

LINA UNALI

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AMIDST MONARCHS,
REVOLUTIONS, AND ACTORS



SUN MOON LAKE
LA NUOVA STAMPA

*Front page :Lina Unali youtube

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AMIDST MONARCHS,
REVOLUTIONS, AND ACTORS
by Lina Unali**

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La Nuova Stampa

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ISBN

“What have you got for us this month, Will?” the players asked him, and, thinking quickly, he’d say, “I thought I’d do something with the weird Italian story I mentioned [. . .]” *

* Adam Gopnik, *When the novelists rewrite the bard*, New Yorker, October 17, 2016.

William Shakespeare, an actor in a turbulent century, his imagination developing out
of the vicissitudes
of an exceptional dynasty, upset by kinship,
divorce, sickness, heresy, spread in sundry castles, treading
stages in which there developed innovation, collaboration.

Premise

In this volume my main goal is to give a final blow to the Romantic vision of Shakespeare that has dominated the European acceptance of his genius on the part of audiences and single individuals for many decades.

A close reading of Shakespeare's plays reveals that rather than a romantic approach to his subject, he shows a perfect awareness of the needs of the theatre, a sympathy toward the colleagues acting with him, even familiarity with their physical persons, their sensibility and predilections.

It will be shown that William Shakespeare uses what might be called *elementary thoughts* concerning the nature of the mind and the universe, the importance of the self in its full bloom and power, in its decline, all subjects that have as a common denominator, that of the oneness of self and that of the plurality of the same, born out of degeneration and loss.

These elementary thoughts are wholly infrequent among Shakespeare's contemporaries. They could even be the fruit of a certain lack on the part of the playwright of a formal academic instruction on the most important subjects studied in the universities of the time.

A limitation of knowledge carried with itself a concentration on particular concepts, on numbers, on tautologies, on tricks, on what one could be inclined to call *engines*, supporting structures of which in the works of his fellow actors and playwrights there is very little trace or none.

The first impression I had during a visit to Westminster was to see a portrait of Henry VIII at the top of a staircase: a strange display since there were six wives beside him and we were forbidden to take pictures.

In the many years that followed I tried to understand what was at the moment for me not fully understandable and to connect that vision with what I was slowly apprehending about William Shakespeare.

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APPENDIX 2

The site of New Place and the Shakespeare Gardens are situated in the centre of the town of Stratford-upon-Avon, to the east of Chapel Street and to the north of Chapel Lane and some 450m north of Holy Trinity Church.

APPENDIX 3

Mamillius in Tapor analysis

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FEW ROMANTIC SIGHS

1.1 Iconoclasm and Several Revolutions

The period of the separation of the Church of England from the Church of Rome was one in which little or no importance was given to the visual arts and in which a part of the artistic heritage of the nation was destroyed, including many testimonials of great value such as the frescoes that adorned the interior of ecclesiastical architectures. Shakespeare seems to refer to this dissipation of the great wealth of the nation in the famous line 4 of Sonnet 73:

Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang¹

These words may be related both to the realm of sensuality, implying the realization of the end of youth, or at least of a beautiful time of life, and, at the same time, can be decoded as a short summary of English history, characterized by the removal of the symbols of religious observance, formerly powerful in the British soil. After the separation from the Church of Rome, England exhibited many places of worship in ruins, convents, churches, cloisters, chapels, and apses. The choir to which the line of Shakespeare's Sonnet probably refers is the part that is placed on the upper part of a church, on its east side, known as the chancel.

An activity recognized as iconoclastic and destructive went on for a long time. After the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII many churches and monasteries were abandoned to decay. Churches were also vandalized on several occasions during the reign of Elizabeth. In the early years of the reign of Queen Elisabeth a few parish priests carried out their functions independently, and later, after the dissemination of Reformed ideas throughout Europe, the churches were seen as emblems of popery, reaction, and regurgitation of an ancient religion. The closure of state-owned lands with the consequent desertion of villages on the part of their inhabitants was also due to the ruin in which the places of worship had fallen.

Writing about these events two images come to mind which may synthesize the pitiful reaction of Italy and of the religious authorities against Henry VIII. The first is a painting hanging above the entrance of the Charterhouse of Trisulti in central Italy representing the charging of the Franciscan monks on the part of the horse-mounted army of Henry VIII.



Nuremberg Cathedral, built in 1250, an Evangelical Lutheran Church since 1520

Massacre of Carthusian Friars in London (F. Balbi - XIX century)



Rome San Peter's Basilica by night

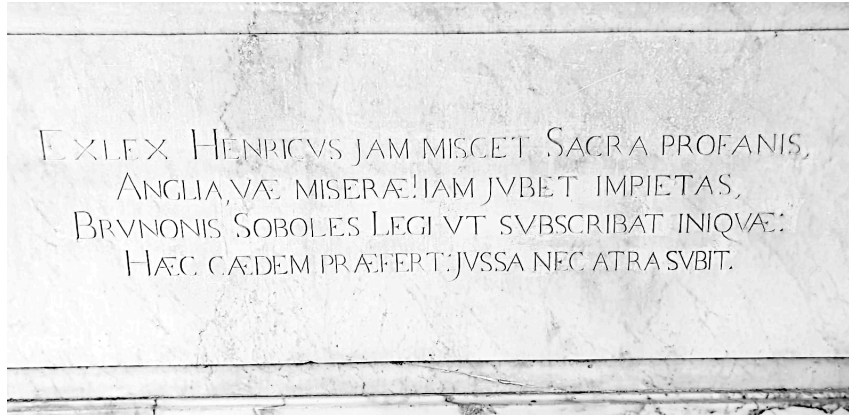


Marguerites on the Island of Marguerite on the Danube

Another striking image of a different character is to be found in Naples within the Certosa of San Martino. On the walls of the church's *pronaos* we see a fresco representing the demolition of the certosas in England. To the right of the window panes, the stories of tortures inflicted to the Carthusians during the period of Henry VIII are represented. One can observe a blurred image of a man on horseback wearing a crown. The fresco is rather faded and the evanescent figure is difficult to identify with certainty. Below the frescoes, written in elegant capital letters on marble slabs, there are two inscriptions laid down by the Rev. Professor Ignazio della Calce in the second half of the eighteenth century. On the left:

Ex lex Henricus Jam miscet sacra profanis /anglia, vae miseræ!
iam jubet impietas, / Brunonis soboles legi ut subscribat iniquae: /
haec caedem praefert: jussa nec atra subit.

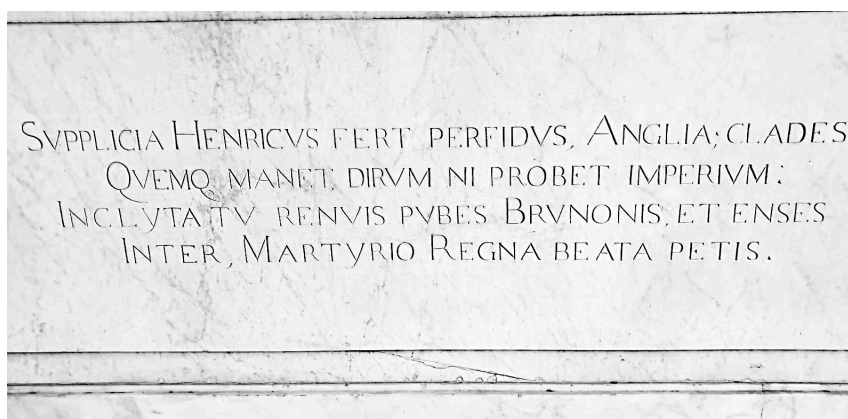
On the right:



Marble Slab inscription inside the Certosa of san Martino, Naples
(Photo Marchegiani)

Supplicia Henricus fert perfidus, Anglia; clades / quemo manet
dirum ni probet imperium: / Incluta tu renvis pubes Brunonis, et
enses/Inter Martyrio Regna beata petis.

The Dissolution of the Monasteries, sometimes referred to as the Suppression of the Monasteries, was the set of administrative and legal trials between 1536 and 1541 by which Henry VIII dismantled the Catholic monasteries, priories, convents, and



friaries in England, Wales, and Ireland,

Marble Slab inscription inside the Certosa of san Martino, Naples.
appropriated their income, disposed of their assets, and reassigned

or dismissed their former members and functions. Although the policy was originally envisaged as increasing the regular income of the Crown, much former monastic property was sold off to fund Henry's military campaigns in the 1540s. He was given the authority to do this by the *Act of Supremacy*, passed by Parliament in 1534, which made him Supreme Head of the Church of England, thus separating England from Papal authority, and by the First Suppression Act (1536) and the Second Suppression Act (1539).

Professor George W. Bernard argues:

The dissolution of the monasteries in the late 1530s was one of the most revolutionary events in English history. There were nearly 900 religious houses in England, around 260 for monks, 300 for regular canons, 142 nunneries and 183 friaries; some 12,000 people in total, 4,000 monks, 3,000 canons, 3,000 friars and 2,000 nuns . . . one adult man in fifty was in religious orders (the total population estimated at the time was 2.75 million).²

1.2 Henry VIII (1491–1597)

While reading *Henry VIII*, one may make significant considerations about Shakespeare and his position toward events of the time. What appears immediately clear is his cautiousness in dealing with the religious controversies that he describes by the generic and vague word *heresy*, twice recurrent in the play. Although we are acquainted with the fact that Henry VIII considered *heresies* seriously and never spoke about them approvingly.

The plot is dominated by the figure of two women, one of which is Catherine of Aragon, and the other is Anne Boleyn. The former had left the palace of Alhambra when still an adolescent to marry Arthur, Henry VII's first son; her, Anne Boleyn was to become the maid of honour. The contrast between them is based on profound cultural differences causing the excessive seriousness of Catherine and the apparently passive behaviour of the other woman.

Catherine of Aragon enters the scene criticizing her august husband for the strike of labourers that is going on in the country and for the amount of money he spent in wars. Anne Boleyn does not intervene in such matters but instead remains silent and enchants the monarch with her charm. Shakespeare's *heresies* — religious controversies — are reduced in his text to hide his own

understanding of what is going on. He seems to wish to reduce a story of immense historical impact to a love story, almost to a family incident.

Anne Boleyn, in *La Cisma de Inglaterra* by Pedro Calderón de la Barca, is represented as a Lutheran spy, who is divulging protestant ideas all over Europe. The fact that she is good-looking is almost irrelevant, that the king of England may love her is almost irrelevant. The only real interest that Shakespeare seems to entertain is the glorification of the monarchy that includes the apotheosis of Elizabeth, the daughter of Anne Boleyn, who will become the most powerful and celebrated Queen of England.

1.2.1 The Love Letters of Henry VIII

When the news of the king's attraction toward Anne circulates at court, she is sent away. She goes to live at her father's Castle of Hever in Kent with the resolution never to return because of the harshness of the king toward her.

Henry VIII's love letters to Anne, some of them written in French, show the turbulence of the times and the instability of the sensibilities of people of great importance in world affairs such as the king himself.

Born in England, Anne Boleyn had spent many years at the court of Claude, Queen of Francis I, of France, and had returned to England at about the end of 1525. She attracted the particular attention of Henry VIII who was at the time in the process of annulling his marriage from his Spanish wife.

Some significant elements that can be found in reading these letters have probably been neglected. In letter III for example, the king says he has sent to Anne a young buck he himself has hunted and recommends that while she eats it she may think of the hunter:

“a buck killed late last night by my own hand, hoping that when you eat of it you may think of the hunter”;

In another passage, in letter XVII, we find a strange sentence about the hunting of animals at certain hours of the day:

Written after the killing of a hart, at eleven o'clock, minding with god's grace, to-morrow, mightily timely, to kill another by the hand which shortly shall be yours.

It is as though the king had the wish to anticipate a more sensual communication with his mistress through the medium of the animals he has just chased and is going to send to her.

At length at Easter, in the year 1533 it was made known that the king had actually married Anne Boleyn in or about Saint Paul's day (25th of January) ... the ceremony was performed in the strictest secrecy and when the event was announced, Anne was already pregnant. We know that the royal couple spent some time at Windsor Castle waiting patiently for her confinement and the birth of her 'son'.

The mention of George Boleyn in the Letters may explain that otherwise unexplainable event of Anne's death penalty inflicted upon her in 1536 after that of her brother for incest (of which many sources testify). George Boleyn, 2nd Viscount Rocheford (d. 1536), brother of Anne Boleyn, had obtained a grant from the crown of the manor of Slough in Kent, which had been previously granted to St. Thomas More.

Soon after his services were employed diplomatically to qualify some of the conditions that included offering the hand of his infant daughter Elizabeth to the duke of Angouleme. This is the last we hear of him in any public capacity before his melancholy end. One May day in 1536 he was one of the challengers in that tournament at Greenwich in which the king abruptly left. On the next day he was arrested and taken to the tower; the Queen his sister, was also arrested that day and consigned to the same fortress. The two were arraigned together on Monday 15 May, for acts of incest and high treason, and judgment of death, was pronounced against both. On the 17th George was beheaded on Tower Hill with four other paramours of Anne Boleyn. The execution of Anne herself was deferred until 19th. (Calendar of state papers Henry VIII.)

The letters are all differently based on the sense of a violation of norm of various kinds: in Letter VIII we have the presentation of nuns (even the head of an Abbey) who have had children from different priests. All the letters are transgressive; they seem to ignore normality and lawfulness.

1.2.2 From Mistress to Consort

Anne was not as Shakespeare tends to portray her in *Henry VIII*, a fascinating and innocent female. In *Anne Boleyn: A Very Brief History* by Mark Black we read about the desire:

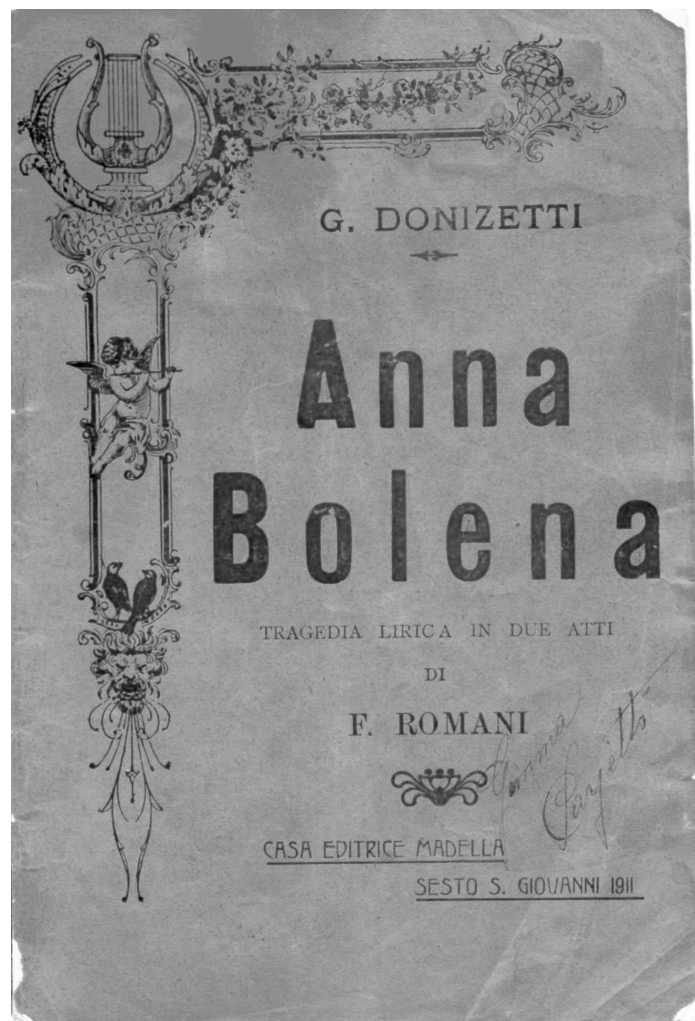
“on the part of Anne to make changes in the Catholic Church. Anne's lady-in-waiting, Anne Gainsford, reported that Anne Boleyn drew Henry's attention to a heretical pamphlet and that she was supportive of people who we're attempting to reform the Church. The actual heretical pamphlet that Anne gave to Henry is not known but two possibilities are Tyndale's “The Obedience of the Christian Man” or

Fish's "Supplication for Beggars." These pamphlets proclaimed that monarchs needed to work to constrain the excesses of the Catholic Church."³

In the same book we read about a possible theological influence of Anne on Henry:

"Some scholars argue that Anne may have not only been the cause for Henry's split from the Catholic Church but she may have actually pushed Henry making split."

into
the



Libretto of Anna Bolena by
G. Donizetti

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COMEDIA FAMOSA.

LA CISMA DE INGLATERRA.

DE DON PEDRO CALDERON DE LA BARCA.

HABLAN EN ELLA LAS PERSONAS SIGUIENTES.

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| • El Rey D. Enrique Octavo. | • Dionis, Criado. | • La Infanta María. |
| • El Cardenal Bolso. | • Pasquin, Gracioso. | • Margarita Polo, Dama. |
| • Carlos, Embaxador de Francia. | • Un Capitan. | • Juana Semeyra, Dama. |
| • Thomàs Boleno, viejo. | • La Reyna Doña Catalina. | • Músicos. |
| | • Ana Bolena. | • Acompañamiento. |

Salon largo JORNADA PRIMERA.

Tocan chirrimias, y correse una cortina, aparece el Rey Enrique durmiendo, delante una mesa con recado de escribir, y à un lado Ana Bolena, y alçael Rey entre sueños:

Rey. **T**Ente, sombra divina, imagen bella,
Sol eclipsado, deslucida estrella:
mira que al Sol ofendes,
quando borrar tanto esplendor pretendes;
por què contra mi pecho ayrada vives?

Ana. Yo tengo de borrar quanto tu escribes. *vase.*

Rey. Aguarda, escucha, espera,
no desvanecas en veloz esfera
esta Deidad tan presto:

Sale el Cardenal Bolso.

Cardenal Bolso. Señor? **Rey.** Tu estás aqui? **Bolso.** Què es esto?

Rey. Quien es una muger, que àora ha salido deste retrete? **Cardenal.** Del sueño ha sido ilusion, porque nadie aqui ha llegado: cuentame, pues, señor, lo que has soñado.

Rey. Ay Cardenal! escucha,
conocerás si fue mi pena mucha.
Ya sabes (pero es forzoso
repetirlo, aunque lo sepas)
como yo soy el Octavo

Enrique de Inglaterra,
hijo del Septimo Enrique,
que por la muerte violenta
de Arturo, dexò en mis sienes
la soberana Diadema,
siendo heredero, no solo
de dos Imperios por ella,
sino de la mäs hermosa,
y mas Catholica Reyna,
que tuvieron los Ingleses
desde que en su edad primera
fueron sus hombros Columna
de la Militar Iglesia:
porque Doña Cathalina,
hija la mas santa, y bella
de los Catholicos Reyes,
nuevos Soles de la tierra,
casò con mi hermano Arturo,
el qual por su edad tan tierna,
ò por su poca salud,
ò por causas mas secretas,
no consumò el matrimonio,
quedando entonces la Reyna,
muerto el Principe de Uvalia,
à un tiempo viuda, y doncella.

A Los

1.2.3. Calderón de la Barca, *La Cisma de Inglaterra*, 1627, la Reyna Catalina y la infanta Maria

One of the recurring differences between Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* and *La Cisma de Inglaterra* (1627) by Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600) is the marked preference, which might even be considered obvious, between Queen Katalina and her daughter Mary Tudor on one side and Anna Boleyn and her daughter the future Queen Elisabeth, on the other. All this occurs within a general exaltation of the Spanish nation and of its destinies:

De cuya feliz Union
salí para dicha nuestra,
un rayo de aquella luz.
Y de quel Cielo una Estrella
La Infanta Dona Maria⁴

Mary is not a consistent character in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, rather the importance of the play stands on an opposite sign, on the praise of Queen Elisabeth the daughter of Ann Boleyn.

The book starts with a presentation of Henry VIII who is sleeping and dreaming of a woman he will later meet.

The motif of *life is a dream* is intrinsic to the playwright's composition and develops also farcically since the very first page of the play together with a marked literariness that is equally intrinsic to it.

The reader realizes that in the background of the play there is that mixture of realism and magic, or to use terms common for describing this kind of literary experience, *magic realism*. And farce is mixed with it. There is an astronomer who is able to predict misfortunes; there is Cardinal Wolsey who, strange to say, wants to become pope and does everything he can to reach his goal; there is Pope Jules II ridiculously described as *Vice-God* en su Iglesia, a quite surprising definition on the part of an author who has had a regular theological training in order to become a priest; there is Henry VIII's third wife Jane Seymour who anticipates the wholly anomalous sequel of the king's marriages.

The play opens with king Henry VIII being visited in dreams by Anne Boleyn, whom he has not yet met. Henry mixes up a letter from the Pope with one from Martin Luther and views this as a

bad omen. The mention of Luther is another great difference between *La Cisma* and Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* in which no clear allusion is ever done to theological differences or to outstanding interpreters of the religious controversy.

In Calderón's play courtiers such as Thomas Cromwell with their ultra complicated activities extending from Florence to the lands of the Sacred Roman Empire are simply absent but at the court of Henry VIII there is Thomas Boleyn an old (*viejo*) man, Anne's father described with exaggerated characteristics.

In act 2, Henry is tortured by lust for Anne. Wolsey comforts the king while securing his support in his quest to become Pope. The Queen brings her ladies in to cheer up the king from his melancholy; Jane Seymour sings, the Queen gives a poetic commentary upon the song, and Anne Boleyn dances, but falls upon the king, inflaming his desire.

The scene is grotesque and at the same time exalted: Anna's falling down to the king's feet is counterbalanced by her being raised by the king himself toward higher Spheres:

Danza Ana Boleyna y caje a los pies del Rey.⁵

At this point there is a brief interference of France.

The French Ambassador, Charles, gets his audience with the king, and announces that the king of France wishes his son, the Prince of Orleans, to marry Princess Mary. The match would unite France and England and bring strength to both nations. This threatens Wolsey's chance to obtain the papacy, because the French have their own favourite for the role.

Wolsey and the Queen are always in conflict and Wolsey vows to use Anne as an instrument to take revenge on the Queen for standing in his way.

Wolsey manipulates Anne who makes an oath of loyalty and support to him. The king makes advances, but as Wolsey advised her to do, Anne tells Henry she will not be his mistress, and will only yield to him as his wife. Wolsey offers the king a way to marry Anne and divorce Catherine, insinuating that his marriage to Catherine was never valid because she was first his brother's wife. Although the Pope had granted a dispensation that allowed Catherine to marry Henry, Wolsey says he must tell Parliament that he disagrees with the ruling and that he means to leave Catherine and send her to a convent. Henry decides to pursue the plan although he knows there is no crime in having married his brother's wife, quoting Biblical examples of this practice. He knows of Catherine's goodness and holiness, but because his lust

for Anne is so strong, he decides to pursue his course of making the latter his Queen.

Henry assembles his men and prepares to dispossess Catherine of the crown. He speaks well of her, also recognising that Princess Mary will remain the heir to the throne despite the dissolution of the royal marriage. He tells Catherine to go either to a convent or to her homeland in Spain. She appeals to the king in a heartbreaking speech, saying she will go to petition her cause to the Pope rather than seek protection in Spain; she fears that her nephew Charles V would seek vengeance and attack Henry, and her love prevents her from allowing Henry to be harmed. The king turns his back on her and walks out with Wolsey. Charles says he will hurry back to France, as he suspects the French Prince will no longer wish to marry Princess Mary, now that her parents' marriage is on the point of being dissolved. Charles hopes to come back and marry Anne Boleyn, as he has promised, once the trouble has dissipated. Wolsey takes Princess Mary away from the Queen. The Queen sends Anne to speak kindly of her to the king, then seeks to know whether any of her people will remain loyal.

Time passes in between acts 2 and 3. Charles has been sent to France and returns with news that the engagement of the French Prince and Princess Mary is to be called off. Before leaving, Charles had been given permission by the king to marry Anne, but on his return to England he finds that the king has himself married Anne.

The Queen has moved to a castle on the outskirts of London. Wolsey refuses to hear petitions from poor soldiers, who rail at his cruelty. Anne meets with Wolsey who asks for her intercession with the king on his behalf, as he wants to be made Head of the Kingdom, but she has already bestowed this honour on her own father. He threatens her, claiming he can bring her down as easily as he raised her up, but, once he storms off, she vows to destroy him.

The king decides to banish Princess Mary and let her languish with Catherine in the provinces. Anne asks not only for Mary to be banished, but also for Wolsey, who has taken arms against her, and the king agrees. The king hears the petitions of the soldiers and dispenses all of Wolsey's property to the soldiers. Wolsey now realises the woman prophesied to bring his downfall was not Catherine, but Anne Boleyn.

The scene shifts to the provinces where Catherine speaks with Margaret. Wolsey, now ruined, comes to the women to ask for help, and they receive him veiled to protect their identities. Moved by his poverty, Catherine gives Wolsey a chain given to her by her uncle, one of her last possessions, and unveils herself. Mary is

brought to the country castle and is happy to be there with her mother, even if they will be poor.

Back in the palace, the king is worried about the loyalty of his men, and secretly spies on their conversations. Anne's rejected lover, Charles, returns her love letters and storms off. Henry has overheard their exchange and is overcome with jealousy. He finds one of Anne's old letters to Charles and reads it aloud. Enraged, he orders Anne and Charles to be arrested and imprisoned in the Tower. Taken prisoner, she addresses the soldiers:

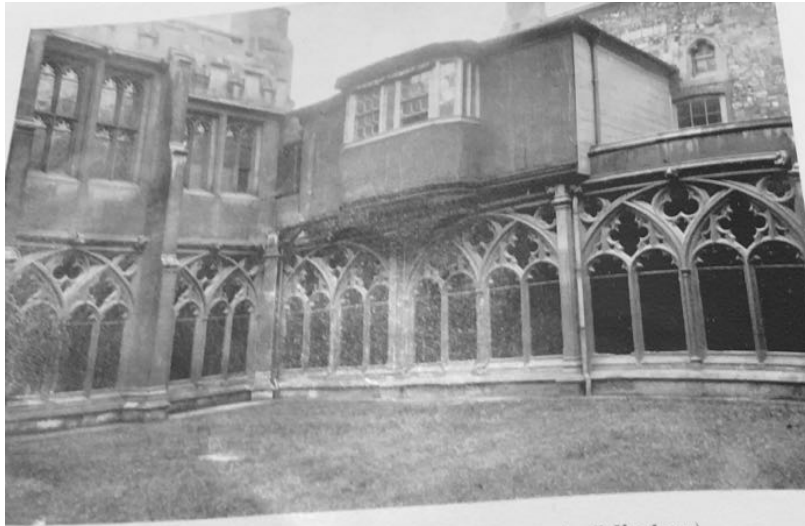
Ana. Villanos, viles
Vive Dios, que en vuestro pecho
Oy mi furor examine:
¿Yo presa? Quien en el Mundo
Pudo atrevido medirse
¿Con mi poder y mi mano?

Cap. Orden es del Rey, èl dice
Que te prendan.⁶

Princess Mary and the noblewoman Margaret come in dressed in mourning clothes and reveal that Catherine has died and Mary demands justice. Remorseful, Henry formally recognises Mary's right to inherit the throne and proposes her marriage with Philip, the son of Charles V of Spain. Henry stages a ceremony in which all his men will take a vow of allegiance to Mary as his own heir, and the body of Anne Boleyn is revealed at the foot of the throne (it has been laid out horizontally, as a cushion at the foot of the throne). Mary is recognised under the condition that she will follow her father's choices in the state relationship with Rome. Mary refuses, but Henry pushes the allegiance ceremony through, saying she is young and foolish, and offers his people the power to depose her if she disagrees with her policies once she becomes Queen. The play ends with this tentative resolution that threatens to come undone even as it is proclaimed.

The comedy's final words are reminiscent of those that can be found written in Italian places of worship, not erased since they first expressed the disgust of the Church of Rome for the king of England rebellion, a disobedience:

Capit. Y Aqui acaba la Comedia
Del docto ignorante Enrique,
E muerte de Ana Bolena.⁷



The Dean's Cloister (showing Ann Boleyn's Window)

1.2.4 The Wives of Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell

Thomas Cromwell's career was strictly connected with king Henry VIII for many reasons among which were his sojourns in Italy with the financial espionage between Florence and Holland, his urge to spread the new religion, and, above all, his association to the monarch's love affairs, marriages, annulments, beheadings and other sad events in which his turbulent life was for many years involved.

Let's briefly reconsider the personalities of the wives of king Henry VIII

- 1 Catherine of Aragon (after her marriage finally annulled, she died while detained under guard at Kimbolton Castle). She was Mary I's mother.
- 2 Anne Boleyn (her marriage to king Henry VIII was annulled, then she was beheaded). She was the mother of Elizabeth I.
- 3 Jane Seymour (she died twelve days after giving birth to Edward VI, an event believed to be caused by after-birth complications).
- 4 Anne of Cleves (whose marriage was annulled. She outlived the rest of the wives and the death of Thomas Cromwell).
- 5 Catherine Howard (Queen of England from 1540 to 1541; first cousin of Anne Boleyn, beheaded with the accusation of betraying her royal husband).
- 6 Catherine Parr (at the death of Henry VIII, she was remarried to Thomas Seymour).

Cromwell supported the king's desire to free himself from Anne Boleyn and consequently marry Jane Seymour, driven by the fact that Queen Anne had a disagreement with him about the management of the money resulting from the suppression of the monasteries and therefore fearing to fall for his misfortune. Cromwell had also made many enemies because of his criteria for sharing the proceeds of the same suppression.

But his fall was mainly due to his pressure for the king's marriage to Anne of Cleves. Queen Jane Seymour died on October 24, 1537, shortly after the birth of her son. The negotiations for a fourth marriage that ensured other heirs to Henry VIII began almost immediately and Cromwell believed that England should become part of a Protestant league in which the Duke of Cleves played a fundamental role; that of bringing the Reformation further.

But that marriage proved to be disastrous, as Henry VIII showed no intention of living with the princess once he had seen her in person.

The king commissioned Cromwell to find legal ways to cancel his marriage, but he was forced to put a good face on a bad game so as not to lose his precious alliance with Germany. Cromwell's adversaries, chief among them the Duke of Norfolk, took advantage of the opportunity to press for his disgrace.

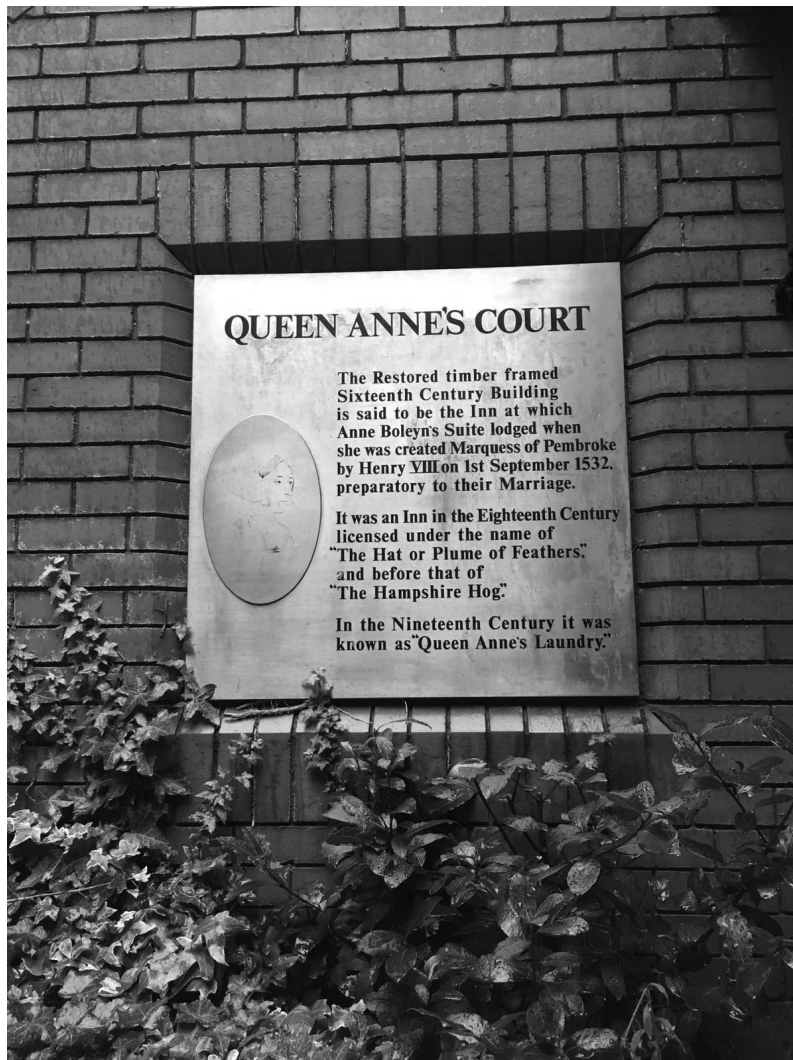
Despite being appointed as the first Earl of Essex in 1540, Cromwell began to suspect that he was in ruins because he was officially a beneficiary of the king's grace despite having trapped the king in a marriage he did not want. His fears proved to be justified when, during a council session on 10 June 1540, Cromwell was arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London. The king, however, kept him alive long enough to testify in the cause of the annulment of his marriage.

Catherine Howard, accused of indecent behavior was beheaded after Thomas Cromwell's death in 1540.

Catherine Parr remarried after the death of Henry VIII.

To better understand the intentions and actions of Thomas Cromwell whose fame is rising while we are writing we have to consider the eruption of the revolt named after Luther that erupted in the German territories of the Holy Roman Empire and was supported in England by personalities such as Henry VIII's once favourite courtier. Cromwell was in favour of the Duke of Cleves with the aim of extending the revolt to the Northern states and

principalities of Germany. It is one of the elements that makes him appear more like an intellectual and a politician than as a courtier. We know that Cromwell was a polyglot and an admirer of Machiavelli who had transposed the primary equation of Renaissance politics to: wealth = power.



Queens Ann's Court



1.2.5 Catherine of Aragon

The image of little Catherine leaving the Alhambra one morning in May 1501 is unforgettable. She took her final leave of her parents in Granada knowing that she might not return to see them again. She embarked with her retinue at Coruña. The seas were rough. At the end after a long and dangerous crossing they landed at Plymouth greeted by the British folks who affectionately acclaimed their new queen, Arthur's perceptive wife who for twenty-four years would become his younger brother Henry VIII's consort, was loved, respected and finally feared. Wolsey feared her.

Catherine's patronage was not confined to humanists of English birth. The chief of European humanists Desiderius Erasmus must be considered as a visitor to her sphere. We know that she admired his genius.

The first half of the fifteenth century can be geographically presented and understood through the personalities of Henry VIII's six wives.

Through Catherine of Aragon we may connect England with the Imperial history of Spain, with the power of the Church of Rome; with the greatness of the Sacred Roman Empire, with the expulsion of the Jews and Moors from its territories.

With Anne Boleyn we inaugurate the separation of England from Rome and the spread of Lutheranism. We should observe that from the twenties of the sixteenth century to the eighties of the same century most countries of Northern Europe turned Protestant.

With Jane Seymour we have the birth of Edward VI the first Protestant king of England.

With Anne of Cleves we see the attempt of England to spread Protestantism toward the lands of Western Germany and to antagonize the Sacred Roman Empire.

Catherine Howard, so frequently involved in scandals, is intellectually and politically the most insignificant of king VIII's wives. Her life ended on the patible.

Catherine Parr, brought up as a Catholic, may resemble a military leader, even an anticipator of Queen Elisabeth. Her education was similar to other well-born women, but she was known for her passion for learning that would continue throughout her life. She was fluent in French, Latin, and Italian, and began learning Spanish after becoming queen.

Catherine Parr enjoyed a close relationship with Henry's three children and was personally involved in the education of Elisabeth

I and Edward VI. She was regent during the military campaigns of her royal husband in France.



King Arthur and Catherine of Aragon as represented
at the gate of Canterbury Cathedral

1.2.6 Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales

Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales was born on September 19 or 20, 1486, just 13 months after Henry VII ascended the throne. Arthur's parents, Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, were married in January of 1486, uniting the houses of Lancaster and York, the rivals in the Wars of the Roses. When their first child was born, he became the physical manifestation of the union of the two houses. The prince was born at St. Swithun's Priory in Winchester, the ancient capital of England and baptized on September 24 in Winchester Cathedral.

In 1488–89, Henry VII negotiated the preliminary treaty of Medina del Campo with Spain that included the proposal that Arthur would be married to Catherine of Aragon the young daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. When Catherine came to England Arthur was 14. Catherine arrived in October 1501.

After 16 years of negotiation and earlier proxy betrothals and marriages, the Spanish marriage of Arthur finally took place on the 14th of November 1501 in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. After the wedding, Arthur and Catherine went to Ludlow Castle on the border between England and Wales to set up their household.

In March of 1502 Arthur fell ill, possibly of tuberculosis, the plague, or the dreaded “sweating sickness” and died on April 2. He was buried in Worcester Cathedral in the Chantry Chapel created for him that still survives.

Catherine was left a young widow in a foreign country. The question of whether or not Arthur and his bride ever consummated their marriage became crucial when Catherine’s husband, Henry VIII, sought to have their union annulled.

This is the description of the first appearance of Catherine of Aragon on the occasion of her marriage with Henry VIII. The passage is an excerpt of Alison Weir’s book *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*:

Catherine of Aragon first appeared at court as Queen of England on the day her marriage to Henry VIII was proclaimed, on 15 June 1509. Henceforth, she would be at Henry’s side at all state and court functions. She had already adopted the pomegranate, symbol of fertility, as her personal device. In the royal palaces of England, an army of carpenters, stonemasons and embroiderers were already carving, chiselling and stitching her initials and Henry’s, ‘H’ and ‘K’, on every available surface, and her throne was set beside the King’s under the rich canopy of estate.

In 1509, Fray Diego described Catherine as the ‘most beautiful creature in the world’. Marriage certainly made her seem so. She was twenty-three, and had kept her look thus far. She was plump, pretty, and still had beautiful red-gold hair that hung below her hips when loose. Yet, within six years, she had lost her youthful bloom and her figure, and in 1515 was described by the Venetian ambassador as ‘rather ugly than otherwise’. Sadly, he spoke the truth. By 1515, Catherine had suffered several bitter disappointments and five pregnancies, and these had aged her considerably.⁹

In Hilary Mantel’s first Volume entitled *Wolf Hall* (p. 80) we find a possible explanation of Catherine’s change inserted in a piece of conversation between Cardinal Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell:

Six times (to the world’s knowledge) Katherine and the King have lived in the hope of an heir. I remember the winter child, Wolsey says ‘I suppose, Thomas, you would be back in England then. The Queen was taken unexpectedly with pains and the prince was born early, just at the end of the year. When he was less than an hour old, I held him in my arms, the sleet falling outside the windows, the chamber alight with fire light, the dark coming down by three o’clock and the tracks of birds and beasts covered that night by the snow, every mark of the old world wiped out [...].’¹⁰

What was to be called the New Year's prince died after fifty-two days, preceding the next new-born child who lived only for an hour. Then in the year 1526 Mary was born after whom another princess was born to whom it was given the name of Elizabeth, the Plantagenet Queen who had been Henry VIII's mother. And she, too, died after a few days.

1.2.7 Mary Tudor

Mary was the only child of Henry VIII by his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, to survive to adulthood. At the age of ten her father sent her to Ludlow on the border with Wales. This was the castle where Catherine had been taken as a bride and from where she had paid with her own money to have her daughter brought back to London. Ludlow castle had been the place of Arthur's death and the site of perhaps the most controversial wedding episode of English history, when Catherine's claim that the marriage was never consummated became central to the dispute concerning Henry VIII and Catherine's annulment in 1531.

She was the first queen regnant of England. In 1554, Mary married Philip of Spain, becoming queen consort of Habsburg Spain on his accession in 1556, but she never visited Spain.

During her five-year reign, Mary had over 280 religious dissenters burned at the stake in the Marian persecutions. After Mary's death in 1558, her re-establishment of Roman Catholicism was reversed by her younger half-sister and successor Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry and Anne Boleyn.

1.2.8 Jane Seymour (Wolf Hall 15 /08/1509 - Hampton Court 1537)

She was the only one of Henry VIII's wives to receive a queen's funeral and to be buried beside him in the Saint George's Chapel at Windsor Castle.

Henry VIII was betrothed to Jane one day after Anne Boleyn's execution. As a wedding gift the king made her a grant of 104 manors in four counties as well as a number of forests and hunting chases.

Concerning Jane Seymour, we know that Katherine Parr, Henry VIII's sixth wife, lacked influence on her stepchild. In the volume by Alison Weir entitled *The Six Wives by Henry VIII* we read:

“The only thing that pained her was that the Council quickly made it quite clear that the young king was under an exclusive control. This meant that Edward was not allowed to see either his stepmother [Catherine] or his stepsisters, his guardians were jealous of any outside influence upon him.”¹¹

The author makes the following comment:

“The boy missed their company and consoled himself by corresponding with them and yet he was upset when he learned in early February that the court would retire to old Manor at Chelsea.”¹²

1.2.9 Edward VI (1537 – 6 July 1553)

Edward VI was king of England and Ireland from 28 January 1547 until his death. He was crowned on 20 February at the age of nine. Edward was the son of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour, and England’s first monarch to be raised as a Protestant. During his reign, the realm was governed by a regency council because he never reached maturity.

The council was first led by his uncle Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset (1547–1549), and then by John Dudley, 1st Earl of Warwick (1550–1553), from 1551 Duke of Northumberland.

From the age of six, Edward began his formal education under Richard Cox and John Cheke, concentrating, as he recalled himself, on “learning of tongues, of the scripture, of philosophy, and all liberal sciences.” He received tuition from Elizabeth’s tutor, Roger Ascham, and Jean Belmain, learning French, Spanish, and Italian. In addition, he is known to have studied geometry and learned to play musical instruments, including the lute and the virginals. He collected globes and maps and, according to coinage historian C. E. Challis, developed a grasp of monetary affairs that indicated a high intelligence. Edward’s religious education is assumed to have favoured the reforming agenda. His religious establishment was probably chosen by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, a leading reformer. Both Cox and Cheke were “reformed” Catholics or Erasmians and later became Marian exiles. By 1549, Edward had written a treatise on the pope as Antichrist and was collecting informed notes on theological controversies. Many aspects of Edward’s religion were essentially Catholic in his early years, including celebration of the mass and reverence for images and relics of the saints.



Edward VI

1.2.10 Anne of Cleves

At the time of the marriage, Henry stood in not small fear of the Emperor and indeed of an European coalition against him, owing to the policy of which Cromwell had been the instrument.

The marriage was calculated to give the Emperor some trouble at home by the encouragement it gave to the German Protestants.

But now Henry was rather inclined to seek reconciliation with the Emperor and to drop the alliance with the country princes. He accordingly had less difficulty in seeking to release himself from a distasteful union. Anne of Cleves (1515–1557) was received with immense firing of guns both from the town and from the Calais haven. She remained in Calais fifteen days for lack of favorable winds but crossed on the 27th and landed at Deal. Thence she proceeded by Dover, Canterbury Sittingbourne, to Rochester. She was met at Barham down and conducted into Canterbury by the archbishop and four of his suffragans with a great company of gentlemen.

Again she was met at Rainham down and conducted into Rochester by the Duke of Norfolk and a great company of earls, knights and esquires.

She reached Rochester on New Year's Eve where Henry himself came incognito upon her next day by surprise, having informed Cromwell before by saying that he intended to visit her privately 'to nourish love'.

As the story reported by the Dictionary of National Biography¹³ reports he found her looking out of a window at a bull-baiting, and showed her a token by himself, still preserving his incognito. She thanked him with commonplace civility and still kept looking out of the window till the king after putting off his cloak went into a chamber and returned in a coat of purple velvet.

It is perhaps an exaggeration to say that he was disgusted with her at the first glance.

He asked her to marry him and so he did.

Anne of Cleves's brother was John Duke of Cleves, surnamed the Peaceful.

She had an elder sister, Sybille, who was married in 1527 to John Frederick, Duke of Saxony, the leader of the Schmalkaldic league, and a younger sister Amelia who remained single.

In 1553 the Duke of Cleves was the most powerful supporter of Lutheranism in the West of Germany; and it was unnatural that after Jane Seymour she should have been thought by Cromwell as a match for Henry VIII.

1.2.11 Catherine Howard (1523–1542)

She was Queen from July 28, 1540 to November 23, 1541.

Born at Lambeth, London 1523 she died in the Tower of London on February 13, 1542. Niece of the powerful duke of Norfolk and first cousin of Anne Boleyn a month after Henry VIII was divorced from Anna of Cleves of whom Katherine was maid of honor, he had his marriage to Anne annulled on July 9, and on July 28 and Katherine were privately married. He publicly acknowledged her as Queen on August 8.

During Christmas 1540 the two young cousins Katherine and Anne spent the evenings together dancing while the king who was suffering from pains in his legs retired early.

Henry had decided to take Katherine Howard in a voyage to the North of the country perhaps with the intention that she would be crowned at York. In the first months of 1541, Katherine resumed her relationship with his cousin Thomas Culpeper with whom she had had an affair before marriage and not only one. Two other names are mentioned one of whom had asked her to be her secretary.

In November 1541, along the way back of the sovereigns from the North, anonymous letters were sent to Court in which the Queen was portrayed as an immoral woman with an indecent behavior. She was taken first to the former convent of Syon on the

left bank of the Thames and then to the Tower where she was beheaded (under the accusation of unchastity and adulteress) while believing till the last minute she would be pardoned by her royal husband.

Immediately after the Queen was beheaded, the widow of George Boleyn, Anne Boleyn's brother, who had been the Queen's maid of honor was beheaded, too, for her favouring the affair between Katherine and Thomas Culpeper, a relationship that was considered high treason.

Henry VIII entered a last period of depression that preceded and accompanied his last marriage with Catherine Parr.

1.2.12 Catherine Parr (1512–1548)

She was born in London in 1512 and died in 1548. She was married to Henry VIII on July 12, 1543 at Hampton Court.

She was a widow and after the king's death she remarried to Thomas Seymour with whom she had probably been previously engaged.

She was a writer and translator, the first Queen of England to publish with her own signature. *Prayers and Meditations* became the first book published by an English Queen. After the king's death she published a second book, *The Lamentations of a Sinner*.

Although brought up as a Catholic, she later became sympathetic to and interested in the "New Faith." By the mid-1540s, she came under suspicion for being a Protestant. This view is supported by the strong reformed ideas that she revealed after Henry's death, when her second book, *The Lamentations of a Sinner* was published. The book promoted the Protestant concept of justification by faith alone, which the Catholic Church deemed to be a *heresy*. A proof of it was her sympathy for Anne Askew, who fiercely opposed the Catholic belief of *transubstantiation* and died in 1546 after being condemned to be burned at the stake. Apart from theology *The Lamentations* are mainly an attack on popery, an exaltation of the king who has freed his subjects from the *iniquity*:

In March the king's health took a turn for the worse, and he was down with 'a burning fever' for several days, this seems to have affected his leg, and he suffered bouts of agonizing pain. His illness did not improve his temper, which was further aroused by reports of heresy within his realm, which was spreading at an alarming rate. Henry himself had never approved of Lutheranism. In spite of all he had done to reform the Church of England, he was still Catholic in

his ways and determined for the present to keep England that way. Protestant heresies would not be tolerated, that he would that very clear to his subjects. As a result of his enquiries, twenty-three people were arrested and examined this way, among them a woman called Anne Askew. (Alison Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 1991.¹⁴

The figure of the Protestant Anne Askew, later included by the founder of Quakerism John Fox in his *Book of Martyrs*, stresses something that is generally neglected or ignored, that on the part of king Henry the VIII the separation from the Church of Rome had little to do with a belief in Lutheranism. The same may also be said of other English followers who viewed the Church of Rome as old theology. Queen Katherine Parr who was favorable to Protestant ideas put herself in a dangerous position with all of them.

With the passing of time our understanding of the relationship between the Queen Katherine Parr and the heretic Anne Askew has become so profound that we have come to realize that the two women were both held responsible for the protestantization of the country as it is explained in the last book published by Derek Wilson entitled *The Queen and the Heretic*.

1.2.13 Education, Feminism, and Protestantism

In his book *The Queen and the Heretic*, Derek Wilson concentrates on the high level of education reached in the family of Thomas Parr with his son and daughters, Catherine and Anne, all of whom were brought up co-educationally without regard to difference of gender (Derek Wilson, 4–5). Catherine was one of the first girls to receive the benefit of a humanistic education (that is a learning program based on a fresh understanding of Greek, Latin, Italian, that emphasized the importance of the full realization of human potentials).

The model to be followed was not that described in *On the Education of Women the Brief Latin Treatise* of 1501, by Marius Equicola, a scholar in the service of the Este family of Ferrara that gave a negative presentation of women exclusively devoted to domestic duties

[...] a woman is occupied exclusively at home where she grows feeble from leisure, she is not permitted to occupy her mind with anything other than needle and thread.¹⁵

Wilson's comment is that Equicola was not alone in urging that since men and women were alike in being created with immortal souls their minds should be equally open to the same stimuli.

Then in 1517 Thomas Parr died of 'the very contagious sweating sickness'.

Wilson establishes the circumstance of a connection between Queen Catherine Parr and Anne Askew. It was the day of Catherine of Aragon's wedding to Arthur in the left wing of St. Paul's Cathedral:

Among the fifty-seven gentlemen to be honored in the midst of the rejoining at the ill fated marriage of Henry VIII's eldest son to Catherine of Aragon, was William Askew of Stallingborough.

1.2.14 The Two Women

The two women were different in behavior. Catherine married king Henry VIII although his difficult character was well known to her as to those who were around him at court. Anna Askew left her husband and abandoned her family, something that was considered highly despicable.

It was Anne's bad reputation that allowed religious authorities such as cardinal Gardiner to freely inspect the activities of the circle that surrounded the Queen of whom the king had become already suspicious. So Anne Askew was taken to the Tower and did not pretend to be innocent of what they accused her. She did not retract anything. The so-called *heresies* were her own life.

She died and Catherine Parr was safe. After the king's death in 1547 she married as a fourth husband Thomas Seymour, Queen Jane Seymour's older brother. The Tudor family was a complex entity since the time Catharine of Aragon of whom Catherine Parr had inherited the name.

1.2.15 Queen Elizabeth I and William Shakespeare

Elizabeth I was born on 7 September 1533 in the Palace of Placentia, at Greenwich and died at Richmond Palace on 24 March 1603. She was Queen of England and Ireland from 17 November

1558 until her death. She was crowned on 15 January 1559 succeeding Mary I and Philip of Spain, her Royal husband.

Elizabeth was the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn who was executed two-and-a-half years after Elizabeth's birth. Anne's marriage to Henry VIII was annulled, and Elizabeth was declared illegitimate. Her half-brother, Edward VI ruled until his death and, ignoring the claims of his two half-sisters, Elizabeth and Mary, and in spite of statute law to the contrary, Edward's will was set aside and Mary became Queen. During Mary's reign, Elizabeth was imprisoned for nearly a year on suspicion of supporting Protestant rebels. Her position can be compared to that of her step-mother Catherine Parr and to that of her protestant associate Anne Askew.

In 1558 upon Mary's death, Elizabeth succeeded her half-sister to the throne and set out to rule by good counsel as she phrased her intentions. One of her first actions as queen was the establishment of an English Protestant church, of which she became the supreme Governor. This Elizabethan Religious Settlement was to evolve into the Church of England. It was expected that Elizabeth would marry and produce an heir, however despite numerous courtships she never did.

In government, Elizabeth was more moderate than her father and her half-siblings had been. One of her mottoes was "*video et taceo*" ["I see but say nothing"]. In religion, she was relatively tolerant and avoided systematic persecution. After the pope declared her illegitimate in 1570 and released her subjects from obedience to her, several conspiracies threatened her life, all of which were defeated with the help of her ministers' secret service. Elizabeth was cautious in foreign affairs, maneuvering between the major powers of France and Spain. She only half-heartedly supported a number of ineffective, military campaigns in the Netherlands, France, and Ireland. By the mid-1580s, England could no longer avoid war in Spain. England's defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 associated Elizabeth with one of the most important events in English history. Some historians depict Elizabeth as a short-tempered, sometimes an indecisive ruler. Toward the end of her reign, a series of economic and military problems weakened her popularity. Elizabeth is acknowledged as calm and wise when monarchs in neighbouring countries faced internal problems that put their thrones in danger. After the short reigns of her half-siblings, her 44 years on the throne provided welcome stability for the kingdom and helped forge a sense of national identity.

When Shakespeare was born in 1564, Elizabeth had been Queen of England for 5 years. While most of his plays were written after

her death, we do know she saw a few performed and that he performed at Court.

Among William Shakespeare's patrons the most important were Queen Elisabeth and James I both of whom loved the theatre.

In *The Court of Queen Elizabeth*, originally written by Sir Robert Naunton under the title of 'Fragmenta regalia' and included in Sir Henry Brown's book, *Sir Roger Naunton (1563–1635)*, is quoted as saying "That the great Queen translated one of the tragedies of Euripides from the original Greek for her amusement." And also about Elisabeth's cultivation: "She was learned (Her sex, and the time considered) beyond common belief; for letters about this time, and somewhat before, began to be of esteem, and in fashion, the former ages being overcast with the mists and fogs of the Roman ignorance."¹⁶

In Henry Brown's volume we read that "Shakespeare was ardently attracted to Elizabeth and her Court, and proved a faithful servant to his royal mistress, one evidence of which is *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, where she is presented as "a fair vestal throned by the west." It is known that "The Pleasant Conceited Comedy of Love's Labour's Lost" was played before Queen Elisabeth in the Christmas holidays on December 26, 1597, and in this and the following year the Queen witnessed the first and second parts of *King Henry IV*, both new plays, and was very pleased with the performances. Falstaff gave great delight to her and her Court, and at her wish to see exhibited the fat knight in love, the poet produced the comedy of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

It is known from the State papers and other authentic documents that the company to which Shakespeare belonged was, in the Christmas holidays of 1598–1599, playing before the Queen at Whitehall and at Richmond Palace; they also played again before her majesty at the latter palace on two occasions in the year 1600, and at the former palace in the Christmas festivities of the same year, and on February 24th, 1601, they played before her Majesty at Richmond Palace,

In the latter part of her life Queen Elizabeth was often at Nonsuch Palace in Surrey during the summer; her successive and frequent stay there was during the period of Shakespeare's enrollment as actor and servant to her majesty. Elizabeth held court at Nonsuch palace that had been designed by Henry VIII to be a celebration of the power and the grandeur of the Tudor dynasty.

The last time the company performed before the Queen was at the palace at Richmond on February 2nd, 1603, her death following soon after a brief illness on March 24th of the same year.

1.3 P. Byshe Shelley and the Death of Anne Boleyn

As one of the signs of Shelley's interest in Calderón there is his translation into English of a substantial portion of *El magico prodigioso* (1637).

In *The Theatre of Shelley* Jacqueline Muhallen speaking about affinities between Calderón and the English poet writes the following:

The contrast between elegance and richness of the royal party and the victim of their policies creates an anti masque in itself and the confrontation of two different processions of oppressions and oppressed is one Shelley uses in *Swellfoot the Tyrant*. This violent image may have been influenced by Calderón who juxtaposes the sight of a mutilated or dead or bleeding body with the symbol of a conservative or cruel ruler or custom. In, for example, *The Physician of his honor*, the physician shows the body of his wife whom he has bled to death in revenge for her supposed (not actual infidelity) covered in blood, in *The Schism of England*, Anne Boleyn's beheaded body is brought before king Henry.¹⁷

Be it said incidentally, the translation of Calderón into English makes the situations represented stiffer and more determinate and tragic. The presence of farcical elements is consistently diminished.

What is cited below is witness of the extreme negativity of feelings of the king after he has become aware of Anne's possible betrayal with the French envoy and orders her arrest:

Enter the Captain —
Sire!
Without the respect
That majesty demands, the Queen. . . . The Queen?

How badly I express myself! That woman,
That fierce animal. That blind enchantment,
False suino, that basilisk, that poisonous serpent,
That enraged tigress. Anne Boleyn, arrest her
And keep her captive for one dismal night
in the Town of London, that impregnable fortress¹⁸

After Anna's arrest new information is given about the terrible circumstances that have led to it. The order of arrest is executed

following the orders of Anne's father the Old Boleyn who comments his action that between the duties of a father and those of a judge, he chooses those of a judge and obeys the king's will. Thus he willingly betrays his affections as a father. Then Boleyn confirms that his daughter has been executed.

Soon after, to a desperate Monarch the news arrive that Queen Catherine is dead and Mary, her daughter as a *Persona* named in the play *Princess*, will by oath be proclaimed heir to her father's throne and future Queen of England. Mary refuses that proclamation and remembering her mother's trials, asks the king what she calls justice:

Yes, her trials were sufficient to destroy
Her saintly life and I have come to ask
Vengeance of you. I will not raise myself
From off your feet until you grant it me,
Or take my life.¹⁹

The passage counterbalances the closing scene of Shakespeare's drama *Henry the VIII* where Anne Boleyn's daughter Elisabeth is announced as the future glorious Queen of England:

Cran. Let me speake Sir,
For Heauen now bids me; and the words I vtter,
Let none thinke Flattery; for they'l finde 'em Truth.
This Royall Infant, Heauen still moue about her;
Though in her Cradle; yet now promises
Vpon this Land a thousand thousand Blessings,
Which Time shall bring to ripenesse: She shall be,
(But few now liuing can behold that goodnesse)
A Patterne to all Princes liuing with her,
And all that shall succeed:²⁰

Sir Thomas More (1478–1535)
(Photo A. Unali)



1.4 Harold Bloom on *Henry VIII*

In Chapter 34 of *The Invention of the Human* (1999) Harold Bloom offers an interesting analysis of Shakespeare's *Henry's VIII*, avoiding to concentrate on the characters of the play rather than on the figures that he calls *Grand Roles*:

My experience re-reading *Henry VIII* makes me doubt the hypothesis that a considerable portion of it is by John Fletcher. Though it is a better dramatic a poem than a play, *Henry VIII* seems remarkably unified, with only a few touches that suggest Fletcher. An experiment in pageantry, *Henry VIII* offers grand roles — Wolsey, Katharine, Henry — rather than characters and its principal fascination (at least for me) is the Shakespeare's detachment from all protagonists."²¹

On Bloom's part the scarce consideration he makes of a possible collaboration with Fletcher in composing the drama is based on its unity that might mean giving scarce importance to the play or one might be inclined to say to that game of the play which collaboration implies and more to its abstract components, to its emblematic value: "Even the Catholic/Protestant confrontation is so muted that hardly appears to take sides." Bloom is giving voice to Shakespeare's indifference, real or feigned, in theological matters²². In these pages we notice the presence of the word *heresy*, which covered and obliterated much more serious situations and events.

Speaking about Shakespeare's evasiveness, the critic adds: "No one in the drama is endowed with any inwardness. They are heraldic pictures with beautiful voices which is all that Shakespeare wants them to be. Only the king is a speaking portrait, whether he's more or less than that is beyond judgment because of Shakespeare's evasiveness" [. . .]²³ We are not even offered their conflicting perspectives on the king, he lacks the nasty consistency that might have made him interesting" [. . .] (p. 685). *Henry VIII* is a processional, a reversion to pre-Shakespearian theatre. Shakespeare, weary of his own genius here undoes most of what he has invented [. . .] Doctor Johnson thought that the genius of Shakespeare comes in and goes out with Katharine."

There are analogies between what Harold Bloom writes about *Henry VIII* and *Richard II* by him defined as the best of Shakespeare's histories, except for the two Falstaffs in the two parts of *Henry IV*. Bloom writes that "Always experimenting Shakespeare composed a *Richard II* as an extended metaphysical lyric, which ought to be impossible for an history play but for Shakespeare everything is possible."²⁴ Bloom uses the adjective *ceremonial* "*Richard II* is the most ceremonial of Shakespeare's plays before his coda in *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*."²⁵

Speaking about the concept of *distance*, Bloom says that *Richard II* seeks to distance us from pathos: "We wonder with Richard, we admire his longing, but we ne'er suffer with him even though he is deposed and subsequently murdered. Of all the histories, this is the most controlled and stylized."

Although Bloom does not write the word *Medieval*, the adjective is precisely what he is pointing to speak about lack of inwardness, preferring the concept of roles rather than that of characters.

Notes

¹William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 73," *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

²Prof. George W. Bernard, *The Dissolution of the Monasteries, History*

(2011) vol.96, p 390

³Mark Black, *Anne Boleyn: A Very Brief History* (Kindle edition, 2012).

⁴Calderón de la Barca, *La cisma de Inglaterra* (1627).

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Alison Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (Grove, 1992).

¹⁰Hilary Mantel *Wolf Hall*, first Volume (p. 80).

¹¹Alison Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (Grove, 1992).

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³It is necessary to consider that the Dictionary of National Biography is considered the standard for understanding what is known about the literature of England and the most reliable encyclopedic work. It was for example the source of Virginia Woolf's "A Room with the View" in which the family of Shakespeare was presented as Leslie Stephen, her father and the founder of the Dictionary of National Biography, had presented.

¹⁴Katherine Parr, *The Lamentation of a Sinner* (1547).

¹⁵Cit. in Rabil A., ed., Henricus Cornelius, *Declamation on the Nobility and Preminence of the Female Sex* (Chicago, 1966), p. 24

¹⁶In Henry Brown's, *Shakespeare's Patrons & Other Essays* (London: Dent & Sons, 1912). Shakespeare Online. 20 Aug. 2009.

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/biography/patronelizabeth.html>

¹⁷Jacqueline Muhallen, *The Theatre* (Open Book 2010, xvi, 289 pp.132).

¹⁸*The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth* (BBC, 1979).

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Michael Wood, *In Search of Shakespeare* (London: BBC Books, 2003–2005).

²²William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), (I, i, 26–27),

²³Harold Bloom, *The Invention of the Human* (1999) Chapter 34.

²⁴*Ibid.* pp.685–86.

²⁵*Ibid.* p. 249.

CHAPTER II THE CONCEPT OF ONENESS

2.1 Certified Information about the Life of William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and the Concept of Oneness Versus Multiplicity

What is presented below is some *certified* information, as it may be defined, about William Shakespeare's biography, repeated here for a better biographical and historical overview on the playwright's personal and theatrical life, and divided into subsections that may turn those notions into a more original and captivating amalgam.

He who is often called *the Bard* was born in Stratford-on-Avon in 1564, in the County of Warwickshire. His father, John Shakespeare, enjoyed a certain reputation in town, and his mother, Mary Arden, is described as coming from a good family. A visit to the house of the Arden shows that perhaps they came from a higher social class than her husband's, with probably greater economic



possibilities.

Edward IV Elementary School in Stratford

2.1.1 Edward IV Elementary School in Stratford

It is believed that William studied at Edward IV Grammar School in Stratford, and there he learned Latin and perhaps some Greek, according to a tradition that Ben Jonson, in his elegy written on Shakespeare's death, contributed to strengthen ("And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek," *To the Memory of My Beloved the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare*, 1.31). The elegy was placed at the beginning of the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's works, and perhaps it is the most complete evidence of the education that he had received.

In the still operative school one can be accompanied by present-day students to visit the classroom that was probably attended by young William. There is a certain number of desks with high seats that are impressive for their decorum and recall studies that were certainly more advanced than most of a present-day elementary school. But these high-level studies had to go hand in hand with the narrowness and extreme concentration of the subjects taught. Aristotle's logic was thus almost likely reduced to the principle of non-contradiction that led to the primary tautologies that in most Shakespeare's plays are to be considered fundamental.

2.1.2 His Wife Anne Hathaway and Shakespeare's Children

Anne Hathaway was the daughter of Richard Hathaway, a Shottery farmer, who left her the farm 'at the day of her marriage' when he died in 1581. She married William Shakespeare in November 1582 and they had three children: Susanna was born on May 1583, followed by the twins Hamnet and Judith two years later. Hamnet, Shakespeare's only son, died in 1596 at eleven years of age and his second daughter Judith died in 1584.

Susanna is the protagonist of the play by the contemporary author Peter Whelan connected with The Royal Shakespeare company for which it was written. *The Herbal Bed* (1996) is set in the year 1613 and the protagonist is Susanna Shakespeare married to Dr. Hall who defends his wife in court from the accusation of adultery.

2.2 William Caxton

William Caxton (c. 1422 – c. 1491) was an English merchant diplomat, translator, and writer. He is thought to be the first person to introduce a printing press in London near Westminster in 1476,

and as a printer was the first English retailer of printed books. The period of his activity coincided with the joint production of *Le Morte D' Arthur* (1485) with Thomas Malory.

Because Malory was held in jail due of his position during the war of the roses, he had permission to go to the Highgate library to do research on the subject of the so-called *matière anglaise*. That of Caxton and Malory was a joint work and the two were often referred to as the *authors* of *Le Morte D' Arthur*. The vastity of this volume can be associated with the spirit of the Reformation, with the new importance given to the written page and to the reading of it.

To understand how the imagination of Shakespeare may have even been nourished by *Le Morte D' Arthur*, it must be remembered that *it* was one of the first printed works produced in England and as such with unprecedented diffusion. Surely its publication produced the maximum circulation of materials related to the events of king Arthur and his knights and to the entire medieval history of England.

In Shakespeare we find numerous precise allusions to king Arthur one of which in the phrase "Arthur's Show," an exhibition of archery by a chivalric order or by a company of archers who met at Mile-end Green as it happens in *Henry IV*, Part II, (act III, scene ii). Another reference to king Arthur is found in *Henry V* (act II, scene iii) in the expression "Arthur's bosom," probably associated with "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22), in contrast to the concept of "hell" later expressed in the play: "Hostess: Nay, sure, he's not in hell: he's in Arthur's bosom, if ever he went to Arthur's bosom." These are just a few of the elements of a much broader system of frequencies, but one could perhaps say that the reading of *Le Morte D' Arthur* is at the basis of the revisitation of the Middle Ages that takes place in the pages of Shakespeare's historical plays regarding the concept of regality and the spirit of chivalry. In Act I of *Richard II*, Scene iii, and in *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene v, the oaths are made on the hilt of the sword that is forged in the shape of the cross.

We should also remember that Hamlet's father appears in the first act of *Hamlet* wearing a medieval armor in contrast with the Renaissance clothes worn by other characters, including the young Hamlet, dressed as a Renaissance prince in mourning. The first scenes of *Hamlet* could also propose the issue of improper relations, the birth of Arthur by Pendragon who with the protection of Merlin creeps into of Countess Igraine's bed assuming the shape of her husband who in the meantime is dying during the siege of the castle.

The relationship between Shakespeare and the Arthurian legend can be well highlighted also by Shakespeare's apocrif entitled *The Birth of Merlin*.

2.3 Heminge, Condell, and Shakespeare's Theatre

In its brevity and simplicity one of the most convincing studies that it is possible to read about the relationship between William Shakespeare and the theater, dates back to 1896 and is titled *John Heminge and Henry Condell, Friends and Fellow-actors of Shakespeare*, written by Charles Clement Waker and published in a small volume on the basis of an official report presented to the British Library.

After underlining the fact that we are indebted to the two actors for the preservation of Shakespeare's work, Waker writes the story of the relationship between William Shakespeare and the stage.

It is thought that Shakespeare occupied a seat at the Theater in Shoreditch, the first theater erected in England by James Burbage, the carpenter, who played there.

Shakespeare, as Waker points out, was considered a "deserving man," a worthy person, and while he was learning to be an actor he practiced writing and undoubtedly became useful in providing prologues and epilogues and other dramatic parts in order to give to old dramas a novel character. So he made his way to the theater and at the age of twenty-eight he had produced at least one play. Waker remarks the fact that having done this for seven years was a sign of his at the same time modesty and ability.

Waker continues in his reconstruction of Shakespeare's theatrical beginnings by commenting that:

it was a great advantage to have such a person in the theater, because he was always available and you could rely on him while the other playwrights were perhaps recovering from their debauchery.¹

His life was now very active, he played continuously, staging other dramas, or he could also be working with two or three others, under the pressure of producing at all costs, preparing, for example, a new drama against a rival company as many did. In 1598, Waker always remembers, he had become a shareholder in the theater.

A more realistic view than that of many of our contemporaries continues to prevail in the text we are examining, a reconstruction of what really occurred. We also read that while Shakespeare regularly performed in the theater by day at the Globe with Burbage, Heminge and Condell, during the season of the theaters there was

demand of actors for entertainment in other places, for nighttime performances in the homes of important people, in the taverns' courtyards, or with the summer traveling companies in various parts of the country.²

In London it was forbidden to act; this is the reason why the first theater was erected at Shoreditch and then moved to Southwark, over the London Bridge. The antiquarian John Aubrey, also known as an archaeologist, a student of folklore and a biographer, wrote in some of his notes what had been handed down on the relationship between Shakespeare and of the East End of London:

He was not a companion, he lived in Shoreditch; he did not practice debauchery and if asked to join other fellows he wrote that he was sorry but he had to refuse."³

The vision of Shakespeare that the author we are examining communicates is that of an actor who played day and night and that in his spare time produced at least two or three dramas a year.

Waker reports that the companies needed roughly a play every 17 days and remembered that new dramas were being continually required. The various parts were not to be learned by heart, but rather *tried, practiced* repeatedly, carried to perfection. The verb used is to rehearse, which implies precisely this association of written composition and acting.

Very interesting and quite modern is the observation that they privileged orality on writing: "Plays were looked upon as written to be spoken."⁴

No drama collection by any playwright had appeared in England until Shakespeare's death in 1616. In the same year, Ben Jonson, having agreed with the owners of his plays, published 10 of them in a volume entitled *The Works of Ben Jonson*. This unusual event caused a sensation among the actors and also made them laugh at the expense of Jonson who had the courage to publish his works. Ben Jonson mentioned the names of the actors who had performed in each of his plays. According to Waker, over the course of three or four years, three of William Shakespeare's close friends, Dick (Richard) Burbage, John Heminge, and Henry Condell, became the sole owners of the entire amount of the sixteen shares in which the capital of the Globe was divided; and being affluent, they set out to let the world know how good William Shakespeare had been. In his will, though he had now retired three or four years from the theater, he had left to his comrades a remarkable inheritance.

In the cemetery of the Saint Virgin Mary in Aldermarbury, a polished gray Aberdeen granite monument was erected in honour of Heminge and Condell, where an open book of lighter granite is displayed, representing the famous First Folio. On each of the three sides of the monument there is a bronze plaque engraved with epigraphs and the whole is surmounted by a bronze statue of Shakespeare, the only one erected in the city of London. In this parish the two actors had lived and the monument celebrates their memory next to that of their brilliant colleague.

2.4 Shakespeare's Rivals and Critics

At the time in which Shakespeare was young many traveling companies toured Europe. It is known that they were in Norwich in 1575, the same year in which the Theatre started to function. Perhaps such were the occasions that provided the young genius his theatrical inspiration and education. Those models would accustom him, for instance, to ignore the rule of the three units of the classical theatre. We may assume that they activated in young Shakespeare a process of emulation and imitation. For him the process of dramatization would not be the result as for Marlowe, born in his same year, a student at Cambridge, from the imitation of the classical theatre as it was studied at his University but of a more spontaneous theatrical experience partly based on improvisation such as that offered by the traveling companies and by the Italian comedy of art that he never saw but of which it seemed he knew all about. All these theatrical practices based on improvisation were his real school, his Cambridge, and substituted the university.

We know nothing about Shakespeare between 1585 and 1592, a year in which it is known he had been in London. In his work, published in 1592, Robert Greene says that he identifies himself with the protagonist Roberto launching a criticism on Shakespeare as an actor and a playwright, defined as:

an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hyde*, [he] is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: [. . .] in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey.⁵

The explanation for these expressions of unfriendliness and hostility toward Shakespeare can be attributed to

1) envy on the part of those writers known as the *University Wits* who had been educated at the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford

for someone who had not had their academic upbringing but proved very successful on the London stage. Let us recall, for example, Tamburlaine by Christopher Marlowe, a student of Cambridge University, which was performed in London in 1585.

2) Shakespeare's plays were based on other authors, books, and manuscripts. We should remember that one of his last plays, *The Winter's Tale*, is based on Robert Greene's beautiful story entitled *Pandosto*, and that traces of another text written by Greene entitled *The History of Orlando Furioso* can be found in *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare.

What is also interesting to consider is that Shakespeare was mainly known as an actor.

Because of the plague, the London theatres were closed from June 1592 to April 1594, during which time William began to test his poetic ability writing *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* under the patronage of Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, to whom the two poems are dedicated. The former, defined a *narrative poem* based on Ovid (*Metamorphosi* X, 665–740), tells of the repudiation of Venus on the part of Adonis and the consequent disappearance of beauty from the world.

A consideration of which there is little trace in critical studies, neither in the present century or in the past, is the fact that the theme of *Venus and Adonis* by Shakespeare is very close, if not identical, to that of a famous painting entitled *Venus and Adonis*, by Titian, who worked at the court of Philip I of Spain, by the end of 1500, a copy of which (though not the original that is kept in the Prado, is kept in the National Gallery) was donated by the king for the proposed marriage with Mary, the second daughter of Henry VIII. I've heard it said that the original was part of a series painted for the king's *amusement*.

Titian's painting, like Shakespeare's poem, represents the half-naked goddess who, driven by the passion of love toward the beautiful Adonis begs him to remain with her and to love her, rather than go hunting, as he is ready to do. In Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* the subject is the same: Adonis alleges various excuses for his parting as the truly amazing one that he does not wish "her to know him before he knows himself":

523 Fair Queen (quoth he) if any Love you owe me,
524 Measure my Strangeness with my unripe Years;
525 Before I know my self, seek not to know me⁶

Adonis also adds that it is evening and that his friends are waiting for him. Adonis will before the morning be killed during the hunt and anemones will bloom out of his blood. Both in the poem

and in the painting one can detect in the background combinations of erotic figures.

Shakespeare's poem was very popular and had six editions in nine years. It seems that it was criticized by the Puritans for the excess of sensuality the lines expressed and this may be the reason why the author wrote in response *The Rape of Lucrece*, in praise of chastity. The story of the Roman matron Lucretia raped by Tarquinius, king of Rome, is taken also from Ovid, together with Livy and from the *Legend of Good Women* by Chaucer.



Tiziano

House (Pieve di Cadore, Italy)

Vecellio's



London National Gallery where the painting by Titian entitled *Venus and Adonis* is kept

2.5 The One and the Dissolution of Oneness

The lines from Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* we have just quoted in which Adonis says that he is too young to let Venus know himself, may become a starting point for a different and deeper analysis of Shakespeare's text that can produce results in the study of almost all his poetic compositions and plays.

First of all, we should underline the fact that the date of composition of *Venus and Adonis* is the nearest to that of when the artist's first education was achieved and which might be dated in the years 1578–1580.

The taking into consideration Shakespeare's studies at elementary school becomes the basis of a fundamental theory based on the two antithetical concepts of littleness, smallness, due to the kind of school that proposed them and on the elevation at which the young artist aspired. An intelligent student might create a new world centred on that opposition between littleness and elevation.

An interpretative emphasis should start from the One and the Self.

Adonis does not wish to break down that oneness of his Self through a lover's passion, emotion, curiosity.

The fundamental principle is the Aristotelian principle of non-contradiction and at the same time the fundamental biblical quotation of God's words "I Am that I Am" is the English translation of the answer God pronounces in the Hebrew Bible when Moses asks for his name (Exodus 3:14). It is one of the most famous lines of the Torah, *I am that I am*.

From that sublime tautology all the others derive.

2.6 Shakespeare's Career

We may now continue with the account of known events of life and activities the presentation of William Shakespeare's career.

In 1594, he appears in contemporary documents as a member of the company of actors of Lord Chamberlain, the most popular of the time that played at court and that later became the *King's Men* under the patronage of James I. In 1599, a group of shareholders from the *Chamberlain's Men*, including Shakespeare, formed a company in order to build and operate the new theatre called the *Globe*, which became one of the most famous of the time. Thanks

to the income from *The Globe* and actions from those of Blackfriars of which he was also a shareholder, Shakespeare was able to accumulate a certain wealth.

In 1597 William bought New Place, a large house in Stratford that was his home from 1597, until his death in 1616. It was demolished in the eighteenth century, but still the foundations and the ground it occupied are still visible.

At the time of the purchase of New Place, Shakespeare had already written a dozen plays, homeland history, drama, and a tragedy of revenge, according to the style in vogue in the Elizabethan theatre. Unable to define exact dates of the composition we can only quote those that are normally ascribed to them. The first plays were *Henry VI* (Parts I, II, and III, 1590, 1592); *Richard III* (1594); *Richard II* (1595); *King John* (1596–97); *The Comedy of Errors* (1590–92); *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1592); *The Taming of the Shrew* (1593); *Love's Labor Lost* (1593–94); *Midsummer's Night's Dream* (1593–1596); *Titus Andronicus* (1590–1592).

It is usually said that the first plays were composed according to the classical models and under the direct influence of famous contemporaries. It has also been said that the first comedies and tragedies were artificial, full of conceits (subtle concepts, word games), but that in their structure they anticipated the great comedies. This is a somewhat stereotyped view of Shakespeare's works. If tragedies such as *Richard II* are for example considered, one should note that instead of the work of a beginner inspired by known models, the play appears as the perfect work of a great master, full of well-crafted symbologies and internal symmetries, a text carefully studied, done very early in life certainly before the moment in which the play was staged.

If *Richard II* and *Richard III* are compared with one another, works that as far as the date of presentation is concerned are very close in time, we can see how different they are, how they appear as composed in different times. Shakespeare's reader should come in tune with the texts to fully penetrate them and be able to catch their inspiration and meaning.

Titus Andronicus is said to be inspired by *The Spanish Tragedy* and is so different from the other tragedies that some critics have questioned its authenticity. Perhaps not enough attention is given to the profound analogies between *The Spanish Tragedy* and other Shakespearian works, and perhaps first of all with *Hamlet*. Other works represented before the end of the century were *Romeo and Juliet* (1596), *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597–1600), *Much Ado about Nothing* (1598–1599), *As You Like It* (1599–1600), *Henry IV* (Part I and II) (1597–98), *Henry V* (1598–99), and *Twelfth Night* (1599–1600).

For the second part of Shakespeare's production in the sixteenth century, we wish to report what Nemi D'agostino wrote in his introduction to *Pericles* (Garzanti, 1991):

From 1604 to 1607, the greatest works appear: *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*. Preceded by masterpieces like *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and the two comedies *As You Like It* and the *Twelfth Night* and followed by other masterpieces such as the *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens*. Around 1608–10, when he exhibits a sovereign style, Shakespeare makes a turning point for which so many reasons have been given, and writes his latest works, the so-called *romances*, those that Ben Jonson defined with stories, storms and the like and such like drolleries.⁷

About the analysis of Shakespeare's human affairs we see, especially in the latter twenty years, both in England and in the United States, an increasingly radical reaction against the reader's romantic vision according to which Shakespeare would have abandoned Stratford for a lonely soul searching, and his life would essentially be divided into three parts: the Stratford period, the period of the London theater, and his retirement at Stratford. This way of considering the biography of the *Bard*, which school and universities were accustomed to memorize was unrealistic. The epochs go forward, they lose their distinctive character and even the most essential understanding of them is sometimes lost. One epoch tends to interpret a previous one according to its mental and cultural patterns.

To begin to contradict the characteristics that have been attributed to Shakespeare's life, we may quote by S.H. Burton, *Shakespeare's Life and Stage* who intelligently emphasizes the continuity of Shakespeare's connections with Stratford, his uninterrupted relationship with his family of origin, and with the one he had formed through marriage.

All the informations about Shakespeare that the latter critic and others give us comes from official documents that record the public events of his life. For example, the documents say among other things that he married in a hurry, bought property in Stratford, became a shareholder in the main company of the time, he had several times legal issues, he received, at James's time I, four yards and a half of scarlet red cloth for a uniform to wear on important public occasions. S.H. Burton provides all the facts to explain that Shakespeare's was not a romantically broken life, he was not a lonely escaper in search of himself. On the other hand we should not forget that his was not a romantic period. Though three days

were needed to go from London to Stratford, Shakespeare never abandoned his birthplace.

Considering also that there is a monument to William in the Stratford's main church, has anyone inquired whether the ecclesiastical authorities would have ever allowed to place it where it now stands if the playwright had not enjoyed an immense popularity, if he were not been exalted by its inhabitants? Who else was buried to the left of a tall altar? A church of Naples in sight of the sea comes to mind where within the sacristy one can see the marble tomb of the Italian poet Jacopo Sannazzaro (1453–1530) and of whom the local guides mention the burying there as something that was done almost reluctantly.

While his theatrical career thrived, William, ~~always~~ according to S.H. Burton, took advantage of every opportunity to increase his bond with Stratford, to buy more property and land in the neighborhood. From the age of forty-six he was more often seen in Stratford than in London despite being still active in the affairs of the *King's Men*, the great company of which he was one of the major shareholders and directors. He certainly had not *retired* in the sense of leaving any activity connected with the theatre. His commitments to London needed travel to the capital, but William probably considered the fact that the attraction of a life that took place predominantly in Stratford exceeded the disadvantages of long journeys.

Because of the plague in the years 1593–94 the London theaters were closed and that interval favoured the writing of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*.

In a brief review of Shakespeare's recent criticism that aims at giving a realistic view of the events of Shakespeare's time, life and, human society, figures also prominently Michael Wood's volume *In Search of Shakespeare*⁸. Like other studies published in recent decades, this realistically presents Shakespeare's world, almost by making a virtual reconstruction of his life and time. The volume starts from the consideration of what Shakespeare's father was asked to do and what he did not do. Far from seeing Shakespeare and his family as relegated to limited horizons as many unknowingly are used to doing, having in addition a very limited vision of what truly can be the life in a country, Wood rightly inserts it into the atmosphere of one of the greatest tragedies of time: the iconoclastic process that the Reformation implemented in order to reinforce its separation from the Church of Rome. We translate a story about the vicissitudes of those years as Wood reports in the first lines of his volume:

In the winter of 1563, four or five months before William Shakespeare was born, his father was called upon by the corporation of his home town to oversee a troubling task. John Shakespeare had served Stratford diligently as constable and ale-taster, and was now the chamberlain or treasurer, responsible for the town accounts. And on a cold day in the darkest time of the year it was his job to hire workmen, with ladders, scaffolding poles and pots of limewash, to desecrate the town's religious images: to destroy the medieval paintings that covered the walls of the guild chapel, next door to the guildhall and the school.⁹

Wood explained what those places meant for the population and appears as openly contrary, even so many centuries later to the spirit that inspired the destruction of what was left:

In the old days, before king Henry's time, the chapel of the Guild of the Holy Cross had been the centre of Stratford's civic life and ceremonies. The guild had endowed and run the grammar school, held feasts, disbursed charities and run the town's almshouses. Inside the chapel, every inch of wall was covered with splendidly gaudy paintings depicting tales loved by all English people, stories rooted in the fabric of the nation's culture for nearly one thousand years.¹⁰

It is more and more frequent to read interesting pages about the events reported by Wood, the disastrous effects of the new religious policy that began with the reign of Henry VIII from the point of view of the disappearance of much of the National Heritage. At the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth a real injunction instituted special communal councils to remove all signs of idolatry and superstition from the places of worship. John Shakespeare found himself in the middle of these events in a position of responsibility and in many cases he felt unhappy. Let's quote again from Wood's text:

The corporation of Stratford and their treasurer in fact left all the stained glass in place and refused to sell off their finely embroidered vestments and cloths. They left wall paintings untouched where they thought they could get away with it, and even partitioned off the chancel so that none of the paintings there was destroyed, they were still visible on the eve of the Civil War in 1641.¹¹

The so-called Gunpowder Plot of November 1605, a conspiracy planned to blow up Parliament and whose anniversary is celebrated in London with fireworks and festivals throughout the city for three days and three nights, was probably the last important attempt to bring England back to Roman Catholicism. Guy Fox,

one of the protagonists of the attack, was a Yorkshire soldier serving Spain in Flanders. His and other plans were to coordinate an insurgency in England that provided support for Spanish troops, but Spain was too eager to restore good relations with England to join and denied its support.

The period of puritanism that ended with the Restoration in 1660 was even more severe in the spirit of destruction and what had been at least partially preserved was often completely erased from the territory.

Numerous traces of this sensibility and of these concerns are present in Shakespearean texts where often a vision that we might call *rational* and even *rationalist* can be contrasted with one definable as *superstitious*. In the first scene of *Hamlet*, the position of the *scholar* Horatio, one of the characters (Horatio, Hamlet, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern coming from Wittenberg, the city of Luther), is indicated by Marcellus for his rejection of superstitious forms:

Marcellus Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,
And will not let belief take hold of him¹²

That injunction to John Shakespeare to erase the signs of the old religion was not an isolated phenomenon. The accusation of papism was always to him in various ways addressed and, ultimately, aggravated by other unfavorable situations, led to the financial ruin of his family. This explains, in addition to the strange circumstance that a boy as gifted as William was not sent to the University, and also something more strange, his almost complete silence as a playwright on religious matters. His *Henry VIII*, for example, instead of mirroring the most crucial events of the time, can be read as a dynastic story and even as a family drama in which a silent and attractive Anne Boleyn, the future mother of Elizabeth I is preferred to the sensitive Queen Catherine of Aragon with little experience of sensuality and eroticism. Of the great ecclesiastical and theological revolution during which William was born and became adult, there is little trace in the same tragedy, if the presence though scarce, of the word *heresy* is excluded. More than of a taking sides, we have often the feeling that William Shakespeare was politically involved only within, in a secret way, secretly judging of facts and circumstances.

2.7 Information on William Davenant

We now wish to add a piece of information about William Davenant (1606–1668). From an inscription on the walls of the Drury Lane Theater in London, we get the following information: “This theater was founded in 1645 by William Davenant, probably the illegitimate son of William Shakespeare.” This Davenant, English poet and playwright, is linked to the figure of Charles I, the king who was beheaded, from whom he had been commissioned a libretto entitled *Temple of Love* (1634–35), a court show where Queen Henrietta Maria made her appearance. He was nominated poet laureate in 1638 after Ben Jonson.

Davenant had the merit of introducing new stage props and music in the English theater: in fact, he is remembered for *The Siege of Rhodes*, 1656, the first English opera recorded by Ch. Coleman and G. Hudson. Rhodes comes back to the stage and one of the serious incidents that could be attributed to Suleiman the Magnificent is once again rehearsed.

If there were no Drury Lane theatre near the Strand with this reminder of Davenant’s activity in the theatre’s brochure, his figure would be almost unknown to us.

Notes

¹Charles Clement Walker, *John Heminge and Henry Condell, Friends and Fellow-actors of Shakespeare, and What the World Owes to Them*, London: CJ Clay & Sons, 1896, p.11.

²*Ibid.*

³John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, edited by Andrew Clark, 2 vols. (London, 1898).

⁴Charles Clement Walker, *John Heminge and Henry Condell, Friends and Fellow-actors of Shakespeare, and What the World Owes to Them*, London: CJ Clay & Sons, 1896.

⁵Robert Greene, *Greene’s Groats-Worth of Witte, Bought with a Million of Repentance* (London, 1591–92).

⁶William Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

⁷Nemi d’Agostino, *William Shakespeare, Pericle, principe di Tiro* (introduzione, Garzanti, 1991).

⁸London: BBC Books, 2003–2005

⁹Michael Wood, *In Search of Shakespeare* (London: BBC Books, 2003–2005).

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), (I, I).

CHAPTER III SHAKESPEARE THE ACTOR

3.1 The Young Man from Stratford

consult the *Dictionary of National Biography*, we realize that more than one page is devoted to William Shakespeare as an actor. Having often forgotten his acting practice and career has diminished our ability to understand Shakespeare, and has also made possible all the questions, at times really very strange, about his identity as a playwright. In a few words, it should be said that in the past, in the minds of many, the consideration of Shakespeare as an actor would have been the equivalent of a denigration rather than an *increase* in the praise of his artistic personality.

It was not until 1594, when the Globe Theatre was built, that he acquired a share in the profits of a Playhouse. The production and publication of a play produced no profit for the author. But as an actor his income was far larger. An efficient actor received in 1635

If we

a regular salary a 180 pounds. Shakespeare's endowments as an actor in 1599 are not likely to have fallen below 100 pounds.

Readers and critics did not like to see Shakespeare as a man having to deal with the "mere praxis," according to a definition by Benedetto Croce in his *Breviary of Aesthetics. Four lessons*¹. By definition, a poet was not a practical person and should have nothing to do with practical matters! Not only that, but Shakespeare was certainly never judged highly as an actor, and even less taken into account were all his other activities connected with the theatre in which he, especially at the beginning of his connection with the stage, was involved. It is well known that he used to keep the noblemen's horses outside the theatre. The author of *Lives of the Poets* (1753), attributed to Teophilus Cibber (11 June 1671–11 December 1757), was the first to write the story according to which Shakespeare's first engagement was that of a horse keeper outside the gates of the theatre. The two stable theaters of the time were both reached on horseback by men of rank. The theatre owner, James Burbage, had a stable for liveried crews nearby, above Saint Paul's Cathedral, in Smithfield.

At this point, it may be interesting to speak more extensively of James Burbage (d. 1597), actor and the first builder of a theatre in England, who is often said to have been a native of Stratford-Upon-Avon. A John Burbage was certainly bailiff of the town in 1556 and a family of that name was known there throughout the sixteenth century. The theory of the Stratford origin of the family has been maintained with a view of confirming the apocryphal story that Shakespeare and James Burbage's son were fellow students at then Stratford School Edward IV. Richard Burbage (1567–1619) was doubtless associated with his father's profession, we have the authority of the first Folio of Ben Jonson's works, in which Richard Burbage is said to have played in *Every Man in His Humour*, 1659, and *Sejanus*, 1603.

It is easy in Southwark to find trace of the presence of people from Stratford which might better explain the presence of Shakespeare himself. John Harvard, from Stratford and the founder of Harvard, is commemorated by the American University of Harvard in a chapel within the Church of St. Mary O'er Ri and his widow used to live in Southwark. It is said pigs were from carried from Stratford to be cooked in Southwark inns.

To support the idea of several people from Stratford engaged in Southwark in theatrical activities, the mention of Shakespeare's brother Edmond, buried in St. Mary O'er Ri, under a stone in which are mentioned also dramatists Fletcher and Massinger, is probably even more a confirmation of the fact that William did not go to London alone to start his career as an actor and playwright.

The presence of Edmond Shakespeare in Stratford will be commented in paragraph 3.2.

To synthesize the presence of other activities in Shakespeare's time, it might be said with a smile that they did not certainly call the attendants of the Duke of Oxford, an identity often confounded with Shakespeare, to tidy up the theatre after the performances.

Shakespeare acted twice a year, he wrote about 37 works, about thirty of which were theatrical pieces. He did not play the main parts, but certainly acted in the roles of the ghost of Hamlet's father, in Banquo's ghost in *Macbeth*, and Tiberius in Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*.

One of the most interesting examples we have of Shakespeare as actor concerns the recitation of the part of Tiberius in Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* and what the latter wrote about the occurrence. It seems that not too much attention has been given to a witness of that importance to understand the Elizabethan drama and the artistic contribution of Shakespeare to its composition. When in 1616 Ben Jonson wrote a critical edition of his plays, a fact in itself unprecedented in the history of the time, he wrote:

I wanted to replace the part of Tiberius as it was, in fact, actually acted in the theatre with a much more modest part written by me. Still preferred my modest part that was the work of my modest person rather than publish the part of another.

Speaking of that *other* who was playing the part of Tiberius, Ben Jonson defined him as a "happy genius."

Lastly I would inform you, that this book, in all numbers is not the same with that which was acted on the public stage, wherein a second pen had good share: in place of which I had rather chosen, to put weaker (and no doubt less pleasing) of mine own, than to defraud so happy a genius of his right, by my loathed usurpation.²

These short quotations offer information on the theatrical methods of composition during the latter part of the Elizabethan age. They offer information on the fact that acting was partly to be considered fixed, and partly, instead, might be substituted. It informs us of the possibility that an actor, playwright himself (e.g., William Shakespeare), could formulate and recite a vital part of his composed by himself. It also informs us that Ben Jonson could modestly regard himself inferior as the author of dramas in their entirety, or in parts thereof, than an actor-playwright who had starred in one of his plays, producing a part different from that which he was to publish in the critical edition of the same dramas that would later become the most authoritative in the general

attribution of the work.

Shakespeare has, therefore, in the course of his artistic career constantly experienced at least another highly communicative art, in addition to that of dramatic composition, it can be argued that caused him to add another dimension. It is the opinion of the author of these pages that it was this other dimension to give the theater production of Shakespeare that particular character that made it really outstanding. What he produces is not a literary text in the true sense of the word, he is neither a *litteratus* nor a man of letters. It is another kind of composition based on words and phrases recited, tried and tried again in stage performances charged with all the vitality that the stage action implied.

But although the practice of composing and reciting at the same time was common in Ben Jonson's time, perhaps Shakespeare, was the only one to add up the brilliance of genius in the production of the written word with that of the stage personally experienced.

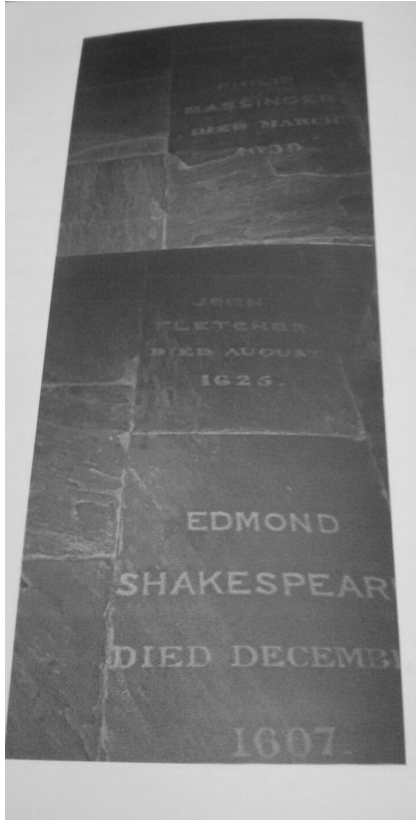
Resuming the theme of Shakespeare as an actor in the works of Ben Jonson we should remember that the former's name is in the list of actors who recited the comedy *Every Man Out of His Humour* of Ben Jonson in the frontispiece of which the name of the actor William Shakespeare appears in the first position "Will. Shakespeare." We reproduce below the first part of that frontispiece in modern typefaces:

The Comoedie was first Acted in the year 1598
By the then Lord Chamberlain's
His servants
The principal Comedians were:
Will. Shakespeare, Ric. Burbage.

Among the other actors there are very known names such as Hen. Condell and John Heminge. The names of all the actors are uniformly shortened and followed by a full stop. There are also lists of lesser known players.

If Shakespeare had not had a continuous and direct communication with the other players and the prompters, he would not be perhaps the greatest genius of the theatre that he was. "He wanted to please," Samuel Johnson wrote of him. But the critics have always regarded him exclusively as the author of Shakespeare's plays, as a playwright, and not as an actor. By so doing it is as though a vital part of his personality had been cut out officials consideration that makes it difficult to understand his way of doing theatre. The mixage, the mixture of heterogeneous elements, went lost. Shakespeare in fact could manage the theatre from the inside because he was an actor, although he was far from

being just one.



3.2 The Tomb of Edmond Shakespeare (1580–1607)

After crossing London Bridge and reaching the district of Southwark, where the theaters were extremely active in Shakespeare's time, one could once see within the church of St. Mary O'er Ri (Over the River) a tombstone. The black marble slabs with their inscriptions are no longer visible because, due to the ridiculous care of restorers, it was recently covered with a new floor.

On the tombstone one could read the names of Edmond Shakespeare and of two of his famous contemporaries, the playwrights John Fletcher and Philip Massinger

who died soon after the death of his son Edward about whose mother's identity nothing was known.



Edmond Shakespeare's Tomb Epigraph (Photo Lina Unali)
John Fletcher's Tomb Epigraph (Photo Lina Unali)

That tomb, which I photographed several years ago, opens a neglected chapter in the life of William Shakespeare who did not go to London by himself, but was accompanied by at least his younger brother Edmond. When the latter died in 1606, probably because of the plague that afflicted London in those years, the prestige Edmond had achieved in the theatrical milieu — not only as an actor but also as a playwright — was such that in the memory of those who had known him, he could be equaled to the most important playwrights of the time. This is why they were buried together.

3.3 Negligence of Incongruities

In Shakespeare's texts, there are evident inconsistencies probably due to the joint effort, not perfectly tuned, between playwright and actors and among the actors with each other, for the purpose of hoax, laugh, or the composition of heterogeneous segments, each full of attractiveness and valid in themselves with which the audience might be pleased. Among the numerous passages some illustrations can be identified in *Hamlet's* most famous soliloquy, in the character of Menenius Agrippa in *Coriolanus* who is represented as going to "whores" in Suburra after supporting the people aspirations to whom he spoke about the well-structured ideals of republican Rome; in *Macbeth* in which when informed of the death of Lady Macbeth, the king reacts by saying words such as "she should have died hereafter" an incongruous expression that sounds much like a mistake on the part of some stenographer, inserted in the sequence of the scenes that follows the Queen's death, rather than the expression of a widower's sorrow. There is no real separation between the noise of the stage and the reference to what might happen in there.

What we just called incongruities points to the remarkable position held by the stage itself, its apparatus, its mechanisms. They explain also the passages in which the theatre/the stage assume an archetypical value in *Macbeth* again when the condition of the actor and that of common human beings are compared:

Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.³

If one is interested in texts that can be defined more fully literary, authors like Edmund Spenser (1552–1599) emerges because his poetry is perfect in the organization of the materials, in the composition of clear and compelling stanzas, almost theatrical, it seems, through the author's ability to elaborate the lines for pages and pages, rhythmically organized and very pleasing to the ear. His poetic vein appears, if carefully considered, truly powerful and inexhaustible.

Compared with the poetic vein of Edmund Spenser, Ludovico Ariosto, or Giovanbattista Marino, Shakespeare's poetic inspiration might even look poor, his literary culture weaker. What is the relationship, one may be wondering, between the character of Adonis that Giambattista Marino projects in thousands and thousands of wonderful verses and the one presented in *Venus and Adonis* whose length is limited to a thousand lines?

In a very simplified way, one might ask why Shakespeare is so famous, what constitutes the superiority that was always accorded to him. One is led to believe that what one might call Shakespeare's *additional value* consists not only in its beautiful use of the language, in having embarked in writing other dimensions produced by the practice of different arts, first among which the immediacy of words pronounced orally, the speakerphone charm, the setting up of a preferential communication with the public. The result is a very special artistic product, an extraordinary text that includes in its folds an active relationship with reality, which, rather than exclude, he introduces into writing and transforms from monophonic into opera, symphony, chorale. One of the first things that I have realized many years ago mentally approaching the text of a Shakespeare play to Dante Alighieri's *Commedia* is that the former was not, differently from that of Dante, homogeneously connected to a single mind.

It may be interesting to read passages of a book on Shakespeare's drama and quote highly controversial passages about the most famous monologues of *Hamlet* and the inability of readers and critics to enter an intimate relationship with the Shakespearean text. Having mostly interpreted the Shakespearean play as a literary work and not as a multidimensional theatrical one, almost a genre in itself, critics and readers have often attributed to it characters and meanings that it is far from having. Among misinterpretation of which Hamlet's text has been the object, there is one of the famous monologues, noticed and commented in *Shakespeare's Shakespeare* by John C. Meagher who writes:

At the International Shakespeare Congress in Berlin, in 1984, an eminent Shakespearian scholar rightly respected for fine work over more than thirty years, mentioned during a seminar that he was undertaking a study to show that "to be or not to be" soliloquy was the interpretive heart of the play. That is not an uncommon opinion, though I have never seen it worked out in full. Perhaps one of the reasons why I have never seen it worked out in full is that it can't work very well. This soliloquy has almost nothing at all to do with the play — so little, in fact, that one can imagine Shakespeare's having written it before he thought of *Hamlet*, waiting for an opportunity to stuff it into some play where it would fit. Hamlet gives us a catalogue of general grievances, so generic ("The whips and scorns of time") that most can be related vaguely to *Hamlet's* plot, or to any other (though it's hard to squeeze "the law's delay" or "the poor man's contumely" into service for Hamlet in particular) — but there is not a word about his mother's hasty marriage, the murder of his father, incest, his charge to avenge: no concrete reference to what

has obsessed him as long as we have known him. And then he characterizes death as “The undiscovered country from whose bourne / No traveller returns.”⁴

According to Meagher, prejudices about the nature of the text and its meanings obscure the drama and make it unintelligible. What after all is condemned is the possibility of a player overlap and critical to the text. This is the main criticism contained in the entire volume. It is worth to translate the continuation of the previous quote, to better grasp the meaning of criticism of Meagher. It must be said that the tone of this criticism, like that of most of the more interesting contemporary analyses, makes previous positions ridiculous. Thus Meagher writes:

I think, that their readings are insufficiently disciplined by an awareness of the nature of Shakespearean dramaturgy and substitute other (usually less demanding) kinds of dramaturgy for the only one that will finally make good sense. This is understandable and forgivable, but not acceptable. It is seriously faulty — but it is also remediable. The remedy has been variously, though not thoroughly, promoted by historical scholarship over the years, but has mainly been resisted. The resistance probably arises primarily from a parochial bias toward modern values (dramatic, critical, psychological, aesthetic, social, moral, poetic, and so forth) that leads readers either to assume naively that Shakespeare wrote in accordance with the reader’s own value set, or to interpret his plays in a way that makes them look much more modern than they are — as if Shakespeare’s greatness lies especially in his ability to transcend his time and think like us, and as if that would do him credit.⁵

Something else may be added to give an historical perspective to the famous monologue. It might be hypothesized that it was initially pronounced by more than one actor in a succession of lines, often a bit odd, in a moment of joint acting, stenographically recorded as it was used at the time, as it came spontaneously from the actors’ mouths. Indeed, the monologue in question shows strange conceptual dislocations that might explain the presence of more than one interlocutor and speaker.

The theme of the opposition between “to be and not to be” was also one of those in vogue in students debates, rhetorical exercises, poetic improvisations and competitions on stages erected in village squares. Of the latter they can still be heard in the Italian villages during contests of improvised poetry (*poesia a braccio*). In the two famous English universities these debates organized around two antithetical themes such as good and evil, paradise and hell, and perhaps even being and not being, were of considerable academic

importance so that the method of producing them by two or more students was even subsequently exported to overseas countries, even to India and to Fort William College in Calcutta by members of the East India Company, educated within its buttresses according to the methods practiced in the mother country and its own collegiate styles.

Notes

¹Benedetto Croce, *Breviary of Aesthetics. Four lessons* Bari: Laterza, 1947

²Ben Jonson in *To the Reader, a Sejanus his fall, A Tragedie, Acted in the year 1603 by the K. Majesties Servants*, The Author B.J., London, Printed by William Stansby, 1616.

³William Shakespeare, *Macbeth Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), (V, v, 24–28).

⁴John C. Meagher, *Shakespeare's Shakespeare* (Continuum Intl Pub Group, 1997).

⁵*Ibid.*

CHAPTER IV
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND *THE PLAY WITHIN THE PLAY*

4.1 *The Play Within the Play in A Midsummer Night's Dream*

It is interesting to realize that in Shakespeare's plays and in those of several of his contemporaries the reading audience and the one that sat in front of the stage might be invited to attend the so-called *play within the play* that is a performance within the main plot of the drama, but, contrarily to an academic or pedantic interpretation that *play within the play* cannot be exclusively defined as a dramatic text inserted within a longer one but as a sort of unconstrained outpour of real theatrical experience and practice, an unfettered production of genuine theatre in action, performed in the process of its real occurrence, inserted within a tragedy or a comedy. In such a *play within the play* the theatrical techniques of the time are explained, revealed, the level of pure stage creativity is fully achieved, the tricks of theatrical composition are disclosed and so are the tricks used by the players to better conform to an idea or realness, that is having verifiable existence.

If the playwrights had inserted within their work a piece of medieval theatre, for example, the outcome would be technically speaking a *play within the play* in the sense the phrase is given in its usual academic interpretation; whereas what is actually shown is the way in which a play is being improvised, organized, recited, and rehearsed. In a sense, then, the *play within the play* — a secondary drama within a primary other — appears as not entirely appropriate. It turns out to be a definition that does not explain the fact that what the audience sees or reads about the theatre itself is its preparation and implementation.

It is the phenomenon of the theatre itself that wins, the revolutionary character of the times brings about the stage with its equipment and the performance that counts is not based on the transcription of known stories but in the invention of the theatre itself.

To go to the theatre is like participating in a discussion about the *play within the play*, which highlights not only one of the features of Shakespeare's drama, but also shows the ongoing relationship with the author's troupe. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we listen to the preparation of the representation that was going to be staged by the artisans of the company for the wedding of the Duke and Duchess. First it should be observed that the prevailing idea is that of democracy: the comedy in question takes place in Athens and Athens is the city that invented democracy and there is an opportunity for the artisans to come together to produce a drama. The

play assimilates contemporary England to ancient Athens. Moreover, the play is “fit” to the occasion, everyone agrees on this, and it will receive a general consensus.

First of all as in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* the actors are called “masters,” in the same way, in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Bottom, the stage manager, calls his fellows “masters.” The word master points to the authorship of the pieces they will pronounce.

What is quoted below is the beginning of the artisans’ rehearsal in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Shakespeare’s comedy first staged in 1596 and first published in 1600. Peter Quince’s house in Athens (Act I, scene ii) is the setting of the play. In *A Midsummer’s Night’s Dream*, the residents of Athens mix with the fairies from a forest nearby with comic results. In the city Theseus, the Duke of Athens is to marry Hyppolita, queen of the Amazons. Bottom the Weaver and his friends rehearse in the woods a play they plan to stage for the wedding celebration.

It all starts with the list of actors who enter the stage:

Enter Quince the Carpenter, Snug the Ioyner, Bottome the Weauer, Flute the bellowes-mender, Snout the Tinker, and Starueling the Taylor.

The carpenter starts to say:

Quin. Is all our company heere?

Bot. You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the script.

Quin. Here is the scrowle of euery mans name, which is thought fit through all Athens, to play in our Enterlude before the Duke and the Dutchess, on his wedding day at night.

Bot. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on: then read the names of the Actors: and so grow on to a point.¹

If we analyze the scene, we can identify ordered sequences of stagings and of the modus operandi of a theatrical company of the time:

Roll call:

Bot. Now good Peter Quince, call forth your Actors by the scrowle. Masters spread your selues.

Quin. Answer as I call you.²

The subject of the play is presented:

Quin. Marry our play is the most lamentable Comedy, and most cruell death of Pyramus and Thisbie.

Bot. A very good peece of worke I assure you, and a

merry.³

The various parts are assigned and a discussion follows on how to interpret them:

Quin. [. . .] Nick Bottome the Weauer.

Bot. Ready; name what part I am for, and proceed.

Quin. You Nicke Bottome are set downe for Pyramus.

Bot. What is Pyramus, a loue, or a tyrant?

Quin. A Louer that kills himselfe most gallantly for loue.

Bot. That will aske some teares in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience looke to their eies:

I will mooue stormes; I will condole in some measure.

To the rest yet, my chiefe humour is for a tyrant. I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to teare a Cat in, to make all split the raging Rocks; and shiuering shocks shall break the locks of prison gates, and Phibbus carre shall shine from farre, and make and marre the foolish Fates. This was lofty. Now name the rest of the Players. This is Ercles vaine, a tyrants vaine: a loue is more condoling.

Quin. Francis Flute the Bellowes-mender.

Flu. Heere Peter Quince.

Quin. You must take Thisbie on you.⁴

With the part of Flute, the bellow mender, the play hints at a taboo that the theatre violates in Shakespeare times about men playing the part of women. Flute asks first if Thisbie is a wondering knight and knowing that he is a man says that because he has a beard he cannot play the part of women: the solution given by Quince is that he will play in a Mask. It is the kind of discussion carried up by the players of the time. The advice given is also a low voice to imitate the voice of woman: “you may speak as small as you will”

Flut. What is Thisbie, a wandring Knight?

Quin. It is the Lady that Pyramus must loue.

Flut. Nay faith, let not mee play a woman, I haue a beard comming.

Quin. That’s all one, you shall play it in a Maske, and you may speake as small as you will.

Bot. And I may hide my face, let me play Thisbie too: Ile speake in a monstrous little voyce; Thisne, Thisne; ah Pyramus my loue deare, thy Thisbie deare, and Lady deare.

Quin. No no, you must play Pyramus, and Flute, you

Thisby.
Bot. Well, proceed.
Quin. Robin Starueling the Taylor.
Star. Heere Peter Quince.
Quin. Robin Starueling, you must play Thisbies
mother? Tom Snowt, the Tinker.
Snowt. Heere Peter Quince.⁵

The following elements can be also observed:

An interest in female roles played by men, that mirror contemporary discussions on the subject;
A frequent reference to the practice of improvisation;
The importance attributed to the interaction with the audience;
The actor's versatility that allows him to change roles and move forth from one role to another, adapting easily from one to another of various tasks.

In the above quoted lines one can also perceive the possibility of working on an already existing draft or on a known subject: "Marry our play is the most lamentable Comedy, / and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbie." We should also remember that the Comedy of Art was famous in Italy as much as the practice of acting according to its styles. Traces of the same characters have been found in characters of Shakespeare's works, such as in Iago (*Othello*) that would address the crafty servant Brighella, originally an Italian mask.

The scene we are at present considering of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can be seen as one of the most effective witnesses of the way in which the companies proceeded every day. According to what these artisans say, the play can be improvised or altered, which leads to the question that we have already mentioned speaking of the introduction to the *Collected Plays* of Ben Jonson about how there were fixed sections and how much *improvisation* substantiated the Elizabethan plays.

The typical method of improvisation of the Commedia dell'Arte — although this is known not to have been performed to England, but it had extemporized in Southern France with performances in the city of Lyon — is present in Shakespeare probably thanks to the continuous communication of news that travelled through Europe, along the ways, for example, of the wool industry or manufacturing, as has been evidenced by the dyad of authors such William Caxton and Thomas Malory. Echoing what has been remarked on the literate printer William Caxton, already an apprentice in the production of wool and the wool trade, the arts proceeded along those trade routes, although at the time of William

Shakespeare's youth they were more prosperous than they had been at the time of William Caxton.

In the same scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* improvisation is assimilated to the roaring of a lion:

Snug. Have you the lion's part written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

Quin. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.⁶

Then they assign the parts and indicate the place where the actors should be acting:

Quin. Here, masters, are your parts: and I am Intreat to you, request you, and desire you, to with them by to-morrow night, and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight; there will we rehearse.⁷

It can be believed that the text of Shakespeare's works is partly influenced by the playwright-actor collaboration, perhaps on the stage itself but not in the same proportion. The percentage of what one might be defined as the Shakespeare and non-Shakespeare may vary. In some dramas it may be negligible in many others, no.

Jokes may have been inserted during the recital itself. This is not to say that the works of Shakespeare have been entirely composed together with others; what should be said, however, is that his work, while bringing abundant traces of a solitary production in which the text is ascribable to a single mind, also bears the imprint of a continuous communication with the whole of the theatrical apparatus, the actors, the audience, and a lively participation to the stage while the play is taking place.

A note may be added: The word *extempore* in the meaning of improvised is present in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

In this case it is an extempore of roaring, something that is very easy to produce, that does not need a script. What is remarkable is that the roaring is natural, it does not need study, not even improvisation.

You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

Extempore and the other words that express the same concept of improvisation, *extemporisation* may be considered a language in itself that appears here and there in the theatrical sonority of Shakespeare's plays. It is connected with the *naturalità* of the mother's womb and rain.

As we read in *The Taming of the Shrew*,

Katherine: Where did you study al this godly speech?

Petrucio: it is extempore, from my mother-wit⁸

Notes

¹William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), (I, ii, 1–10).

²*Ibid.* (I, ii, 14–16).

³*Ibid.* (I, ii, 11–14).

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.* (I, ii, 16–58).

⁶*Ibid.* (I, ii, 16–58).

⁷*Ibid.* (I, ii, 91–95).

⁸William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), (II, i, 257–58).

CHAPTER V OTHER PLAYS WITHIN PLAYS

5.1 The *Play Within the Play* in *Hamlet* and in *The Spanish Tragedy* By Thomas Kyd

The subject of the presence of actors and consequently of acting in Elizabethan plays can establish a particular relationship between the *play within the play* in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and that in *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd. Unfortunately, scrolling the bibliography of studies on the Elizabethan dramatists would be in vain to obtain a deep comparative analysis between the texts of Elizabethans, such as Shakespeare and Kyd. Let's try to fill this gap, at least minimally.

We should remember that the two authors William Shakespeare and Thomas Kyd are said to have collaborated in the *Ur-Hamlet*, a drama previously made famous by William Shakespeare that both authors probably in varying degrees jointly wrote and recited. The similarities between *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet* are really amazing.

In addition to the *play within the play*, which will be compared later on, some similarities between the two works can be summarized this way:

- both start with the appearance of a ghost;
- both ghosts have passed to the kingdom of death, but it is not said that they have been killed;
- both ghosts are asking for vengeance;
- a character named Horatio is central to *The Spanish Tragedy*, another Horatio is central in *Hamlet*;
- the relationship between Bel-Imperia and Lorenzo in *The Spanish Tragedy* and that between Ophelia and Laertes in *Hamlet* can be described as inspired only by hatred, as a highly troubled relationship between brother and sister;
- as in *The Spanish Tragedy*, one could make the equation Spain = England, so as in *Hamlet*, Denmark ideally corresponds to England. The latter equation is illustrated since the time of the Danish kings who reigned in England at the end of the first millennium after Christ, Denmark was not a nation whatsoever in the English mentality. As for the first equation Spain = England, it should be remembered that Queen Catherine of Aragon (Alcalá de Henares 1485-Kimbolton, Huntington 1536) had married two English kings of the Tudor dynasty: Arthur (1501) and his brother, the prince who ascended the throne with the name of Henry VIII.

Let's consider some autobiographical elements in Shakespeare's

play within the play. The most obvious ones that do not seem to have been sufficiently noticed are those that are related to Shakespeare's complex theatrical performance. Of course through the centuries other autobiographical explanations were searched and found, perhaps the most interesting of which is that signaled by the poet Laureate Ted Hughes (1899–1930) in a magnificent book, a recommended reading, entitled *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*,¹ through which we are led to understand that a love wounded William is concealed behind the behaviour of all the female protagonists of his poems and his plays, from Venus in *Venus and Adonis* to Desdemona in *Othello*. Hughes calls this the *fundamental equation* at the root of Shakespeare's artistic personality. The character of the loving female would always cover the playwright's tempestuous relationship with Henry Wriothesley, Duke of Southhampton, the dedicatee of the Sonnets. The pain inflicted by his rejection would be decisive in the life and art of Shakespeare and it would remain a permanent scar.

But however fascinating Hughes' thesis might be, we would rather deal with the *play within the play* in *Hamlet* as a testimony of the way of acting in Shakespeare's time and as an autobiographical and personal reflection of primary importance. From a certain point of his life, the theatre he intensively practiced became its central element and, as such, a component of outstanding importance.

The Spanish Tragedy's play within the play is limited to a number of lines but in *Hamlet* the *play within the play* spreads through several scenes; it is interspersed with elements that have nothing to do with it and covers much of the second and third act. If we consider the actor's profession, we realize that it coincides with that of the playwright and that the set of scenes reveals the mind and activity of Shakespeare, the actor-playwright.

Greater or lesser importance is given to the *play within the play* depending on what one can capture of the historical and theatrical nature instead of the literary nature of the text.

The *play within the play* in *Hamlet* serves not only to look deeper into the tragic events that are the main object of the representation, but also shows what the theatre was about, what kind of relations there were between the different individuals (playwrights, actors) involved in it, their rivalries, and what was happening in the theatrical as well as in the political history of the time. We should always remember that those times had produced something very similar to a revolution and that could be defined in any case as a huge deregulation in the order of things.

Analyzing *Hamlet* we become aware of the fact that little or no

importance is given by audiences and critics to the toponym Wittenberg. It is incredible to think that the term is not immediately perceived as a carrier of important meanings, perhaps of the most important meanings in the whole drama. Wittenberg goes hand in hand with the *play within a play* in the sense that the theatre enters the stage like a storm, and conforms to it.

The *play within the play* is not a scholastic form but an invasion of the theatre within the theatre. In *Hamlet* in particular there are a series of storm surges that differently shape the scenes and make them float in the air.

In Act II the players are overcome on the road by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern who are Hamlet's friends and university colleagues at Wittenberg, invited to court by Claudius, who wants to understand the reason of Hamlet's recent transformation.

Hamlet is aware of the cause of their coming:

Ham. Why, any thing, but to the purpose. You were sent for;
and there is kind of confession in your
Looks which your modesties have not craft enough to colour:
I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

Then GUILDENSTERN reveals the truth to Hamlet:

My lord, we were sent for.²

The players of the traveling company are announced as arriving at Elsinore. They are coming to offer their service. Hamlet says that they will have that service. The one who will play the part of the king will be welcome. Before meeting the actors, Hamlet announces the particular roles he wants to assign to them:

- the king
- the adventurous Knight
- the Lover
- the comic
- the clown,
- the Lady

He expresses himself in the following way:

Ham. He that playes the King shall be welcome; his
Majesty shall haue Tribute of mee: the aduenturous
Knight shall have
his Foyle and Target: the Louer shall
not sigh gratis, the humorous man shall end his part in
peace: the Clowne shall make those laugh whose lungs
are tickled o' th' sere: and the Lady shall say her minde

freely; or the blanke Verse shall halt for't: what Players are they?³

They are introduced by Rosencrantz as “the Tragedians of the City.” By contrast the appellative “Comedians” in *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* should be recalled:

Rosin. Euen those you were wont to take delight in
the Tragedians of the City.⁴

Hamlet starts to give an explanation of how the theatre works from a commercial point of view by asking why they travel because both from the point of view of profit and of reputation, it should be better for them not to travel, that the company remained in a single place. In this part of the play there are many observations of concrete and technical character, all based on a sound information on the theatrical questions of the time:

Ham. How chances it they trauaile? their residence
both in reputation and profit was better both
wayes.⁵

In response to Hamlet, Rosencrantz refers to some recent law on the travelling companies:

Rosin. I thinke their Inhibition comes by the meanes
of the late Innouation?⁶

Hamlet once again intervenes as one engaged in the same activity of the tragedians he has just met and inquires whether the reputation of these acting companies is the same as when he was in the city:

Ham. Doe they hold the same estimation they did
when I was in the City? Are they so follow'd?⁷

Rosencrantz's answer is negative:

Rosin. No indeed, they are not.⁸

This is an exchange of information, malevolence, and gossip between colleagues. Hamlet asks if they have grown rusty. This kind of dialogue is wholly unexpected as it is between a prince of Denmark and his travelling company fellows.

Ham. How comes it? doe they grow rusty?⁹

Rosencrantz answers that they are the same but their competition

included children's companies, which were applauded and were the current fashion:

Rosin. Nay, their indeauour keepes in
the wonted pace; But there is Sir an ayrie of
Children, little Yases, that crye out on the top of
question; and are most tyrannically clap't for't: these
are now the fashion, and so be-ratled the common
Stages (so they call them) that many wearing Rapiers,
are affraide of Goose-quils, and dare scarce go thither.¹⁰

Hamlet asks who these children are, who maintains them. He adds that, when they become adults, they will see that those who have made them play did wrong to get them to express aloud against the same persons they will successively become.

We spoke about an autobiographical mirroring of Shakespeare as an actor. As we see in this part of the play there is a presentation of problems that beset the companies of the time, either travelling or stable. As we shall learn speaking of Ben Jonson there were at the time famous companies of children who rivalled with those of adults and often surpassed them.

In this discussion about the theatre, it is pointed out that children companies were harming themselves because, if the audience got used to seeing only children performing, the same audience would not praise them when they grew up; as adults they would not receive the success they got when they were children:

Ham. What are they Children? Who
maintains 'em?
How are they escoted? Will they pursue the
Quality no
longer then they can sing? Will they not
say afterwards
if they should grow themselues to common
Players (as
it is like most if their meanes are no better)
their Writers
do them wrong, to make them exclaim
against their
owne Succession.¹¹

Rosencrantz seems to follow very well the question that bothers Hamlet and remarks that there has been much discussion on both sides and the Nation could not be held responsible for not stopping it. It seems very interesting that for so long, even comparing the situation presented in *The Spanish Tragedy*, we look into so detailed theatrical issues, of which certainly the audience was

aware and perhaps could follow even better and with greater amusement than the questions relating to the psychological problems of a Danish prince, far from the common mentality in both space and time. Those were burning issues of which even those who were not working in the theatre knew:

Rosin. Faith there has bene much to do on both sides:
and the Nation holds it no sinne, to tarre
them to Controuersie.¹²

Remaining on the same subject, Hamlet wonders whether it is really possible:

Ham. Is't possible?¹³

The drama at this point has just become, even if provisionally, the drama of the theatrical situation in the country.

Let's add a paragraph on the children companies the first of which had been founded at the beginning of '500 and were still performing the years of *Hamlet's* production. These companies had lost the favour they formerly enjoyed from having been involved in the years 1588–89 in the so-called Martin Marprelate Controversy and their reputation remained low in the decades since 1590. They became popular again after Richard Burbage leased the second Blackfriars Theatre to the so-called *Children of the Chapel*, about 1597. The children, who were renamed *Children of Queen Anne's Revels* — perhaps in honour of Anne Boleyn, mother of Elizabeth — or simply *Children of the Queen's Revels*, after the accession of James I to the throne in 1603, performed in dramas of outstanding authors such as Dekker, Middleton, Chapman, Webster, Jonson, Beaumont, and Fletcher. The part of *Hamlet* that anticipates the tooting entry of actors of the travelling company is relevant to what will be said later about the *painting* in *The Spanish Tragedy*, in the edition made by Ben Jonson. In *Hamlet* there is mention of a portrait of the new king, and the price bought it, the first of which had been founded at the beginning:

Ham. It is not strange: for mine Vnckle is
King of Denmarke, and those that would make mowes
at him while my Father liued; giue twenty, forty, an
hundred Ducates a peece, for his picture in Little.¹⁴

Then Guildenstern announced, with the trumpet's blowing, the arrival of the actors. Hamlet and Guildenstern had taken advantage of the time available before the arrival of the actors to deal with hot issues of interpretation. Then they come:

Guil. There are the Players.¹⁵

Hamlet gives the actors welcome to Elsinore and announces that they will do what they will to make their performance look more like an entertainment than as a true theatrical production. He establishes the character and function of acting, to deceive his father and mother, uncle and aunt:

Ham. Gentlemen, you are welcom to
Elsonower
[. . .] the Players (which I tell you must shew
fairely outward) should more appeare like entertainment
than yours. You are welcome: but my Vnckle
Father,
and with the trumpet Mother are deceiùd.¹⁶

Guildestern asks how the father uncle and the aunt mother should be deceived and Hamlet begins to lose his head. The unleashing of his madness determines the boundary between Hamlet's discussion about the theatre as a man of the theatre and the personal and regal tragedy on which the work hinges.

Guil. In what my deere Lord?¹⁷

From a certain point onward, the theatrical question has been treated from a realistic point of view with considerations solely related to the work of the actor, the operation of companies and similar. Afterwards, almost abruptly, it gets mingled with the chain of emotions and resentments that afflict Hamlet personally as the son of a father murdered by an uncle who has married his brother's wife, his own mother, and as a prince in mourning. In almost non understandable phrases, he says:

Ham. I am but mad North, North-West:
when the
Winde is Southerly, I know a Hawke from a
Handsaw.¹⁸

We may summarize what happens after the appearance of Polonius on the stage. He is Ophelia's father, the young woman who was passionately in love with Hamlet. The prince teases him and says that he will announce the arrival of the actors. Polonius says that he heard of them and instead of speaking of the present, the old pedant begins with the old times and mentions a Roman actor named Roscius: "When Rossius an Actor in Rome." He adds that the actors arrived ("The Actors are like hither my Lord"). It

should be remarked that Roscius was just the nickname of the actor Richard Burbage. Hamlet's pronunciation emits incomprehensible sounds ("Buzze, buzze") that could also be interpreted as meaning nonsense, nonsense.

Subsequently, Polonius indulges in making a bizarre theatrical discourse on the various theatrical genres, which can also be read as a further analysis of the theatrical practices of the time and the various kinds of plays that could be performed. It is actually a repetition of the discourse on the theater that seemed so exciting in one moment but meaningless in the next.

Polon. The best Actors in the world, either for Tragedie,
Comedie, Historie, Pastorall: Pastoricall-Comicall
Scene indiuible, or Poem
unlimited.¹⁹

One is reminded of a picture painted by Joshua Reynolds in the eighteenth century representing David Garrick, the most famous Shakespearean actor of the time, as being pulled from one side to the other by figurations of Comedy and Tragedy. The famous painting may be viewed online at <http://cgfa.sunsite.dk/reynolds/p-reynold4.htm>.

Hamlet and Polonius exchange jokes about Ophelia. The tone of the former interlocutor is recriminatory, that of latter petulant. In the same scene before the entrance of four or five players (the number is not specified), a dialogue of about ten lines is exchanged between Polonius and Hamlet.

Hamlet welcomes the players. Then, addressing the head comedian with unexpected familiarity he says he is happy to see him well, he wonders whether he is his old friend, he tells him that his face has become bold since he has last seen him, he wishes to know if he has come to Denmark to rival him. He also addresses the woman, a member of the company, describing her as nearer Heaven than when he saw her last. He repeats the welcome to the actors informing them that there will shortly be a recital and that he wants to make a test of their vocal abilities:

Ham. Y'are welcome Masters, welcome all.
I am glad to see
thee well: Welcome good Friends. O my
olde Friend?
Thy face is valiant since I saw thee last:
Com'st thou to
beard me in Denmarke? What, my young
Lady and Mistris?
Byrlady your Ladiship is neerer Heauen then

when
I saw you last
[. . .] Masters, you are all welcome [. . .] weél
haue a Speech straight. Come giue vs a tast
of your quality:
come, a passionate speech.²⁰

The first actor asks what the performance will be about, and Hamlet says that once he was addressed a speech but it was never acted and even if it were acted it would not happen more than once because the drama as he remembers it did not please everybody.

Ist Play. What speech, my Lord?²¹

In order to understand the part that follows it should be remarked that Hamlet makes a very interesting assessment of what gives value to a drama. He speaks of the theatre as an experienced professional and something to which he gives particular value is defined by the phrase “Sallets in the lines,” the opposite of dull, insipid, lines. Hamlet invites the main actor to remember the lines that Aeneas tells Dido especially when he mentions the assassination of Priamus and asks him to recite them if he still remembers them.

Ham. ‘twas Æneas Tale
to Dido, and thereabout of it especially,
where he speaks
of Priams slaughter. If it liue in your memory,
begin at
this Line, let me see, let me see: The rugged
Pyrrhus like
th’Hyrcanian Beast. It is not so: it begins
with Pyrrhus.²²

Polonius again intervenes with his approval.

Pol. Fore God, my Lord, well spoken, with
good accent,
and good discretion.²³

Polonius says that the speech is too long but Hamlet asks the comedian to continue. Jokes were exchanged between the actors and Polonius was openly opposed to the rehearsal. Then another passage gives an insight on how could at the time the comedy be considered.

The first actor continues to declaim until the point in which the mention of a painting is reached with the phrase “I know as a

painted tyrant Pyrrhus stood.” This sentence suggests a typical feature of Shakespeare’s mentality and composition, which we have previously mentioned, that is the conjunction of two situations in which the principle of identity prevails and according to which something becomes through self reflection equal to itself.

Ham. Good my Lord, will you see the
Players wel bestow’d.
Do ye heare, let them be well vs’d: for they
are
the Abstracts and breefe Chronicles of the
time.²⁴

The term abstract is here used with a different meaning from the way it is used in *The Spanish Tragedy*, it means *summary*, *synthesis*.

First Hamlet tells the actors to follow Polonius then asks the actor he considers an old friend if he can recite the murder of Gonzago. The wonder in the reader or the listener of the play arises regarding how can it be that a prince of Denmark in mourning for the death of his father, who has studied in a Lutheran university in Wittemberg and a-called old friend, the actor-manager of a travelling company can communicate so easily at an equal level, but the answer has already been given. The explanation is that the member of a theatrical company is talking to a member of another. It is a communication between colleagues. The prince called Hamlet and the strolling players practice the same trade.

Within this particular kind of *play within the play* for long stretches the fiction of the prince who goes mad after the murder of his father and the marriage of his mother to his uncle is at the same time a real and a fiction.

Ham. Follow him Friends: weél heare a play to
morrow.
Dost thou heare me old Friend, can you play
the murther of Gonzago?²⁵

The actor answers positively:

1st Play. I my Lord.²⁶

The passage does not hide the intention of the playwright to show the audience how a play is assembled. Hamlet asks the actor about the possibility of inserting (in the *canovaccio*, as it was called in the Italian Comedy of Art) a number of lines and asks him if by necessity he could study a speech that he will compose of the

length of twelve to sixteen lines

Ham. We'll
ha't to morrow night. You could for a
need study a speech of some dosen or sixteene lines,
which
I would set downe, and insert in't? Could ye not?²⁷

Then Hamlet warns the actors to follow Polonius, he advises them not to mock him, he takes his leave from them until the night, and repeats the phrase that they are welcome to Elsinore:

Ham. Very well. Follow that Lord, and looke you
mock him not. My good Friends, Ile leaue you til night
you are welcome to Elsonower?²⁸

After all have departed, one of the several of Hamlet's soliloquies present in the drama is pronounced that takes into particular consideration the effect of tragic emotion produced by the theatre. The tragic emotion and the tragic reality of life are mutually compared. We reach a new consideration of the theatre and are led to judge the theatrical expression so powerful as to push some perpetrators of crimes to confess them.

When topics related to the theatre in all their possible manifestations are dealt with, Hamlet does not behave as a psychopathic, but rather like an actor who has a profound experience of the several aspects of his profession, and is able to teach others to practice it in the right way.

Such is what we consider the main autobiographical element in Shakespeare's plays: the reference to an actor's practices, the awareness of the whole process of a drama production.

While Hieronimo in *The Spanish Tragedy* is a gentleman who is said to have written a play when he was a student, Hamlet is a prince of Denmark who seems to have had a past as an actor or is still an actor. It should also be remarked that unlike in the Aristotelian tradition the theatre does not produce the liberation from passion and the achievement of a state of sublime *atharassia*, rather a greater involvement in it:

Ham. I haue heard, that guilty Creatures sitting at a
Play,
Haue by the very cunning of the Scoene,
Bene strooke so to the soule, that presently
They haue proclaim'd their Malefactions.
For Murther, though it haue no tongue, will speake
With most myraculous Organ.²⁹

A more realistic project is later expressed by Hamlet in another soliloquy. He gives orders to the actors to recite something similar to the assassination of his father on the part of his uncle:

Ham. Ile haue these Players,
Play something like the murder of my Father,
Before mine Vnkle.
[Enter King, Queene, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosincrance, Guildenstern,
and Lords.]³⁰

A dialogue of king Claudius with Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern follows concerning the foolish behavior that Hamlet has recently exhibited. Rosenkrantz speaks about the pleasure felt by Hamlet in meeting them at the entrance of Elsinore. The king seems to be pleased by this and says that his hope is that this might be a possible solution. The king then asks his wife to leave and acts in such way that Hamlet met Ophelia, as if by chance so that t both he and her father, unseen, might judge from how they get together if the condition of Hamlet's upset mind is caused by love.

The Queen obeys. We thus reach a climax in the play in which Hamlet's madness seems to increase through the voyeuristic attitude of the two old corrupt men, his uncle Claudius and Polonius.

What follows is Hamlet's most famous monologue.

Then comes the equally famous scene of Hamlet's fury that translates itself in the upsetting contact with Ophelia and in his violent treatment of her. What follows may be considered Ophelia's monologue that starts with the consideration of the mental disturbance of the man she has once loved.

We realize that, in the passages up to now examined, the scenes that can be seen as crucial for the understanding of the tragedy can also be read as a manual of performing. We may transcribe from the third act the passages in which Hamlet acts as though abandoning his psychological problems in order to instruct his fellow comedians in the art of theatrical production:

Enter Hamlet, and two or three of the Players.

Ham. Speake the Speech I pray you, as I pronounc'd it to you trippingly on the Tongue: But if you mouth it, as many of your Players do, I had as liue the Town-Cryer had spoke my Lines: Nor do not saw the Ayre too much your hand thus, but vse all gently; for in the verie Torrent, Tempest, and (as I may say) the Whirlewinde of Passion, you must acquire and beget a Temperance that may giue it Smoothnesse. O it

offends mee to the Soule, to see a robustious Perywig-pated Fellow, teare a Passion to tatters, to verie ragges, to split the eares of the Groundlings: who (for the most part) are capeable of nothing, but inexplicable dumbe shewes, & noise: I could haue such a Fellow whipt for o're-doing Termagant: it out-Herod's Herod. Pray you auoid it.

Player.

I warrant your Honor.

Ham. Be not too tame neyther: but let your owne Discretion be your Tutor. Sute the Action to the Word, the Word to the Action, with this speciall obseruance: That you ore-stop not the modestie of Nature; for any thing so ouer-done, is fro the purpose of Playing, whose end both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere the Mirrour vp to Nature.³¹

We may synthesize some passages of the play that along with other elements, some of which have been previously considered, help provide a complete manual of acting:

- a) With respect to noise, it is prescribed that the pronunciation of the words should occur trippingly, which equates to nimbly, easily, gracefully, gently, fluently. If the tone is too low, on the other hand, it should almost be better to call the street crier whose main feature is to scream.
- b) Do not gesticulate. To express passion, temperance is recommend that gives it the character and appearance of smoothness and uniformity.
- c) At the same time the actor should not shout, tear, shred the expression of passion. The observation is profound: shouting does not allow passion to flow clearly and cohesively but it shatters it, and reduces it to pieces.
- d) There is a consideration concerning the audience or part of it, groundlings, the ignorant people, used only to two mutually conflicting experiences: dumbness, like the one you may get watching that kind of representations like dumb-shows, pantomime, or the opposite, noise. It is an audience unaccustomed to half-tones.
- e) Someone should be whipped for his overdoing. Any excess should be eliminated. Style should be based on order and consistence.

To these must be added the following recommendations contained in the second part of Hamlet's speech, concepts that belong to a theory predominantly derived from the aesthetics of Aristotle:

- f) Do not "overstep the modesty of nature." One must maintain modesty. The concept of modesty is the opposite of that of overdoing, a term which as mentioned above refuses all kind of

excess.

- g) Acting is “holding up a mirror to nature.”
- h) It is realistic, that is something that actually happens.

It should incidentally be remarked that there is not a great difference between certain theories expounded by Hamlet and certain acting instructions suggested to today’s players. Also to the later it is recommend the use of a voice, that stays behind “the fourth wall,” that does not overcome the line that ideally separates the space of the actors and that of the audience.

But the general tone of several passages calls to mind above all the *Galateo of Courtier*³² by Baldassar Castiglione, the manual of proper behaviour for a courtier inspired by Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie*,³³ 1583 on the manners of a courtier, whose style by the latter is being recommended to the literati while Hamlet’s recommendations are addressed to actors.

When the actors are ready, the new *play within the play* starts with the scene of the poisoning and killing of Hamlet’s father presented through a dumb-show:

Enter a King and a Queen very lovingly; the Queen embracing him, and he her. She kneels, and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up, and declines his head upon her neck: she leaves him down upon a bank of flowers: she, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the King’s ears, and exits. The Queen returns; finds the King dead, and makes passionate action. The Poisoner, with some two or three Mutes, comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away. The Poisoner woes the Queen with gifts: she seems loath and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his love. Exeunt.³⁴

The brief text of this dumb-show (III, ii) may be considered as one of the masterpieces of Shakespeare’s theatre.

One of the most interesting elements in this text is the suggestion of motion in such a small space: it distinguishes an inside and an outside determined by the movements of the Queen and of the man, a high and a low defined by the position of the royal figure, a walking in the directions of places that are opposite to each other.

To this it should be added that the dumb-show sums up what has happened at the court of Denmark and anticipates the tradition of the Elizabethan theatre from Gorboduc (1561) onward, the use of ellipsies, and the occurrence of events that would occur in the future and will have a close resemblance to what it being said.

The passages that we have presented so far were part of a play within the more minute extended play, a discourse through which

the critic, the spectator, and the reader had access to theatrical material in the making, in its actuality, in its problems, and in its ardour; they could have access to the secrets of the trade, see it in all its ramifications, concerns, problems, and different implications.

The dumb-show follows a rather silly intervention of Ophelia who, after asking what it is all about, instead of being appalled by what she has seen almost like an actress herself occupied with the staging of a drama, raises the question about the possibility that what was until then mimed was not the play itself. If proven otherwise, she was interested above all in love, why then does she ask questions concerning the play's representation? A sustainable hypothesis is that she was a participant in the execution of the theatrical performance.

Ophe. What means this, my Lord?³⁵

[. . .]

Ophe. Belike this shew imports the Argument of the Play?³⁶

What follows is a short *Prologue* to the play that is going to be performed according to traditional lines in which the actors salute the audience:

Prologue For us, and for our tragedy,
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently.³⁷

What follows is a true *play within the play* that extends for more than 100 lines with interferences on the part of Hamlet and of others. It might be defined as a microdrama. It is a piece entitled "The Murder of Gonzago." The plot is comparable to certain aspects of the murder of Hamlet's father and its primary function is to trap Claudius and compel him to reveal his guilt. This is why Hamlet gives it the title of "The Mousetrap." As a matter of fact, the trap that has been used to trap the murderer works so efficiently that, like a madman, Claudius leaves the place where the drama is rehearsed before it finishes.

It should be noted, incidentally that the word mouse recurs more than once in *Hamlet* since the first scene of the play in which it is said that there is not a mouse stirring.

The following quotations all come from Act III:

Enter King and his Queene.

Ham. The Mouse-trap: Marry how? Tropically: This

Play
is the Image of a murder done in Vienna: Gonzago
is the Dukes name, his wife Baptista: you shall see
anon.³⁸

Afterwards Lucianus, the king's nephew, appears on the stage.
Hamlet himself finds his dramatic counterpart in him:

Enter Lucianus.

Ham. This is one Lucianus nephew to the King.³⁹

Ophelia intervenes, one might say, operatively, once again not directly involved in the world of feelings but almost as a stage director might, attributing to Hamlet the function of Chorus, that is of comment to the dramatic action. What has been said of her acting as a player concerned with the organization of the play, rather than with herself is here strengthened:

Ophe. You are as good as a Chorus, my Lord.⁴⁰

What follows is a further agitated playful exchange of teasing remarks between Hamlet and Ophelia until Hamlet, after referring to the fact that his mother has mistaken husbands, gives the start to the central event of the tragedy. The croaking raven is invited to intervene howling for Vengeance.

Ham. So you mistake Husbands. Begin Murderer.
Pox, leaue thy damnable Faces, and begin. Come,
the croaking Rauen doth bellow for Reuenge.⁴¹

Lucianus' speech is disturbed, agitated, crazy, and recalls the assassination of the king through poisoning. These black thoughts of suitable medicines, of the consent of time, of the right season, the lack of eyewitnesses, of stinking weeds mixtures gathered at midnight with the prohibition of Hecates (goddess of death), thrice cursed, infected three times, so that with their natural magic and their harmful properties, immediately usurp healthy living. Particularly noteworthy is the concept of healthy living (wholesome) that is now corrupted, poisoned, and ruined.

Lucian. Thoughts blacke, hands apt,
Drugges fit, and Time agreeing:
Confederate season, else, no Creature seeing:
Thou mixture ranke, of Midnight Weeds collected,
With Hecat 's Ban, thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy naturall Magicke, and dire propertie,

On wholesome life, vsurpe immediately.
Powres the poyson in his eares.⁴²

Hamlet tells where the poisoning occurred. The name of the man who was murdered was Gonzago.

The microdrama inserted in *The Spanish Tragedy* was said to be based on a tragedy previously written by Hieronimo, which was in turn based on Spanish chronicles. Also in this case, it is formally asserted that the text comes from a written source of which Hamlet proudly says still exists (available) and is written in chosen Italian. The implication is that what is written has a character of greater certainty than what is oral. The fact that it is written seems to attach importance to the just-ended representation. In other words, Hamlet warns that they are not manufactured lies.

Ham. [. . .] the Story is extant and writ in choyce Italian.⁴³

5.2 Do Critics Really Read the Texts of Shakespeare's Plays?

Something that has occurred recently makes one doubt whether the text of Shakespeare's plays, we mean for instance the text of the First Folio of 1623, taken as a standard has been really read by the people who should have read it, at least for their professional duty, slowly and carefully. We can quote two remarkable examples of superficiality. Emma Rice, who has recently left the direction of the *Globe*, had at the beginning of her undertaking declared that she knew little Shakespeare. It was thus reported in *The Guardian*:

But while aware of the scrutiny the job brings, Rice isn't troubled by it: "I wouldn't be here if I didn't want to do Shakespeare, didn't enjoy Shakespeare and wasn't inspired by Shakespeare. I don't think it matters that I'm not a Shakespearean scholar, because I don't have to direct all the plays. I'm going to hold on to my truthful reaction that some of it's very hard to understand, and surely that's only a good thing because it means I can be rigorous. Sometimes in rehearsal we come across something and I think: No 14-year-old from Nottingham is going to work out what that means. It doesn't mean I cut it or am disrespectful of it, but it does mean I admit I don't understand it. I always keep in mind the 14-year-old from Nottingham that I once was. The biggest crime is if anyone comes out of the Globe saying, 'That was boring' or, 'I didn't understand it.' Then we have failed."⁴⁴

We cannot forget the director of the *Globe* Mark Rylance who dismissed from his post saying that he was not assured of the authorship of the plays:

He left the Globe in 2005: there had been tensions with the board, he felt, over, among other things, his charismatic leadership style and his scepticism about whether Shakespeare had even written the plays that bear his name. ⁴⁵

Cynthia Zarin, in “After Hamlet. A Shakespearean maverick comes to Broadway”, describes in a more open way Rylance’s relationship with the question of Shakespeare’s authorship of the plays. But all the same his approach to the subject appears as too simple. Many important elements are left unconsidered such as the implicit or explicit accusations of plagiarism that William Shakespeare suffered on the part of his contemporaries. Most often plagiarians are so named for their intense interest for the text of other writers.

The question may be put this way: Did the critics and other important connoisseurs of the theatre realize that Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, approaches the actors of the travelling company as fellows in the same trade and that he becomes crazy only when the preoccupations about the theatre disappear and give way to his psychological problems?

5.3 The *Play Within the Play* in *The Spanish Tragedy*

We can try to explain what is *the play within the play* in *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd (1554–1598) after a short premise on the education and artistic activity of the playwright.

He was the well-educated son of Francis Kyd, a scrivener. He could write a Latin verse and liked to introduce it into his plays. He could translate from French and Italian and was acquainted with Spanish. He was brought up to his father’s profession of scrivener or notary, but he followed his inclination for literature and the theatre, for which we know he suffered poverty and privation. Besides *Cornelia* (1594) and *The Spanish Tragedy*, published anonymously for the first time in 1592, Boas, from whose edition of 1901 we shall quote, mentions *Householders Philosophie* (1588) and a prose translation signed ‘T. K.’ of Torquato Tasso’s *Padre di Famiglia* (1583) besides two more plays, respectively entitled *Soliman* and *Perseda* (1592) where there are situations and names that are present in the *play within the play*, Act IV of *The Spanish Tragedy* and The First Part of Hieronimo, both directly connect to the plot of *The Spanish Tragedy*.

In the Prologue the spirit of Andrea, a Spanish nobleman killed in Portugal, asks for vengeance for his death inflicted on him by Balthasar, a Portuguese prince who at the end of the war will be

taken as prisoner to Spain and will be involved in situations occurring within the country.

What follows is the plot of *The Spanish Tragedy* in greater detail. Horatio the son of Hieronimo, a nobleman at the court of Spain, is killed by Lorenzo, Bel-Imperia's brother who is giving hospitality to Balthasar in his house in order to prepare her marriage with the latter. Bel-Imperia, previously Andrea's lover, had started to flirt with Horatio and is deeply suffering for his death.

Bel-Imperia appears engaged in a strange love tangle reminiscent of the character of Desdemona in *Othello*. She has been emotionally linked to Andrea, then to Horatio, and her brother Lorenzo now wishes her to marry Balthasar. In the latter part of the drama, on the occasion of the marriage between Bel-Imperia and Balthasar, a text composed by Hieronimo is recited that centers around the character of Perseda, an Italian lady with whom Suleiman has fallen in love.

The part of Perseda, the female protagonist of the shorter play produced within the longer one, is acted by Bel-Imperia who wishes to revenge the death of Andrea, which is mirrored in that of Suleiman by Balthasar.

Below we indicate the way in which the idea of composing a tragedy is staged from the first scene of Act IV. *The play within the play* in Act IV, Scene i develops out of a request of revenge on the part of Bel-Imperia who wishes to know from Hieronimo whether such is the love that he feels for his murdered son that no action has yet been taken by him to assure his revenge:

Bel-Imperia Is this the loue thou bearest Horatio?⁴⁶

Bel-Imperia argues that Hieronimo, a nobleman at the court of the king of Spain, is not doing enough to avenge the death of his son Horatio, her lover, who was killed by Lorenzo. But Hieronimo has already in mind a plan of action.

Incidentally, this request for revenge on the part of a female character aiming at hitting a male character, brings to mind the one made at the beginning of *Richard II* (Act I, Scene ii) by the widow of the Duke of Gloucester (Woodstock), treacherously murdered by his brother, Richard II. Both the Duke of Gloucester and Richard II are grandchildren of Edward III, and between them cousins.

We continue with the presentation of the Act IV, Scene i:

Hieronimo For why, the plots already in mine head,

Heere they are.⁴⁷

As invited to the wedding of Bel-Imperia and Balthasar, Hieronimo wants them to recite the parts of a drama that he had written many years earlier when he was a student. This is the most interesting part of *The Spanish Tragedy* from the point of view of the construction of *the play within the play*. So Hieronimo expresses himself:

When in Tolledo there I studied,
It was my chance to write a tragedie,
See heere my Lords.
He shewes them a book.
Which long forgot, I found this other day,
Now would your Lordships fauour me so much,
As but to grace me with your acting it,
I meane each one of you to play a part,
Assure you it will proue most passing strange
And wondrous plausible to that assembly.⁴⁸

On the passage taken from Act IV we may make some observations. The subject of the play is taken from a written text. In particular it is a former student's composition written when he was at the university of Toledo, a university that might stand for a major British university, such as Cambridge, to which Thomas Kyd was effectively connected; the people that attend the performance are not professional actors but can be required to act on a previously prepared plot, perhaps one promoted by a different inspiration, on another occasion; presumably the people were required to improvise their parts; learn their parts by heart and recite them by heart.

As in *Hamlet* the references to the problems of the contemporary stage will appear. In the passage we are about to quote the prohibition for women to act is consciously violated. Hieronimo asks Lorenzo to urge his sister to play a part that he conceived and Bel-Imperia responds that there is no need of such invitation and theorizes against the norm in force in Kyd's time of forbidding the stage to women arguing that a drama is not such without a woman. Here's the precise passage of the drama where this occurs:

Hiero. Now my good Lord, could you intreat,
Your Sister Bel-imperia to make one,
For whats a play without a woman in it?

Bel. Little intreaty shall serue me Hieronimo,
For I must needs be employed in your play.⁴⁹

It's during the preliminary stages of the play's rehearsal when Hieronimo makes an interesting specification concerning the fact that at the time of the play's composition he had intended that it was meant for the acting of "*Gentlemen and schollers*," but now the characters will be "*Princes and Courtiers*." It must also be added that in the case of gentlemen and scholars Hieronimo meant a theater where the actors were either university students, that is, theatrically and literally speaking university wits, as were Kyd and Marlowe, his unfortunate roommate, while the latter term refers to the court theatre. We mention Act IV, Scene i:

Hiero. [. . .] was determined to haue beene acted,
By Gentlemen and schollers too,
Such as could tell what to speak.

Bal. And now it shall be plaide by Princes and Courtiers
such as can tell how to speak.⁵⁰

After specifying himself as author of the text and addressing the actors who would recite the text, Hieronimo provides the plot of the drama that will in the end be staged. So one might say that Hieronimo intends to reduce and summarize the text he wrote a long time previously, in its fundamental elements, to achieve a playability that may fit the desired end of the representation.

It should be incidentally remembered that *Hamlet* was the only play by Shakespeare that was acted in his lifetime at the two universities. We argued that it was not important that its composer had never attended any of the classes of the said universities nor followed any of their activities.

Act IV, Scene i:

Hiero. That shall I roundly: the Cronicles of Spaine
Recorde this written of a Knight of Rodes,
He was betrothed and wedded at the length,
To one Perseda an Italian dame.
Whose beauty rauished all that her behelde,
Especially the soule of Soliman,
Who at the marriage way the cheefest guest.
By sundry meanes sought Soliman to winne,
Persedas loue, and could not gaine the same.
Then gan he break his passions to a freend,
One of his Bashawes whom he held full deere,
Her had this Bashaw long solicited,
And saw she was not otherwise to be wonne,
But by her husbands death this Knight of Rodes.
Whome presently by trecherie he slew,

She stirde with an exceeding hate therefore,
As cause of this slew Soliman.
And to escape the Bashawes tirannie,
Did stab her selfe, and this the Tragedie.⁵¹

The main elements of the plot that Hieronimo states to be based on a story from Chronicles of Spain are as follows:

- a) Erastus Knight of Rhodes was engaged to an Italian lady named Perseda;
- b) Suleiman, chief guest at the wedding between Erastus and Perseda, falls in love with the latter;
- c) Suleyman tries to lure Perseda into loving him, but does not succeed;
- d) confiding in a close friend, one of his Bashawes (honorific Turkish title normally written in English as Pasha and Pascià in Italian);
- e) to succeed in the conquest of Perseda, Bashaw kills Erastus;
- f) Perseda, upset by wrath, kills Suleiman and in order to escape the tyranny of the Bashaw kills herself.

Balthasar anticipating that what was going to be staged at the wedding would only be a simulation of reality, requires Hieronimo to clarify the assignment of the parts:

Bal. But which of vs is to performe that parte.⁵²

As will happen in *Hamlet*, the *play within the play* is indeed a composition partially impertinent to the main structure of the drama represented but can be read primarily as an open portal on the design and construction of the stage itself, on how the theatre acquired meaning. In the allocation of theatrical roles, Hieronimo assigns to himself that of Suleiman, to Lorenzo that of the Knight of Rhodes, to Bel-Imperia that of Perseda. He also provides abstracts on which everyone can write down the part that is assigned to him “And act as occasion it’s offered you.”

According to the last quoted sentence, the acting does not appear as fixed or predetermined; on the contrary, it is expected from the actors in their own way to accommodate situation and inspiration. Hieronimo as stage manager also provides the costumes: a Turkish hood, a black moustache, and a hawk. He gives a cross to the Knight of Rhodes and another to Lorenzo:

Hiero. O, that will I my Lords, make no doubt of it,
Ile play the murderer I warrant you,
For I already haue conceited that.
Bal. And what shall I?
Hiero. Great Soliman the Turkish Emperour.

Lor. And I?
 Hiero. Erastus the Knight of Rhodes,
 Bel. And I?
 Hiero. Perseda, chaste and resolute.
 And heere my Lords are seuerall abstracts drawne,
 For eache of you to note your partes,
 And act it as occasion's offred you.
 You must prouide a turkish cappe,
 A black mustacio and a fauchion.
 [Giues a paper to Bal.]
 You with a crosse like to a Knight of Rhodes.
 [Giues another to Lor.]⁵³

Hieronimo gives another cross to Bel-Imperia, saying that she should attire herself. Bel-Imperia, sensing the gravity of what is going to happen in the drama they are going to improvise, says that it should be better if it were a comedy rather than a tragedy. This is also a sign of the extreme dynamism and mutableness of organization in the Elizabethan theatre. You can, as we have seen before, change the kind of players, alternate at will comedy with tragedy and vice versa, depending on, for example, the inclination of the director or individual actor, the current situation, the events that will be simulated, etc.

At a certain point Hieronimo begins to theorize about the differences between tragedy and comedy and shows the greater elevation of the tragedy. Hieronimo's speech is reminiscent of the Prologue of Marlowe's, Tamerlaine the high project is announced to raise "the level of tragedy above clownesque to the stately tents of Kings."

Hiero. A Comedie, fie, comedies are fit for common wits
 But to present a Kingly troupe withall,
 Giue me a stately written Tragedie.
Tragedia cotnurnata, fitting Kings,
 Containing matter, and not common things.
 My Lords, all this must be perfourmed,
 As fitting for the first nights reuelling.
 The Italian Tragedians were so sharpe of wit,
 That in one houres meditation,
 They would performe any thing in action.⁵⁴

The passage we have quoted above is also very interesting because of its reference to the so-called Italian tragedians and their speed of organization and planning a drama. Lorenzo intervenes, saying that he saw the same being done by the French tragedians. The representation that has been planned by Hieronimo is by these simple comments included in a European context of theatrical

practices, of which perhaps the most important was represented by the *Italian Commedia dell'arte* otherwise called Italian Comedy. It has already been mentioned that its performances never occurred in England but in Southern France, while their influence is to be traced far from it.

We make a parenthesis to say that as the events presented in *The Spanish Tragedy* are far from chosen at random but are inserted in the context of dynastic conflicts between Spain and Portugal almost contemporary to the author, so the historical events that the *play within the play* shows appear to be those centered around the figure of Suleiman the Magnificent (1494–1566) during whose reign the Ottoman empire was at its zenith. In 1522 he drove from the island of Rhodes the Order of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. This event may explain the reference in the *play within the play* to the Knight of Rhodes.

It should be added that there is an oral tradition according to which on the shores of Tuscany, in the park now called dell'Uccellina, an Italian noblewoman was kidnapped by the Turks in the middle of '500. In the same period a similar event occurred to an Italian lady named Imperia Cognati.

Continuing with the construction of the play we may say that Hieronimo intimates to each of the noble courtiers transformed into actors to speak in unknown tongues: Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish. English words are not the only ones pronounced throughout the performance.

Hieronimo also warns that everything will end in a scene: "And all Shall be Concluded in one scene." It is a particular implementation of the Aristotelian unity of time that generally the Elizabethan dramatists did not follow, but they seemed to have now and then in mind.

5.4 Ben Jonson and the Picture Within the Play in *The Spanish Tragedy*

Ben Johnson added to *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd a kind of *play within the play* that one would be tempted to call *painting within the play*. But before proceeding to the presentation of the passage, which contains the mention of a painting and of a painter, we wish briefly to introduce the author himself, who has been mentioned several times in these pages, one of the most important Elizabethan dramatists who besides being author of well-known comedies and tragedies wrote a grammar of the English language that he drafted in 1617, which was published posthumously in 1640. It was he who recommended the use of

punctuation in the texts. Ben Jonson can be seen, compared with Shakespeare, for example, as a figure of auditor and grammarian, even if these definitions are far from exhausting what can be said of his personality.

Ben Jonson (1572?–1637), a marvellous combination of writer and actor, was probably born in Westminster, was briefly associated with the University of Cambridge, and was a soldier in the Low Countries where it seems he killed someone.

With Ben Jonson may start for the main authors of English literature the consideration of how long they spent in what might be called exposition to voyage and exposition to nature and to physical fatigue. Among his trips, it should be remembered the one he made in 1618, at the age of 45 when he travelled 400 miles through Scotland. In 1613 he accompanied to France the rebel son of Sir Walter Raleigh to whose *History of the World* he seems to have personally contributed.

Ben Jonson probably started to work for the stage after 1595. In 1597 he appears as actor and playwright in the company of the Admirall's Men; in 1598 as author of a tragedy written for that company; in the same year Francis Meres mentions him among the most outstanding English authors of tragedies. Several events of 1598, in different ways, increased his fame. In September 22 he fought what he afterwards called a duel against certain Gabriel Spencer a fellow actor who had criticised him and whom he killed.

According to official documents when he was accused of murder he declared himself guilty. He succeeded to escape being hanged thanks to an ecclesiastical benefit, but was briefly converted to Catholicism, which he abjured after a second condemnation twelve years later. The latter episode caused a temporary break from the Admirall's Men, whose manager, Philip Henslowe, recorded the event. The comedy *Every Man out of his Humor* was performed in 1598 by the rival company of the Chamberlain's Men, probably thanks to Shakespeare's recommendation who, as already mentioned acted in it in one role. Since then Ben Jonson was classified among the most outstanding playwrights of the time. He wrote *Every Man out of his Humour*, *Cynthia's Revels*, and *Poetaster*.

The former as it has already been said, was at the beginning presented by the company in which Shakespeare performed and in others of the above-mentioned children of the company known as Queen's Revels.

Now we wish to arrive at the central part of what we wish to say. In the almost unknown edition of Ben Jonson's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1602), Hieronimo asks a painter to paint his family and also to pictorially represent his son's murderer.

At the beginning of the scene, in the presence of his wife Isabella, Hieronimo apostrophizes the painter calling him *beggar*. The latter says that he is crying for his dead son whom he considered priceless and when Isabella asks him what he would like to get in exchange for his son's life he answers that he wants justice. Hieronimo remarks that justice is in God's hands.

Pain. God blesse you sir.

Hie. Wherefore, why, thou scornfull villaine.

How, where, or by what meanes should I be blest,

Isa. What wouldst thou haue good fellow.

Pain. Iustice, Madame.

Hie. O ambitious begger, wouldest thou haue that
That liues not in the world,

Why all the vndelued mynes cannot buy

An ounce of iustice, tis a iewel so inestimable:

I tell thee, God hath engrossed all iustice in his hands,

And there is none, but what comes from him.

Pain. O then I see that God must right me for my murdered sonne

Hie. How, was thy sonne murdered?

Pain. I, sir, no man did hold a sonne so deere.

Hie. What not as thine? that's a lie,

As massie as the earth I had a sonne,

Whose least vnuallued haire did waigh

A thousand of thy sonnes and he was murdered.

Pain. Alas, sir, I had no more but he.

Hie. Nor I, nor I: but this same one of mine,

Was worth a legion: but all is one.

Pedro, Iaques, goe in a doores, Isabella goe,

And this good fellow heere and I,

Will range this hidious orchard vp and downe,

Like to two Lyons reaued of their yong.

Goe in a doores, I say.

[Exeunt.]

The Painter and he sits downe.

Come let's talke wisely now:

Was thy sonne murdered?

Pain. I, sir.

Hie. So was mine.

How doøst take it: art thou not sometimes mad?

Is there no trickes that comes before thine eies?⁵⁵

As soon as he hears such praise of another man's son Hieronimo starts to enquire about the ability of the painter who stands in front of him. He says he is very famous, his name is Bazardo, then Hieronimo asks him to paint his own image ten years younger and to paint a picture in which his ten years rejuvenated image appears

together Isabella, his wife and their son in the attitude to address her, then he asks if the painter knows how to paint a tree and to fasten to it the son hit by the coward's strokes:

Pain. O Lord, yes sir.

Hie. Art a Painter? canst paint me a teare, or a wound,
A groane, or a sigh? canst paint me such a tree as this?

Pain. Sir, I am sure you haue heard of my painting, my name's Bazardo.

Hie. Bazardo, afore-god, an excellent fellow. Look you sir,

Doe you see, Ide haue you paint me my Gallirie

In your oile colours matted, and draw me fiue

Yeeres youger then I am. Doe ye see sir, let fiue

Yeeres goe, let them goe like the Marshall of Spaine.

My wife Isabella standing by me,

With a speaking looke to my sonne Horatio.

Which should entend to this, or some such like purpose:

God blesse thee, my sweet sonne and my hand leaning vpon his head:

thus sir, doe you see may it be done?

Pain. Very well sir.

Hie. Nay, I pray marke me, sir. Then sir, would I haue you paint me
this tree, this very tree.

Canst paint a dolefull crie?

Pain. Seemingly, sir.

Hie. Nay, it should crie: but all is one.

Well sir, paint me a youth, run thorow and thorow with villaines
swords, hanging vpon this tree.⁵⁶

Hieronimo asks the painter if he can draw an assassin:

Canst thou draw a murderer?

Pain. Ile warrant you sir,

I haue the patterne of the most notorious willaines that euer liued in
all Spaine.

Hie. O, let them be worse, worse: stretch thine Arte,

And let their beardes be of Iudæs his owne collour,

And let their eie-browes iuttie ouerrin any case obserue that.

Then sir, after some violent noyse,

Bring mee foorth in my shirt, and my gowne vnder myne arme, with
my torch in my hand, and my sword reared vp thus: and with these
wordes.

What noyse is this? Who call's Hieronimo?

May it be done?

Pain. Yea, sir.⁵⁷

Hieronimo asks if the painter manages to paint all the fury of
madness and describes himself in picturing fury in so realistic a

way, that his hair stands on end. Nature also has to be a part of the mental upheaval. Then there is a direct allusion to the murder of his son and his dangling from a branch. Hieronimo asks to be portrayed as the old Priam of Troy, when his house was on fire. To the question of the artist if there is no end to this madness, he replies that there is no end. He will abandon the stage by beating the painter.

Hie. Well sir, then bring mee foorth, bring mee thorow allie and allye, still with a distracted countenance going along, and let my haire heaue vp my night-cap.

Let the clowdes scowle, make the Moone darke, the Starres extinct, the Windes blowing, the Belles towling, the Owle shriking, the Toades croking, the Minutes iering, and the Clocke striking twelue. And then at last, sir, starting, behold a man hanging: And tottering, and tottering as you know the winde will weaue a man, and I with a trise to cut him downe.

And looking vpon him by the aduantage of my torch, finde it to be my sonne Horatio.

There you may a passion, there you may shew a passion.

Drawe mee like old Priam of Troy,
Crying, the house is a fire, the house is a fire
As the torch ouer my head. Make me curse,
Make me raue, make me cry, make me mad,
Make me well againe, make me curse hell,
Inuocate heauen, and in the ende, leaue me
In a trance, and so foorth.

Pain. And is this the end.

Hie. O no, there is no end: the end is death and madnesse,
As I am neuer better then when I am mad,
Then methinkes I am a braue fellow,
Then I doe wonders: But reason abuseth me,
And there's the torment, there's the hell.
At the last, sir, bring me to one of the murderers,
Were he as strong as Hector, thus would I
Teare and drage him vp and downe.

He beates the Painter in, then comes out againe with a Booke in his hand.⁵⁸

These so-called *The Additions to the Spanish Tragedy*⁵⁹, presumably written by Ben Jonson, but probably by Shakespeare himself, although their reading is not particularly agreeable, but rather the opposite, add to an idea of theatre of the Elizabethan age as something revolutionary and strange, drenched in madness and hate. They exhibit a hate that is incapable to remain silent and aims at being pictorially represented within an irrational need to paint the mind.

The figure of Hamlet stays in the mind either as anticipatory or model.

Notes

¹Ted Hughes, *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being* (Faber Paperbacks, April 13, 1992).

²William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), (II, ii).

³*Ibid.* (II, ii, 318–25).

⁴*Ibid.* (II, ii, 326–27).

⁵*Ibid.* (II, ii, 328–29).

⁶*Ibid.* (II, ii, 330–31).

⁷*Ibid.* (II, ii, 332–33).

⁸*Ibid.* (II, ii, 334).

⁹*Ibid.* (II, ii, 335).

¹⁰*Ibid.* (II, ii, 336–42).

¹¹*Ibid.* (II, ii, 343–49).

¹²*Ibid.* (II, ii, 350–51).

¹³*Ibid.* (II, ii, 355).

- ¹⁴*Ibid.* (II, ii, 359–62).
- ¹⁵*Ibid.* (II, ii, 365).
- ¹⁶*Ibid.* (II, ii, 366–72).
- ¹⁷*Ibid.* (II, ii, 373).
- ¹⁸*Ibid.* (II, ii, 374–75).
- ¹⁹*Ibid.* (II, ii, 391–95).
- ²⁰*Ibid.* (II, ii, 417–28).
- ²¹*Ibid.* (II, ii, 429).
- ²²*Ibid.* (II, ii, 442–47).
- ²³*Ibid.* (II, ii, 462–63).
- ²⁴*Ibid.* (II, ii, 516–20).
- ²⁵*Ibid.* (II, ii, 530–32).
- ²⁶*Ibid.* (II, ii, 533).
- ²⁷*Ibid.* (II, ii, 534–36).
- ²⁸*Ibid.* (II, ii, 538–41).
- ²⁹*Ibid.* (II, ii, 585–90).
- ³⁰*Ibid.* (II, ii, 590–92).
- ³¹*Ibid.* (III, ii, 1–22).
- ³²Baldassar Castiglione, *Galateo of the Courtier* (1528).
- ³³Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (1583).
- ³⁴William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), (III, iii, 133).
- ³⁵*Ibid.* (III, ii, 134).
- ³⁶*Ibid.* (III, ii, 136).
- ³⁷*Ibid.* (III, ii, 144–46).
- ³⁸*Ibid.* (III, ii, 232–35).
- ³⁹*Ibid.* (III, ii, 239).
- ⁴⁰*Ibid.* (III, ii, 240).
- ⁴¹*Ibid.* (III, ii, 246–48).
- ⁴²*Ibid.* (III, ii, 249–54).
- ⁴³*Ibid.* (III, ii, 256).
- ⁴⁴Lyn Gardner, “‘It’s time for a big adventure’: Emma Rice on her opening Globe production,” *The Guardian*, 11 April 2016.
- ⁴⁵Cynthia Zarin, “After Hamlet. A Shakespearean maverick comes to Broadway”, *The New Yorker*, May 5, 2008.
- ⁴⁶Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Broadview Press Ltd* (IV, i, 1).
- ⁴⁷*Ibid.* (IV, i, 51–52).
- ⁴⁸*Ibid.* (IV, i, 77–84).
- ⁴⁹*Ibid.* (IV, i, 94–98).
- ⁵⁰*Ibid.* (IV, i, 100–04).
- ⁵¹*Ibid.* (IV, i, 107–25).
- ⁵²*Ibid.* (IV, i, 131).
- ⁵³*Ibid.* (IV, i, 132–45).
- ⁵⁴*Ibid.* (IV, i, 155–65).
- ⁵⁵*Ibid.* (III, xii).
- ⁵⁶*Ibid.* (III, xii).
- ⁵⁷*Ibid.* (III, xii).
- ⁵⁸*Ibid.* (III, xii).

⁵⁹All the quotations are taken from Ben Jonson, *Spanish Tragedy* (London: T. Pauier, 1602). To the hypothesis that the reference is to William Shakespeare see: <https://www.deepdyve.com/lp/oxford-university-press/ben-jonson-s-additions-to-the-spanish-tragedy-as-the-subject-of-0j5F70CzGZ#bsSignUpModal> “Ben Jonson or Shakespeare” c.p. Anticipator or model for the future. The White/Pavier Q4 of 1602 added five passages, totaling 320 lines, to the existing text of the prior three quartos. The most substantial of these five is an entire scene, usually called the painter scene since it is dominated by Hieronimo’s conversation with the painter.

CHAPTER VI ONENESS AGAIN *KING LEAR*, AND *THE TEMPEST*

6.1 *Richard II*, a New Kind of *Play Within the Play*, and the Degradation of Oneness

Richard II is the most perfect of Shakespeare’s plays even if it was one of the first to be staged in the London theatre. On this subject, it is interesting to remark that in general Shakespeare’s scholars consider the play as if it were written in a minute, almost



in no time, while a play such as *Richard II* might have been studied in detail for years, composed in solitude even before its author had reached London. Let aside that *Richard III*, so different from *Richard II*, had been rehearsed in the same year.

A brief note on the Monarch Richard II. Richard the II (1367–1400) was born in Bordeaux. He was the youngest son of Edward Prince of Wales (the Black Prince) and grandson of Edward III. He was born in the Abbey of Saint Andrews in

Bordeaux and was baptized in the cathedral three days later by the Archbishop James, the titular king of Majorca, acting as chief sponsor [. . .]. This brief presentation may also explain Richard's weakness and uncertainty in action. In a way he did not belong to the country over which he reigned. But as he first appears on the stage he is a perfect example of the concept of perfection personified in a king.

At the beginning of the play we have what we may call a new kind of *play within the play* that ends tragically. Two of the king's subjects, Hereford and Norfolk, are in front of him ready for a duel that will decide their destinies, but that duel will never start. The king is inhibited in his action to start the combat and this is his first defeat.

There are two contrary movements that dominate the stage: the first one is the flourish of trumpets on the part of the marshals, a sign that the combat between the two contenders is about to begin, and the second, a *coup de théâtre* in which the king interrupts the combat after a consideration regarding what he calls *fair peace* that he does not wish to spoil with blood.

The king substitutes the combat with his own royal decisions according to which his cousin Hereford (the future Bolingbroke, the future Henry IV) will be banished to Ireland and Norfolk will go to France and never return.

From then onwards, the fullness of oneness of the king will decline. What follows is a description of a possible sequence of events:

1. Hereford, that is, Bolingbroke, one of the two contenders, leaves England and goes to Ireland. In metaphorical terms, the rays coming from Bolingbroke in Ireland reach England and make the country dark by contrast.
2. Bolingbroke returns and fights against Richard, defeats him and puts him in jail. The brilliance of Richard's oneness is obscured. It is the sad outcome of an ancestral story.
3. Richard turns into a puppet of snow. All his integrity and the splendor of his personality is gone.
4. This is Shakespeare's text of *Richard II* but we have another version of the events that is interesting to consider. In the latter version that is reported by the *National Biography* (pag. 1031) we have an alternative theatricalisation which is at least partly in contrast with that given by Shakespeare. It might be called *historical*, that is corresponding to what really occurred. It was decided that Hereford and Norfolk should settle their quarrel in a single combat ultimately fixed to take place on Gosworth Green near Coventry on 16th September. But before they had joined issues, Richard rising up from his scaffold took the battle into his hands. The assemblage heard a tumult of incredulous astonishment because in virtue of the authority delegated by Parliament, the king banished Hereford for ten years and with more equanimity the unpopular Norfolk was to go into exile ("for a hundred visit").

6.1.2 *Richard II* and Queen Elisabeth

But here is another *Richard II* with whom Queen Elisabeth I identified. The story starts at the time of Henry VIII who felt betrayed by his most outstanding courtier Thomas Cromwell whom he condemned to the scaffold.

His guilt was to have advised the king to marry as his fourth wife the German Duchess of Cleves toward whom he felt no attraction but only disgust.

This situation can be associated with the rebellion organized by the second Earl of Essex a former protégé of Queen Elisabeth who was condemned to the same punishment as Thomas Cromwell for engaging in a rebellion against his sovereign (Earl of Essex rebellion 1601).

The idea spread that the outburst of such rebellion might have been influenced by the performance of Shakespeare's *Richard II*. Soon after 1595 the London Companies had resumed playing at the conclusion of a long interval caused by the plague and Shakespeare had started a new tetralogy based on English history, the first play of which was precisely *Richard II* whose key significance rested on the deposition of a monarch.

In the Chapter devoted to *Richard II* contained in a volume of *Shakespeare's Histories*, edited by Peter Alexander (Collins London and Glasgow) there is the report of a connection between the rehearsal on the part of the Chamberlain men of *Richard II* and the sedition raised by the Earl of Essex against the city of London. It is one of the most astonishing examples of the combination of theatrical activity and politics of which the peerage was responsible

On 18 February 1601 Augustine Phillips, a member of Shakespeare's company, appeared before a court to explain why the Lord Chamberlain's servants had on 7th February, the afternoon before Essex made his attempt to raise London against the government, put on a performance of *Richard II*. This play showed the deposition of a ruler and might be regarded, in the circumstances, the authorities thought, as an incitement to the public to support the coming attempt by the Essex faction to take over the government from its lawful sovereign. That the authorities were correct in their surmise that the play was intended to stir the spectators to acquiesce, if not to participate, in the coming venture, the evidence of Phillips fully confirmed; but at the same time he was able to satisfy the court that the actors themselves were innocent of any such intention.¹

6.1.3 *Richard II's Own Deposition*

In the volume entitled *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers / Literature as Uncanny Causality* (New York: Methuen, 1987) by Marjorie Garber, the term *ghost writer*² is used in a broader sense than that preferred to, for example, English seventeenth-century parliamentary life when it indicates secret reportage on the part of political and literary personalities (such as Robert Walpole) of what was daily pronounced in Parliament. In synthesis the basic element that comes to mind is that common in European and in particular British politics. But in this case the field in which the author expands may be termed *extreme psychology*, it overcomes practice and common sense.

One of the interesting features of the volume is the consideration of the fact that Shakespeare's identity as a playwright had for centuries been put in doubt could be made more significant than in a philological sense. It could be connected with the essential meaning of the plays, with its characters. It is intrinsically associated with the stage.

The plays of Shakespeare abound with ghosts.

The author of *Ghost Writers* quotes interesting examples especially from Act IV of *Richard II* in which the king has already been deprived of his reign by his cousin Bolingbroke. He has lost his name and there is a special emptiness resulting from that loss:

KING RICHARD II No lord of thine, thou haught insulting man,
Nor no man's lord; I have no name, no title,
No, not that name was given me at the font,
But 'tis usurp'd: alack the heavy day,
That I have worn so many winters out,
And know not now what name to call myself!
O that I were a mockery king of snow,
Standing before the sun of Bolingbroke,
To melt myself away in water-drops!
Good king, great king, and yet not greatly good,
An if my word be sterling yet in England,
Let it command a mirror hither straight,
That it may show me what a face I have,
Since it is bankrupt of his majesty.³

The risk of the volume of Garber's volume is perhaps to be too far-fetched in this association between theatrical reality and profound meaning.

The word self-erasure the author uses corresponds to the image of a snow puppet, but it is more realistic. Richard becomes a voice from the past. He is the ghost of *Richard II*. He has deposed his own deposition.

6.2 *The Play Within the Play in The Tempest*

The end of Scene I of *The Tempest* and the beginning of Scene II clearly show that what happened had not been a real storm, but, if we wish to further develop the theme of the *play within the play*, it was *a play of the storm* or *a storm within the play*. This can first be argued from the fact that at the very beginning of the following scene, to his daughter Miranda, who is worried because on board of the sunken ship there might have been valid individuals and they may have been damaged in the frightful event, Prospero, her father, says not to worry because nothing had happened that might have destroyed people and things.

This way of conveying information on the part of Prospero not only denies the factuality of the events and affirms that they were only fruits of imagination but also denies his own magic being the cause of them.

We enter another area of Shakespearean creativity that connects the construction of the wreck through the equipment and artifices of the theatre. As in *Hamlet*, the playwright seems to develop the notion of fashioning what occurs on the stage. The storm as it has taken place in the first scene of Act I is basically a representation brought forth with the equipment of which the Elizabethan theatre could dispose in terms of sound production, human voice, and other instrumentality. The equipment that the theatre owned was sufficient. Just a switch was enough to turn off all lights. Shakespeare would thus be showing to the audience how the theatre worked from inside.

One of the faults of the scholars and critics that have searched for the historic sources of the episode of the shipwreck has led them to connect it to some well-known navigation catastrophe. Besides the potentiality of the theatre to construct realities, they ignored that stories of that kind occurred every day and that their resounding could clearly be captured in Southwark where the most important theatres were, less distant than two miles from the docks.

6.3 *The Invincible Armada and Shakespeare's The Tempest*

It is difficult to understand how the scene of the shipwreck with which Shakespeare's *The Tempest* starts is not as a rule connected by critics and scholars to the tremendous shipwreck of the Spanish ships of the Invincible Armada, which had occurred a few decades earlier. All the elements that make up the tragedy are relevant to understand the history of England and the fundamental international antagonisms that we have tried to present:

On the one hand we have a Catholic Spain with its hatred for reformed England symbolized by two female figures we can imagine feeling aversion toward each other: Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn.

On the other hand we see Philip II of Hapsburg the only son of Charles V, emperor of the Holy Roman empire whose marriage with Mary Tudor would last from 1554 to 1558, during which time her father Henry VIII was asking the Pope for an annulment of his marriage with her mother.

In 1587 on stormy waters The Spanish fleet with its most courageous navigators withdrew from Lisboa in Portugal from where a tragic sea enterprise had started with the aim of defeating London and had afterward repaired toward the coasts of Coruña.

It is curious to remark how those coasts with their stormy airs and the tremendous winds were the same on which Queen Catherine still an adolescent had embarked toward England finally landing in Plymouth to marry Henry VIII's older brother Arthur Tudor who would with his premature death leave her alone.

And the ideological positions the Holy Roman Empire is precisely the one against which Thomas Cromwell fought, pointing to the German Duchess Anne of Cleves as a possible fourth wife of Henry VIII to promote the extension of Protestantism throughout the still Catholic German provinces. Henry VIII had found her disgusting.



Julian the Apostate



Martin Luther

6.4 *King Lear* and the Engine of Zeroing as a *Play within the Play*

Differently from those of his contemporaries, the plays of Shakespeare contain something that may be called *devices, machines, engines*, the outcome of a particular kind of connecting and interpreting the materials. The presence of such devices is what makes the difference between his works and those of his contemporaries. It creates a condition of movement, it annuls staticity.

Also the *plays within the plays* can be seen as engines, promoters of tragedies and perhaps *King Lear* is one of its best examples.

The drama of *King Lear* starts in the fury of a storm. The sovereign is getting old but would have no real need to divide his reign. His own folly is the engine of his ruin, the drive toward of his own annulment. From a certain point onward king Lear's reign will be no more an undivided entity but will be divided in favour of his two eldest daughters. The third daughter, Cordelia, answering to her father's question about the amount of love for him appeals to the norm of a proper relationship between father and daughter and momentarily interrupts the process of his derangement. Cordelia answers that she does not love her father more that she should.

King Lear's retinue will be divided from 100 to 50 to nil after each visit to one of his daughters' mansions.

King Lear has in common with other works by Shakespeare, including *The Winter's Tale*, a story at its foundation. The play hinges on this story that is at the same time both regal and mythical.

From this moment a mad rush to nowhere starts, punctuated by a series of subtractions. In the visit to the first daughter Lear's retinue is reduced by half. In the visit to the second daughter the king's retinue is still reduced by half. Thus Lear's destiny proceeds to nought, toward its zeroing.

Lear flies into a rage and disowns Cordelia. The king of France, who has previously courted Cordelia, says that he wants to marry her even without inheritance and she accompanies him to France without her father's approval. Of course these episodes of loss are not isolated in their unfortunate occurrence. Cordelia will die in England, which will be invaded by France. One is tempted to say that the end of the play will coincide with that of a *play within the play*.

Notes

¹Peter Alexander, *Shakespeare, Complete Works* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1964).

²Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers / Literature as Uncanny Causality* (New York: Methuen, 1987).

³William Shakespeare, *Richard II, Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

CHAPTER VII

THE WINTER'S TALE

7.1 Mamillius in The Winter's Tale

An analysis of frequencies of Mamillius in The Winter's Tale shows that his name is present in the play 8 times concentrated in the first two scenes¹. Already in the first one, the two courtiers Archidamus (Lord of Bohemia) and Camillo (Lord of Sicily) speak of Mamillius as a beneficial and vital child, even endowed with taumaturgical powers. We in particular refer to the phrase "physics the subject" which could be reformulated with *heals the person*.

The character of Mamillius fits into a scene that may be seen as characterized by promise both as regards the friendship between the two kings, Leontes and Polixenes, and as regards the young prince alone. This promise will prove vain and will turn into its opposite. This first scene is revealed as a whole as the result of an illusion that things are not what they appear to be.

Archidamus speaks of the "ineffable comfort of the young prince Mamillius" and continues by saying that he is "a lord of the greatest promise he has ever realized". Camillo shows his agreement in the hopes he has for him. Note that with both promises and

hopes the observation is projected into a future that will never occur. Camillo adds that he is a valiant child, "he is a valuable child, one who cares for the person, renews old hearts" and subsequently accentuates through a clearer passage to metaphorical language that "those who walked on crutches before he was born also desire life of seeing him man".

Archidamus answers with a curious phrase with an unfathomable meaning: "Would they be content to die?", "Would they otherwise be happy to die?" Camillo responds in an equally strange way: "Yes, if there were no other excuse for which they should wish to live". Archidamus replies: "If the king had no children, they would like to live on crutches until he had one." To be noted also the exaggerated expression with the probable intention of communicating more deeply.

The passages we read from scenes I and II of *The Winter's Tale* introduce to situations that are interesting to closely examine. The first is about the friendship of the two kings when they were children. It is said that later on, the responsibilities connected with their respective kingdoms (Kingdom of Sicily and Kingdom of Bohemia) had separated them and that their friendship had been maintained through letters, embassies and gifts. The most interesting element seems to concern the fact that the relationship between the two sovereigns had not been personal, but diplomatic and official for many years. What will happen in a later moment, during the visit of Polixenes to Leontes in the kingdom of Sicily, the crisis of jealousy of Leontes develops towards the royal guest, the tragic separation of the latter from all the characters previously bound to him by bonds of confidence and affection seems to be precisely the consequence of the transformation of the relationship from impersonal to personal. In other words, personal contact between the two kings would open privileged channels of frustration and destruction.

We quote from the scene that recapitulates the two kings' childhood

CAMILLO: Sicily cannot show himself over-kind to Bohemia. They were trained together in their childhoods; and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection, which cannot choose but branch now. Since their more mature dignities and royal necessities made separation of their society, their encounters, though not personal, have been royally attorneyed with interchange of gifts, letters, loving embassies; that they seemed to be together, though absent, shook hands, as

over a vast, and embraced, as were, from the ends of opposed winds.
The heavens continue their loves!

The anticipation of Camillo that the affection rooted in childhood between the two kings will develop on the occasion of Polissene's stay in Sicily will not be fulfilled. Their "shaking hands and hugging each other like above an ocean" that characterized the period between their childhood and the actual visit will not be enough to preserve their affection.

We have mentioned certain characteristics of Shakespeare's plays otherwise named in these pages as *devices*, *engines*, and *motors* referring to their capacity to produce movement and transformation at the level of language, plot, and meaning. Among these, the story, the fable, or the short story occupy a prominent position. One such is the tale that gives the title to Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*.

As *the play within the play* the story is both central and isolated from the rest of the drama.

One could define Shakespeare play entitled *The Winter's Tale* on the basis of a minimal narrative told by the child Mamillius who, with the passing of time and the change of scenes, has lost his princely power and prestige and has fallen into the deep misery derived from the sad relationship between his parents and his own incapacity of overcoming discomfort.

The tale of the title of the play emerges only in the second act, with reference to what Mamillius tells his mother in front of various female figures, after defining the story he is going to tell as "best for winter." It is a narrative that runs through half a sentence: "There was a man [. . .] Dwelt by a churchyard." It is Mamillius' answer to his mother's request to hear him tell a story.

Thus the story begins and ends, synthesizing the frustration and sense of death that dominates the entire first part of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and that will find its tragic conclusion in the child's own death.

The child Mamillius, who was initially rudely rejected by his mother, is subsequently rejected by his father. The contexts highlighted by TAPoR help formulate the sequence of the rejections the child must undergo. Among the main reasons for them are his mother's resentment and the jealous thoughts that is father, the king of Sicily, nourishes toward his wife. Although Mamillius is his own son, half the blood of his hated wife flows in his veins. The meaning of the tiny tale we have digitally detected in the second act of Shakespeare's *The Winter Tale* points toward death.

The short story of death germinates within the larger context of destruction that starts when Leontes king of Sicilia asks his guest king Polixenes of Bohemia, to whom he was affectionately connected since childhood, to extend his visit in Sicilia. Polixenes' answer is that he has been away from his kingdom for too long and must depart in order to take care of the impending affairs of state. The period of beauty and perfection he has enjoyed as a guest will soon be dissipated. After Leontes's wife, Hermione, repeats the invitation and the Bohemian king accepts to stay, Leontes starts to suffer from an uncontrollable jealousy. He soon becomes convinced of his wife's betrayal. He gives orders to his loyal courtier, Camillo, to poison the king of Bohemia. Instead, Camillo warns Polixenes of the danger and the two leave Sicilia.

Furious at their escape, Leontes now publicly accuses his wife of adultery, and declares that the child she is bearing is not his. He throws her in prison and sends two noblemen to the Oracle of Delphi for what he is sure will be the confirmation of his suspicions. Leontes gives orders to Paulina's husband, Lord Antigonus, to take the child and abandon it in some desolate place. While Antigonus is gone, the answer comes from Delphi — Hermione and Polixenes are innocent. As this answer is given, word comes that Leontes's son, Mamillius, has died of a sickness brought about by the accusations against his mother and the psychological condition in which his young age has been compelled to live. Hermione, meanwhile, falls in a swoon, and is carried away by Paulina, who subsequently reports the queen's death to her heartbroken husband.

This is the first part of the story that may be described as a string of disgraceful events within a tragedy. Antigonus, meanwhile abandons the baby on the Bohemian coast, and reports that Hermione appeared to him in a dream, bade him to give her daughter the name of Perdita and leave gold and other tokens on her person. Shortly thereafter, Antigonus is killed by a bear, and Perdita is raised by a kindly shepherd.

The function of Time that has started to eloquently dominate the stage and is transforming reality, making it agreeable. Sixteen years have passed and Polixenes' son, Prince Florizel, falls in love with Perdita. His father and Camillo in disguise attend a sheep's hearing and watch as Florizel and Perdita are betrothed — then, tearing off the disguise, Polixenes intervenes and orders his son never to see the shepherd's daughter again. With the aid of Camillo, however, who longs to see his native land again, Florizel and Perdita embark for Sicilia, after using the clothes of a local rogue to hide their identity. They are joined in their voyage by the shepherd and his son. In Sicilia, Leontes — still in in the condition

of sad bereavement— greets the son of his old friend expressing pleasure. Florizel pretends to be on a diplomatic mission from his father, but his cover is blown when Polixenes and Camillo, too, arrive in Sicilia. A gentleman of the Silician court narrates for us what happens next: the shepherd tells everyone the story of how Perdita was found leading Leontes to realize that she is his own daughter, which leads to general rejoicing. The entire company then goes to Paulina's house in the country where a statue of Hermione has been recently finished. The sight of his wife's figure makes Leontes deeply upset, but then, to everyone's amazement, the statue comes to life — it is Hermione who has been resuscitated. As the play comes to an end, Paulina and Camillo become engaged, and the whole company celebrates the miracle of life's renewal.

Concerning the statue, the name of the very famous Italian sculptor Giulio Romano (1499–1546), a disciple of Raphael, is mentioned that interestingly interrupts the historical vagueness of the play's setting and adds another *engine* to it. We take it as a non frequent quotation from the Italian history of art in the plays and as an admirable engine to move the action onward.



Archaeological Museum of Delphi, Umbilicum mundi

7.2 Plagiarism

These pages can give rise to many heterogeneous, equally interesting, observations. One the most famous, relates to the assertion that William Shakespeare was not the author of his plays. No one ever denied that he was also an actor who played in many plays written both by him and by other fellow actors. If we wish to look at the situation more closely, we may remember that the writer Robert Greene, one of the best known among University wits, insulted Shakespeare with the famous phrase reported in his *The Groatsworth of Wit*, calling him an “Upstart crow beautified by our

feathers.” In so doing he lay charges against him not so much for his success as an actor as much as for his being a plagiarist, one who takes someone else’s works or ideas and passes them off as his own.

It must now be said that in all the discussions on Shakespeare’s identity as a playwright no sufficient attention was given to such accusations against him and that, on the contrary, it is a well-known fact that only a writer, an author, may be accused of copying a text. Even in modern times a violation of copyright has little or nothing to do with a regard to the oral utterance of someone’s words.

It’s especially interesting to note that a story by Robert Greene is one of the sources of *The Winter’s Tale*. And it is exactly his *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time* that inspired the *Winter’s Tale*, which is centered on how time transforms the human condition and can dramatically shift from tragedy to comedy.

So one can even say that the implicit accusation of plagiarism directed at William Shakespeare is one of the main proofs of the dramatist’s identity and recognition.

It is unclear why this element has never been highlighted in the century-long discussion about Shakespeare’s identity. Greene’s words and Shakespeare’s start to blend at the beginning of Greene’s career with the former’s publication of *Mamillia* that will later be transformed by Shakespeare into the name of Mamilus.

7.3 *Pandosto* by Robert Greene and *The Winter’s Tale*

Pandosto: The Triumph of Time is a prose romance written by Robert Greene, first published in 1588 and republished in 1607 after his death, that is about 25 years later, with the new title *Dorastus and Fawnia*, only four years before *The Winter’s Tale*. The narrative, popular during the time of William Shakespeare may in turn, be based on *The Clerk’s Tale*, one of Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*.

In Shakespeare’s story there is a geographic inversion of places between Sicily and Bohemia. In Greene’s tale, Pandosto, not Polixenes, is the king of Bohemia, who accuses his wife Bellaria of adultery committed with his childhood friend, the king of Sicilia. His pursuit of this unfounded charge leads him to send his infant daughter out to sea to die and causes the death of his son and of his wife. His daughter drifts to Sicilia and is saved and raised by a shepherd called Dorastus. The Prince of Sicilia falls in love

with Fawnia, unaware that she is a Princess, and they run away to marry. They land in Bohemia, where Pandosto unwittingly falls in love with his daughter Fawnia. At the end of the story, after Fawnia's identity is revealed, Pandosto commits suicide out of grief for his sin and the troubles he caused to his family.

Without going into much detail, it is clear that the comparison Greene is making is of a literary character that is present in *The Winter's Tale* 23 years later.

The popularity of *Pandosto* or *Dorastus and Fawnia* may be gauged by the fact that the British Museum alone contains ten editions of the novel, dated before the end of the eighteenth century. Of these, the *edition princeps* of 1588 is a unique copy, and forms the basis of the present modernized editions *Dorastus* and *The Winter's Tale*.

As far back as 1709, at least, it was known that Shakespeare had drawn upon Greene's novel for the subject matter of *The Winter's Tale*, but the actual debt of the dramatist to the novelist can be realized only after a careful comparison between the two works. Greene's style is, of course, characteristic of himself and his pleasant conceits find no place in Shakespeare's mature drama. The curious moralizations from natural history, the familiar use of proverbial lore, the dissertations on abstract themes, and the laboured style abounding in antitheses and alliterations combine to place *Dorastus* in the long line of euphuistic novels, of which Lyly was the originator. Greene is often coarse, but he has that Elizabethan gift of sweetness, which is unmistakable. The pathetic scene, in which Bellaria laments the loss of her child, appealed to Shakespeare, and the lines in *The Winter's Tale* "The day frowns more and more: thou'rt like to have A lullaby too rough" (Act II, scene iii) are reminiscent of Greene's words:

Shalt thou have the
whistling winds for thy lullaby, and the sea foam instead
of sweet milk?"²

The changes, which Shakespeare introduced into Greene's narrative, are due in the main to the requisites of the dramatic form. The long-winded speeches and dreary monologues of the novel lack dramatic correctness. Consequently, the speeches are either omitted altogether, shortened, or converted into dialogue. At the same time, the action is concentrated in deference to the claims of dramatic unity. When, for example, the first act of the play opens, Polixenes is already about to depart, and is only restrained by Sicily's importunity. To dramatic causes, likewise, we owe the creation of Antigonus, Paulina, and Autolycus, in whom

respectively are concentrated the nobles, ladies, and clowns of the novel. At other times, Shakespeare enlarges from a brief hint given by Greene..punto

There is no counterpart in Greene's, novel of the pathetic scene in *The Winter's Tale*, in which the character of young Mamillius is developed, merely the statement that the guards "coming to the Queen's lodging found her playing with her young son, Garinter." In the same way, Greene's reference to the storm at sea is expanded into Act III, scene iii of *The Winter's Tale*. Some further points of difference between the play and the novel are the following: The change of names throughout. The part of Pandosto of Bohemia is taken by Leontes of Sicily, that of Egistus of Sicily by Polixenes.

It is really a production of texts by the means of other text

Notes

¹ William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

² *Ibid.* (Act II, Scene iii).



Flowering plant in front of Southwark Cathedral

APPENDIX 1

Madness as Folly in Erasmus (Elogium moriae) by Erasmus Desiderius (Erasmus of Rotterdam, November 6, 1469 – July 22 1536); in *Orlando Furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto; in *History of Orlando Furioso* by Robert Greene; in *The Faerie Queen* and *Tears of the Muses* by Edmund Spenser.

One of the main themes of *William Shakespeare Amidst Monarchs Revolutions and Actors* is the contraposition between two contrary concepts, *oneness* and *madness*, which may be defined as the essence of Shakespeare's tragedy.

The following are the sources of Shakespeare's inspiration that are worth considering:

Discourse on madness in the first 30 years of the sixteenth century may imply a discourse on religious conflicts of great impact

1 between the Catholic (Roman Catholic) and the (Protestant, Reformed) Christian

2 between Christian and Muslim

Under the first point we should consider Erasmus Desiderius' *Praise of folly*. It was written in conjunction with Sir Thomas Moore with whom Erasmus was staying at Moore's house in Bucklersbury in the City of London. The title *Moriae Encomium* had thus a second meaning *In Praise of Moore*. *In Praise of Folly* is considered one of the most notable works of the Renaissance and one that played an important role in the spreading of Protestant ideas.

An oration, of feigned matter, spoken by Folly in her own person:

At what rate soever the world talks of me (for I am not ignorant what an ill report Folly has got, even among the most foolish), yet that I am that she, that only she, whose deity recreates both gods and men, even this is a sufficient argument, that I no sooner stepped up to speak to this full assembly than all your faces put on a kind of new and unwonted pleasantness.¹

In the anti-Catholic passages, which are less known, some theological considerations crop up in which the character of Folly attributes to the Apostles. They had an undistinguished attitude toward Grace.

In like manner, the Apostles press to us grace; but which of them distinguishes between free grace and grace that makes a man acceptable? They exhort us to grace and yet determine not what is the work working, and what a resting in the work done.²

They are different to the kind of charity:

They incite us to charity, and yet make no difference between charity infused and charity wrought in us by our own endeavors. Nor do they declare whether it be an accident or a substance, a thing created or uncreated.³

When they speak about sin they may be inspired by whisky:

They detest and abominate sin, but let me not live if they could say what that is which we call sin, unless perhaps they were inspired by the spirit of the Scots.⁴

About that the monks and the clergy we read:

And next these come those that commonly call themselves the religious and monks, most false in both titles, when both a great part of them are farthest from religion, and no men swarm thicker in all places than themselves. Nor can I think of anything that could be more miserable did not I support them so many several ways. For whereas all men detest them to that height, that they take it for ill luck to meet one of them by chance, yet such is their happiness that they flatter themselves.⁵

Erasmus makes fun of the multitude of names to which the clergy applies to itself

another great happiness they conceive in their names, while they call themselves Cordeliers, and among these too, some are Colletes, some Minors, some Minims, some Crossed; and again, these are Benedictines, those Bernardines; these Carmelites, those Augustines; these Williamites, and those Jacobines (. . .)⁶

And yet these kind of people, though they are as it were of another commonwealth, no man dares despise, especially those begging friars, because they are privy to all men's secrets by means of confessions, as they call them.

After passing the church from an overall point of view, his characters and his nomenclature, in *Praise of Folly* Erasmus turns his attention to the figure of the Pope:

And for popes, that supply the place of Christ, if they should endeavor to imitate His life, to wit His poverty, labor, doctrine, cross, and contempt of life, or should they consider what the name pope, that is father, or holiness, imports, who would live more disconsolate than themselves? or who would purchase that chair with all his substance? or defend it, so purchased, with swords, poisons, and all force imaginable? so great a profit would the access of wisdom deprive him of — wisdom did I say? nay, the least corn of that salt which Christ speaks of: so much wealth, so much honor, so much riches, so many victories, so many offices, so many dispensations, so much tribute, so many pardons; such horses, such mules, such guards, and so much pleasure would it lose them. You see how much I have comprehended in a little: instead of which it would bring in watchings, fastings, tears, prayers, sermons, good endeavors, sighs, and a thousand the like troublesome exercises. Nor is this least considerable: so many scribes, so many copying clerks, so many notaries, so many advocates, so many promoters, so many secretaries, so many muleteers, so many grooms, so many bankers: in short, that vast multitude of men that overcharge the Roman See — I mistook, I meant honor — might beg their bread.⁷

The final comment is:

A most inhuman and economical thing, and more to be execrated, that those great princes of the Church and true lights of the world should be reduced to a staff and a wallet.

Ludovico Ariosto (8 September 1474–6 July 1533)

Ariosto is best known as the author of the romance epic *Orlando Furioso* (1516), which describes the adventures of Charlemagne, Orlando, and the Franks as they fight against the Muslims who have occupied Spain. Ariosto composed the poem in the *Ottava rima* rhyme scheme and introduced a narrative commentary throughout the work.

The earliest version appeared in 1516, although the poem was not published in its complete form until 1532. Orlando is the Christian knight known in French (and subsequently in English) as Roland. The action takes place against the background of the war between Charlemagne's Christian paladins and the Saracen army that had invaded Europe and attempted to overthrow the Christian empire. The poem is about war and love and the romantic ideal of chivalry. It mixes realism and fantasy, humor and tragedy. The stage is the entire world, plus a trip to the moon. The large cast of characters features Christians and Saracens, soldiers and sorcerers, and fantastic creatures including a gigantic sea monster called the

orc and a flying horse called the *hippogriff*. Many themes are interwoven in its complicated episodic structure, but the most important are the paladin Orlando's unrequited love for the Muslim princess Angelica, which drives him mad.

The character of Angelica was not present in *The Chanson de Roland* whose main episode is the death of Roland at Roncisvaux due to the treason of Ganelon, one of Charlemagne's army.

Orlando Furioso begins during the siege of Paris; Angelica, coveted by both Orlando and Rinaldo, is entrusted by king Charles to Namon of Bavaria with the promise of giving her in marriage to whom proves to be more valiant in defeating the Moors. But the girl manages to escape, pursued by many warriors of both sides. After some troubles, she meets a young wounded Saracen infantryman, the beautiful Medor, of whom she falls in love and with whom she escapes to Catai. Orlando, later arriving in the woods on whose trees the couple had written phrases that celebrate their love, goes mad and starts the devastation of everything he encounters on his way. The paladin, with his mind obscured by jealousy, wanders through France and Spain, then he swims across the Strait of Gibraltar. Meanwhile, the warrior Astolfo, after taming a hippogriff, flies to the moon, where he finds Orlando's lost sense in an ampoule. After crossing Africa, Astolfo gives the ampoule to Orlando to smell and after resuming his sense he returns to the combat.

The poem has never been properly read with the consideration of Angelica as not being a Christian herself. Only contemporary reading of the poet can make it a believable reality, even a notion taken for granted. Schools and scholars have always carefully avoided underlining the truth that is the result of an active intercultural experience.

The History of *Orlando furioso* by Robert Greene

The play starts when Marsilius to whom Ganelon had in *The Chanson de Roland* reported the transit of the French troupes in the Pirenees comes out of his palace to receive the princes coming from all over the world to obtain the hand of Angelica his daughter.

In Greene's play we see that substitution of places and of the characters' respective roles is of the works and plays of the Carolingian cycle. Here in fact, Marsilio is not the sultan of Saragossa as in *The Chanson de Roland* but the emperor of a non better defined Africa. He addresses the princes who have come from all over the world with the aspiration to marry his daughter Angelica.

They have come

To seek and sue for fair Angelica. Sith none
but one must have this happy prize,
At which you all have levell'd long your thoughts,
Set each man forth his passions how he can,
And let her censure make the happiest Man⁹

Orlando introduces himself saying

“I am no King, yet I am princely born,
Descended from the royal house of France,
And nephew to the mighty Charlemagne,
Surnam'd Orlando, the County Palatine.
Swift fame that sounded to our Western seas
The matchless beauty of Angelica.”

Enter ORLANDO, the DUKE OF AQUITAIN, and the COUNTY
OF ROSSILION
Therefore, drum, sound,
Enter ORLANDO, the DUKE OF AQUITAIN, and the COUNTY
OF ROSSILION
with Soldiers

Orl. Princes of France, the sparkling light of flame,
whose glory's brighten than the burnish'd gates
From whence Latona's lordly son doth march,
When, mounted on his coach tinsell'd with flames,
he triumphs in the beauty of heavens¹⁰

Orlando speaks in the exhalation of love for Angelica. He says that the difficulties that were to be encountered on the way to Marsilius' palace have not kept him back, have not hindered his way.

As far as love is concerned Orlando's true enemy and rival is Sacripant who discourages Angelica from loving him. In response to what he says, Angelica protests that her love for Orlando is printed in her thoughts in such a way as to leave no place for anything else. To which declaration Sacripant reminds her that Orlando has filled their “Afric fields” with blood.

Orlando's madness is presented with linguistic tools. The coupling of the names of Angelica and Medor that Orlando sees engraved on the cork of trees obliterates his name and that cancellation of his name develops his madness.

Not always what we have studied gives us information about who the various characters are. Who could imagine that Medor

was one of Marsilius army? Who could imagine that Angelica herself belonged to the same religious tradition.

Orlando's madness precedes that of Hamlet in its excess.

Edmund Spenser: Redcrosse, Una and the Imagination of Love

Among the most memorable pieces of world literature there is the Canto I of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* (1590) whose lines start with the figure of a Christian knight named Redcrosse riding side by side an apparently lesser female figure mounting a donkey whose name, we learn, is Una

A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine,
Ycladd in mightie armes and silver shielde,
Wherein old dints of deepe wounds did remaine,
The cruell markes of many a bloody fielde;

[. . .]

ii

But on his breast a bloudie Crosse he bore,
The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,¹¹

The woman riding beside him recalls Ariosto's (and Robert Greene's) character of Angelica:

A lovely Ladie rode him faire beside,
Upon a lowly Asse more white then snow,
30

Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide

Under a vele, that wimpled was full low,
And over all a blacke stole she did throw,
As one that inly mournd: so was she sad,
And heavie sat upon her palfrey slow;

35

Seemed in heart some hidden care she had,
And by her in a line a milke white lambe she lad.

V

So pure and innocent, as that same lambe,
She was in life and every vertuous lore,
And by descent from Royall lynage came
40

Of ancient Kings and Queenes, that had of yore
Their scepters stretcht from East to Westerne shore,
And all the world in their subjection held;
Till that infernall feend with foule uprore

Forwasted all their land, and them expeld:

45

Whom to avenge, she had this Knight ,

The lady's character main trait is an innermost sorrow due to the loss of the lands of her father's empire that she wishes recover with the help of the knight.¹²

When the occasion for sensuality occurs the signs of alienation and estrangement in which the characters are immersed are different from those represented in the lines of Ariosto (and Greene). They are the fruit of substantial separation from reality, they are caused by *sprites*, supernatural creatures sent by others, not based on jealousy but on previously conceived and imagined and kept secret sensual enjoyment.

They make themselves manifest and reach a climax under the influence of spirits (sprites) that induce love

XLVII

415

Thus well instructed, to their worke they hast,
And coming where the knight in slomber lay,
The one upon his hardy head him plast
And made him dreame of loves and lustfull play,
That nigh his manly hart did melt away,

420

Bathed in wanton blis and wicked joy:
Then seemed him his Lady by him lay,
And to him playnd, how that false winged boy,
Her chast hart had subdewd, to learne Dame Pleasures toy.

XLVIII

And she herselfe of beautie soveraigne Queene,
425

Fayre Venus seemde unto his bed to bring
Her, whom he waking evermore did weene,
To bee the chastest flowre, that ay did spring
On earthly braunch, the daughter of a king,
Now a loose Leman to vile service bound:

430

And eke the Graces seemed all to sing,
Hymen Iö Hymen dauncing all around,
Whilst freshest Flora her with Yvie girlond crownd.¹³

But before reaching this point of the story in which the stern individuality of the protagonists, both male and female, melts down

in unexpected images of love, there are intermediate lines that contain allegorical allusions to political and religious events that Edmund Spenser witnessed in his own time and for which he suffered intense embarrassment and pain. Of them and first of all, there was the advent of Protestantism in England toward which he was deeply in favour.

The exaltation of *The Fairie Queen* under the name of Gloriana corresponds to the poet's praise of the choice that England was making through the separation from the Church of Rome. But more than the discursive style of works such as Thomas Moore's that satirize Catholic Church in his *Praise of Folly*, the reader of *The Faerie Queen* is carried to the vision of natural worlds inspiring awe and fear.

Although the lady who is riding beside the Knight tries to dissuade him from entering the dark hole entrance, which they find when wondering in the forest after losing their way, when he gets in he sees on the ground an animal that is half serpent and half woman.

It laid on the dirty ground and from her there bred
a thousand young ones, which she daily fed.
After doing that, they entered her mouth and disappeared

What surprises in the members of this strange confraternity is that they by the reader will always be remembered as *black* although their colour is only once specified.

The same so sore annoyed has the knight,
That welnigh choked with the deadly stinke,
His forces faile, ne can no lenger fight.
Whose corage when the feend perceiv'd to shrink,

She poured forth out of her hellish sinke

195
Her fruitfull cursed spawne of serpents small,
Deformed monsters, fowle, and blacke as inke,
With swarming all about his legs did crall,
And him encombred sore, but could not hurt at all.

The Redcross Knight who stands for Holiness and for Reformed England, in the end succeeds in defeating and killing the loathsome animal and to proceed along the correct path.

He meets a Hermit who lives in a cave
full of books and tells his rosary. He is capable

producing Sprites.¹⁴

The Tears of the Muses Thalliah

In the poem, *The Tears of the Muses Thalliah* (1580), Edmund Spenser seems to be referring to Shakespeare, although this is something on which not all critics agree:

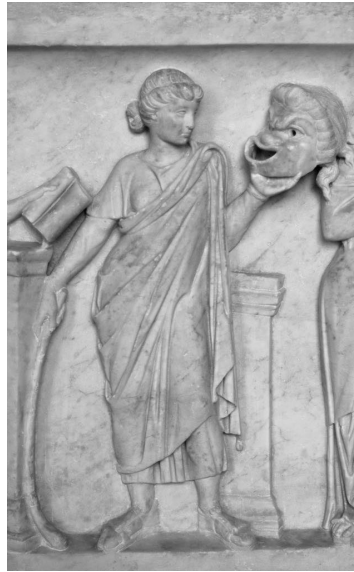
And he the Man, whom Nature self had made
To mock her self, and Truth to imitate,
With kindly Counter under Mimick Shade,
Our pleasant Willy, ah! is dead of late:
With whom all Joy and jolly Merriment
Is also deaded, and in Dolour drent.¹⁵

What makes the attribution to our eyes most uncertain is the idea that Shakespeare is by Spenser said to be dead, something impossible if we consider that he was 17 years younger than Shakespeare.

What instead would appear realistically described is contained in the line “With kindly Counter under Mimick Shade,” where Counter may indicate a cashier where the counting of money for an afternoon performance at the entrance of a theatre (Mimick) is done and Shakespeare (Willy) as an actor and shareholder of his own Company is accepting money from the perspective of the audience.

His action is seen both in the vitality and in the happiness of its results it produced.

The Muse Thalliah, as all her sisters, cries for the corruption of the times, which hinder any true creativity in the field of art.



Thalliah Muse of Comedy (Louvre)

Notes

¹Erasmus Desiderius, *Praise of Folly* (1511), The Project Gutenberg Ebook

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Robert Greene, *The History of Orlando Furioso* (London, 1594),

www.luminarium.org

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queen* (1590),

www.poetryfoundation.org

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵Edmund Spenser, *The Tears of the Muses Thalliah* (1580),

spenserians.cath.vt.edu/

APPENDIX 2

The site of New Place and the Shakespeare Gardens are situated in the centre of the town of Stratford-upon-Avon, to the east of Chapel Street and to the north of Chapel Lane and some 450m north of Holy Trinity Church.

There are around the world several other gardens that carry the name of Shakespeare. One that comes to mind is in Central Park in New York City, another is in Portland, Oregon. Differently from other gardens, the flora that was present in Shakespeare's garden has been described as prevalently English: it counts about 200 plants.

In *The Plant-Lore and Garden-Craft of Shakespeare*, Rev. Henry N. Ellacombe¹ writes in the press notices of the first edition:

It would be hard to name a better commonplace book for summer lawns . . . The lover of poetry, the lover of gardening, and the lover of quaint, out-of-the-way knowledge will each find something to please him. . . . It is a delightful example of gardening literature. —
Pall Mall Gazette

For this reason the study of the Plant-lore of Shakespeare is a very pleasant study, and there are other things that add to this pleasure. One special pleasure arises from the English character of his descriptions. It has often been observed that wherever the scenes of his plays are laid and whatever foreign characters he introduces, they really are all Englishmen of the time of Elizabeth, and the scenes are all drawn from the England of his day. This is certainly true of the plants and flowers used in the plays; they are thoroughly English plants that (with very few exceptions) he saw in the hedgerows and woods of Warwickshire.

The consideration of Shakespeare's garden is probably the most eloquent sign of the fact that Shakespeare, not the actor but the author, was a man from Stratford who was inspired by a book that was common in his time and produced something that only one living in a village could produce. He had that concentration, a passion that only physically limited horizons would produce.

By contrast, it may be interesting to present 21 plants exhibited at a recent Festival of Science at Villa Muscas in Cagliari. They belong to a Sardinian natural milieu, the so-called *Flora Mediterranea* and reminds one of Grazia Deledda's (Nobel Prize 1936) narratives. The plants are: myrtle, mastic, viburnum, rosemary, strawberry trees, buckthorn, phillyrea, angustifolia, thyme, heli-

chrysum, mint, lavender, common sage, catnip, laurel, carob, olive, Phoenician juniper, juniperus oxycedrus, pine, Aleppo pine, cork oak, holm oak, and downy oak. Those among them that are present in Shakespeare are myrtle, rosemary, thyme, mint, lavender, laurel, olive, pine, and cork. They have all Latin names. They are mostly ubiquitous.

Notes

¹Ellacombe Rev. Henry Nicholson *The Plant-Lore and Garden-Craft of Shakespeare* (London, 1896).

APPENDIX 3

Let's run through five of the eight contexts created by TAPoR¹ for the term *Mamillius*. They refer to the relationship between king Leontes and his son:

O, that is entertainment
My bosom likes not, nor my brows! Mamillius,
Art thou my boy?
MAMILLIUS: Ay, my good lord.

How now, you wanton calf! Art thou my calf?
MAMILLIUS: Yes, if you will, my lord.

to this kernel,
This squash, this gentleman. Mine honest friend,
Will you take eggs for money?
MAMILLIUS: No, my lord, I'll fight.

LEONTES: It will let in and out the enemy
With bag and baggage: many thousand on's
Have the disease, and feel't not. How now, boy?
MAMILLIUS: I am like you, they say.

LEONTES: Why that's some comfort. What, Camillo there?
CAMILLO: Ay, my good lord.
LEONTES: Go play, Mamillius; thou'rt an honest man.
[Exit MAMILLIUS]²

The child Mamillius, who was initially rudely rejected by his mother, is now rejected by his father. The contexts highlighted by TAPoR help formulate the sequence of the rejections the child must undergo. Among the main reasons for it there are his mother's resentment and the jealous thoughts that the king of Sicily nourishes toward his wife. Although Mamillius is his own son, half the blood of his hated wife flows in his veins.

Notes

¹The Text Analysis Portal for Research project, commonly referred as TAPoR, consists of a network of six of the leading Humanities computing centres in Canada: McMaster University, University of Victoria (in collaboration with Malaspina UC), University of Alberta, University of Toronto, Université de Montréal and University of New Brunswick.

²William Shakespeare, *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

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“I really admire your poetic sensibility and your ability of being both a scholar and a writer”

Sau-ling Wong

“Ciò che colpisce nei testi di Lina Unali...è la capacità di comprendere e interagire con successo in qualsiasi contesto linguistico e culturale”.

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