with producing and performing live theatre demonstrate a marked improvement in their language skills and in their self-confidence by the course's end. More than just a numeric grade, achievements are palpable in the laughter and applause of the audience, when the sum of months of study and layers of work come to fruition. While the stakes could not feel higher to the students, especially at the onset, neither is the success that they obtain as the final curtains are drawn.

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OLGA TAXIDOU* and FRANCESCO DALL'OLIO**

Medea by Olga Taxidou,
Directed by Lee Breuer and Eamonn Farrell.
Mabou Mines Theater, New York, 23-25 March 2018
Interview with Olga Taxidou by Francesco Dall'Olio

Abstract

Francesco Dall'Olio interviews Olga Taxidou on the March 2018 work-in-progress production of Taxidou's *Medea* at Mabou Mines Theatre, New York, directed by Lee Breuer and Eamonn Farrell, with Maude Mitchell as Medea.

KEYWORDS: *Medea*; Olga Taxidou; Lee Breuer; Maude Mitchell

FDO: Thank you for this opportunity. I would like to start with your previous experience with *Medea*, the show in Georgia in 1997. What is the relationship between the two shows?

OT: Thank you for coming to see the work in progress and for your thoughtful questions. There is no formal relationship between the two versions of my adaptation of *Medea*. I have been very fortunate to have two outstanding but very different companies engage with my work. Each company brings its own history of performance to any text it approaches. I have written elsewhere about the Georgian production and the ways it responded its own historical moment. The Mabou Mines production[1] directed by Lee Breuer with Maude Mitchell in the title role of-

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[1] CREDITS: Medea: Maude Mitchell; Puppeteer/Performers/Chorus: Lute Breuer, Jessica Weinstein, Sam Gibbs, Anthony Leung; Environment: Kalan Sherrard; Puppetry Advisor: Basil Twist; Composer: Jay Ansill; Singer: Alex (Tiappa) Klimosvitsky; Keyboard: Marie Incontrera; Video Design: Eamonn Farrell; Lighting: Lucrecia Briceno; Associate Lighting Designer: Betsey Chester; Costumes: Meganne George; Associate Costume Designer: Peter Fogel; Stage Manager: Alyssa Howard; Assistant Director/Production Manager: Dana Greenfield; Technical Intern: Stephanie Ghajar. This project was made possible by a generous grant from The Roy Cockrum Foundation and support by Judith Scheuer and Joseph Mellicker, and through a residency at The MacDowell Colony.

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fered a whole new set of relationships between text and stage. This was the first time the text was performed in English so that was quite exciting to see. In general, I believe that once a play-text reaches a company, a director and the actors, the playwright needs to step back. I feel there needs to be trust in the performance process itself. In both cases I was very familiar with the history of the companies. With Mabou Mines especially the whole process of the shift from text to stage is very important and very collaborative, and there is a huge emphasis, in classic avant-garde manner on this process itself. I hope this will become clear throughout this discussion.

FDO: Why *Medea*? Which aspects of Euripides text have drawn you to it?

OT: This is an impossible question to answer. I could respond in a number of ways: I can repeat generalisations about Greek tragedy and Euripides in particular and their relevance for our contemporary world. We could draw many analogies about the ways Euripides's text conceptualises and enacts relationships between east and west, barbarism and civilisation, men and women, autochthony and otherness, citizens and refugees, the politics of motherhood and the politics of statehood. Thematically, this list of binaries could be expanded to encompass more historical and political parallels. This, however, might make for an interesting essay and not necessarily an interesting piece of theatre.

What always draws me to Greek tragedy and Euripides especially is its immanent adaptability, or its translatability, as Walter Benjamin would say. These are works that I think were written along two theoretical axes: they were meant to be performed so theatricality was central (they were blueprints for performance, unfinished works, as it were); and they were already adaptations of myths, so the principles of re-writing, adaptation, and translation were/are constitutive of their very being. We could even draw parallels here with the Brechtian notion of the 'Model', which is based on the principle of reproducibility and not mere and mechanical reproduction.

I am also always drawn to the literariness of the language itself, both the strangeness of the classical Greek, and the ways this has been translated and re-worked in the *longue durée* of its reception history.

Of course, every work is always also biographical, but things like 'intensions' in both literary and personal terms are never fully knowable, and always a kind of fallacy.

FDO: Why a monologue in the first place? Have you reworked on it for the new performance?

OT: As the original text gives so much space to our understanding of *Medea*, I thought it would be interesting to get the whole story from her perspective. However, this perspective is not reduced to the 'point-of-view' of a specific psychological character, i.e. that of Medea. This version of *Medea*, and this view of the function of the monologue, opens up the whole idea of 'dramatic persona' as a kind of *gestus* through which I hope we get the whole play. I have to admit that I did not start with this idea in mind and then try to implement it. I think that I simply followed the original text and re-wrote most of it to be spoken by her. This is the no-

tion of dramatic persona as a type of 'performing machine' (and I had not read Heiner Müller when I wrote this text over twenty years ago). Many of these reflections on the idea of a non-psychological notion of character of course derive from Greek tragedy itself, but also from my engagement with the specific performance of Maude Mitchell and the ways she approached this idea of the monologue, as something that does not only give us insight into a specific dramatic role, but that can possibly embody the whole play.

It does mean that a number of challenges are posed for the performer, as the language is very demanding, fluctuating between high poetry and the everyday, and containing both dialogue and choral sequences. It needs a performer who can embody many and sometimes contradictory performance traditions from Naturalism to Epic, from classical recitative to everyday speech, from eastern traditional modes of stylization (as in Noh and Kabuki) to modes that come from soap opera and cinema. Maude Mitchell was able to embody and integrate all these traditions and bring them to her acting of Medea. Her training in the Meisner technique certainly helped to move away from a psychological take on the character, and to open the role of Medea up so it encompassed both her 'internal world' and the 'external world' of the play. For example, even the stage design with the altar of Hecate as a central piece, could be read as somehow portraying Medea's internal world, not necessarily her psychology, but her body itself, so important in a play that deals with the politics of reproduction. Again, these ideas were not thought out by myself prior to the rehearsal process, and artificially imposed. Quite the opposite, watching the rehearsal and the work-in-progress, allowed me to better understand how this kind of monologue can function on the stage.

I had, however, seen Maude Mitchell perform Nora in the Mabou Mines *Dollhouse* directed by Lee Breuer. This was an outstanding performance for which she won an Obie, amongst other awards. I saw in that performance the ways the actor could at once embody a role and its reception in the genealogy of that role, I saw how Nora was both a specific character and a prism through which the politics of the play could be read. There is an astonishing moment when Nora leaves the Dollhouse and encounters what is in effect the role of women, the politics of gender in the twentieth century and beyond. In shutting that door behind her she foreshadows Molly Bloom's emphatic "YES" (as we know, James Joyce was a huge Ibsen fan), but also looks back in the long genealogy of theatre to other instances where women crossed that line between the private and the public, the *oikos* and the *polis*. In my mind this *gestus* of Maude Mitchell as Nora also echoed Medea's first address to the chorus, "Women I have left the house . . .". Interestingly, when Maude Mitchell speaks that line in my adaptation ("Women, I have left the house, shut the door behind me, forever . . .") she walks into the audience. When Nora leaves the Dollhouse, her final speech is performed not on the central stage but on a balcony. This crossing of that liminal space between the stage and the audience, happened organically. It was Maude's idea and came out of the rehearsal process. In my mind it also quoted her leaving the stage as Nora. When I saw Maude Mitchell in *Dollhouse*, I thought to myself that she would make a terrific Medea, not necessarily in my version. That this came about was a matter of good fortune.

In addition to the monologue I wrote a new "Song to Love", which is a series

of couplets, the first line of which is always "What is this love?". Lee Breuer suggested that this sequence be shared as a question/response between Medea and the musicians, making them a type of chorus. This sequence ends with "The pain of childbirth I'd trade / For relief from this love", directly quoting the famous line from Euripides but also re-writing it.

So, in many ways this version of a monologue somehow syncopates all the roles in the play into one. What the rehearsal process, Lee Breuer's re-ordering of the text, and the work-in-progress brought out, are the ways that this monologue could indeed be opened up on the stage to encompass all the other aspects of the play.

FDO: How did you work on the adaptation of the text for this 'work in progress' with Mabou Mines?

OT: Lee Breuer is a very generous director. When I gave the text to him and Maude Mitchell for their consideration and when they agreed to do it they had carte blanche from me. I admired their work for many years, had taught it, had run workshops with them, so I felt I understood their theatrical aesthetic well and respected it. However, Lee Breuer discussed with me every single change he dramaturgically made to the text. I have to stress that these changes were made in order to accommodate other aspects of theatricality that he introduced to the production process: the chorus of spider puppets, the Jason-puppet, the introduction of original music. All these elements needed to be theatrically integrated and this involved shifting the text around a bit. And not a word of my text was changed. I wrote a few small additional sequences as part of the rehearsal process, but Lee discussed with me every change he wanted to make. As I said, he didn't really have to, as I believe this is part and parcel of the process, but he did, and I am grateful for this, as I think it added further to and inflected this quality of adaptability I mentioned earlier that comes with the original Euripides text.

FDO: The play contains many references to present-day consumeristic culture and migrations issues: are they a part of the original script or did you add them during the rehearsals of this particular performance?

OT: All these references are there in my version, which was written before this performance. The text is littered with them. I wanted to draw the contemporary parallels not so much through narrative analogies or metaphors but mainly through sudden shifts in language and register. I think most of the contemporary references appear through the use of language that refers to the 'everyday'. I don't think I use any contemporary place-names or direct references to events. I hope that the shifts in language and style (high, literary/everyday colloquial, *pathos*/*bathos*), which admittedly might be somewhat jarring in places, might create a kind of jolt in the audience, a kind of estrangement rather than a simple and direct identification with our own contemporary reality.

FDO: From your perspective as a researcher on the relationship between traditional tragic forms and modern theatrical currents, how was the experience of actually working on a contemporary adaptation of a Greek tragedy which inspired Sene-

ca too, and what were the most inspiring or, contrariwise, difficult or disheartening aspects of it?

OT: The only disheartening aspect was that we all wished we had more time to work on it. Like any exciting performance this one made the original Euripides text feel both more familiar and more strange. Re-writing, both through language and performance, is, as I have mentioned throughout, so central to the whole trope of tragedy, and this project once again made that very clear to all of us, I think. I am always astounded at how much you can play with the conventions of classical Greek tragedy, and how strong they still remain. I firmly believe in the power of tragic form. This is why, despite my writing a monologue, I think that the actual performance in a sense had to deconstruct performatively that idea of the monologue, so it could also encompass the chorus, Jason, the Nurse, etc. This was very revealing for me. It is as if tragic form was pushing through on the stage, demanding more theatricality.

It is impossible to either re-write and/or perform a play like *Medea* without also quoting the long history of its reception as a literary text and as a performance text. This also became apparent through Lee Breuer's detailed knowledge of world theatre. Seneca's text was one that Lee and Maude worked with very closely. It is indeed one that I also love. The final lines that are projected onto the altar "Bear witness where you go / The Gods no longer exist", are the closing lines from Seneca's *Medea.* It was Lee's idea to use these. I think this worked very well as they were projected somewhat hazily (Eamonn Farrell, the assistant director and lighting / video designer worked on this), enough to add a metaphysical dimension to the political and domestic drama, but the audience had to 'look twice' in order to decipher the lines, so it couldn't act as the final word. I was particularly happy with this inclusion of Seneca as his *Medea* was one that influenced my re-writing.

FDO: As explained in the Q&A section following the performance the day I saw it, it took form during rehearsals, thanks to a continual work of collective experimentation. According to you, which were the main developments and in what ways did you collaborate with the company?

OT: As I mentioned earlier, I was not heavily involved with the actual rehearsal process nor did I particularly want to be. Lee, Maude and I had had a series of very detailed discussions about the text and these were on-going throughout the rehearsal process as well, but I was not there, present throughout the first three weeks. It is my belief that the shift from page to stage is a delicate one, and the theatre makers need the space to do what they do best. Sometimes the presence of the writer can be detrimental. For me, from the moment the rehearsal started Lee was the author/*auteur* of the production. However, as his idea of authorship for performance is always a collective and collaborative one, so was the process. The analogy that Lee uses is that of a musical 'jamming session'. As in any jamming session to work, all the participants need to be very accomplished in their own instruments but also receptive and open to the ideas of others. Lee proved a very insightful and creative conductor of such a session, that I think brought out the best in everyone's talents.

FDO: How did you adjust the script to the performing space and general acting requirements? To what extent has the text undergone changes? Is it too meant to be in progress?

OT: Performance texts, I think, are always in progress. And here we have much to learn from the Greek tragedies themselves. On the one hand, they adhere to very strict performing conventions, while, on the other, they are open to the risk and ephemerality of the performance process itself. Personally, I believe that you can do anything with a text on stage – that the performance has its own autonomy. Of course, you can also fail. I don't think that a playwright can control the various lives that their work has on the stage. They can like some more than others, but they cannot control them. For example, we all know how notorious Samuel Beckett was, and his estate is, about how his plays can be produced. And I have certainly seen some pretty bad productions of his plays, but I don't think you can stop them happening. I have also seen some very exciting installations based on Beckett plays, that may not have been possible while he was alive. So the risk that live theatre involves needs to be shared by the writer as well. And in this respect, I was very, very fortunate, as I approached a company and a director whose work I knew well and in whom I had absolute trust.

FDO: The show was heavily dominated by images of spiders: there were puppeteers moving spider-puppets, and a web circling all around the stage. What was their main function and who developed this idea? Is it somehow rooted in the script or was it integrated during the rehearsals?

OT: The idea of using the image of spiders as such a potent symbol on the stage came from Lee Breuer and Maude Mitchell, and we discussed this early on, almost a year before the rehearsal process began. I liked the image of Arachne very much. Her own story has parallels with that of Medea. She is from Asia Minor; she is a mortal who challenged the goddess Athena (who is also critically presented in my text); she is only turned into a spider after the *hubris* she commits in winning the weaving competition against Athena. Her craft then becomes her punishment. As a symbol of monstrous femininity she also parallels Medea. Interestingly, Athena uses Hecate's herb to transform her into a spider. This works well with the presence of Hecate's altar on the stage.

Theatrically Arachne offers a very potent symbol on the stage, both delicate and deadly. As a stage property the web is a very versatile object; it functioned as a curtain, and a physical stage for the Jason puppet, as even perhaps a metaphor for Jason's colonial expedition; visually there were many parallels between Hecate's altar and the spider's web.

The idea of the puppet spiders was also Lee's and he discussed this with the wonderful puppet designer, Basil Twist, who was the Puppetry Advisor. In turn Basil, introduced Kalan Sherrard, who created Hecate's altar and all the glove puppets (using real bones for their legs) and the whole scenic Environment.

These puppets (with the work of the puppeteers Lute Breuer, Sam Gibbs and Anthony Leung) functioned as a chorus of sorts for Medea. They underlined her connection with both artistry and sorcery.

FDO: As an expert of Craig's theatre, what was your reaction to the use of puppets on stage and what the implications of Jason being reduced to a small visible figure to be handled by Medea herself, while being magnified verbally in Medea's own passionate and desperate monologue?

OT: I love puppets! Unlike Craig, I don't think they should replace human actors, although I don't think that he really believed that either. The puppet in much of the modernist experimentation in acting and staging functions as a trope that helps to rethink the art of the actor. The relationships between psychological expressiveness and stylization, between interiority and physical action, between presence and absence are all highlighted through the presence of the puppet. The relationships between the puppet, the actor, the dancer and even athlete are radically re-worked in much modernist experimentation. I have written about this elsewhere and I don't want to bore you here.

However, and very interestingly to me, Lee was not aware of my work on Craig and modernist puppets. I, on the other hand, had seen his show *Peter and Wendy*, which used puppets with Basil Twist, and knew of his work in puppetry. So, when he suggested the use of puppets I jumped at the idea!

I think that the combination of actor and puppet on the stage, as we had here, is a particularly potent one. Especially, when 'huge' emotions are involved like rage, vengeance, desire, and mourning. The combination of actor and puppet sheds light on the art of both these performing modes, helps to avoid melodrama and easy psychologism. The use of puppets, I think, is especially apt in performing the great visceral emotions of Greek tragedy, as the ancient Greeks themselves believed that the emotions were not simply a matter of interiority, but were also and always externalized. So, *menos, oistros, ate* etc., visited their victims from the external world and did not solely reside in their psyche.

I think puppets help to materialize this idea that the strong emotions of this play do not solely derive from Medea's internal psychology. And, it takes a very strong performer to act with puppets. The scenes with Medea and the Jason puppet (with Lute Breuer as the puppeteer) are very evocative and powerful. It also shows how we as spectators can empathize with both animate and inanimate creatures on stage. At the same time, this also invites us to marvel at the art of both the actor and the puppeteer.

There is also another Craig connection that came out of the rehearsal process. And that is through Ellen Terry, Craig's mother. Maude's costume included a neck piece around which her gown was draped, of a green beetle-like construction. This was Maude's idea, and it was a direct reference to Ellen Terry's famous green beetle dress that she wore in her role as Lady Macbeth in 1888. This gown was adorned by 1,000 iridescent beetle wings (shed naturally), has been more recently restored, and is very significant in the history of costume design. Of course, we did not use real beetle wings, and when Maude suggested the idea to the costume designer, Meganne George, she came up with the idea of using green fake finger nails. However, the impact was very strong as at least one audience member picked up on the reference to Ellen Terry, as became clear in one of the Q&As.

"Things have a life", says Winnie in *Happy Days*, and things on the stage certainly have a life and a long one at that. When dealing with literary texts, we are

able and have the critical tools to spot allusion, citationality, intertextuality more generally. The same surely is true of the languages of the stage. In this instance, Maude's quoting of Ellen Terry's gown as Lady Macbeth, was also a way of alluding to another play that also deals with the politics of motherhood. And as this kind of quotationality always generates more interpretation, we can even read into this the difficult relationship between Ellen Terry and her son Edward Gordon Craig. Of course, all these thoughts derive after the work in progress. It is amazing how much meaning one simple object (a beetle wing / a fake nail) on the stage can generate.

FDO: Now I'd like to talk briefly about two moments of the performance, which particularly struck the audience. The first one was how Medea's children were presented on stage: they were marionettes moved, and talked to, by Maude Mitchell, telling them the story of Jason's journey while washing them and preparing them as if they were going to bed. For the audience this was a very important moment in the show, concerning the relationship between Medea and her kids. What is your opinion?

OT: The marionettes used for the children were in the Japanese Kuruma Ningyö style, which derives from the older form of Bunraku. It is associated with the telling of epic tales and religious ritual. Lee had actually studied this form of puppetry in Japan, and it was he who suggested this style for the children. Of course, it was modified, and I think it worked well to help Medea narrate her back story, which at least in terms of Jason's exploits of conquest, entailed many epic elements. The bath scene also allowed us to see Medea as a caring, loving mother. It helped create that ambivalence in her character and in our feelings towards her, which is so crucial for tragedy. In terms of ritual, the bath scene also mirrors death ritual (the cleaning of the body before sleep / the cleansing of the body before death).

FDO: The other striking moment was when Medea, towards the end of the performance, started climbing over the rows of seats, talking directly to the audience, as if the audience itself had somehow become a sort of Chorus to be addressed and the stage were all of a sudden enlarged. Was this part of your original idea or was it an acting innovation?

OT: This was Maude Mitchell's idea, and it sprung from the rehearsal process. It was indeed a magical moment and I was fortunate to be there when she turned to Lee and said 'shall I go out into the audience?', and if I remember correctly Eamonn Farrell said something like, 'Yes, turn the audience into women'. And while Maude ventured out into the audience, I could also see this gesture as quoting her role as Nora, when Nora leaves the Dollhouse. This is the sequence when Medea addresses the chorus of women, "Women, I have left the house . . ." and the house here was also the 'house' of the stage. The sequence also re-wrote many of the famous women / feminist lines of Euripides, like "The rivers run backwards / and the world starts again . . .". It also has many contemporary references to credit cards, supermarket queens, 'difficult, hormonal women', and while Maude is walking through the audience she is performing both the roles of Medea and Jason. I am very pleased that you found this moment striking. Such implicating of the audi-

ence does not always work, and can even be manipulative. I think in this instance it was very effective. And once again this allowed the audience to marvel, up close, at the art of the performer.

FDO: What was the function of the masked, silent woman on stage and what did the actual lack of the Chorus imply? Was it perhaps because it was lacking that those of us who knew Euripides' text at that point felt turned into one?

OT: Jessica Weinstein played the role of the masked narrator at the start and the end of the piece; she also turned into a chorus and Medea's confidant throughout. Although, there was no chorus in the traditional sense, the convention of the chorus was re-worked through the role of The Cleaner (Jessica's role), the function of the spider puppets, who in places were a chorus for Medea, and of course, the role of the musicians. Jay Ansill composed original music and with Alex (Tiappa) Klimosvitsky and Marie Incontrera performed live. These musicians also formed a type of chorus, as there were moments when they took part in question / response exchanges with Medea. And, of course, the whole audience is turned into a chorus at the moment when Medea crosses the line that separates them from the stage.

Jessica, who is also a very accomplished performer, acted at least in my mind as a kind of sounding board for Medea, as a character of common sense, the low version of Medea's high pain, as she was envisioned as a cleaner. I was very surprised to see that this was the role the Lee had decided to present with a mask and in a faux-classical gown. The mask, of course, was made of paper, perhaps alluding to a fading, worn out classicism. Originally, a hard mask was meant to be created, but we thought it might be more effective to have paper mask, which itself quotes a classical convention. This again, placed more demands on the art of the performer, and Jessica Weinstein was able to smoothly and convincingly move between a number of roles.

FDO: As both a classicist and a movie lover, some aspects of the performance reminded me, in some way, of Pier Paolo Pasolini's cinematic adaptation of *Medea*, especially the emphasis on Medea's foreignness. Other viewers have seen in it also some connection to Christa Wolf's *Medea. Stimmen* (*Medea: A Novel in Voices*, 1996). Are the film and the novel in any way related to your own adaptation?
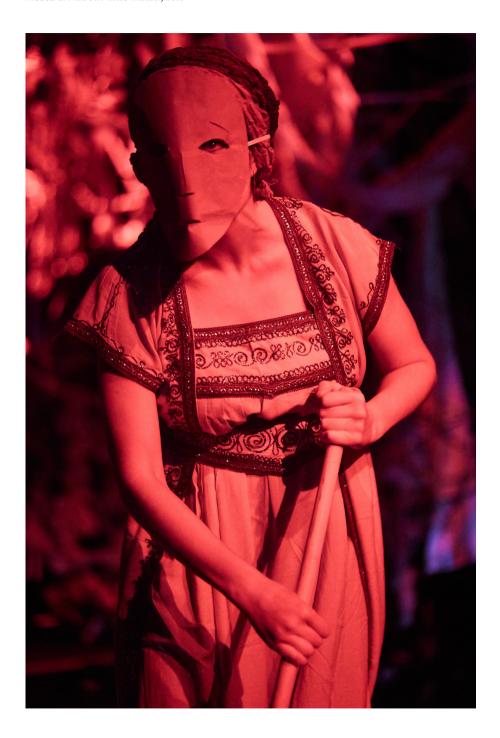
OT: I think every performance of *Medea* will inevitably also engage with the performance history of the play, and with its overall reception. Most of us come to a performance having seen or read other versions on stage, screen or in literary renditions. And I truly believe that it is a mark of a good performance that it can mobilise within the audience its ability to at once empathise but also to see critically and almost meta-theatrically other versions that it may quote. And this is a pleasurable act too. So in a sense every *Medea* opens up a whole field of *Medeas* – just as in translation studies we have 'field translation'. Of course, Pasolini's version is very significant, in its portrayal of Medea through Maria Callas as a sorceress, but also in framing the story with a human sacrifice that in itself proposes an interpretation of 'the birth of tragedy through fertility ritual', very much influenced by the primitivism of the '60s and '70s (and in Pasolini's particular fusion of tragedy and Christian ritual, Dionysus as the Crucified, to paraphrase Nietzsche). It also helps
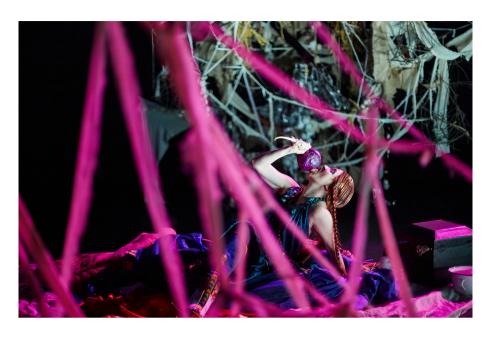
us to understand the killing of the children not as an aberration but as a ritualistic sacrifice (and in Seneca, for example, this sacrifice also saves them from slavery). So, yes, Pasolini's version is important but so is Lars von Trier's, so is Ninagawa's Kabuki inspired stage version (whether we have seen them or not), but these references are not direct, they do not neatly map onto each other. They are related through their central source text, as it were, the original. Of course different viewers will see different connections. For example, I had not read Christa Wolf's version when I wrote my adaptation, but I do not doubt that parallels exist. As I mentioned at the start of this discussion, adaptability is a central mode especially for tragedy in performance. This mobilises a whole network (like the Arachne's web) of connections, some deliberate, some not, some from the text, others from the performance and the audience. There is no deterministic relationship between them and the link is always Euripides.

When we talk about tragedy in performance, I think, what is at work is the opposite of a kind of 'anxiety of influence', whatever we may call that; something that goes against the fetish of 'originality' and 'newness' (again Brecht's idea of the 'Model' comes to mind, and indicatively his first 'Model' was based on his production of the *Antigone* of Sophocles based on Hölderlin). In discussion with Lee Breuer about adaptation and performance he used the Duchampian idea of 'the Readymade', which I think is very apt too. Together with the idea of the musical jam, I think this work in progress opened up my text in performance in ways that at once paid homage to the Euripides text and to its long history of re-writing and performance.

FDO: After this three-day performance run what's the future of this project in your view? Do you feel the need to further develop this 'work in progress', and how?

OT: I know that Maude Mitchell and Lee Breuer and the company would like to develop this project further and then present it in the Mabou Mines theatre in New York, hopefully followed by a tour to international festivals. Lee's seminal work *The Gospel at Colonus* will be revived at Central Park in New York this September, and the APGRD at the University of Oxford has been in discussion with me to plan an event celebrating Lee's work on Greek Tragedy. So, we hope to take at least a version of this *Medea* there too. The experience was extremely rewarding for me as it shed light on both the original and on my adaptation. But performance is a lived experienced event, and we hope to engage more audiences with this project, to bring out yet more surprising and hopefully wondrous moments.

Pictures on pp. 157-60 are by Tucker W. Mitchell – photog.nyc

Silvia Bigliazzi* and David Schalkwyk**

A Conversation on David Schalkwyk's *Shakespeare, Love and Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 251

Abstract

David Schalkwyk talks about his latest book on *Shakespeare, Love and Language* (Cambridge University Press, 2018) with Silvia Bigliazzi.

Keywords: Shakespeare; love; language; desire; eros

SB: As the other day I was walking down the street I found myself rehearsing in my own mind bits of speeches, fragments of memories, scattered sounds in Italian and in English, and this made me think about our bilingual experiment with *Antony and Cleopatra*.[1] I thought about Cleopatra's infinite variety but also about feelings of otherness and displacement with regard to Antony, and wondered to what extent being displaced sometimes also means being in one's own place, and how getting lost also means finding oneself. Perhaps also through language. So I started wondering whether our multilingual *A&C* could play with language in that way, perhaps experimenting on the possibilities of desire – for one-self and for the other(s) – through language swapping, or overlapping, or counterpointing, as if engaging with a very flexible musical score.

DS: These are wonderful, resonating and suggestive thoughts. I have now spent quite a bit of my life away from 'home' – to the point that I no longer know what home is or where it may be. When I was Director of Research at the Folger Shakespeare Library we had a seminar on Global Shakespeare, and thought it would be fun to replicate the Robben Island Shakespeare, and sign our names against our favourite passages in Shakespeare. I was startled by my choice, made instinctively, without deliberation: Antipholus of Syracuse's speech:

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[1] Reference is to the workshop on a directorless performance of *Antony and Cleopatra* which took place in Verona from 24 to 28 February 2019. The Italian translation was by Silvia Bigliazzi and the performers were Hanna Arendzen, Monica Garavello, Michele Guidi, Eric Nicholson, Elena Pellone, Antony Renshaw, and David Schalkwyk.

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He that commends me to mine own content
Commends me to the thing I cannot get.
I to the world am like a drop of water
That in the ocean seeks another drop,
Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself.
So I, to find a mother and a brother,
In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself.
(1.2.33-40)[2]

I've always been struck by Wittgenstein's suggestion that philosophy means no longer being at home (in one's language), no longer knowing one's way about. And that our task is to return language to its proper home. But everything he shows us about language is uncanny in the Freudian sense-unheimlich. The strangeness of home. And our struggle to find comfort in that strangeness. Is this what Eros is all about: finding comfort in strangeness; forging a home out of the other? And offering a home to the other in one's alien and alienated being?

SB: This tension between feeling at home and estranged, or comforted in strangeness, appears to me related to your major claim in *Shakespeare, Love and Language* that desire and love are opposite and complementary: the one being an emotion or affect resting on lack and metonymy (from Plato to Lacan), the other including emotion but going beyond it and relying on presence and uniqueness, the "finality of the you" Todorov talks about.

DS: Yes and no. I stalled for a long time on *Shakespeare, Love and Language* (it took me over ten years to write) because I was determined to find some way of distinguishing love and desire. All work on eros of the previous thirty years was obsessed with desire, a concept that had garnered increasing theoretical sophistication. Nobody had written about love in Shakespeare since the nineteen-seventies. This was understandable enough. It was a reaction to an earlier celebration of love in Shakespeare that was philosophically and politically uncritical. But something had been lost in the refusal to take seriously a concept that is at the heart of almost the whole Shakespeare canon. I tried to restore love as a concept central to Shakespeare's work, but also to his age. In *Shakespeare, Love and Service* I explored one of the senses of love, exemplified by Ariel's question to Prospero, "Do you love me, master?" (4.1.48) – the reciprocal bond between master and servant, monarch and subject that was not necessarily a deeply affective relationship. In what I consider its companion volume, *Shakespeare, Love and Language* I try to understand the same question asked by Miranda of Ferdinand. (This question, "Do you love me?", 3.1.80, occurs only twice in Shakespeare – both instances in *The Tempest*.) This proved to be much more difficult. *Eros* is much more complex and elusive than *nomos*. In short, I came to the conclusion, after reading Plato, the neo-Platonists, the Galenic psychologists, Freud and Lacan – and, of course, Shakespeare – that love and desire are not distinct but nonetheless different concepts. Love needs de-

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[2] References to Shakespeare's works are to the Folger digital editions, edited by Barbara Mowat and Paul Wernstein (http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org).

sire (what a paradox! love wants desire – see how language infiltrates and compli-cates everything, rendering everything exciting!) but it cannot be reduced to de-sire, a reduction that seemed to be compulsory for a whole generation of Shake-speare critics and scholars. So I reworked Lacan's algorithm for desire, as a metonymic movement based on a lack that will never end in identity (which is also essentially Plato's, absent the latter's ultimate teleology) to produce my own algo-rithm for love: it is driven by the reiterative need or want or absence, but obeying the rules of syntax, it can, miraculously, produce metaphorical identity. There is no statement (of identity) without syntactical movement. That identity is the reciproc-ity of love, achieved in a single moment between two singular subjectivities: what Todorov calls "the singularity of the you". But there is no finally achieved stasis. Because it is the essence of language to be repeated (Wittgenstein, Derrida), and such re-iteration always opens up the possibility of *difference*, the metaphorical identity of love is always unstable, always open to disruption by new contexts. I hope that my algorithm manages to combine the fundamental insights of Plato and Lacan into the *needs* of and for desire with the more humanist focus on the singu-larity of identity that love makes possible but cannot guarantee.

SB: You tackle eros in Shakespeare as "an intertwining of emotion, thought, atti-tude and *linguistic action* that cannot be comprehended by any single theory or historical narrative, but which may be illuminated by the deep involvement of lan-guage in human subjectivity and its drives" (9-10). Appropriating Carson's posi-tion, you insist on the fact that, albeit a noun, love acts as a verb. This brings in the question of language as performative action constitutive of the tension between eros and love as well as the construction of the subject linguistically through, and in relation to, the other.

DS: Yes. It should be apparent from my response above that I regard eros as deep-ly analogous to, or at least illuminated by, the operations of language. Just as liter-ary studies and theory over the past three decades have neglected love as an active force in Shakespeare, it has tended to be fixated on a neo-Saussurean picture of language as essentially a *structure*. A very different strand of what we now call an-alytic or Anglo-American philosophy, following Ludwig Wittgenstein and J.L. Aus-tin, however, see language primarily as a form of action, as a way of negotiating a way in the world, and of changing that world. In my first book, *Speech and Perfor-mance in Shakespeare's Sonnets and Plays*, I argue that the sonnets are fundamen-tally forms of (attempted) action. For this book I found Stanley Cavell and William Reddy's development of Wittgensteinian and Austinian ideas of the dynamism of language in use useful in teasing out the ways in which love is necessarily a nego-tiation or navigation of feeling between two people through the vagaries of inter-active dialogue – what Cavell (2006) calls "passionate utterance". In Shakespeare, love and desire are fundamentally linguistic – they are pursued, in their fullest in-stances, in conversation between two people in both fictional (imaginative and im-aginary) and frictional ways.

SB: Shakespeare's famous wordplay on I and eye/d in sonnet 104, "when first your eye I eyed" (2), seems pertinent to this erotic dynamic, in which the pun encapsu-

lates noun and verb, being and acting in a performative lyrical address to the you. Booth has underlined the phrase's capacity "to introduce witty and pertinent suggestions of a conceit it approximates structurally, the fusion and/or exchange of the identities of lover and beloved" (Shakespeare 1977: 333n2).

DS: Well, this is a complicated example. One of my reservations about a whole generation of sonnet critics, epitomized by the brilliance of Joel Fineman, is the way they tended to reduce the "I" to the "eye": vision, or the impossibility of vision, encapsulating the concomitant impossibility of accurate or fulfilling sight. The sonnet as, essentially, a failed picture. But the way you put it, with "eyed" as a verb that impacts upon the "I" in relation to another, changes that picture entirely. Cavell's "passionate utterances" are precisely what you call the "performative lyrical address to the you".

SB: You beautifully discuss how the uncertainties of desire, rather than the fullness of love, constitute the deep engine of Shakespeare's drama. Love too is a verb, implying acting rather than being, but, as you point out, Shakespeare does not engage with love as sustained action in romantic comedies. I find your definition of many Shakespeare's plays involving desire as "incessantly embodied and re-embodied as love" (8) very intriguing. I wonder to what extent this concept coalesces the separate ideas of desire and love. I also wonder to what extent dramas of desire, grounded in lack and substitution, correspond to an idea of *drân* as voluntary doing, and as such constituting the subject as a wilful and self-aware self, or instead to an idea of *páschein*, i.e. of suffering, being an estranged-self affected in a certain way, and how this relates to the idea of being comfortable in strangeness.

DS: Again, as Falstaff would say, "You have hit it!". For the relationship between desire and love, see my account of the algorithm in which the metonymy of desire may, through the necessary operations of syntax, turn into the metaphorical identity of love. The paradox of love (rather than desire) is that it is fundamentally *páschein*, or suffering, as you put it: one *falls* in love. But there is an ethical dimension to love (which desire *lacks* – I love it!), which is that once one has been struck, fallen, let oneself go, then to acknowledge love (rather than desire) entails a responsibility for one's behaviour, actions, continuing to love and care, *into the future*. One falls into this stranger, but one also takes responsibility for one's self in relation to that stranger. This combines an alienation of oneself in the falling, the *páschein*, with an ethical requirement that you do not become a "double self" (as Portia accuses Bassanio of doing; *The Merchant of Venic*e 5.1.261). Shakespeare is absolutely fascinated by the performative ethics of oaths and promises. A certain, absolute integrity is demanded along with the falling into the other by falling in love. This is utterly different from the cruisings of desire.

SB: Dealing with love in Shakespeare entails both considering how he responded to historically-situated theories, and went beyond them, even anticipating modern philosophers. This not only allows us to penetrate the intricacies of eros in ways irreducible to individual theories, past or present, but also invites us to reflect upon our own approaches and critical stances, including critical eclecticism.

DS: I am aware of being in danger of being dismissed for such eclecticism. Indeed,

some of the reviews have already reproached the book for its critical incoherence. I see no reason why a certain openness to difference, even contradictory difference, should be regarded as a necessary sign of intellectual weakness. I approached my task with a single question in mind: how does the concept of erotic love make its way through Shakespeare's work? Eros. I had no predetermined approach. Despite my general inclination towards a certain strand of linguistic philosophy (which sees greater affinities between Derrida and Wittgenstein and Austin than most – see my *Literature and the Touch of the Real* – I did not wish to give any definitive *reading*: historicist, humanist, Wittgensteinian, Lacanian, Cognitivist, and so on. I read the texts, and what struck me – what I say in my opening pages – is that there is no single theory, or idea, or picture of love in Shakespeare. That said, there do seem to be certain trends: the idea that the beloved is singular and not fungible; that no-one can be commanded to love someone they do not; that love is both immensely powerful and fragile; that while fantasy may be immensely destructive, it is to some degree inescapable; that to claim to love someone incurs an ethical commitment that desiring someone does not; that the separate integrity of each lover has to be preserved – that the traditional ideal of fusion is both impossible and destructive; that love may be an a politically disruptive force; that lovers do not know why they love; that love is a projective force of bestowal of value; and that love is not an emotion but a dispositional form of behaviour that involves multiple, often contradictory emotions. I read all the classic Galenic humoural psychologists and found them both contradictory and inconsistent, and Shakespeare's attitude to them ironical and sceptical. I spent two years trying to understand Lacan, and found to my delight and surprise that Shakespeare had beaten me to it: he had read Seminar VII before he wrote *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, but had moved on to Todorov for *Romeo and Juliet* and Austin and Cavell for *Antony and Cleopatra*. I saw signs of Lucretius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Derrida and Mauss in *The Merchant of Venice*, and the Catholic philosopher Jean-Luc Marion helped me to understand aspects of *Othello* and *Troilus and Cressida* I hadn't been able to make sense of before. It was fun.

SB: The five chapters into which your book is divided propose five main approaches to Shakespeare, love, and language. The first one deals with the function of subjective fantasies in channelling desire towards an object, and accordingly constructing it as desirable. Your argument leads to the conclusion that the love object is not fungible. Is this dependent on the origin of the projective power in the subject? How does the idea of feeling comfortable in strangeness accommodate with this projective subject-oriented perspective? Is the strangeness one may feel comfortable with a condition produced by the self in Shakespeare, or is this possibility evaded?

DS: This is a difficult question, and I'm not sure I can answer it adequately. There is absolutely no doubt that in Shakespeare love is not fungible from the perspective of the lover at the moment of love. There are many instances of this: Hermia's willingness to die rather than marry Demetrius in *Dream*; Juliet's similar refusal of Paris; Bertram's incapacity to love Helen in *All's Well*, despite acceding to marrying her. And *Dream* makes clear that this is a projective, but also involuntary, form

of bestowal by the lover on the beloved: "Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 1.1.240). At the same time, he is acutely aware of how vulnerable such singular bestowal is to change: compare Lysander's transformed fixation on Helena, Romeo's move from Rosalind to Juliet; Proteus's transformed affection for Silvia. Hence my algorithm, which incorporates the singular metaphorical identity of love within the metonymic movement of desire, but always open to the disruptive difference of iterability. Your question is about feeling comfortable with strangeness. I'm not sure one is ever comfortable. There are moments of ecstasy, or movements of pleasure (cf. Kate and Petruchio's initial and concluding interactions in *The Taming of the Shrew* or any number of interactions between *Antony and Cleopatra*) but never, in Shakespeare, the stasis of comfort. Perhaps this is just a characteristic of the genre – of theatre or drama. But I think not. His sonnets are the least comfortable, or comforting, love poems in English.

SB: Your reading of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* demonstrates the impossibility "to reduce fantasy either to language or the unreachable Real" (56), showing that the "anatomy of love as fantastical . . . is unparalleled in Shakespeare" (57). I recently discussed how in Macbeth desire becomes the origin of fear (2018). In what way does the fantastical share in the nature of other affects in Shakespeare, and may this sharing shed light on the nature of love and language?

DS: You ask such hard questions! My reading of *Gentlemen* is very specific, very particular to a historic form of love and a modern theory of desire: it combines Andreas Capellanus's treatise on what we call "courtly love" – *De Amore* – with a pretty straightforward account of the play in the light of Lacan's Seminar VII discussion of courtly love and the imaginary. The play concerns the ways in which a certain attitude to women, exemplified by "courtly love", does not encounter them as people, but rather as what Lacan calls vacuoles: hollowed out fantasies that bear no real relation to the person desired and loved. This reading does not evade the attempted rape at the end, but argues that it makes perfect sense, as does Valentine's 'gift' of Silvia to Proteus, since the fantasy that both men have sustained collapses, along with their attempts to find poetic expression of that fantasy in the Symbolic. Once Silvia collapses into a real figure, she is no longer of any interest to either of the men, who shift their desire onto the androgynous figure of "Sebastian". Fantasy here is appalling. Worthy of excoriation by the #MeToo movement and all who sympathise with it. But that is not to say we can get rid of fantasy or the imaginary. It remains at the core of the bestowal of value at the core of love. But in Shakespeare, it seems to me, fantasy is channelled and 'realized' if I can use that word, through the friction, the resistance, the give and take of "passionate utterance" as an active, performative form of conversation. In this symbolic activity, where "other affects", as you put it, are mutually engaged in what Reddy calls the "navigation" of feeling (2001), love mobilises a vast range of emotions, exemplified by the interactions of Shakespeare's unsurpassed lovers, Antony and Cleopatra.

SB: The second chapter deals with what you call "Love's Trouble Consummation". With regard to *Troilus and Cressida* you explore how "the metonymical movement of desire may be transformed into the metaphorical identity of desire" (14). How is

the relation between metonymy and metaphor dramatised in this play?

DS: I think I have answered, at least in part, this question above. This chapter was the most difficult for me to write. And I still have misgivings about the argument. I offer a radical argument here (perhaps radically wrong). This was a case of following the argument where it led me. *Troilus and Cressida* is the first play I discuss that contains a real, extended conversational engagement between the lovers: a sustained "passionate utterance". Following my algorithm, it struck me that it is impossible to determine any length of time for the metaphorical identity of love to be established. Aristotle maintains that friendship is tested by time. But how long is enough? If the metaphorical identity of love is established only momentarily through the metonymic movement of desire, and it is always open to the disruption of difference through the subsequent moments of repetition, no criterion is available for deciding how long is long enough for us to count this (momentary) identity as love indeed. All love may come to an end. To paraphrase Derrida, if only one such instance is possible, we need to account for that possibility. So I concluded that there is no way of determining the duration that love must meet to count as love. An instant, "momentany as a sound, / Swift as a shadow, short as any dream, / Brief as . . . lightning" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 1.1.145-7), might serve. So that's what I argued about Troilus and Cressida's brief relationship, and it became a heartbreaking exemplum of all loves that break off, are disrupted, come to an end, no matter how long they'd managed to sustain themselves. The moment of difference, of differentiation, obliterates previous time. I'm still uncertain about this logic.

SB: In your third chapter, you focus on the 'gift of love'. With regard to *As you like it*, you connect the 'condition of otium' experienced by the characters in the forest with "the playfulness of fiction" (14), while with regard to *The Merchant of Venice* you disclose bitter insights into the "impossibility of love as a gift" (ibid.).

DS: These are very different plays, but they are connected by what Derrida calls the impossibility of the gift. My discussion of *As You Like It* is informed, as all treatments of the play must be, by its pastoral character: by its bifurcated vision of pastoral as both a desirable fantasy and a harsh reality. The love forged between Orlando and Rosalind needs the otium of the pastoral, the fiction of gender play, to suspend the immediacy of desire. That suspension allows for play, in all senses of the word, totally absent from the rigid demands of war in both *Othello* and *Troilus and Cressida*, to negotiate or navigate feelings and attitudes, and test consistency of behaviour, without immediate consequences. Rosalind is thus able to give herself as a gift, both to her father and her lover without having to pass through the restrictions and demands that Portia is subject to, while also retaining relationships between others in her gift. The gift of love in *Merchant* is very different. Taking Mauss and Derrida's argument that a real gift demands no sense of recompense, I argue that Antonio's gift to Bassanio is in fact his heart, disguised as collateral for a loan to Shylock. Portia's gift of his wealth back to him negates this impossible gift of love. How do we give to the people we love freely, without any expectation of recompense, even in the form of thanks? Does love demand this? Is it even possible? And if it is not possible, is love possible?

SB: In chapter four you resume the topic of love as service already discussed with regard to *The Two Gentleme*n, and more extensively in your book of 2008. Here the focus is on the retainer-band logic of *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Romeo and Juliet*. What prompted you to consider these two plays together?

DS: It's simple. They're both love stories, conditioned, if that is the right word, by the overwhelming ethos of patriarchal service, in which women are either distracting objects of desire once the manly pursuits of violence and aggression are put aside, objects of social exchange, or dangerous distractions from masculine solidarity. What is striking is the degree to which Beatrice, who loathes that masculine ethos, finds herself forced to save her cousin by appealing to Benedick's *service*. Although it is an earlier play, *Romeo and Juliet* is almost unique in Shakespeare's canon in eschewing the discourse of service between its youthful lovers entirely – within a social context in which service predominates. I argue that *Romeo and Juliet* exemplifies the recognition of the beloved as a singular person, loved for their specific irreplaceability. Romeo and Juliet forge a reciprocal relationship that eschews the demands of their society (as Petruchio and Katherine do in *The Taming of the Shrew*), whereas Beatrice and Benedick are reintegrated into the communal dance (even if it proves to be giddy).

SB: Chapter five tackles the question of love and emotion and culminates in an illuminating investigation of how *Antony and Cleopatra* offers evidence that love can be reduced neither to a single emotion, nor to simplified binaries, as it involves conflicting emotions which are expressed, produced, and tested through language. This raises the question of who Antony and Cleopatra are and to what extent they (de)construct themselves performatively through erotic speech acts.

DS: Hmmm. One could just as well say that they construct themselves through erotic speech acts. It is important to remember that each of them has a history – within the time of the play, and extending before it. That history has constructed them in a particular way, and their interactions inevitably both deconstruct and attempt to reconstruct that history. I return to some degree to Freud in this chapter, following an excellent *Shakespeare Quarterly* essay by David Hillman in transference – both Antony and Cleopatra are the subjects of transference and are resistant to or fearful of it. But my main goal here is to investigate the degree to which love may be said to be an emotion. The interaction of the lovers in this play runs the gamut of emotions, some of them completely contrary of what we would consider love, and more important, they feel anger, exasperation, frustration, contempt, derision precisely *because they love each other*. In addition to exploring the idea that love is a behavioural disposition that involves emotions but is not reduceable to them, the chapter explores the way that Cleopatra and Antony recognize or acknowledge love for each other retrospectively, in the manner of their respective deaths. If Lacan is right to say that love involves giving what one doesn't have, then Shakespeare's great tragedy shows that love is a promisory note on the future – something one doesn't have – but it is recognized only as something already given, in the past.

SB: "In Shakespeare the Imaginary always works with the Symbolic. In its most

traditional form it is a reprise on the poetic discourses of courtly desire . . . This means, in effect, that the Lacanian theory of the signifier that founds language on an essential lack or absence, and the theory of the subject that flows from that absence, stems from a confusion of langue and parole: language as system and language in use." (202). These remarks concern plays like *The Two Gentlemen*, *Much Ado*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Troilus and Cressida*. Reference to the signifier as related to desire also suggests to me a very peculiar example of how Shakespeare grounds Juliet's desire in absence before translating it into Todorov's "finality of the you": Juliet's ignorance of Romeo's face and name. The balcony scene confirms her love for a masked voice, now screened by the night. At the ball, Romeo's voice is, contrariwise, the signifier of an object to be hatred by Tybalt. His voice is a synecdoche of the eroticised object, a signifier of desire grounded in absence, and as such seducing Juliet through the sensuous power of what Kristeva calls the semiotic. But it is also what turns the potential for eroticism into Tybalt's aggressiveness. All this seems to suggest a subtle link between conflicting stances and passionate drives equally rooted in some form of lack.

DS: Well, there is no doubt that *Romeo and Juliet* displays in the most sure-sighted ways the erotic nature of hatred, and perhaps the potential violence of love. I'm uncertain about reducing both these impulses to a common lack, however. It's the obsession, since Plato, with the idea that love is essentially identical to desire, to wanting something one does not have (and will never have) that has impeded recognition of the difference between these concepts. In Leone Ebreo's wonderful *Dialoghi d'amore*, Sophia, the female interlocutor, counters Philo's Platonic definition of love by insisting that the love for children is not predicated upon any lack, and that this may be applicable to eros too. I guess that the problem is that lack is so much more interesting than fulfilment. It's Tolstoy's observation that all happy families are alike whereas each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. The unhappiness of lack is a dynamic, driving force that makes for interesting and engaging stories. I wanted to write a chapter that dealt with two couples who may be said to be Shakespeare's happiest, erotically speaking, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and Gertrude and Claudius. But it was too hard.

SB: Let us get back to our starting point and *fil rouge* of our conversation: the strangeness of home, finding comfort in that strangeness and forging a home out of the other, but from a different, perhaps plainer angle. In his latest novel, *The Only Story* (2018), Julian Barnes describes his young protagonist's falling in love with an older woman as a form of "complicity": "Not . . . as yet a complicity to do anything. Just a complicity which made me a little more me, and her a little more her" (11). I wonder whether this is in any way comparable to what we have said about Shakespeare. In Barnes, that mutual form of understanding and discovery of oneself through the other is presented as all the more exceptional because concerning an entirely unconventional relation. In this respect, a passage from your book is especially interesting as it gets to the core of the fundamental question of the position of the subject in relation to ideas of a free or socially-conditioned individuality:

> In his insistence that love offers a Hegelian freedom "to be with oneself in the other" . . . Hegel's . . . sense that freedom means achieving a completeness and autonomy of the self as an individual and finding oneself a home in a world that "makes the actualization of individuality and social membership possible". *Romeo and Juliet* deals in the different ways in which love is split between the two "others" implicit in Hegel's aphorism: the other of society, family ties, expected norms and compulsions (the big "Other" in Lacan-speak) and the singular other who is loved (what Lacan would call the "small other" or the *objet petit a*). The question is the degree to which each (for Lacan, the Symbolic and the Imaginary in their asymmetrical relation to the Real) is imbricated in the other. (192)

DS: I was trying to respond to an issue that Paul Kottman raises in an important *Shakespeare Quarterly* essay on the question of freedom in *Romeo and Juliet*. I wanted to avoid the Romantic idea that love transcends all social conditions and constraints. (Think of Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" –

> Ah, love, let us be true
> To one another! for the world, which seems
> To lie before us like a land of dreams,
> So various, so beautiful, so new,
> Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
> Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
> And we are here as on a darkling plain
> Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
> Where ignorant armies clash by night.)

But I was also unhappy with the idea that romantic love is merely an ideological construct designed to trap unwitting subjects into complicity with a capitalist and patriarchal hegemony. *Romeo and Juliet* seemed to me to show these two forces in tension. My inadequate way of expressing this tension was to say that we are all subjects of social forces over which we have little control, but love also makes individuals of each of us. That's as much as I could do with this impossible subject. I often wish that I'd had the courage to withhold the book from publication. One should not inflict upon the world a piece of work that is so obviously and irredeemably flawed. If I were foolish enough to write on love in Shakespeare today, I would write a completely different book.

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