

A DANCING OF ATTITUDES:
BURKE'S RHETORIC ON SHAKESPEARE

By

STEPHEN CHARLES ROWAN

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Department of English

The University of British Columbia
1956 Main Mall
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1Y3

Date September 18, 1985

ABSTRACT

Since F.S. Boas coined the term in 1896, All's Well That Ends Well, Troilus and Cressida, and Measure For Measure have been generally accepted as "problem plays," and many critics have offered biographical, thematic, and formal explanations of why these plays are so "dark."

In this thesis, I accept that these plays are "problems" and I propose a rhetorical explanation for dissatisfaction with them, especially with their endings. Drawing on Kenneth Burke's philosophy of literary form and his anthropology of man as the symbol-using animal, I show that in these plays Shakespeare frustrates the expectations of an audience for a definite ending through death or marriage which would define the "terms" characterized in each play; secondly, he provides no scapegoat whose victimage would allow the audience to recognize an order clearly proposed for its acceptance; finally, he supplies no symbol of order which credibly demonstrates its power to establish a renewed society.

As rhetoric, these plays show an intense "dancing of attitudes" toward symbols of order and toward conventional forms which would provide a clear sense of an ending. As such, they show what Burke calls "self-interference" on the part of the playwright -- a deliberate balancing of arguments for the sake of "quizzicality" toward language as symbolic action.

According to this analysis, the problem plays remain problems for an audience which seeks identification with symbols of order; they are, however, a tribute to the agile mind of a master rhetorician.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....1
 SMALL LATINE, LESSE GREEKE, BUT MUCH RHETORIC.....7

II. BURKE'S RHETORIC: LANGUAGE AS SYMBOLIC ACTION.....17
 LITERATURE AS A DEFINITION OF TERMS.....23
 CRITICISM AS CONVERSATION: TWO REJOINDERS TO BURKE.....30
 FORM AND MEANING.....37
 A RHETORICAL ANTHROPOLOGY.....43
 SHAKESPEARE AS RHETORICIAN.....46

III. ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.....54
 THE AMBIGUOUS VALUE OF HONOR IN WAR.....56
 THE AMBIGUOUS VALUE OF HELENA.....62
 THE ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH CERTAIN VALUE.....75
 THE CLOWN'S PERSPECTIVE.....82
 THE AMBIGUITY OF THE ENDING OR ALL SEEMS WELL.....85

IV. TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.....97
 "WHAT A PAIR OF SPECTACLES IS HERE!".....99
 THE GREEKS IN COUNCIL: THE FACTION OF FOOLS.....107
 THERSITES: A PRIVILEGED MAN.....112
 HELEN: A THEME OF HONOR AND RENOWN?.....119
 A GORY EMULATION.....123

V. MEASURE FOR MEASURE.....128
 ANGELO AND ISABELLA: A FIERCE DISPUTE.....129
 THE FRAILTY OF OUR POWERS.....134
 THE COMIC SUB-PLOT: I HOPE HERE BE TRUTHS.....142
 HIS GRACE THE DUKE: LIKE PROVIDENCE DIVINE?.....147

LUCIO: AN "INWARD" OF THE DUKE.....153
THE CONCLUSION: THIS LOOKS NOT LIKE A NUPTIAL.....157
VI. LOOKING BEFORE AND AFTER.....163
 THIS, THEN, IS THE PRAISE OF SHAKESPEARE.....171
 IS THIS THE PROMISED END?.....178
 IMAGINARY GARDENS AND REAL TOADS.....183
VII. ENDNOTES.....189
VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....205

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I. INTRODUCTION

Most critics have sensed some kinship among the plays of Shakespeare's "middle period" (from approximately 1600-1604) and have tried to define their distinguishing quality in order to appreciate better the nature of Shakespeare's style, ways of thinking, and craftsmanship. Since Frederick Boas first coined the term "problem play" in 1896, and included Hamlet, All's Well, Measure for Measure, and Troilus and Cressida in the grouping, the term has been applied to various plays.

Most critics include All's Well, Measure for Measure, and Troilus and Cressida in the category, while either retaining Hamlet (Tillyard), omitting it (Lawrence, Rossiter) or replacing it with another candidate (Doran). It seems, then, that a consensus exists concerning at least three plays to be retained from Boas's list and to be included in the "problem" grouping.

The criteria for determining a "problem play" or "dark comedy" (E.K.Chambers) were enunciated by Boas and may be distinguished as moral or thematic and structural. For Boas, the moral concern in these plays is with unbridled passions erupting in societies "ripe unto rottenness" and with cases of conscience solved by "unprecedented" methods; the structural awkwardness is related to the "unprecedented" methods: the massive weight of issues, according to Boas, is not sustained by the framework of the plot, and therefore a satisfactory ending is precluded.¹

Succeeding critics have not improved much on Boas's definition. The criteria for this grouping remain moral or thematic and structural difficulties. So, for example, W.W. Lawrence (who argues, in fact, against these plays as problems) points initially to their exploration of the darker complexities of human nature which is too analytic for comedy and too light

for tragedy; Tillyard notes that dogma and abstract speculation are seriously treated but are not absorbed well into the action; and Rossiter suggests that generalizations on the theme of man's tragi-comic "shiftingness" are treated with a seriousness that is unexpected in comedy and may even be incongruous with it.²

Structurally, the problems are likewise viewed as Boas saw them and mostly concern a putative mismanagement of effect toward the ending of the plays. So, for example, the tragic mood is without tragic issue (Lawrence); a "grand finale" of forgiveness is "engineered" after time is merely filled in between a dramatic climax at mid-play and the conclusion (Tillyard); the problems are realistically viewed, but the endings are not; that is, they neither issue in tragedy where expected (as in Troilus and Cressida) nor in the conventionally happy ending of comedy (Doran). The structure of the plays is also confused throughout by a mingling or even clashing of conventions, as when romance conventions are examined with unsparing realism (Lawrence).³

For some critics, two of these plays at least are not a problem at all. Morally or thematically they may be interpreted as allegories of mankind's moral education or redemption (for example, G.Wilson Knight and R.W.Chambers on Measure and G.K.Hunter on All's Well); structurally, they can be defended as comic because they employ conventions of fairy tale and folklore that would be well understood as "pointers" to an Elizabethan audience (Lawrence) or because they exhibit the comic framework and are therefore to be taken as such (Frye).⁴

Ernest Schanzer is an exception to the foregoing discussion because he argues for a different definition of a problem play. Dissatisfied with the critical thinking on these plays which does not, he believes, distinguish them sufficiently from the theme and mood of other plays in the canon, and looking

for a grouping that will offer clearer insight by suggesting unique affinities among the plays included, Schanzer offers his own definition. A problem play is one "in which we find a concern with a moral problem which is central to it, presented in such a manner that we are unsure of our moral bearings, so that uncertain and divided responses to it in the minds of the audience are possible or even probable."⁵ Using these criteria, Schanzer suggests that only Julius Caesar, Measure for Measure, and Antony and Cleopatra qualify as problem plays.

Schanzer's criteria are not entirely satisfactory, however. They do not, for example, create a unique grouping after all, as can be seen when Patrick Murray, who accepts Schanzer's definition, proceeds to extend the list of Schanzer's candidates for the grouping to include Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida, and All's Well.⁶ Besides, why should the "problem" with a play be limited to a moral one? What about the "existential" problem of how to respond to Lear's death, the attractiveness of Macbeth's evil, or the fate of Coriolanus? More to the point, how brush aside the many structural difficulties with Troilus, All's Well, and Measure which have troubled many critics?

Most critics, it seems, have not accepted Schanzer's definition or revised grouping, nor have they been persuaded by those for whom the usual problem plays are not, for some reason, a problem. In much the same way that Boas delineated the problems, recent critics continue to point to the thematic and structural difficulties which make some kind of grouping out of the plays analyzed in this thesis.

For example, Philip Edwards, echoing Ellis-Fermor, calls Troilus and Cressida "anti-art" and suggests that it may be Shakespeare's expression of doubt about the power of form to shape experience. Since incoherence is the

"matter" of the play, form is refused. Likewise, in All's Well and Measure for Measure Shakespeare attempts to deepen comedy by giving it real wounds to heal, but he discovers that the form of comedy cannot be made to manipulate some materials into a redemptive conclusion.⁷

Like Edwards, other critics suggest that the problem lies with Shakespeare's ambivalence about romance conventions which he had always found congenial. For Howard Felperin, Troilus, All's Well, and Measure show a new ambivalence toward the romance mode, also evident in Hamlet, Julius Caesar, and Henry V. On all sides, the romantic imagination is "subjected...to unprecedented stresses" as Shakespeare faces up to the recalcitrance of humanity in the face of easy solutions.⁸ According to E.C. Pettet, Shakespeare abandons romance in All's Well, recoils from it in Troilus, and shows cynicism about it in Measure. His mind, it seems, is drawn to evil in preparation for the writing of the tragedies, while his artistic habits draw him back to the conventional romance ending. The vehicle cannot contain the tenor of "the sensibility, thought, and vision that were soon to be expressed in the great tragedies."⁹

Finally, R.S. White, commenting only on All's Well and Measure, also argues a problem. For him, they mark a temporary withdrawal from romance as Shakespeare experiments with the potentially endless ending of that mode. Knowing that in "naive romance" such as Sidney's New Arcadia one adventure follows as soon as another finishes, Shakespeare, it seems, is struggling with how to end in a way that explicitly acknowledges the oscillating rhythms of romance. He continues in the problem plays the "disquieting hint" at the end of Twelfth Night, that as much is excluded from the festive spirit of a comic ending as is included in it, and he

presents the action in such a way that we become conscious of the elements of manipulation, and even a hint of tyranny, in the

imposition of the comic ending upon a potentially endless presentation of people's fictional lives...The plays would be more conventional, less worrying, if the author did not seem so clearly aware of the nature of such manipulation. His somewhat frustrating sense that the potentially endless narrative must somehow be formally concluded reveals itself in different ways in each play, and implies a more transparently sceptical attitude towards the happy ending.¹¹

Echoing the thoughts of Frank Kermode on Shakespeare's Sense of an Ending (that he sensed it as an arbitrary interruption of a continuum of experience) this analysis also reflects the artist's struggle as Paul deMan has articulated it in Blindness and Insight: how to communicate "the experience of time." Through irony (a synchronic structure), a writer will portray the "differences" or conflicting claims and disjunctions of the moment; through allegory (a successive mode), a writer will spread out those differences through "an ideal time that is never here and now but always a past or an endless future." In both modes, the writer is aware of qualifications to full knowledge or to a never-ending duration of experience which arise because of living in time. Shakespeare's struggle, then, is the struggle of every writer: how to formulate attitudes toward experience in such a way that he preserves the sense of the "authentic experience of temporality," "the predicament of the conscious subject," and "the unwillingness of the mind to accept any stage in its progression as definitive, since this would stop...its 'infinite agility'."¹⁰

The problem plays are especially deliberate experiments, I suggest, with how to incorporate "recalcitrant," potentially tragic, developments into a form which presents either a stalemate or an ostensibly happy ending, along with the conviction that the ending has concluded nothing. In these plays there are no satisfactory marriages or worthy deaths; rhetorically, there is no merger or division of terms with which an audience can identify. Shakespeare's plays usually provide one or the other, taking a comic or tragic

route to a definition of terms. However, in the problem plays, there is an unrelieved presentation of serious issues, resulting in neither of the conventional kinds of transformation a playwright usually provides through death or marriage.

Shakespeare seems to be deliberately frustrating his audience's expectations of a conventional ending, perhaps to make it aware of the ambiguities of the issues presented and to make it question its yearning for decisive solutions. Of course, Shakespeare has qualified his issues earlier: contrasting Jaques with Arden, for example, Malvolio with Illyria, Shylock with Belmont, and Falstaff with heroic kingship. But the problem plays appear at the "bottleneck" of Shakespeare's dramatic development and seem to mark some kind of intense experiment with themes and forms he has used earlier while working his way into the tragedies and romances. His arguing is more even-handed, allowing neither an easy acceptance of a final order nor even a clear indication that the order presented is intended to be acceptable.

For reasons that will be obvious both at the end of this introduction and in the course of the next chapter, I believe that the rhetorical criticism of Kenneth Burke will prove especially helpful for understanding the problem of the problem plays. Both his philosophy of literary form and his rhetoric of identification between author and audience provide a means to analyze how ambiguities are presented in plays, how the audience expects to overcome "ironic impasse" by the presentation of some motive for action, and how it is bound to be frustrated when no such convincing motive or symbol of order is provided. Before attending to Burke's rhetoric, however, a brief survey of rhetorical theory in the Renaissance will clarify some assumptions about meaning and communication commonly held by rhetoricians now and then and will

show how Burke's philosophy of literary form differs, as a rhetorical theory of literature, from more narrow definitions of the province and methods of rhetoric.

SMALL LATINE, LESSE GREEKE, BUT MUCH RHETORIC

In his classic study of William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke (1944), T.W.Baldwin reconstructs the curriculum of studies Shakespeare would probably have undergone if he did, in fact, attend the Edward VI Grammar School in Stratford-Upon-Avon. Baldwin argues that numerous correspondences can be found between authors Shakespeare would have studied (Ovid, for example) and references in the plays; likewise, he shows how a training in rhetoric would have made Shakespeare familiar not only with a disputatious style of arguing opinions (guided by Erasmus's De Copia) but also with numerous tropes and figures which would help him to present these arguments effectively.

Even if Shakespeare had never attended Stratford's Grammar school, Baldwin's study documents the pervasive training in rhetoric to which every school boy was submitted in order to prepare him for public life. Since Shakespeare's plays show close familiarity with this training, it is reasonable to assume that he acquired knowledge of it somehow, either directly or through conversation with those who had it.

Shakespeare's "exposure" to rhetoric, then, is not in question. Rather, it is necessary to ascertain the effect of this exposure on his plays. What was the commonly taught conception of rhetoric and how is that related to Shakespeare's poetics? Moreover, how are these conceptions related to Kenneth Burke's rhetoric which I will be using to analyze the problem plays?

The Renaissance conception of rhetoric is in no way uniform since its very content was the subject of technical, in-house disputes. Cicero had denominated five "offices" of rhetoric: invention, disposition, elocution, memory, and delivery. The traditional rhetoricians, carrying on the Ciceronian and medieval inheritance, included the "invention" of arguments and their "disposition" within the province of rhetoric. They recognized, with Aristotle, that rhetoric had its counterpart in dialectic, from which it borrowed "proofs," but that it also used "probable" proofs drawn from certain commonplaces or "topoi" that would provide matter for argument.

The reformers of rhetoric in the Renaissance, led by Peter Ramus, proposed to separate invention and disposition from rhetoric, to include these offices under dialectic alone, and to leave for rhetoric the office of elocution -- that is, dressing up ideas with fit "ornaments" and with a "garment of style." Ramus always assumed that in his system a student would study both dialectic and rhetoric; he merely wanted to reduce duplication of offices.¹²

At question in this dispute is the degree to which rhetoric is a way of knowing. To the reformers, it was merely a way of expressing effectively what had to be known in the more rigorous but surer discipline of dialectics. To the traditionalists, however, rhetoric was concerned with finding arguments as well as with setting them forth. Through rhetoric, one could come to know as much as might be known by common assent to arguments drawn from the commonplaces of probable opinions. These in-house differences, however, should not obscure the crucial point of agreement: to some extent all recognized rhetoric's important role as the communicator of ideas, either its own or those found by dialectics.

The textbook Renaissance emphasis on rhetoric as a way of knowing must supplement any study of the effectiveness of tropes and figures in order to appreciate the full range of rhetorical thinking at work in Renaissance literature. Among others, Joel B. Altman's, The Tudor Play of Mind is an example of just such a broader view. Altman shows how a training in rhetoric taught both students and playwrights how to argue opposites ("in utramque partem") when they wrote and this helps to explain the multiple points of view on any topic usually encountered in Renaissance drama. On the other hand, Sr. Miriam Joseph's classic study on Rhetoric in Shakespeare's Time and Brian Vickers's Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry concentrate so well and so much on the tropes and figures of rhetoric that they can mislead a person into taking for the whole of Renaissance rhetoric what was only, at least for Ciceronians, a part of it -- elocution.¹³

Kenneth Burke, too, recognizes the tropes and figures as persuasive forms of speech. That is, figures like "antithesis" and "gradatio" do more than decorate an idea that could have been expressed just as well without them. Rather, they carry the hearer along with the speaker because by satisfying the hearer's sense of form they help to transfer acceptance of the figure to acceptance of the argument. The figures, as Longinus said, by adding "energy" transport the hearer to agreement through ecstasy: an audience under the influence of the figures will leave its own thoughts behind and identify with the speaker's.¹⁴ For Burke, the tropes and figures are undeniably important to the rhetorician; they are, according to Puttenham's submerged analogy, like a general's plan of war, employed strategically to overcome the opposition.¹⁵ However, they are not the whole of rhetoric. Burke calls the tropes and figures "minor forms," which will have persuasive effect only within an argument set up, as Aristotle prescribed, by the use of other kinds of "proof." Burke's rhetoric, then, is concerned with more than

figures of speech; it agrees with the traditionalists in regarding rhetoric as a way of knowing or at least of coming to agree about what speaker and audience think that they know.

Burke goes further than the traditionalists, however, by including literature or fiction as a kind of rhetoric. He mentions that the literary forms which he calls "conventional," "progressive," and "repetitive" work as a kind of argument, persuading an audience to accept the outcome of their development as a true account of a situation. The major forms work like the minor forms by setting up an audience's expectations and then satisfying them, thus leading it to transfer satisfaction with the form to satisfaction with the "argument."

Burke's expansion of the realm of rhetoric into literature has met with objection from other rhetoricians, like Wilbur S. Howell, who want to maintain a strict distinction between rhetoric and poetics: that is, between language directly addressed to an audience (non-mimetic) and language addressed to an audience through a fable or fiction (mimetic).¹⁶ Brian Vickers seems to share this view when he ponders the problem of how rhetoric (that is, the minor forms) can be useful for explaining the movement of an entire play. As he says:

The problem facing rhetoric studies, especially in drama, is how to move from micro-texts -- the presence and functioning of rhetoric at the levels of word, phrase, sentence, even whole speeches -- to macro-texts, the overall structures or patterns within plays. One can trace the rhetorical form of a speech by Berowne, or Brutus, or Ulysses, but when it comes to describing plot, lexis has to yield to mythos. Aristotle's Rhetoric must give way to his Poetics. Rhetoric seems to have a cut-off point beyond which it cannot be taken as an analytical tool, or if so only in increasingly generalized forms.¹⁷

Howell maintains that Renaissance theorists knew very well that the "two literatures" differed, if not in aim (which in both cases is to persuade) at

least in method. Burke's rejoinder is that he cannot accept the need to draw such a hard and artificial line. Everyone agrees that Renaissance literary theory emphasized the didactic function of literature, and everyone agrees that the poet freely borrowed from rhetoric at least the "energy" of its tropes and figures. What Burke has done is to revise the notion of rhetoric so that it includes both non-mimetic and mimetic writing. Along with Howell and Renaissance theorists, then, Burke accepts that the fable persuades; however, in his philosophy of literary form he goes further and attempts to show how it does so.¹⁷

Of course, the idea that literature "persuades" in any way meets resistance from those who regard a work of art as free of "interest" or "profit" of any kind. Aesthetic theories that suspect didacticism, ideology, or paraphrase of any kind as necessarily partisan distortions of experience focus attention on the structure of a work itself as a "reconciliation of opposites" (Coleridge) or a balancing of tensions (Richards) and not on the artist or the audience as communicating anything through the structure. To this aesthetic, the emphasis on didacticism in Renaissance theory seems puzzling if not perverse, and a woeful misreading of the best drama and poetry which flourished all around it.

In my use of rhetorical analysis, I hope to show that a subtle appreciation of a work's form and texture need not detract from the artist's communication of something about experience that concerns both him and his audience. I assume, however, that this "something" is not reducible to a thematic paraphrase, nor that it is separable from the form through which it is communicated. Granted, some literature can seem like blatant propaganda, like Gorboduc, for example. Other literature seems to ask explicitly that we take it that way -- as a justification of the ways of God to man, perhaps, or as a warning to "the wise/ Only to wonder at unlawful things,/ Whose deepness

doth entice such forward wits/ To practice more than heavenly power permits" (Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, Epilogue). But Burke believes that a literary presentation of such issues -- especially a dramatic one -- is inescapably more subtle than what appears as the obvious moral.

To put it simply, every protagonist needs an antagonist for the staging of a drama, just as God needs Satan in Paradise Lost before the action can begin. The characters are ironically defined by one another. In the course of their combat, one will win and the other will lose, with an audience's interest in the outcome all the keener to the extent that the contest could go either way, or to the extent that the struggle has been intense. Also, every drama includes a "tragic ambiguity": although one character is necessarily expelled or killed off because the action requires it, that same character has been required for the dramatic enactment in the first place. Iago is before he is "right" or "wrong," and he will always be, even if he must always be denied.

Now, instead of "characters," substitute "attitudes" or "terms" for understanding some extra-textual situation, and it is obvious how an audience can divide in its response to the conflict. It may cheer or hiss the victory at the close depending upon its identification with the characters who uphold the order established at the end. As my analysis of Burke's rhetoric will make clear, the characters in a drama are not allegories of ideas. What they "represent" must be ascertained by as thorough an "indexing" as possible of their "stance": they are agents who act within a certain context, with certain purposes and means of acting. But as the interaction of these characters in the course of the drama begins to show who will win and who will lose, an audience will "agree" to the outcome only to the extent that they agree with the "terms" themselves and how they end up.

As a rhetorician, Burke recognizes that tragic ambiguity -- obvious as it is -- cannot for long prevent some kind of action, and as the playwright "votes" for one action over another, he invites the audience to accept or to reject his expression or arguing of the issue. Shakespeare, of course, is more subtle than most playwrights and votes, so to speak, by secret ballot. It is impossible to do more than guess what he himself thought of the winners and the losers in his plays because the chameleon poet expressed every shade of opinion as forcibly as possible and with negative capability opened his mind to many arguments. The fact that Julius Caesar contains simultaneously and cogently the views of Caesar/Marc Antony and the views of Brutus/Cassius on the value of "Caesarism" makes it, to some, primarily the tragedy of Caesar and, to others, primarily the tragedy of Brutus. Obviously, the play does not change, only the verdict of the majority of the audience will differ, depending on what it thinks of how the play has ended up.

Burke's rhetoric, then, like the best of Renaissance poetics, assumes both a purpose for which the poet writes and a well-argued presentation of that purpose. What separates the best of poetry from narrow didacticism is the poet's comprehensive, sophisticated and well-formed vision of an order or attitude toward experience which satisfies the united faculties of mind, emotions, and imagination. As Rosemond Tuve has explained it, the didactic theory of Renaissance poetics assumes (bluntly) that poetry teaches; it appeals to the mind as well as to the other faculties because it believes that the "contemplating intellect" can "apprehend the true nature of things." Poetry teaches in the sense that it communicates "a hitherto unperceived rationally apprehensible order," and Tuve emphasizes that a "rational" apprehension is not confined to the intellect: it requires the interaction of all the faculties.¹⁸

Writing in 1947, Tuve seems especially sensitive to "modern" (New Critical) objections against didactic intentions in poetry while, at the same time, she tries to explicate the undeniable bias toward didacticism in Renaissance theory. To that end, she makes a helpful distinction, I think, between a poem's "subject" or the poet's purpose for writing, and the content of the poem -- what gets said on behalf of the purpose. The "teaching" is the purpose as it is embodied in the form. Tuve's distinctions coincide with Burke's theory of how literary forms argue for an attitude which, the poet believes, will "encompass" a situation; the attitude to be taken or the order to be upheld would be the purpose for writing; the formal presentation would be the "inventions" of the poet's imagination. Tuve's remarks should, I think, be quoted at length:

...one cannot pick out in it [Wilson's Arte of Rhetorique] the ordinary modern notion of some content as the purpose of a piece, or of a 'subject matter' (didactically important) divisible from the form (didactically negligible).

To what is the matter 'apt'? What does the distinction between 'matter' and 'purpose', made several times, mean -- if not that the directing conception determines my selection of things true and likely as well as my way of 'commending' or making impressive those things? How can words and sentences (probably figures of words and figures of thought) confirm the cause, unless the process is one of fit incarnation of an intention, just as I have suited my matter to my purpose by the way I have ordered it? I do not beautify my style; I beautify the cause. I do not start out with my matter; I find it.

...I believe that the root of much modern critical dissatisfaction with the didactic theory of poetry is its supposed identification of content with purpose -- and I do not think that the Renaissance made this identification. Many of our quarrels with didactic poems turn out to be quarrels not with the poet's aim but with the subject matter and devices through which he has made his aim apparent -- and no element in poetry is so subject to the changing fashions of different times as the first of these."¹⁹

If Tuve is right, then the praise of Shakespeare for what he has to teach us does not imply praise of his abstractable precepts; rather, it implies praise

for the thoroughness of his invention -- for the way he has fully argued divergent attitudes toward a subject so that we can understand its complexity more clearly, even if we do not accept the ostensibly proposed order. This, certainly, is the way Kenneth Burke sees Shakespeare: as a dialectician who could see the "quality of the action by views from various angles," and who could excel so many others in his ability to marshal all available arguments, even if he "votes" in the end for one over another.²⁰

This concept of rhetoric is not didactic, then, in a narrow sense. Rather, it assumes that an artist needs to build agreements with his audience, starting with premises it will accept and moving it through various mergers and divisions until the conclusion is, as far as possible, acceptable to most, if not to all. It is this concept of rhetoric that I expect will be helpful for analyzing the problem with the problem plays. If, in fact, an audience needs to "identify" with a rationally comprehensible order, and if it expects to do so at the end of a play, and if the artist prevents it from doing that, will there not be a problem? What if Shakespeare is trying to communicate the "idea of disjunction" in the problem plays, as Ellis-Fermor suggests in relation to Troilus and Cressida? Will he not have to use every rhetorical means at his disposal to convince the audience that its urge to indulge a conventional response is mistaken?

I believe that Burke's philosophy of literary form and his rhetoric offer a flexible and fruitful way of explaining what is happening in three of Shakespeare's most troubling plays as well as in others throughout the canon. Therefore, after an explanation of Burke's critical method, I will analyze All's Well That Ends Well, Troilus and Cressida, and Measure for Measure, and I will conclude with suggestions for distinguishing these plays from the tragedies and the romances which follow them.

The order in which I study the plays is strategic and does not imply a decision about their dating. Since Troilus is the "darkest" of the three, I have put it in the middle, using it as a contrast to the others whose romance motifs lighten the troubling tone but do not completely relieve it. One may glimpse a ray of hope or imagine that there is light at the close of All's Well and Measure, but according to this analysis, one is still in the tunnel.

II. BURKE'S RHETORIC: LANGUAGE AS SYMBOLIC ACTION

Kenneth Burke's essay on Adolf Hitler's "word magic" in Mein Kampf provides a starting point for a clear understanding of Burke's rhetoric as "symbolic action." According to Burke, the purpose of rhetoric is to persuade an audience to change its attitude or stance toward some tension in its situation through identification with those symbols of a new identity presented by the speaker. The new identity is welcomed in direct proportion to an audience's dissatisfaction with its lack of identity or its inability to act purposefully with others in the present context.

Writing his analysis of "The Rhetoric of Hilter's Battle" in the summer of 1939, Burke welcomed the unexpurgated edition of Hitler's book not only as a chance to study the tactics of a master rhetorician who provided identity for a people, but also to defuse the sinister effects of those tactics by exposing them to a quizzical analysis. Since the results of this study are applicable to any use of language as symbolic action, they will help to explain to some extent the "problem" of the problem plays. If, as Burke maintains, an audience expects a "persuasion to change" by attending to an author's symbolic action and yet is prevented from doing so, there will be problems for the audience stemming from a frustration of formal expectations and anthropological needs.

For Burke, Hitler's rhetoric is effective precisely because he provides a clear symbol of a new order which will redeem his audience from the burdens of its historical condition. Hitler's rhetoric works because it is "the bastardization of fundamentally religious patterns of thought" (PLF, p.219);¹ that is, as a "salvation device," it draws upon ways of thinking which appeal to deeply grounded human needs for purpose, fellowship, and freedom. However,

as Burke goes on to show, Hitler's rhetoric is sinister and ultimately ineffective because it bastardizes these religious patterns of thought, applying them in "illegitimate" ways.

Hitler's "medicine" (or "snakeoil," to be more exact) was his prescription for the conditions of post-war Germany. The context of situation was a breakdown of the capitalist economy in a world-wide depression, wounded national pride after defeat in war, and a "babel" of voices at the center of the "tottering Hapsburg Empire," all of them urging reform and preventing it at the same time by their wrangling. Hitler equated Vienna, the capital of the former empire, with "poverty, prostitution, immorality, coalitions, half-measures, incest, democracy (i.e., majority rule leading to 'lack of personal responsibility') death, internationalism, seduction, and anything else of thumbs-down sort the associative enterprise cared to add on this side of the balance" (PLF, p.200).

Using ideas just as a poet uses images, Hitler characterized Vienna as the city from which his audience obviously needed to move, figuratively speaking, if it wanted to transcend its present troubles. The new city was to be Munich, the headquarters for the Nazi party, the perfect setting for Hitler's philosophy of an Aryan race with inborn dignity of blood and the center of vituperation against the common enemy, the "international Jew" whose blood would "pollute" the Aryan if mixed with it. Hitler deliberately chose one enemy against which to direct his attacks, because, as he acknowledges himself, it makes thinking easier and casts less doubt on the strength of one's own position if objections to it come from only one direction.

The Jew was "defined," then, as the "devil" and the rival male to the strong leader, wooing the masses (conceived in feminine terms) away from the leader's one voice. His aim was to seduce the "folk" into following ideas

(like democracy) that would drag them back into the burdensome conditions under which they had suffered. For Hitler, the Jew was to be a scapegoat, on whose back the Aryan could load the detested burdens of his own situation (the failure of his own economy, the ignominy of his own wounded pride) in order to expel them and thus to purify his own identity as one no longer burdened or polluted.

Burke's analysis clearly shows the poetic way in which Hitler's rhetoric works: first, by making mergers among some ideas and divisions between others; so, for example, the equations for Vienna, already mentioned, merge to identify that city as the fit setting for the common enemy; Munich, on the other hand, is distinguished from Vienna by a different set of equations. It is identified with Hitler's inner voice, leader-people identification, unity, Reich, plow, sword, work, war, army, responsibility, sacrifice, idealism, obedience to nature, race, and nation. "And, of course, the two keystones of these opposite equations were Aryan 'heroism' and 'sacrifice' vs. Jewish 'cunning' and 'arrogance'" (PLF, pp. 207-208).

Next, Hitler pits one term against the other as rivals and then points the "arrows of expectation" toward having to expel the one in order to save the other. By drawing upon the commonly accepted values of his audience toward sexuality, Hitler points the arrows in the direction of the Jew by identifying him as a rival male and hence as a "pollutant" like syphilis, prostitution, or incest. The message is clear: in order to preserve the "inborn dignity" -- blood purity -- of the superior race (with which Hitler's audience is invited to identify itself), the inferior races must be expelled.

Burke's incisive critique of Hitler's rhetoric also points out that much of its power derives from its sincerity. Hitler is offering to others a "salvation device" which had proved successful for himself when his first

formulations of a political philosophy in Vienna had met with attack from Bolshevist rivals. Hitler had discovered hate as a way out and took it to the end of the line. Mein Kampf is Hitler's battle, as Burke tries to emphasize by the title for his essay, and although Hitler's plans may be dismissed as irrational, they worked precisely because they were presented in the name of reason and in a form which caricatures a religious way of thinking.

In a shrewd distinction, Burke points out that Mein Kampf is "the bad filling of a good need" (PLF, p.218). "The yearning for unity," he says, "is so great that people are always willing to meet you halfway if you will give it to them by fiat, by flat statement, regardless of the facts" (PLF, p.205). Hitler's rhetoric is "bad," however, not only because it is literally murderous, but because it solves nothing; it provides a noneconomic interpretation for burdens which are economically engendered. By making a scapegoat of the Jew as the advocate of "bad capitalism," Hitler allows the Aryans to continue the same economic practices which had brought about the depression in the first place. Instead of getting his audience to recognize the babel of voices within themselves and to sort them out there before taking action, Hitler simplifies the thinking of his audience by encouraging them to project the cause of their burdens elsewhere and to purify themselves by killing off what is supposedly not themselves.

Burke's solution for Hitler's word magic is as ingenious as his analysis. Since we cannot change the way rhetoric works, he argues, we (in 1939) should take a lesson from Hitler's masterful, sinister use of it and make of Hitler the scapegoat. In that way, people will be motivated first to defeat Hitler's fascism and then, once the outside danger to democracy is removed, to extirpate those elements of fascism which threaten democracy from within. "Our job, then," says Burke, "our anti-Hitler Battle, is to find all available ways of making the Hitlerite distortions of religion apparent, in

order that politicians of his kind in America be unable to perform a similar swindle. The desire for unity is genuine and admirable. The desire for national unity, in the present state of the world, is genuine and admirable. But this unity, if attained on a deceptive basis, by emotional trickeries that shift our criticism from the accurate locus of our trouble, is no unity at all" (PLF, p.219).

As Burke has analyzed it, then, Hitler's use of rhetoric is a "salvation device," synonymous with "medicine," with "equipment for living," and with a "ritual of rebirth" that uses a religious way of thinking to help a people transform their sense of identity from that of a people damned to that of a people saved. Hitler's success comes not from the content of his mergers -- which falls apart under analysis -- but from the fact that his message is used to "fill in" a pattern of thinking which satisfies an audience by a ritual or formal kind of progression.

According to Burke, every use of symbols works, in effect, for the same end: to persuade people to change through identification with a term which is equated with the way out of a present predicament and which proves its potency by surviving a contest with rival terms or other explanations for the same predicament. Every act of persuasion is, so to speak, a local and ritual reenactment of a religious way of thinking employed, for example, in the "combat myth" in which one term (or god or power) struggles with its rival for mastery over the allegiances of a people.

Commenting on Python, A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins by Joseph Fontenrose, Burke applauds the anthropological insights which help to explain the role of mythic narrative in the founding of cults, and he emphasizes especially that the rival gods or terms are in perpetual dialectical tension. As polar opposites, they will always imply one another as surely as positive

implies negative and order implies chaos, even if one power is accepted as god for the moment.

The reason for a "combat myth" or narrative of their struggle is to show how they end up and therefore which is the god with which a people would want to identify and in the process to overcome their divided and burdensome state. As Burke explains, "In themselves, as 'polar' terms, they have no progression or priority, but merely imply each other. When translated into terms of mythic narrative, however, such opposition can become a quasi-temporal 'combat' between the two terms, with the corresponding possibility that one of the terms can be pictured as 'vanquishing' the other. Or they can be thought of as alternatively uppermost, in periodic or cyclic succession (an arrangement that comes closer to retaining the notion of their mutual involvement in each other, even while distinguishing between them and giving each a measure of predominance). Similarly, the pattern can be further modulated by the thought of an inter-regnum, with one of the terms not an out-and-out victor but a temporary interrex, eventually to be replaced by the other" (LSA, pp. 387-388, Burke's emphases).

Burke emphasizes that a combat myth is told not only for aesthetic pleasure but also to explain the founding of a cult which is "a system of governance" with sanctions for particular attitudes and actions. Therefore, the structure of the myth will be broadly applicable to any act of persuasion, but it will convince a people only to the extent that it draws on the beliefs, hopes and fears of a particular "context of situation" and persuades them to accept one order as good and the other as bad -- even though both are possible and always will be. As Burke slyly suggests, the killing of a god does not cause him to die off; rather, it makes him immortal. By showing where he ends up, the story defines the scapegoat as the god-to-be-expelled, but it also

shows that this is the rival attitude of the reigning order and that if it is ever revived, chaos will come again.

The ending of a combat myth is simultaneously a transcendence of a struggle (or ironic impasse of conflicting terms) and a catharsis of an unwanted burden. It could represent a moving on to a more inclusive term, as in a Platonic dialogue of contending opinions, but more often it takes the route of tragic expulsion. To some extent, both movements occur simultaneously, with only an emphasis on one or the other to mark the difference.

Burke then extrapolates from these comments on mythic narrative and applies them to poetic narrative in general, especially tragedy and comedy. Just as the combat myth pits against one another rival gods (which ultimately represent the powers of Love and Death, as Freud believed) and then tells how one god won and founded the cult while the other lost and survives to threaten it, poetry, too, in dramatic ways, defines terms by clusters or equations of images and ideas, pits them against one another, and points the arrows of expectation toward the defeat of the devil term and the survival of the god term. Structurally, then, tragedy and comedy are modifications of the same combat myth, applying the formula to different kinds of character ("better" than ordinary in tragedy, "worse" than ordinary in comedy), all the time "fitting" the characters to their end so that an audience can be satisfied by knowing how and when and whom to applaud (LSA, pp. 399-400).

LITERATURE AS A DEFINITION OF TERMS

For Burke, poetry, like the combat myth and every other kind of symbolic action (including sinister kinds, like Mein Kampf), uses both a religious way

of thinking and a dramatic kind of pattern to define terms and to move an audience to accept the definition.

As characters in a drama, the terms cannot be defined, obviously, by paraphrase or abstraction to a terminology outside of the play. The characters are actors on a particular scene, acting with certain purposes and agencies. Therefore, an audience learns what to think of the characters or terms by making as thorough an "indexing" as possible of who does what, where, how and why. (Obviously, a more thorough job can be done if one is studying a text rather than witnessing a performance.) Burke calls these five constituents of any act the "Pentad" and, as simple as it sounds, he uses it with great ingenuity in his Grammar of Motives to show how rhetoricians can manipulate the "ratios" between one integer and another to construct anything from the symbol structure of a play like Enemy of the People, to a philosophy like pragmatism or idealism, or to a political instrument like the Constitution of the United States.

Much like formalists with whom he is sometimes contrasted, Burke advocates as thorough a charting as possible of the "equations" a poet or philosopher has set for the definition of his terms. So, for example, what it means to say that Dr. Stockmann is an "enemy" of the people comes to be understood ironically by noting not only what he does but where he does it. Ibsen defines the term by showing Stockmann acting on behalf of the people's safety and then suffering their hostile reaction because they are not ready for the truth he has to tell them. Burke then describes the setting of the final action:

In Act V, the stage directions tell us that the hero's clothes are torn, and the room is in disorder, with broken windows. You may consider these details either as properties of the scene or as a reflection of the hero's condition after his recent struggle with the forces of reaction. The scene is laid in Dr. Stockmann's study, a setting so symbolic of the direction taken by the plot

that the play ends with Dr. Stockmann announcing his plan to enroll twelve young disciples and with them to found a school in which he will work for the education of society (GM, p.5, Burke's emphases).

The meaning of the poet's terms, then, emerges by studying not only the integers of the Pentad but the ratios between them (for example, that Stockmann's act of saving the people through education is contained within the scene of his study in the company of twelve disciples such as Jesus had).

In addition to the Pentad, the poet also uses imagery to indicate the quality of an action from different angles. Imagery or metaphor are what Burke, following Nietzsche, calls "perspectives by incongruity" (ATH, p.269); they are a "screen" or "filter" through which an audience is persuaded to see the essence of the action. Impressed with Caroline Spurgeon's book on Shakespeare's imagery, Burke notes that "her method can disclose statistically how Shakespeare frequently organized a play about a key or pivotal metaphor, which he repeated in variants (like a musical 'theme with variations') throughout the play." So, for example, "Romeo and Juliet is organized about images of light; Hamlet, the ulcer or tumor, and King Lear, bodily torture" (ATH, pp. 274-275).

The metaphoric perspectives are complicated still further by Shakespeare's favoring of puns to indicate that the quality of the action may be perceived from at least two directions at once. Burke does not comment on the following plays specifically, but in Romeo and Juliet love and death imply one another in a pun on "die": "Thus, with a kiss, I die" (V.iii.120).² In Hamlet, "union" is a grisly pun on the pearl with which Claudius poisons a drinking cup and the incestuous marriage with which he has poisoned Denmark, and Hamlet's use of this pun, by linking the marriage to the poisoning act, underscores the poetic justice of Claudius's death: "Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damned Dane,/ Drink off this potion. Is thy union here?/ Follow my

mother" (V.II.336-338). And, in King Lear, a pun on "kind" shows that one's "kind" or family may not necessarily be "kind" or caring and the wrenching apart of these two senses of the word complements the images of bodily torture in this play. According to the Fool, only the fathers "that bear bags/ Shall see their children kind" (II.iv.51), and Lear, who had trusted first in the "kind" nursery of Cordelia and then of Goneril and Regan, is stung by "filial ingratitude" until he discovers, as if for the first time, Cordelia as a "kind and dear princess" (IV.vii.28).

Puns and metaphoric perspectives, then, are ways in which a poet attempts to direct the audience's attention toward an understanding of the terms he is setting up. But each term is defined not only in itself by imagery and in ways analyzed by the Pentad (by mergers); it is also defined in opposition to another term which serves as its rival possibility (by division). There can be no action or dramatic development unless a contest can be staged, just as there can be no positive idea of a society's goals without implying what these goals are not. This, says Burke, is the "paradox of substance" -- that nothing can be defined as what it is without reference to what it is not (GM, pp.21-23).

The etymology of "substance" itself (to stand under) shows that when we enunciate the "stance" of anything, it is always in relation to an "understood" context or scene. Thus, every term for encompassing a situation is inherently ambiguous since it evokes its polar opposite or rival possibility even when it is taken to be "substantially" true. In dramatic terms, this means that the hero cannot be accepted as such unless an audience both recognizes a struggle against a villain and agrees to expel him. The risk for a playwright, then, is in the choice of terms for mergers and divisions. If done with an accurate gauging of an audience's beliefs, the playwright can direct his audience's agreements where he wants them. However,

if his equations and contrasts are unappealing or misjudged, an audience may fail to go along with the argument.

The unforeseen changes in perception because of historical developments further complicate the playwright's task. For example, the response to The Merchant of Venice is difficult enough because of dramatic ironies between Belmont and Venice and the use of money in both scenes. But Shylock's Jewishness adds something to the equation to which a twentieth century audience is especially sensitive. The fear to be identified with anti-semitism will cause some in the audience to make Shylock a martyr and in no way a comic butt or scapegoat. On the other hand, some will use his Jewishness to confirm their own prejudices and will ignore the ambiguities of Shylock's relationship to the Christians of Venice. By making the outsider to the festive conclusion Jewish, Shakespeare has risked, perhaps intentionally, a different reception to his definition of terms.

Finally, the "substance" of a playwright's argument is defined by where the terms end up. Speaking of death as one kind of ending, Burke calls it the "narrative equivalent of the Aristotelian entelechy. For the poet could define the essence of a motive narratively or dramatically (in terms of a history) by showing how that motive ended: the maturity or fulfillment of a motive, its 'perfection' or 'finishedness,' if translated into terms of tragic outcome, would entail the identifying of that motive with a narrative figure whose acts led to some fitting form of death" (RM, p.14).

In rhetorical terms, the moment of death or expulsion is a transformation of terms, the significance of which must be determined in the context of each play and, ultimately, by the judgement of those in the audience. As Burke explains, "a poet's identification with imagery of murder or suicide, either one or the other, is from the 'neutral' point of view,

merely a concern with terms for transformation in general" (RM, p.11). To "kill off" a term, then, may mean that it deserves to die: it is the ritual scapegoat for an attitude which "has" to go. On the other hand, the death may be a martyrdom, showing that the principle or term that is sacrificed has been too good for this world which is then condemned for the act of murder. For Burke, suicide, as self murder, either shows the self-stifling effects of an attitude or becomes the vehicle for self-transcendence in the name of that cause for which one gives his life. The act of death can show that something is worth dying for or that something is "fit" to die. In either case, some attitude with which the audience identifies is being transformed by being killed off and therefore, if a eulogy is spoken, it is on behalf of that part of itself which an audience believes it must relinquish for the sake of what survives.

Burke's analysis of drama as symbolic action can best be studied in his article "Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method" in which the salient assumptions of his kind of analysis are clearly explained and illustrated: the assumption of a "context of situation" (usually economic) to which the play is a "counterstatement"; the analysis of characters as terms "fit" for the arguing of the counterstatement and not as personalities with psychological case histories; the progression of the argument from the setting up of terms through their peripety to the conclusion where one term is sacrificed so that the other might survive and the whole vision accepted by the audience as an attitude pointing to the way out of its burden.

Burke's belief in drama as a "ritual of rebirth" or a "salvation device" is clearly implied in his calling Othello a "viaticum" for the burdens of Shakespeare's audience as owners of private property. Using only the terms of the play, which enact Othello's jealousy or fear of losing what he has "invested" in Desdemona, and assuming that one kind of relationship (property

ownership) may be expressed in terms of another (monogamous marriage in which the husband is "lord" of the wife, as Othello is called), Burke studies how the principal terms or characters (Othello, Desdemona, and Iago) fit together for defining what is essentially or substantially the tension involved with increased attempts to acquire and to keep private property.

In this analysis, Desdemona is the property which Othello would keep to himself. Her value is increased by a topical appeal to the audience's belief in the value of monogamous marriage. As Othello's wife, Desdemona "belongs" to Othello, and any violation of her would be promiscuous. If Othello were to lose her and what she represents (the "tranquil mind," "content," and all the "pride, pomp and circumstance" of Othello's occupation), chaos would truly come again.

Iago enters as an attitude not so much distinct from Othello's as its counterpart. He appears at Othello's ear, whispering his suspicions; he kneels at Othello's side, pledging his support. He is as close to being inside Othello as a playwright can make him, and he represents the fear of estrangement which accompanies the act of ownership. Othello's tragedy arises from his foredoomed desire to extend his ownership so absolutely that others' uses are prevented. Given Othello's "engrossment" in his property, Iago's task is to induce jealousy from what appears to be Cassio's promiscuous handling of the handkerchief. Iago succeeds so well in making Othello suffer estrangement from his property precisely because Othello has attempted to extend his ownership to such an extent that he cannot distinguish courtesy from lechery. Othello, then, kills Desdemona, attempting to transform her into a creature who belongs entirely to him, even if she will then be dead to his own "uses" as well as to others', and then he kills himself when he is told that his fear of estrangement was without reason. The suicide, in rhetorical terms, represents the reflexive nature of Othello's burden: the

stifling and self-killing effects of the attempt to make of private property an absolutely personal possession.

The play, then, serves as a counterstatement to the audience's "tension." If they weep for Othello, it is because they realize where their own jealous engrossments are "ending up" (what they "amount" to), and if they hate Iago it is because they need him as a tangible villain, a scapegoat of their own jealous fantasies. If the drama is to work as a "viaticum" for the audience, it will lead them to a more quizzical analysis of the attitude that is absolutely engrossed in private property. The substance of Othello's attitude cannot be understood without remembering the "paradox of substance": that every claim to property implies a fear of rival claims -- that every "exchange" of love is "discounted" to some extent by fear of jealousy. In fact, to the extent that one's attitude is "absolute" in its demands, it is sure to provoke its opposite.

Given his appreciation for the "fit" of the characters in the argument of the play, Burke favors two tropes especially as master methods of analysis: irony, which will keep the critic aware of the dialectical tensions among competing attitudes, and synecdoche, which will train the critic to see each part of the play as contributing to the defining of the whole. The effect of the play, then, will finally be gauged by the way in which an audience responds to the "fit" of competing attitudes and to the way in which they end up.

CRITICISM AS CONVERSATION: TWO REJOINDERS TO BURKE

There are two qualifications I would have to make to Burke's analysis before using it for my own purposes. First, Burke's assumption of economic

tensions as the audience's "context of situation" needs some sophistication if this method of analysis is to be more flexible, more respectful of the range of concerns in Shakespeare's plays, and therefore acceptable to more critics. Burke assumes the economic context because he believes that in some form it is always there. Class differences on the basis of property distribution exist in every age, creating tensions between those who are up or down in the hierarchy and requiring "courtship" of a kind between the classes to assuage their separation by providing a sense that they share a place in the same overarching order. Burke derives these ideas from William Empson who, in Some Versions of Pastoral, argues that the conventions of "pastoral literature" are actually a paradigm for how all of literature works: in every work different constituencies of the audience are "wooed" into a sense of union by seeing their ideas played out in the same context. In pastoral, the moral concerns of the "higher" orders are argued out in "terms" of the lower orders; in drama, a double plot can serve this purpose; in a novel, different characters can express the divergent attitudes toward a situation in ironic juxtaposition. According to Paul de Man, Empson under the pretense of analysing a poetic convention is actually explaining "the ontology of the poetic" itself, namely, the "problem of separation" between poet and audience and between different classes in the audience itself which a poet contrives to overcome by symbolic means though he is never completely successful.³ Burke takes from Empson the idea of a separated audience, but he too often, I think, explains that separation merely in economic terms.

Surely, Burke is right to assume that economic conditions exist outside the play and that they form a "substructure" (in Marxist terms) for the values which the audience has adopted. But as Burke himself admits, Shakespeare does not seem overtly interested in the economic substructure. "Shakespeare's strategy as a dramatist," according to Burke, "was formed by [the] relation

between feudal and bourgeois values. This 'superstructural' material was the objective, social material he manipulated in eliciting his audience's response. Economic factors gave rise to the transition in values, but he dealt with the transition in values" (PLF, p.309).

Burke's assumption, then, that a play is a ritual of rebirth for an audience, persuading it to a way out of its tensions by a narrative formulation of terms, this assumption is more credible and helpful if one assumes a more than economic definition of these concerns. So, for example, Theodore Spencer in Shakespeare and the Nature of Man analyses the tensions in the Renaissance between Copernican and Ptolemaic systems of astronomy which altered the perception of man's place in the cosmos; between Ciceronian and Machiavellian theories of statecraft, which differed in their view of the moral nature of public life; and between the optimistic anthropology of a Raimond Sebond and the deflating commentaries on it by Michel de Montaigne. "Thus," he concludes, "in the immediate intellectual background of the late sixteenth century, two main attacks were being made on the idealistic picture of the nobility and dignity of man. There was the traditional attack, which described man's wretchedness since the fall, but which was still based on a firm belief in man's crucial place in the center of things; and there was the newer attack, which in a threefold way, threatened to destroy that belief itself." ⁴

The list of polar opposites in the context of situation could be indefinitely extended, since the Renaissance in England was one of those watershed moments in history when attitudes of various kinds were being argued out thoroughly before one of them would clearly come to predominate as a paradigm. The context of situation, then, must be understood in a flexible way, and, if that is done, it can help explain the play as a counterstatement to the audience's tensions and a more or less accepted arguing out of its

concerns. Othello may or may not be about the burdens of private property economically considered, but it is certainly about a jealous man who will not keep a corner of the thing he loves for others' uses. As the tension of jealousy in some sense is argued out, it will be a viaticum only for those who feel "consubstantial" with Othello's tragedy.

Thus modified, Burke's assumption of a context of situation for a play coincides precisely with the practice of contemporary directors who choose those plays for production whose concerns seem to overlap with those of the audience and which therefore seem to be the plays "for the moment." In his interviews with several contemporary directors of Shakespeare's plays, Ralph Berry discovered that, given a choice, and not just box office considerations, directors chose those plays which would say something to a situation (usually political) particularly burdensome to the audience. Hence, Michael Kahn "would have liked the opportunity to do Troilus and Cressida during the Vietnam war"; Konrad Swinarski staged All's Well in his native Poland "because I think it is a picture of a world that is very similar to the world I'm living in and collaborating with; and I'm trying to show its face." For him, this meant showing how the Court in All's Well, like the power of the State in Poland, "finally determines what is going on between people." And Robin Phillips' production of Measure for Measure was staged in part because the "sexual core" of the play was able to be explored in 1975 in a way not possible previously. As Phillips believes:

There have been periods since it was written when this would not have been possible. And here we are at the time when people are prepared to accept it; a play that pivots on that central theme is permissible in 1975, for a start. I think also that the other themes of power, corruption in power, sexual blackmail in power, are interesting. I suppose a thousand plays can relate in some sense to Watergate [a political scandal in the United States at that time]; but corruption, whether or not Watergate had any sexual motives at its core, is neither here nor there. The fact that we've had a major scandal at that level allows one to explore

a play with that as plot. And consequently one is prepared to delve into the reasons -- not the ones that we've explored in our newspapers, but totally different.⁵

According to the practice of these directors, then, it seems that drama can serve very well as a "counterstatement" for an audience's situation, provided, of course, that one can grant the metaphorical equivalents of one tension as expressed in terms of another.

A second caution needs to be raised concerning the way Burke interprets the endings of Shakespeare's plays. Although his concept of the "paradox of substance" commits him to recognize a dialectical arguing out of terms, his response to a play's ending frequently takes a one-sided view both of its significance as a transformation of terms and, accordingly, of the essence of the play. This can best be illustrated by a contrast between Burke's interpretation of Coriolanus and Norman Rabkin's.

For Burke, Coriolanus is "fit" to be the sacrifice or scapegoat of an attitude which is a burden for Shakespeare's class-conscious society. Coriolanus's vituperations against the lower orders embody and exaggerate an attitude that "has" to go if the body politic is to work harmoniously along the lines of Menenius's analogy to the human body. Shakespeare further fits Coriolanus for his role as scapegoat by the way he has created characters whose role in the play is "derived" from their function in forwarding the "destiny" of Coriolanus: Aufidius, the slayer, of course, but also Virgilia the devoted wife, who gives us a glimpse of the victim's more lovable side, and, above all, Volumnia, whose influence over her son helps to prepare the audience for two turns of the plot -- Coriolanus's decision to stand for consul and his decision not to march on Rome. These characters are so constructed that the death of Coriolanus will be made to seem not only good but also inevitable.

For Burke, then, the ending is clearly purgative, and an audience feels well rid of its victim. But as Burke himself has stated in Rhetoric of Motives, the meaning of a death is ambiguous and has to be interpreted in the context of the entire development of terms in a text. In his 1981 production of Coriolanus at Ashland, Oregon, Jerry Turner showed how an opposite interpretation of Coriolanus's death could be staged and be well received by making of Coriolanus a hero whom the plebians were not prepared to accept. According to Alan Dessen's review in the Shakespeare Quarterly:

Arndt [the leading actor], without distorting or changing Shakespeare's lines, found a sympathetic side to that war machine Coriolanus...his rejection of praise, honors, and spoils often came across to the Ashland audience as an appealing modesty, while his contempt for the plebians (who, in his eyes, did not deserve tribunes or corn gratis) often elicited cheers from the spectators, along with laughter at the mob, the tribunes, and, at times, Volumnia. The gown of humility scene (II.iii) thereby became more a display of Coriolanus' restraint than an expose of false patrician hauteur; similarly, the outbursts triggered by the tribunes in II.i. and III.iii seemed logical, even inevitable. For the most part, this Coriolanus did not rage in I.i and in other potential diatribes, but rather delivered the lines rapidly and curtly, so as to provide a dismissive contempt that the plebians seemed to accept as their due, a contempt later justified in the battle scenes when Coriolanus backed up his words with deeds and the citizens behaved largely as he had predicted.⁶

Dessen does not mention this, but it is interesting to conjecture how much the audience's reception to this interpretation reflects a mood in the United States at that time of wanting a hero after a period of war and political scandals and of choosing to make a scapegoat of the poor in the hope that the "disgrace" of their condition would thereby go away. In any case, in Turner's production, Coriolanus is certainly not the scapegoat, but a martyr.

Norman Rabkin's analysis of Coriolanus proceeds scene by scene to show how Shakespeare manipulates an audience's perceptions either on behalf of Coriolanus the honorable and blood-dealing man (his mother's view), or against Coriolanus, the traitorous man and "breaker of butterflies" (the

plebians' view). Coriolanus's effectiveness seems inseparable from his bloodiness, raising a moral dilemma for the audience because it cannot have one without the other. Writing his article in 1966, Rabkin seems conscious of his own context of situation (the United States during the Vietnam War) as he further explicates the political dilemmas of this play and alludes to the difficulty of being simultaneously a man of principle and a political animal. Up to a point, he says, Coriolanus's view of honor as something to be deserved makes him seem haughty but pardonably proud because the people are shown to be not worth serving. But eventually this principle leads Coriolanus to betray Rome and to be killed. "Defining his entire life in terms of his inner principle of integrity, Caius Martius Coriolanus has destroyed his very identity."⁷

Obviously, then, Coriolanus's choice does not work and must be disowned. Thus far, Rabkin would agree for different reasons with Burke's interpretation of Martius's death. But, asks Rabkin, what are the alternatives to Coriolanus? Certainly not Aufidius, a traitor as well as an opportunist? Certainly not the compromisers like Cominius, Menenius, or even Volumnia who would concede "that value is dictated not by the nature of the object but by the tastes of the valuer, so that Coriolanus is honorable not so much when he rescues Rome as when he receives the accolades of its worthless citizens?"⁸

With careful attention to what he has come to call the "complementarity" of a Shakespearean play, Rabkin sums up the dilemma: "Shakespeare offers us two alternatives, the idea of the state as unbending moral imperative and the idea of the state as a community organized for the benefit of its members -- on the one hand the state as worthy of allegiance only when it represents the highest moral ideals, on the other my country right or wrong. And he seems to be telling us hopelessly that neither of these notions of the state will

work." Therefore, completely contrary to Burke's analysis, for Rabkin "no catharsis is possible."⁹

As I have said, Burke himself recognizes that the fact of death as a transformation of terms is in itself an ambiguous act. Therefore, one can expect equivocal interpretations of its significance. Burke has shown one such interpretation in Coriolanus's case, and Jerry Turner has shown another, while Norman Rabkin has shown those features of the text which would explain them both. I do not believe, then, that accepting Burke's method requires that in every case one accept a univocal interpretation of how the terms have ended up. An audience may reach a consensus one way or another, but if rival terms have truly been well argued, the "devil" will always have his advocate.

With certain adjustments, then, to Burke's concept of "context of situation" and to his usual practice of interpreting a death as simply cathartic rather than problematic, I would propose that his rhetorical theory of drama as persuasion to change through identification with some "god term" and expulsion of a "devil term" will explain much of the problem with the problem plays. In them, such identification is made impossible by equivocal definitions of terms or characters and by no transformation of terms through death or expulsion of a scapegoat.

FORM AND MEANING

According to Burke's philosophy of literary form, a rhetorician gains acceptance for his definition of terms by engaging his audience's cooperation in the making of meaning. First he creates formal expectations in his audience and then, by satisfying them, contrives to convince the audience that the argument or "conclusion" is inevitable. As Burke analyzed it in Mein

Kampf, for example, the way out or salvation device is always achieved by deliberately formal means. Minor forms illustrate this principle most easily. So, for example, antithesis sets up expectations of what to think, first of one side, then the other. As Burke explains in Rhetoric of Motives, "...we know that many purely formal patterns can readily awaken an attitude of collaborative expectancy in us. For instance, imagine a passage built about a set of oppositions (we do this, but they on the other hand do that; we stay here, but they go there; we look up, but they look down, etc.). Once you grasp the trend of the form, it invites participation regardless of the subject matter" (RM, p.58).

In Language As Symbolic Action, Burke comments further on the effectiveness of this form especially if one needs a scapegoat: "One may find himself hard put to define a policy purely in its own terms, but one can advocate it persuasively by an urgent assurance that it is decidedly against such-and-such other policy with which people may be disgruntled. For this reason also, the use of antithesis helps deflect embarrassing criticism (as when rulers silence domestic controversy by turning public attention to animosity against some foreign country's policies). And, in this way, of course, antithesis helps reinforce unification by scapegoat" (LSA,p.19).

Like the minor forms, certain larger forms also arouse an audience's expectations and fulfill them. These are the Repetitive, Progressive, and Conventional forms described by Burke in "Lexicon Rhetoricae" from Counterstatement.

"Repetitive form" is the consistent maintaining of a principle under new guises. It is a restatement of the same thing in different ways. Thus, in so far as each detail of Gulliver's life among the Lilliputians is a new exemplification of the discrepancy in size between Gulliver and the

Lilliputians, Swift is using repetitive form" (CS,p.125). Repetitive form means the same thing as recognizing "what goes with what." A character's actions and purposes for action, the means of acting and the scene of the action (the integers of the Pentad and the ratios among them) can all be "indexed" in order to define what the character "stands for" in the play. To put it another way, the cluster of equations is also definition by "merger," with the character summing up the meaning of one term in the "argument."

Progressive form is subdivided into syllogistic and qualitative progression. "Syllogistic progression is the form of a perfectly conducted argument, advancing step by step. It is the form of a mystery story, where everything falls together, as in a story of ratiocination by Poe. It is the form of a demonstration in Euclid...The arrows of our desires are turned in a certain direction, and the plot follows the direction of the arrows. The peripety, or reversal of the situation, discussed by Aristotle, is obviously one of the keenest manifestations of syllogistic progression" (CS, p.124).

"Qualitative progression ...is subtler. Instead of one incident in the plot preparing us for some other possible incident of plot (as Macbeth's murder of Duncan prepares us for the dying of Macbeth), the presence of one quality prepares us for the introduction of another (the grotesque seriousness of the murder scene preparing us for the grotesque buffoonery of the porter scene)" (CS, pp.124-125).

Finally, Conventional form is "the appeal of form as form." Burke notes that "any form can become conventional, and be sought for itself -- whether it be as complex as the Greek tragedy or as compact as the sonnet" (p.126). Conventional form differs from progressive and repetitive forms in being categorically expected by the audience. "That is, whereas the anticipations and gratifications of progressive and repetitive form arise during the process

of reading, the expectations of conventional form may be anterior to the reading" (CS, p.127).

All of these forms may intermingle, of course; that is, any one incident may be serving more than one formal function. "A closing scene may be syllogistic in that its particular events mark the dramatic conclusion of the dramatic premises; qualitative in that it exemplifies some mood made desirable by the preceding matter; repetitive in that the characters once again proclaim their identity; conventional in that it has about it something categorically terminal, as a farewell or death; and minor or incidental in that it contains a speech displaying a structural rise, development, and fall independently of its context" (CS,p.128).

Of special importance for a study of the problem plays, Burke recognizes that forms may conflict as well as intermingle. "An artist," he says, "may create a character which, by the logic of the fiction, should be destroyed; but he may have made this character so appealing that the audience wholly desires the character's salvation. Here would be a conflict between syllogistic and qualitative progression. Or, he may depict a wicked character who, if the plot is to work correctly, must suddenly 'reform,' thereby violating repetitive form in the interests of syllogistic progression" (CS,p.129). In other words, the ambiguity of a definition will be especially evident if the forms through which the definition of terms is presented lead to the arousing and fulfilling of different expectations.

Because, for Burke, forms are means of persuasion on behalf of terms which define the way out of an audience's burdens or tensions, Burke differs from both formalists and deconstructionists at the same time that he shares with them certain critical assumptions and procedures. Like the formalists, Burke advocates as thorough an "indexing" as possible of a work's imagery,

equations, ironies and paradoxes; unlike them, however, Burke wants to use "all that there is to use," including historical and biographical information to determine the context of situation and a knowledge of the author's entire corpus to ascertain his peculiar definition of key terms. For example, Shakespeare's definitions of Othello and Iago, Burke suggests, might gain greater clarification by comparing them with Aaron the Moor in Titus Andronicus in whom the traits of Othello and Iago seem to be combined.¹⁰

Like the deconstructionists, Burke recognizes that every work contains "always already" a suppressed attitude. Where Jacques Derrida will find "traces" of such an attitude, Burke finds the "paradox of substance," recognizing that every positive term necessarily implies a negative, every order a chaos, and every god a devil. However, where Derrida would urge deconstruction of the ostensible order for the sake of insight into the tactics which have suppressed a rival understanding, Burke will argue that some action -- however inadequate -- is always necessary for the symbol-using animal if he is to satisfy his "yearning for unity" not only with a symbol of order but with others who also accept that symbol. As he says in Rhetoric of Motives:

Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were wholly and truly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man's very essence. It would not be an ideal, as it now is, partly embodied in material conditions and partly frustrated by these same conditions; rather, it would be as natural, spontaneous, and total as with those ideal prototypes of communication, the theologian's angels, or 'messengers' (RM, p.22).

The dramatist, like the historian, knows that "a thing [for example, a movement in history] has many aspects, good, bad, indifferent. You 'transcend' this confusion when, by secular prayer, you 'vote' that ONE of the aspects is the essence of the lot" (ATH, p.260). And a dramatist "votes" by

showing through the narrative progression of his drama where a term ends up. As "dishonest" as it may seem, there is no way beyond an oppressive condition other than by partially adequate acts on the scene of one's situation. "The problem of evil," says Burke, "is met by transcendence -- the process of secular prayer whereby a man sees an intermingling of good and evil factors and 'votes' to select either the good ones or the evil ones as the 'essence' of the lot. And choice between policies is not a choice between one that is a 'lesser evil' policy and another that is not. It is a choice between two lesser-evil policies, with one of them having more of a lesser evil than the other" (ATH,p.314).

It is interesting to speculate on whether the differences between Burke's philosophy of language as symbolic action and Derrida's philosophy of deconstruction may, in part, be explained by the differences between the Gallic and American scenes: one has experienced the oppression of an occupying power and is therefore sceptical of language as manipulation; the other has experienced the working of democracy in the "human barnyard" and is therefore more confident that an action taken will roughly approximate the action needed. In any case, it is in large part his concept of literary form as a kind of persuasion to action which has made Burke something of a maverick to many literary critics. As Frank Lentricchia sums it up in Criticism and Social Change, "Modernist literary theorists since Cleanth Brooks, and other crusaders for literary autonomy, have been openly hostile [to Burke] -- they sense his more-than-literary commitments. The newest academic avant-garde, from Jacques Derrida to Paul deMan, mainly ignores him: like a powerfully accomplished father, the mere thought of whom creates those queasy feelings of impotence, Burke must be forgotten. He knew too much, too soon." ¹¹

A RHETORICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Burke grounds his literary theory in a definition of man which he enunciates in five codicils. Through this anthropology Burke clarifies his understanding of how any language as symbolic action elicits cooperation from people who, by nature, respond to symbols. To the extent that the definition is accurate, it explains why rhetorical criticism can do much to explain the probable effect of symbols on an audience. For Burke:

1. Man is the symbol-using animal. That is, through language man "entitles" or sums up an attitude toward his world which would otherwise be an undifferentiated chaos of forces. Every name for a situation is a perspective on it, and, at the same time, it is a "screen," coloring one's perception of reality. Words are implicit persuasions about what to notice and about what action to take toward what is noticed, and since they are necessarily partial entitlements of reality, words need to be juxtaposed with one another for a fuller perspective on the context of situation. Against a naive verbal realism which assumes that reality is as it is named, Burke admonishes that the symbol is a partial perspective and an implicit persuasion: "In responding to words," he says in Language As Symbolic Action, "with their overt and covert modes of persuasion ('progress' is a typical one that usually sets expectations to vibrating), we like to forget the kind of relation that really prevails between the verbal and the nonverbal. In being a link between us and the nonverbal, words are by the same token a screen separating us from the nonverbal" (LSA,p.5).

An artist's symbols, then, are new definitions of terms, new perspectives which could not be enunciated as well in any other way. As Burke says in Counterstatement, "The symbol might be called a word invented by the artist to specify a particular grouping or pattern or emphasizing of

experiences -- and the work of art in which the symbol figures might be called a definition of this word. The novel, Madame Bovary, is an elaborate definition of a new word in our vocabulary" (CS,p.153).

2. The second codicil explains how man's symbols arise. Man is inventor of the negative or moralized by the negative. That is, every purposeful human action is a 'yes' to one course of action and an implicit 'no' to another. Human action implies freedom to choose and therefore a competition among contending attitudes to determine which one "should" be the way to go. Polar opposites belong inseparably to human ways of thinking and acting, and Burke's "paradox of substance," discussed earlier, is only a further sophistication of the recognition that no choice is self-evident or stands outside of a limiting context. As a matter of fact, "There is an implied sense of negativity in the ability to use words at all. For to use them properly, we must know that they are not the things they stand for" (LSA.p.12).

3. Because of his symbols, man is separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making. That is, the class structure and social hierarchies of all kinds are established first and last by man's capacity and need for defining where he "stands" symbolically. Contrary to orthodox Marxism, Burke presumes that man's defining capacity comes first, followed by tool-making or economic capacities. It is shown to be the more "essential" trait because "In choosing any definition at all, one implicitly represents man as a kind of animal that is capable of definition (that is to say, capable of symbolic action). Thus, even if one views the powers of speech and mechanical invention as mutually involving each other, in a technical or formal sense one should make the implications explicit by treating the gifts of symbolicity as the 'prior' member of the pair" (LSA,p.14).

4. After his use of symbols has established several 'orders' of society (economic, political, religious, for example), man is goaded by the spirit of hierarchy or moved by a sense of order. That is, he naturally desires to accept his place in an order by a kind of "courtship" in which he identifies with those on top of the hierarchy and they, in turn, can be seen to "woo" his allegiance. Burke especially admires how E. M. Forster has shown the "embarrassments" of hierarchy (or social mystery) in A Passage to India, how these are interwoven with the idea of cosmic mystery, and how they are transcended by courtesies and other rituals of respect between the colonials and the colonizing power (LSA,p.227).

5. The final codicil is a "wry" one: that man is rotten with perfection. That is, since every symbol strives to be the 'perfect' definition or the 'proper' naming of a tension, it usually employs a scapegoat, as in drama, to differentiate the 'false' or 'imperfect' symbols from the 'true' or 'perfect' ones. The yearning for perfection, however, is ultimately illusory, since every assertion will always imply some polar opposite or option as surely as God implies the Devil, and ultimately dangerous as well, because without some other perspective on the situation, the chance of missing what is "really" there increases. As Burke explains in Philosophy of Literary Form, "Dictatorships, in silencing the opposition, remove the intermediary between error and reality. Silence the human opponent, and you are brought flat against the unanswerable opponent, the nature of brute reality itself" (PLF,p.445). Of course, since warnings like this have not kept precisionists of every kind from trying to stifle debate, Burke calls this a "wry" codicil and advocates a policy of ironic contemplation of contending attitudes (a "parliamentary" of representative opinions) in order to expose the limitations of any symbol that claims to provide an absolute understanding of the "substance" of the human situation.

SHAKESPEARE AS RHETORICIAN

"Burke," said his friend Howard Nemerov, "is Shakespearean, I believe, in his delight in what some of us deplore: ambiguity, the range of meanings hidden and evident in, it may be, a single word; and Shakespearean, too, in his willingness to let perspectives criticize one another 'dramatically'."¹² If this is so, and I have tried to show that it is, then the use of Burke's method seems particularly promising for a study of Shakespeare.

From the time of his first play, 1 Henry VI, Shakespeare demonstrates his ability to dramatize the claims of rival perspectives. At the same time, he shows that he knows about the rhetorical effects of a scapegoat as a structuring principle; if one term can be established as the "false" explanation of events, the other will be accepted as "true." However, a brief but closer look at this play will show that even in this apprentice work, the master dramatist was showing signs of scepticism about the absolute claims of either partial perspective. In this way, Shakespeare gives an early indication of his style throughout the canon of his work, and especially in the "problem plays" where rival terms are presented more even-handedly than elsewhere.

According to Bullough, 1 Henry VI was written about 1591/2 and was therefore of topical interest to an English audience since the country was again at war with France. The figures of brave Talbot and his son become a way of identifying true English behavior and of rallying patriotic feelings against the French led by Joan of Arc who is, fittingly enough, called a witch and a devil.

In this play, Shakespeare gives his audience in the French as tangible a villain as Iago, and, even more than he does in Othello, directs his audience to the "lynching" of the victim who is clearly other than themselves. Now, if this were all that he was doing, the piece would be no more than melodramatic propaganda. However, Shakespeare has other interests to pursue in this play, a clear sign of which is that he deviates from his chronicle sources to present a garden scene in which the War of the Roses originates. Shakespeare focuses attention, then, not so much on the enemy without as the enemy within, so that Talbot is shown to die not so much because of treachery by the French as because of discord among the English.

In the garden (Eden before the Fall?) Plantagenet (York) and Somerset are arguing over Plantagenet's claim to the throne - "a case of truth." When Warwick is asked to adjudicate between the rivals, he shows how difficult it is to distinguish their claims:

Between two hawks, which flies the higher pitch;
Between two dogs, which hath the deeper mouth;
Between two blades, which bears the better temper;
Between two horses, which doth bear him best;
Between two girls, which hath the merriest eye;
I have perhaps some shallow spirit of judgement;
But in these nice sharp quilllets of the law,
Good faith, I am no wiser than a daw.

(II.iv.11-18)

Neither rival, however, accepts this verdict. Each one tries to establish that his claim is the only truth: it is either so "naked" as to be obvious (York) or so well "well apparell'd" (Somerset) as to be evident even to "a blind man's eye." The imagery, of course, shows how the same kind of claim can be argued in ways which look different but which really amount to the same argument.

Further distinctions are likewise misleading. As York picks a white rose and Somerset a red, and as each urges his followers to do the same, the

audience knows that a red rose and a white rose are equally roses and that it will take a civil war to settle the claims between such rivals since any reasonable distinction between them is hardly possible and since Somerset will not accept the expedient of a majority decision.

The colors of the roses can even be used to suggest emblematic interpretations, depending upon whose perspective one wants to adopt (emphasis on the willfulness of the decision). York chides Somerset for cowardice: "Meantime your cheeks do counterfeit our roses;/ For pale they look with fear, as witnessing/ The truth on our side." Somerset replies: "No, Plantagenet,/ 'Tis not for fear but anger that thy cheeks/ Blush for pure shame to counterfeit our roses,/ And yet thy tongue will not confess thy error." And, since each faction is a rose, each contains a hidden disease or danger : "Hath not thy rose a canker, Somerset?/ Hath not thy rose a thorn, Plantagenet?" (II.iv.62-69).

These rivals, who will lead a nation to war, maintain indistinguishable claims to the throne, but even closer to the throne exist rivals who weaken the position of an already weak king. Winchester, great-uncle to Henry VI, and Gloucester, uncle and Protector, also contend over which of them will truly rule the king and, through him, England. Their rivalry is exacerbated by their ties of blood (since close family ties make the claims of one over the other even harder to distinguish), and therefore it is a most revealing perspective on their feud when Winchester challenges Gloucester at one point, "be thou cursed Cain/ To slay thy brother Abel, if thou wilt" (I.iii.39). And, in a reprise of the red rose/white rose rivalry, Gloucester urges his blue coated men to oust Winchester's tawny coated men from their place at the Tower of London, all to the distress of the general citizenry led by the Mayor, who cries out: "Fie Lords! that you, being supreme magistrates,/ Thus contumaciously should break the peace!" (I.iii.57-58).

The rivalry among the English themselves, then, seems of more pressing danger than that from the French. Shakespeare has provided a villain in the French so that simple-minded patriots can have their lynching, but also so that more sober-minded patriots can recognize that a lynching solves nothing since the real enemy is within. Ironically, Gloucester comments on the treachery of the Duke of Burgundy against Henry VI when he and Winchester have been plotting even more treacherously closer to home under outward signs of friendship: "O monstrous treachery! can this be so,/ That in alliance, amity and oaths,/ There should be found such false dissembling guile?" (IV.i.61-63).

Shakespeare, thus early in his career, is showing his ability to argue opposites. Moreover, he also shows that, as every rhetorician knows, the way out is usually through a scapegoat -- a character or term whose death will "prove" something about the term that survives.

In this play, Talbot's death is the intended scapegoat, but since the loss of the bravest Englishman in France will be used for different purposes by York and Somerset, it will prove nothing toward settling their feud. For easier contrast of their rival positions, Shakespeare juxtaposes their different versions of history in successive scenes:

York: A Plague upon that villain Somerset,
That thus delays my promised supply
Of horsemen, that were levied for this seige!
Renowned Talbot doth expect my aid,
And I am lowted by a traitor villain
And I cannot help the noble chevalier:
God comfort him in this necessity!
If he miscarry, farewell wars in France.
(IV. iii. 9-16)

Somerset: It is too late; I cannot send them now:
This expedition was by York and Talbot
Too rashly plotted: all our general force
Might with a sally of the very town
Be buckled with: the over-daring Talbot
Hath sullied all his gloss of former honour
By this unheedful, desperate, wild adventure:

York set him on to fight and die in shame,
That, Talbot dead, great York might bear the
name.

(IV.iv.1-9)

Of special interest for an analysis of the problem plays, it should be emphasized that these rival positions, which cannot sort themselves out even by the death of an ostensible scapegoat, arise and continue because the King is young and ineffective. The symbol of order is weak, able to remonstrate only feebly with the warring factions of Winchester and Gloucester, "O, how this discord doth afflict my soul!" (III.i.106). Moreover, the King is dangerously led by his "fancy," not his reason. He is so impolitic as to imagine that he can settle the York/Somerset faction by arbitrarily plucking a red rose and expecting that it will be interpreted as a gesture that proves nothing. Then, addressing the contending factions during the campaign in France, he urges them:

O, think upon the conquest of my father,
My tender years, and let us not forgo
That for a trifle that was bought with blood!
Let me be umpire in this doubtful strife.
I see no reason, if I wear this rose,
That any one should therefore be suspicious
I more incline to Somerset than York:
Both are my kinsmen, and I love them both:
As well they may upbraid me with my crown,
Because, forsooth, the king of Scots is crown'd.

(IV.i.148-157)

Commenting on this performance, Warwick tells York: "My Lord of York, I promise you, the king/ Prettily, methought, did play the orator." York replies, "And so he did: but yet I like it not,/ In that he wears the badge of Somerset." Warwick assures him, "Tush, that was but his fancy, blame him not; /I dare presume, sweet prince, he thought no harm." But York muses over it, "An if I wist he did, -- but let it rest" (IV.i.174-180).

Later, Henry's "will" leads him to take the dangerous step of overriding Gloucester's choice of a bride and of accepting Suffolk's choice of Margaret of France, through whom Suffolk hopes to rule the king himself. With an ironic perspective on his action that draws attention to its danger, Suffolk concludes the play:

Thus Suffolk hath prevail'd; and thus he goes,
As did the youthful Paris once to Greece,
With hope to find the like event in love,
But prosper better than the Trojan did.
Margaret shall now be queen, and rule the king;
But I will rule both her, the king and realm.

(V.v.103-108)

Obviously, Shakespeare, from the start of his dramatic career, knew how to argue opposites and also knew what he would have to do in order to resolve an "ironic impasse." At the same time, he is showing scepticism already about the "better" claims of either rival and knows that the fact of death itself can be manipulated for different purposes. With this much understanding of ritual drama to begin with, he continues the most extensive and probative explorations imaginable of the dilemmas that arise over any human value like honor, love, reason, mercy, or justice, or of any human enterprise like war or marriage.

In the problem plays, I believe, Shakespeare's arguing of opposites is particularly intense and unrelieved. Using Burke's rhetoric, I will examine how Shakespeare's equations for terms like Helena, Cressida, and Isabella are inherently ambivalent; besides that, their rivalry with other terms is not resolved by any credible scapegoat or by any clear acceptance of how the terms end up. More than that, the authorities in these plays, like Henry VI, are either weak or arbitrary, contributing to the concourse of discord rather than helping to resolve it. Finally, the playwright's deliberate interference with the progression of his plot, especially toward the endings of these plays,

throws doubt, I suggest, on the resolution which the audience thinks it is getting and may even desire. Recalling R.S. White's analysis of the endless ending of romance, I think the problem plays show that Shakespeare knows he could continue the argument indefinitely, has to conclude somehow, but reminds the audience that it could have ended otherwise.

In all of these ways, Shakespeare frustrates the expectations of the audience for a symbolic action that will help them to encompass their situation, and he therefore leaves them not only dissatisfied but even anxious at having been shown only the dilemma and not the way out. I do not know why Shakespeare wrote these plays, but I think it is simplistic to assume that he was suffering some kind of collapse or period of depression. It is just as possible to argue that in All's Well, Troilus and Cressida, and Measure for Measure, he is at the full peak of his powers, arguing opposites at white heat and daring the consequences of audience dissatisfaction.

According to Stephen Booth, Shakespeare shows in his writing of Love's Labor's Lost that he knows how to violate an audience's expectations of an ending in the interest of a greater awareness of what is so about reality (or the context of situation) but which has not been formulated in the play and perhaps can never be. The drama "ends not like the old play" in order to respect the "indefinition" of experience itself.¹³ What Shakespeare does in Love's Labor's Lost and, indeed, throughout the canon from 1Henry VI to the Tempest he does, I suggest, in an especially unrelieved way in the problem plays. With what Burke calls comic ambivalence, he charts the range of human conduct, knowing the value of as comprehensive a vocabulary as possible in order to "gauge the full range of human possibilities" (ATH,p.74).

Shakespeare's own attitude, it seems, is one of "methodical quizzicality toward language" whereby he allows a full appreciation of its resourcefulness

for encompassing the human condition (GM,pp.441-442). His metaphorical perspectives, his puns, his arguing of terms are so thorough that he clearly reveals the limits of any other attitude as the "final" word.

Shakespeare's mastery of language served as a model for Burke's own strategy of "planned incongruity" (the transferring of words from one category of association to another by the "coaching" of their metaphorical implications). In his praise for Shakespeare's style, Burke clearly identifies his sympathies as a thinker with Shakespeare, and this praise provides a fitting link between an exposition of Burke's method and the analysis of Shakespeare's plays which follows:

In Shakespeare, casuistry was absolute and constant. He could make new 'metaphorical extensions' at random. He could leap across categories of association as readily as walking...We propose by the casuistry of 'planned incongruity' to follow in [our] conceptual vocabulary the lesson that Shakespeare taught us with his (ATH,p.230).

III. ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

In his Arden edition of All's Well, G.K. Hunter suggests that Helena provokes such divergent responses in critics that the problem for interpretation is whether to fit Helena into the play or to fit the play to her. Is she a heroine of romance whose completion of impossible tasks proves her to be not only the worthy wife but also the salvation of her husband? Or is she a scheming social climber whose success in getting her man proves to be a pyrrhic victory for "predatory monogamy" (Tillyard's phrase), matching together, as it does, an unwanted wife with an undeserving husband? Hunter then suggests that criticism, to be most helpful, should provide "a context within which the genuine virtues of the play can be appreciated."¹

The context I propose is that of the play as rhetoric in Burke's sense: the use of forms for the defining of terms. As a dramatist and skilled rhetorician, Shakespeare is used to arguing opposites, but in this play, as in Troilus and Cressida and Measure for Measure, he presents a particularly unrelieved divergence of perspectives on the action, so that Helena's apparent victory is by no means certain or desirable. Not only do the "equations" for Helena's character clash, but the syllogistic movement of the plot is deliberately frustrated, especially at the ending, with the result that an audience is made self-conscious of its desire for a happy ending and is forced to question the adequacy of conventional forms to account for every situation and to encompass it.

Since All's Well is concerned so explicitly with a class conscious hero and heroine, it seems to illustrate as well Burke's theory that class division is, in some way, the "context of situation" to be addressed by a play's symbolic action. As I have mentioned in Chapter 2, however, it is not my

concern to assume a specific extra-textual tension or burden. I would not want to argue, for example, that Bertram represents a money-poor but titled aristocracy being pursued by a "mounting" bourgeois class in search of titles, and that if his proud resistance to a match sanctioned by his mother and his King is not checked it threatens not only to endanger the future of his class but to tear apart the commonwealth as well. This is a plausible reconstruction of class relationships in England after the rise of the Tudors and before the civil war -- a situation much alluded to in "citizen comedy," for example. But it is not necessary to assume this specific social context in order to appreciate in more general terms the pursuit of Helena and the flight of Bertram. Some critics, like G. Wilson Knight, for example, have used the imagery of the play to argue a Christian rather than an economic message: that Helena is Divine Grace and that Bertram is Sinful Man who does all that he can to reject his own redemption.²

Whatever the extra-textual issues may be, the problems caused by the text are those of how to define Helena and of how to respond to her victory. These problems, in turn, create a more difficult problem for the audience: how to identify with a way out of a tension when only the dilemma has been presented. The division "characterized" by Helena and Bertram is great, and the action of the play gives the audience no clear reason to believe that it can be bridged. Instead, All's Well betrays the audience to itself as so craving the "promised end" of a way out that it is willing to gloss over an embarrassing amount of inconsistency in order to enjoy it.

In his review of John Barton's 1968 production of All's Well, J.W. Lambert gives away just how much an audience truly craves a definite ending and how, in his view, Barton provided it, especially by making Bertram more likeable and excusable (by emphasizing his boyishness) and by making Helena's trickery more acceptable. "All's Well that Ends Well," he writes, "is a good

play after all, this production tells me. And how finely it manages the gentle ritual of the end, when as one discord after another is resolved, 'Mine eyes smell onions' exclaims Lafew, and in that single phrase recognizes the absurdity of the contrivance, smiles at it, yet ratifies our unquenchable insistence -- a correct aesthetic demand, not a superficial emotional surrender -- for a well-tempered harmony at the last."³

In my view, the aesthetic demand is certainly there, and obviously it can be satisfied by various productions. But a troubled response to the text is not mistaken, and it arises from disappointment that the aesthetic demand is not being satisfied as generously as it might be and from the suspicion that Shakespeare is deliberately frustrating a simple response to this play, especially to the ending.

THE AMBIGUOUS VALUE OF HONOR IN WAR

Shakespeare's rhetorical qualifying of self-evident values, which he does throughout the play, can be seen, for example, in how he suggests that Bertram has gained only a doubtful honor by fighting for the Duke of Florence. Although Diana reports that "they say the French count has done most honorable service" (III.v.3-4) and although the Duke has created Bertram General of the horse for this, there are many hints that this honor which any gentleman would value has, in fact, no reasonable basis and is, besides, hollow and ostentatious.⁴

Expanding on one sentence in his source, Painter's Palace of Pleasure, Shakespeare adds two short scenes (III.i and III.iii) and other commentary to undercut Bertram's achievement. According to Painter, "when [Beltramo] was on

horsebacke hee went not [home] but toke his journey into Tuscane, where understanding that the Florentines and Senois were at warres, he determined to take the Florentines parte, and was willingly received and honourable entertained, and was made captaine of a certaine number of men, continuing in their service a long time."⁵

From the way he handles the subject of the war, Shakespeare, I suspect, took a hint from the word "determined" because it suggests an act of choice with no reason given, the kind of willful act which is impossible to evaluate as right or wrong in the absence of reasonable criteria. Then, in III.i he presents the Duke of Florence, marvelling to his entourage of the lords of France that their King "would in so just a business [as this war] shut his bosom against our borrowing prayers" (III.i.7-8).

Because the lords cannot offer any explanation for their King's refusal of aid, the Duke implies an arbitrary one: "Be it his pleasure" (III.i.17). We know from his farewell to the young lords (I.ii) that the King of France is, in fact, indifferent to the claims of either the Florentines or Senoys. "They have fought," he says, "with equal fortune, and continue/ A braving war" (I.ii.2-3). And so the young lords have "leave/ to stand on either part" (I.ii.14). Since the King cannot distinguish between the rivals, it makes no difference to him which side kills the other. Honor, whatever it may be, can be gained either way, and at least the war may allow young hot bloods a chance to work off excess energy. The wars will offer a "nursery" for the young men who are "sick/ For breathing and exploit" (I.ii.16-17).

Despite the King's indifference, the Duke has convinced his company that he has "fundamental reasons" for this war which make his cause seem "holy" and his rival's cause seem "black and fearful." According to the rhetoric, it is obvious that fighting for the Duke is the right thing to do, and that victory

in his cause is an honorable prize. But Shakespeare knows that if Bertram would fight for the Duke, he will have to "determine" to do so. The Duke's "fundamental reasons" are never presented to the audience, nor are Bertram's. When he leaves France, it is only "to the wars"; he does not at that point choose sides. Shakespeare, then, strengthens Painter's hint that the hero's choice of whom to serve is arbitrary by suppressing any discussion of reasons for the quarrel and making it the King's "pleasure" to stand apart from it with almost comic detachment or at least wise passiveness. If, indeed, Florentines and Senoys are so close to one another that they are "by th'ears," how is one to be distinguished from the other?

Since, in fact, the rivals are also brothers, their wars are even more bloody for the close relationship of the contestants and the difficulty of clearly distinguishing one's rights from the other's.⁶ To say that one side is "holy" and that the other is "black and fearful" is to lay on the rhetoric with a trowel. Why, then, should Bertram win distinction or honor for having killed the Duke's brother in battle (III.v.7)? If he had fought for the other side and had killed the Duke, would an audience's estimation of him change in any way? Shakespeare, then, takes no pains to provide a reasonable basis for Bertram's honor even as he parades the soldiers in victory with "drums and colors" before the soldier-struck citizens of Florence, the Widow, Diana, and Mariana.

As the noisy procession passes by, the drum of Mars which Bertram loves makes a loud and hollow sound. In fact, the victory itself is a little hollow, or at least muted, because the soldiers have lost their regimental drum, much to the chagrin of Parolles. The regimental colors which troop before them are matched for ostentation by the "plume" which identifies Bertram and the "scarves" which Parolles wears. These conspicuous clothes help to mark the heroes out as members of the new generation "whose

judgments," the King had said, "are/ Mere fathers of their garments; whose constancies/ Expire before their fashions" (I.ii.61-63). This qualifying perspective on the young heroes is reenforced by the comments of the Widow and Diana. To them, the honor Bertram gains in war does not excuse his failure to be loyal to his wife. Honor and honesty belong together. In a scene that much resembles the return of the soldiers to Troy in Troilus and Cressida, the glory of a military procession is undercut by the objective, moral commentary of disinterested observers:

Diana:

He -

That with the plume; 'tis a most gallant fellow.
I would he loved his wife. If he were honest
He were much goodlier.

(III.v.77-80)

The honor gained in the service of Mars, then, is shown to be doubtful. Moreover, the purpose for which the young lords have gone to war is presented in suspicious terms. As the First Lord says to the Duke, echoing what was said to the King about war's therapeutic value, the war may, indeed, prove a "physic" for those of "the younger of our nature,/ That surfeit on their ease" (III.i.17-18). But this implies that war is for "sick" people, who have chosen it, wisely or not, as their remedy. Besides, just because "ease" has been purged does not mean that honor has replaced it.

In light of these disparagements of war's rituals, effects, and causes, we should not be surprised to find puns which evaluate war ambivalently even as the Duke explains his case at the opening of III.i.:

Duke. So that from point to point now have you heard
The fundamental reasons of this war,
Whose great decision hath much blood let forth,
And more thirsts after.

First Lord. Holy seems the quarrel
Upon you Grace's part; black and fearful
On the Opposer.

Duke. Therefore we marvel much our cousin France
Would in so just a business shut his bosom
Against our borrowing prayers.

(III.i.1-8)

According to the O.E.D., the first use of "fundamental" in its "immaterial" sense occurs in this play. Prior to this, it was the adjectival form of "fundament" in the sense of the foundation of a building or the buttocks of the body, especially the anus. Shakespeare is stretching the word to include an immaterial sense at the same time that more earthy denotations would be more prominent for his audience. As he usually does, Shakespeare wants to suggest a two-edged commentary with a pun, and it is consistent with the imagery he is using in reference to the war.

The King has already said that war is merely a physic or cathartic for those who "surfeit" on their ease; why, then, should its reasons not be "fundamental" in two senses: foundational and stinky? The fact that the quarrel seems "holy" further corroborates the suggestion of war as a "hole" through which the vile matter of sick people can be purged. This possibility of a pun on "fundamental" is strengthened by the fact that Shakespeare uses the word only one other time in his plays, and once again it is in a context where physic is needed to restore the body politic to health. In Coriolanus, Coriolanus addresses the senators of Rome, saying:

You that will be less fearful than discreet,
That love the fundamental part of state
More than you doubt the change on't, that prefer
A noble life before a long, and wish
To jump a body with a dangerous physic
That's sure of death without it, at once pluck out
The multitudinous tongue.

(III.i.150-156)

As in All's Well, the society's burden is concealed in a pun which not only provides a scatological interpretation of the burden but also implies that it should be purged. If this reading of a pun is correct, it would make the Duke's reasons "full of holes," at the same time that the quarrel only seems "holy" in its righteous sense. All's Well will end with a similar qualification: that all seems well, but it is important to note that this explicit ambivalence has marked the play early on. Both Bertram's acquiring of honor through war and of Helena through marriage are craftily qualified in this play.

Also of interest in this short exchange is the Duke's reference to the war as a "business." There may be deflationary overtones in the use of the word, as when Iago speaks of the "trade of war" (Othello I.ii.1). But, more than that, the epithet "business" will also describe Bertram's marriage to Helena, which he despises, his courtship of Diana, for which even Parolles criticizes him, Helena's plot to use Diana to trap Bertram, and Parolles' fatuous plan to recover the drum. When the cynical clown says that his "business" is to fetch Helena for the Countess and, later, that his "business" -- like Helena's -- is to the court, we hear a word accumulating unsavory connotations at the same time that it links all levels of the action.

In a more subtle linking of the two actions, the Duke promises to reward those who follow him with the words, "all honor that can fly from us/ Shall on them settle." (III.i.20-21) It undercuts the Duke's promise of honor to recall that Bertram had caustically referred in similar terms to the "honor" which the King had conferred by bestowing Helena on him: "When I consider," he had said, "what dole [dolor?] of honor/ Flies where you bid it, I find that she, which late/ Was in my nobler thoughts most base, is now/ The praised of the King; who, so ennobled,/ Is as 'twere born so" (II.iii.169-173).

Bertram, seconded by Parolles, has enrolled in the wars in order to achieve an honor in deed which would complement the honor of his noble lineage, but the language of the text suggests that he may not have succeeded in his plan. He wants to prove himself a man and believes that he cannot do so if he is kept back for being "too young" and is "clogged" with a wife who is not only below his station but, more to the point, not of his choosing. Bertram envies the other young lords of France whom the King had urged upon leaving for the wars not to "woo honor, but to wed it" (II.i.15). Therefore, leaving home and France for Italy, Bertram has shifted the scene of his action to where he will be free from constraint and free for achievements in war and love which he can determine to undertake as he pleases. He succeeds at least to the extent that he wins promotion from the Duke and that Fortune seems his "auspicious mistress."

Shakespeare shows, however, that Bertram's gaining of honor in war is at least dubious, and he will show explicitly that Bertram loses the honor of his house in the attempt to seduce Diana. Back in Rousillon, the Countess, assured by some gentlemen the "The Duke will lay upon [Bertram] all the honor/ That good convenience claims" (III.ii.73-74), remains unimpressed. In her view, "His sword can never win/ The honor that he loses" for having deserted Helena (III.ii.97-98).

THE AMBIGUOUS VALUE OF HELENA

So much in this play seems to show that Helena is Bertram's unquestioned good, that it sometimes remains underappreciated how much Shakespeare has qualified the value of Helena just as he has qualified the honor Bertram

supposedly gains in war. Helena, I suggest, is defined in deliberately ambiguous terms because an audience is supposed to remain frustrated by not knowing how to accept her marriage with Bertram.

Helena, on the one hand, is described as a "herb of grace" and should prove to be Bertram's salvation. She is well "derived" from a wise father and has inherited his virtuous qualities with no admixture of "an unclean mind." Moreover, both her status and her actions combine to define her perfection in the Countess's estimation: "She derives her honesty and achieves her goodness" (I.i.47-48). Heaven loves to hear the prayers of such a woman, and with good reason: she is heaven's agent ("minister") for curing the King and may well be equally instrumental, the Countess hopes, in relieving Bertram "from the wrath of greatest justice" (III.iv.28-29).

As W.W. Lawrence has argued, Helena's deeds are consistent with the identity of the conventional "clever wench" of folk tale and romance.⁸ By curing the King and solving tasks, she assures the regeneration of her society. She is, as well, a virgin and an honest woman, one who is twice willing to lay down her life that the King and Bertram might live.

Helena's exemplary qualifications as a "god term" are corroborated by the King's and the Countess's endorsements. The King gives "honor" and "wealth" as his dowry to Helena, along with a ring which is discovered only late in Act V. Moreover, he warns Bertram, "As thou lov'st her,/ Thy love's to me religious; else, does err" (II.iii.183-184). The Countess adopts Helena, and not only in I.iii where she plays with the word "daughter" in order to discover Helena's intentions of marriage toward Bertram. When Bertram deserts Helena, the Countess adopts her in earnest. "He was my son/ But I wash his name out of my blood/ And thou art all my child" (III.ii.68-69). She tells Lafew that "if [Helena] had partaken of my flesh and cost me

the dearest groans of a mother, I could not have owed her a more rooted love" (IV.v.10-13).

Rhetorically, then, Helena is "consubstantial" with the aged authorities of this play. She is identified with whatever they, in their wisdom, recognize as honesty, worth, goodness, and deserving. The equations which, together, establish Helena as the "herb of grace" seem most strongly validated by her miraculous act of raising the King. Helena comes to the court of the dying King so recommended by Lafew for "wisdom and constancy" (II.i.86) that the King orders him to "bring in the admiration that we with thee/ May spend our wonder too, or take off thine/ By wondering how thou took'st it" (II.i.90-92). The solemn tone of romance is sounded by these words and continues through those incantatory verses in which Helena, modestly at first, presents her credentials as the "weakest minister" of "[Him] that of greatest works is finisher" (II.i.138). She prays, in effect, that the King awake his faith, and appeals to the precedent of great miracles recorded in "holy writ" to assure him that "oft expectation hits/ Where hope is coldest and despair most sits" (II.i.145-146). She counts herself among those whose "inspired merit" may be doubted by men but whose acts are heaven's itself. "Of heaven not me, make an experiment" (II.i.156). In paradoxical terms and with druid-like calculations of time, Helena promises the "The greatest grace lending grace/ Ere twice the horses of the sun shall bring/ Their fiery torcher his diurnal ring/...Health shall live free, and sickness freely die" (II.i.163-165/170). Then, as surety of her confidence in her credentials and her cure, she lays down her life as the forfeit if her promises prove false. It is pure magic!

Thus paraphrased, the action of raising the King represents Helena as the "god-term" -- the one whose worth defines the good which, if chosen, leads to comedy and which, if rejected, leads to tragedy. But it is also obvious that Helena's actions are undercut throughout this scene, calling into

question any reasonable basis for defining her as an unmixed blessing. Before she enters, for example, Lafew's joking with the King insinuates with phallic innuendo that the King's raising may indeed involve a rather ordinary visible sign of an invisible grace:

Lafew: I have seen a medicine
That's able to breathe life into a stone,
Quicken a rock, and make you dance canary
With sprightly fire and motion, whose
simple touch
Is powerful to araise King Pippen, nay,
To give great Charlemain a pen in's hand,
And write to her a love-line.

(II.i.74-79)

And, in a most daringly denigrating perspective on Helena's visit, Lafew remarks that she looks like a traitor and that he is "Cressid's uncle/ That dare leave two together" (II.i.99-100).

Moreover, Helena's reason for coming to the King is at best a half truth. She tells him:

...hearing your high Majesty is touched
With that malignant cause wherein the honor
Of my dear father's gift stood chief in power,
I come to tender it and my appliance,
With all bound humbleness.

(II.i.112-116)

She has already tried out this high-sounding motive on the Countess, swearing "by grace itself" (I.iii.222) for its veracity, but had been forced to admit:

My lord your son made me to think of (curing the King)
Else Paris, and the medicine, and the King,
Had from the conversation of my thoughts
Haply been absent then.

(I.iii.234-237)

It seems, then, that Helena's intentions to marry Bertram are fixed but that her motives, like Cressida's, are hard to ascertain. Her ability to drive a hard bargain, however, is obvious. As the scene ends and before she

undertakes any cure, she exacts from the King the price of his cooperation in her choosing of a husband from among his wards.

In light of the trapping of Bertram which Helena is plotting from the beginning and of the King's being brought to comply with it through this scene, I wonder if an allusion to Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy is more than a mnemonic irrelevance. When Lafew goes to fetch Helena, he uses the famous words which precede Hieronymo's staging of a play (or action) calculated to take in the spectators and to seal their doom. "Nay, I'll fit you," (II.i.93) says Lafew, and so said Hieronymo (The Spanish Tragedy, IV.i.70). If an audience catches this allusion, Helena's action appears in the perspective of a trap as well as a cure. As Bertram will put it, by raising up the King, Helena contrives to bring down Bertram.

It seems, then, that even in the scene where Helena shows herself most powerful for good, most self-sacrificing, and "graceful," qualifications arise, however lightly touched upon, that compromise from within any simple definition of her character.

These qualifications recur throughout the play and justify the pun which the Clown, Lavatch, makes on her epithet. Not only is she the "herb of grace," which is rue or mercy; she is also a herb of "grass" (IV.v.17-22), a reference, as the Clown explains it, to the grass which Nebuchadnezzar ate only after he had gone mad (Daniel 4:28-37).

Helena, for example, claims that she is heaven's minister but also knows, as she mentions in soliloquy, that

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to heaven; the fated sky
Gives us free scope; only doth backward pull
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.

(I.i.223-226)

There is nothing untoward about self reliance itself, of course, but when it cloaks sheer will power behind references to heavenly destiny, it compromises a person's sincerity. Thus, Helena's attempting to convince the Widow that "heaven/ Hath brought me up to be your daughter's dower,/ As it hath fated her to be my motive/ And helper to a husband" (IV.iv.19-22) sounds pious enough, but it follows soon after some tough negotiating for which, we have seen, Helena has some skill. As Helena walks hand in hand with heaven, it is hard to tell who is leading whom.

Acts of self reliance, then, break the equation between heaven and Helena as heaven's instrument, as do references to Helena's ambition. As she leaves Rousillon on pilgrimage, Helena offers as her explanation that "Ambitious love hath so in me offended/ That barefoot plod I the cold ground upon,/ With sainted vow my faults to have amended" (III.iv.5-7). Whether she means to repent or not, Helena has recognized in soliloquy that she does, indeed, desire to "mount" to a status above her and that her appetite to do so may, in fact, be sick and even dangerous, no less so than Bertram's "sick" desires which arise in his wooing of Diana. "Th' ambition in my love," she admits, "thus plagues itself:/ The hind that would be mated by the lion/ Must die for love" (I.i.96-98). Moreover, like her namesake in Midsummer Night's Dream, this Helena shows an equal eagerness in pursuit of a man who does not want her mingled with a little masochism in the process.

Given Helena's self reliance and ambition, her "fixed intents" (I.i.236), the imagery that would make of her Bertram's sister by adoption takes on an added significance. As I suggested when discussing the rivalry theme in the war plot, Shakespeare shows scepticism about any "fundamental" reasons which can distinguish one brother's claims from another's. The closer the rivals, the more equal their claim and the harder to tell them apart. If Helena, then, claims the right to choose for herself a husband and takes the

steps to do so, why should her "brother" Bertram have any less a right? Moreover, what fundamental reason can convince him to choose her for a wife when it cannot be said for certain whether she is a herb of grace or a herb of grass?

The less "savory" side of Helena shows clearly for most critics in her use of the bed trick to fulfill the tasks Bertram has given her if she would win him for a husband. It is here that she shows herself less of a handmaid of heaven and more of an enterprising woman with cash advances for inducement and a manual of instructions for the "business" at hand.

However, trouble for interpreters begins even before Helena arrives in Florence. As Bertrand Evans has noticed, Shakespeare, in his comedies, usually keeps an audience as fully informed as the most informed character on stage so that the audience may enjoy the "discrepant awareness" between itself and those who are duped or in other ways manipulated by that character.⁹ But, in All's Well Shakespeare suspends his usual practice and allows Helena to dupe or at least to puzzle an audience as surely as she will dupe and puzzle Bertram. Violating the convention that an audience can trust the disclosures of a soliloquy, Shakespeare provides Helena with a speech in which she expresses fierce concern for Bertram's safety in the wars and upbraids herself for having caused him to expose himself to danger. Twice she promises, "I will be gone"; she will not remain at home to discourage his return. Instead, she will expose herself to dangers rather than submit Bertram to the "mark/ of smoky muskets" (III.ii.112-113). What is an audience to think? Certainly, that Helena will be gone! But where? Surely not to Florence if she is as solicitous for Bertram's comfort as she claims to be.

Furthermore, what is an audience to believe when a letter from Helena to the Countess announces that she is "Saint Jacques' pilgrim" (III.iv.1)?

Shakespeare has added this information to his source in a deliberate effort, it seems, to throw his audience off the scent of Helena's whereabouts. Painter's heroine, Giletta, "toke her way...telling no man whither shee wente, and never rested till shee came to Florence." ¹⁰ Shakespeare's heroine follows a more circuitous route, even while she pens sanctimonies to the Countess. "Bless him at home in peace," she writes, "whilst I from far/ His name with zealous fervor sanctify" (III.iv.10-11). She even hints at a death wish: "He is too good and fair for death and me/ Whom I myself embrace to set him free" (III.iv.16-17).

Like Portia in The Merchant of Venice, Helena uses the smokescreen of having holy business in hand in order to hide her true interests. Portia, however, confides her plans completely to Nerissa and, through Nerissa, to the audience. Moreover, her deception is for an unambiguously good purpose: to save the life of her husband's "bosom lover." By contrast, Helena tells no one her plans and proceeds to win back Bertram only because she wants him back, not for any clear advantage to him. Helena's lies and deceptions may prove the strength of her single-minded purpose, but they also hint at a desperate desire to have her way which will not be resisted. Later, Helena's hint to the Countess of death to come is made to seem a fact as she lets it drop in conversation with the Widow that she is "supposed dead" (IV.iv.11) and has somehow gotten the rector of Saint Jacques to confirm it in a letter written to one of Bertram's companions (IV.iii.58-63). Meanwhile, however, the audience, which has been led to suspect that Helena is a languishing pilgrim on the way to Spain, discovers that she has, in fact, arrived in Florence with no explanation, and it watches as she busies herself with interest in Bertram, the talk of the city.

Evans throws up his hands at such duplicity. "Excepting the moment of openness when she needed Diana to help her trap Bertram," he complains, "this

heroine has not spoken straight to anyone. She has not taken us into her confidence, but has kept silent, hinted loosely, or put us off the track with falsehood. Unlike our sense of earlier heroines, our awareness of what she is grows and changes. Our understanding of her past conduct is repeatedly revised by our view of her present conduct." And this revision, Evans maintains, does not show Helena in a favorable light.¹¹

Besides her deviousness, Helena shows a mercenary streak which taints her act of trapping Bertram, however lawful it can be made to seem, because of the agency she uses. Shakespeare's telling of how Helena wins the Widow's cooperation for her plan differs again from his source in several ways to the effect of strengthening the impression that Helena has bribed the Widow as much as she has convinced her.

For example, Painter's Widow is explicitly compassionate "after that the Countesse had rehearsed the whole circumstance" of her "estate of love".¹² Shakespeare spares the audience a lengthy conversation between the women, which makes dramatic sense, but, contrary to Painter, he indicates that the the Widow is not so much compassionate as she is uneasy with Helena's plan. "I was well born," she demurs, "Nothing acquainted with these businesses/ And would not put my reputation now/ In any staining act" (III.vii.4-7).

When the Widow hints that her belief in Helena can be swayed by Helena's wealth ("I should believe you/ FOR you have showed me that which well approves/ Y'are great in fortune" [III.vii.13-15]), Helena sees her opening: "Take this purse of gold/ And let me buy your friendship thus far,/ Which I will over-pay and pay again/ When I have found it" (III.vii.14-17). This offer of personal recompense to the Widow is Shakespeare's addition to his source, as is the important detail that the purse contains gold. Painter's heroine offers the Widow an unspecified sum in exchange for her cooperation,

but it is intended for the daughter's dowry, not for herself. Even so, Painter's Widow, needy as she is, agrees to cooperate only "if it be a thinge honest"; Shakespeare's Widow expresses no doubts once she has been offered the money.

Shakespeare returns to his source for the detail about the dowry but, again, with a difference. Painter specifies that the sum of 500 pounds passes to the Widow only after Giletta has slept with Beltramo and, even then, since the Widow refuses to accept it as a reward for services rendered, Giletta replies, "I doe not purpose to give unto you the thing you shall demaunde in reward, but for consideration of your well doing, which dutie forceth me to do."¹³ Shakespeare, significantly, raises the sum of the dowry to 3,000 crowns and has Helena promise it to the Widow before the fact, almost as an added incentive. "After,/ To marry her, I'll add three thousand crowns/ To what is passed already" (III.vii.34-36). If the exchanges of a bawdy house come to mind, the effect, I think, is not accidental. Moreover, the "business" is explicitly called a "deceit" even if it be a "lawful" one.

Further denigration of the bed trick arises by Shakespeare's arranging the scenes in which Helena plans to trap Bertram to fall alternately between the scenes in which the Dumaine brothers plan to expose Parolles for "the love of laughter" and the education of Bertram. Shakespeare is obviously inviting a comparison between the analogous actions of entrapment and exposure, but the intended effect is ambiguous. The simple juxtaposition of the two actions teases the mind into making the connections and then sends it in several directions. I will, in a moment, explain how the parallel plot can reflect favorably on Helena's action. But to finish the highlighting of her deceitfulness and mercenary savvy, there should be noticed the mention of gold in the subplot (entirely Shakespeare's invention) which corresponds to the purse of gold that Shakespeare has added to his source in the main plot.

Gold is mentioned twice; the first is in a letter found on Parolles and written by him to Diana in which he advises the woman to demand payment in advance for her services because of Bertram's deceitfulness.

Dian, the Count's a fool, and full of gold...
When he swears oaths, bid him drop gold, and take it;
After he scores, he never pays the score.
Half won is match well made; match and well make it
He ne'er pays after debts, take it before.

(IV.iii.225/236-239)

Helena is at least tarnished by this resemblance between Bertram's dealings and her own paying of gold to the Widow before she "scores" with the bed trick. It is as if she is as deceitful as Bertram, which makes payment in advance advisable, or is at least as prostituting in her intentions.

The second mention of gold emphasizes its power to corrupt. The Interpreter, interrogating Parolles about Bertram, allows that "His qualities being at this poor price, I need not to ask you if gold will corrupt him to revolt" (IV.iii.289-291). The suggestion is clear: has not the Widow likewise been corrupted when she agrees to revolt from her misgivings and to cooperate with Helena's deceit?

A more damaging reflection on Helena derives from the entire action of entrapping Parolles since it does more than show him to be a braggart and traitor to his friends. As he betrays them to themselves, Parolles also tells the truth about them and especially about Bertram, "one Count Rousillon, a foolish, idle boy, but for all that very ruttish" (IV.iii.226-228). Parolles reveals the lords to be as wicked in their way as he is in his, and he shows Bertram especially to be ensconced in a self-serving and seeming knowledge of himself. Although it is fun to see a braggart and a liar exposed for what he is, Parolles also gains sympathy from the fact that he has been surprised by superior numbers in a place he least expected. We grant him his reason for

chagrin: "Yet who would have suspected an ambush where I was taken?" (III.iii.315-317), and we admit that Everyman is liable to the same exposure: "Who cannot be crushed with a plot?" (IV.iii.340).

Put Bertram in Parolles' place, and we see him as a person exposed for the faults he has, even a traitor to himself and others, but also one overwhelmed by deceit and superior numbers. We see Helena, for a moment, as one who differs from Bertram only in one respect: her own faults will never be exposed.

In many ways, then, the bed trick represents Helena as a "herb of grass" just as the healing of the King had represented her as a "herb of grace." But just as the raising of the King was qualified in a lewd direction, the bed trick and the actions surrounding it are qualified in a romantic and even moralistic direction.

For all the unsavory connotations which Shakespeare has allowed to arise, the bed trick remains, as W.W. Lawrence pointed out, a staple convention of folk tale and romance. No one, insofar as they respond to that convention alone, will blame Helena for using it. Moreover, bribed or not, the Widow does agree that the deceit is "lawful," and just when they are needed most to suggest the world or "scene" of romance, Shakespeare cranks out some paradoxical and incantatory couplets to gloss Helena's plans:

Let us assay our plot, which, if it speed
Is wicked meaning in a lawful deed,
And lawful meaning in a lawful act,
Where both not sin, and yet a sinful fact.

(III.vii.44-47)

As Helena makes her way back to France with the Widow and Diana, she alludes to heaven's aid and heaven's hand in the "fated" events, and she strikes the

proper attitude of a romantic heroine as she invokes the cooperation of time for the unfolding of the plot's direction:

...the time will bring on summer
When briars shall have leaves as well as thorns
And be as sweet as sharp. We must away;
Our wagon is prepared, and time revives us.
All's well that ends well; still the fine's the crown.
Whate'er the course, the end is the renown.

(IV.iv.31-36)

These romance motifs are complemented by allusions to the morality tradition in the exposure of Parolles, and these reflect favorably on Helena as one whose grace will save Bertram from himself. Like Everyman, Bertram "o'erflows himself" in an act of "rebellion" whereby he is merely his own traitor for fleshing his will in the attempted spoil of Diana's honor. His companions lament his guilt "for shaking off so good a wife and so sweet a lady" and for having earned "the everlasting displeasure of the King" (IV.iii.6-8). They expect that Parolles' exposure will teach Bertram not to trust in the judgment of his companion, and they observe a reason for hope which some critics take to be the rueful and summarizing wisdom of the play:

The web of our life is of a mingled yarn,
good and ill together; our virtues would be
proud if our faults whipped them not, and our crimes would despair
if they were not cherished by our virtues.

(IV.iii.74-78)

According to this reading of the subplot, if Bertram's folly is surprised and exposed for what it is, and if he is cherished nonetheless, he has reason to be grateful that he has been saved from himself and, in the words of Dr. Johnson, "dismissed to happiness."

THE ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH CERTAIN VALUE

So far, then, we have seen that Shakespeare has established discordant equations for Helena, which for clarity's sake I have clustered around the pun on the epithet "herb of grace" or "grass." Rhetorically speaking, Helena is a term inherently ambiguous and obviously so. Unless in the action of the play it can be shown which understanding is "true" (the god term) and which is "false" (the devil term), Helena will remain ambiguous, and the desire of the audience both to identify the god term and to identify with it will remain frustrated.

At one point it seems, indeed, that some attempt is made to distinguish right from wrong, true from false, according to some stable criterion of value. This is when Helena is presented to Bertram as the gift of the King and when Bertram's rejection of her on the grounds of her poor birth provokes the King's sternly -argued definition of true honor. A closer look at this speech and its context, however, will show that no stable and self-consistent definition of honor arises and that, as a result, no reasonable criterion for Helena's worth is provided.

The King's first speech, which summarizes the views on a subject of much interest to Shakespeare's contemporaries, distinguishes between two definitions of honor: one that derives from title (status) and one that is achieved by deeds (acts).¹⁴ Of course, the two definitions of honor need not contradict one another, but like Chaucer, Dante, and Boethius before him, the King's definition of "true" nobility clearly favors that which is shown in deed:

'Tis only title thou disdain'st in her [Helena], the which
I can build up. Strange it is that our bloods,

Of color, weight, and heat, poured all together,
 Would quite confound distinction, yet stands off
 In differences so mighty. If she be
 All that is virtuous, save what thou dislik'st--
 A poor physician's daughter -- thou dislik'st
 Of virtue for the name. But do not so:
 From lowest place when virtuous things proceed,
 The place is dignified by th'doer's deed.
 Where great addition swells and virtue none,
 It is a dropsied honor. Good alone
 Is good, without a name; vileness is so:
 The property by what it is should go,
 Not by the title. She is young, wise, fair;
 In these to nature she's immediate heir;
 And these breed honor. That is honor's scorn
 Which challenges itself as honor's born
 And is not like the sire. Honors thrive
 When rather from our acts we them derive
 Than our foregoers. The mere word's a slave,
 Deboshed on every tomb, on every grave
 A lying trophy, and as oft is dumb
 Where dust and damned oblivion is the tomb
 Of honored bones indeed. What should be said?
 If thou canst like this creature as a maid,
 I can create the rest. Virtue and she
 Is her own dower; honor and wealth from me.

(II.iii.118-145)

Muriel Bradbrook, who sees this speech as the "germ of the play," argues that it is "doctrine of a kind which ought to convince Bertram. It is only after he has objected, 'I cannot love her, nor will strive to do it,' that the King exercises his power to compel submission" (my emphasis).¹⁵ According to Bradbrook, in consequence of the grounds of Helena's nobility (which include her curing of the King by heaven's power) Bertram's offense in refusing her is greatly aggravated.

But if we grant that Helena is noble because of her virtue (though this virtue clearly coexists with willful, calculating ambition, as we have seen), and if we recognize that the King ennobles Helena for services rendered to him, we may still ask with Bertram, "But follows it, my lord, to bring me down/ Must answer for your raising?" (II.iii.112-115). Bertram is challenging the authority of the King to determine for him what he should value as noble. Even if Helena were unambiguously good, Bertram claims the right to choose

her for himself. "I shall beseech your Highness," he says, "in such a business give me leave to use/ The help of mine own eyes" (II.iii.107-109). He sees no reason why he must pay the price for benefits bestowed on someone else. Through Bertram's response, Shakespeare frustrates the conferring of the conventional good fortune of romance and requires an audience to think about the King's offer rather than to accept it without question.

Bertram's stated reason for objecting to the match is churlish and follows after his protest in the name of free choice: "I know her well/ She had her breeding at my father's charge/ A poor physician's daughter my wife! Disdain/ Rather corrupt me ever!" (II.iii.113-117). It well deserves the King's rebuke as an ignoble statement. Bertram's father, for example, would not have acted so. Rather, "who were below him/ He used as creatures of another place,/ And bowed his eminent top to their low ranks,/ Making them proud of his humility,/ In their poor praise he humbled" (I.ii.41-45). However, is not the King's rebuke in some ways beside the point? The root of Bertram's objection lies not in Helena's birth but in his desire to choose for himself in this "business," and he sees no reason why the King's will should compel his own choice. If, in fact, "Honors thrive/ When rather from our acts we them derive/ Than our foregoers," why should Bertram be prevented from achieving greatness just because the King is so intent on having it thrust upon him? Bertram has wanted to woo honor in the wars and has been forbidden to do so. Now he is told to find honor solely in the gift of the King. Throughout this play, Bertram is forbidden to grow up by acting for himself at the same time that the values of the dead and older characters (with whom Helena is identified) are held up for imitation. It seems unfair. Why should Helena be allowed to achieve honor by deeds while Bertram must live with only the frustrated desire to do so?

The King in anger during his second speech only strengthens Bertram's case. The King's "honor" at the stake seems to be neither that achieved by deeds nor derived from noble blood; it seems more like reputation and wounded pride seconded by force:

My honor's at the stake, which to defeat,
I must produce my power. Here, take her hand,
Proud scornful boy, unworthy this good gift,
That dost in vile misprision shackle up
My love and her desert; that canst not dream
We, poisoning us in her defective scale,
Shall weigh thee to the beam; that wilt not know,
It is in us to plant thine honor where
We please to have it grow. Check thy contempt;
Obey our will, which travails in thy good;
Believe not thy disdain, but presently
Do thine own fortunes that obedient right
Where both thy duty owes and our power claims;
Or I will throw thee from my care forever
Into the staggers and the careless lapse
Of youth and ignorance; both my revenge and hate,
Loosing upon thee in the name of justice,
Without all terms of pity...

(II.iii.151-167)

Where in the second speech (or even in the first) is there any reason given for Bertram's honoring Helena which is not merely personal to the King and which would cogently and unambiguously establish Helena as Bertram's certain good? I suggest that no such reason can be found and that Bertram signals this by saying that only when he looks with the King's eyes, and not his own, does he recognize that Helena is ennobled (II.iii.168-174).

The King's speech, then, like Ulysses' speech on degree in Troilus and Cressida is full of commonplace orthodoxies of the time but provides no stable moral center for the play as it might at first appear to do. It speaks beside the point of Bertram's assertion that he should be free to choose a wife for himself, and it offers no reasonable means of arguing Helena's worth for Bertram. Ominously, as well, it promises to loose "revenge and hate...in the

name of justice" which would further confound the terminology of this play to a point of complete ambiguity.

Since this scene of royal judgment will be repeated with a difference at the end of the play, several moments require mentioning for the light they will throw by analogy on the later scene. Helena, as the King's preserver by heaven's power, is presented to the lords as one whom they are powerless to refuse. Even so, she seems humble in their presence and draws back. "I am a simple maid," she says, "and therein wealthiest/ That I protest I simply am a maid./ Please it your Majesty, I have done already" (II.iii.67-69). It is impossible to say for certain, but is Helena's holding back a calculated move to assure herself of her King's support? Is she acting as Buckingham advised Richard III: "Play the maid's part, still answer nay, and take it" (Richard III, III.vii.51)?

In any case, the King will hear no objections and, after this slight frustration of syllogistic progression, pushes Helena forward to make her choice. Shakespeare has added the lottery of lords to his source, and this has the effect of showing Helena's "fixed intent" on Bertram as well as the arbitrary nature of her choice. All of the lords are equally qualified; "not one of those but had a noble father" (II.iii.63), and all are equally rejected by her either for no reason at all or for reasons which are declared by them to be beside the point.

Helena: You are too young, too happy, and too good
To make yourself a son out of my blood.

Fourth Lord: Fair one, I think not so.
(II.iii.77-99)

Obviously, Helena's intents have long since been fixed on Bertram, and her going through the motions of the lottery functions as a way of confirming this

fact for the audience and of showing how Helena will achieve her end despite any false starts or even apparent obstacles in the way.

Lafew's comments serve two purposes: they show that at least to his mind Helena would make a desirable match ("I had rather be in this choice than throw ames-ace for my life"); they also show that Lafew can at times be an unreliable chorus. He believes that the lords are rejecting Helena ("Do they all deny her?") when, in fact, she is rejecting them.

Bertram's response to the King's second speech shows that he has the wisdom to know when resistance is useless. He asks for "pardon," admits that Helena is the "praised of the King," but when told "Take her hand/ And tell her she is yours," replies only "I take her hand" (II.iii.174-175/177). The King, in what seems indecent haste to cover up the omission, declares it a "contract," to be blessed by "good fortune and the favor of the King" and then exits with the court.

He leaves behind Lafew and Parolles, who repeat in a more explicit way the roles of the King and Bertram respectively. Lafew is glad that Bertram has made his "recantation," and Parolles objects to the word. Lafew then relentlessly exposes Parolles as one "good for nothing but taking up"; he heaps "egregious indignities" on Parolles who is powerless to respond because of Lafew's "privilege of antiquity." Like Bertram, Parolles knows the limit of his options. "Well, I must be patient," he says, "there is no fettering of authority" (II.iii.237-238). He may hurl invectives in Lafew's absence and threaten to "beat him and if I could but meet him again." But when Lafew returns at once and faces Parolles with the chance to make good his threat, Parolles is, as usual, only "words." Having suffered this relentless excoriation and heavy-handed truth telling, Parolles not only shares Bertram's

experience of indignity, he also seconds Bertram's solution: to seek an honor of his own choosing in the Tuscan wars.

Those who would see Parolles simply as a Vice who misleads Bertram (and whose exposure would relieve Bertram of all illusions) should notice that it is Bertram's idea to go to the wars. Parolles may be Bertram's "fit" companion and accomplice, but he is not the complete seducer he is blamed for being. Bertram, like Helena, has "fixed intents" of his own without benefit of seduction, and he sees no certain reason to surrender his will to that of another.¹⁶

As we have seen, however, the honor Bertram seeks elsewhere will be dubious. As in Troilus and Cressida, the values of love and honor are shown to be not self evident but dependent for their worth on the estimation of the one who values them. That is what makes this play so problematic and troubling; the definitions of value are so even-handedly presented that not only the characters but also the audience will be frustrated trying to define a true and certain good in this play.

On a morality or allegorical level, the King's will to work for Bertram's good by marrying him to Helena may well suggest the dispositions of Providence for wayward Humanity. Bertram's stubborn resistance may figure a "natural rebellion" crying out for redemption by the patient, suffering, graceful woman who saves him from his worst intents by laying down her life for his sake. But this morality pattern must ignore the ambiguous equations for Helena, the less than godly motives of the King who seeks to constrain the issue, and the understandable frustration of a youth who wants to be a man, who wants to gain honor by deeds, and who without reason is forbidden to be himself by choosing for himself.

THE CLOWN'S PERSPECTIVE

The Clown's remarks are often too oblique to be interpreted easily or precisely, and yet they serve as another perspective on the action, affecting the response to the play according to the interpretation taken. Dowden, for example, understood the words "That man should be at woman's command, and yet no hurt done" (I.iii.93-94) as a straightforward comment and, in fact, as the motto of the play. W.W. Lawrence interpreted it ironically, but maintained that Helena's conduct is in contrast to it. Other critics will grant the irony but interpret it as a damaging critique of Helena's eventual control over Bertram.¹⁷

Granted the openness of the text, I suggest that the Clown's comments usually show two features: a double applicability to the actions of Helena and Bertram and a deflating of those actions to a level below that of any high-sounding interpretation.

Some comments, of course, apply only to Helena, as when Lavatch is sent to fetch her for the Countess and is reminded by her name of another Helen and of the damage she caused for Troy:

Was this fair face the cause, quoth she,
Why the Grecians sacked Troy?
Fond done, done fond,
Was this King Priam's joy?

(I.iii.71-74)

Other comments, on the other hand, apply as much to Bertram as to the Clown's situation. Explaining to the Countess, for example, his reasons for marrying, Lavatch says, "I so marry that I may repent" (I.iii.36-37) and "I am out of friends, madame, and I hope to have friends for my wife's sake" (I.iii.39-40). The interpretation of these lines is uncertain, but the ironical and self-

serving meaning is always possible. For example, one may marry either to repent former wrongs or to have the chance of repenting the marriage itself, as the Countess points out. The "friends for my wife's sake" may not be the husband's friends at all but may, in fact, be close to the wife for their own purposes and for hers. The Clown's meaning is not certain, but neither is Bertram's, I will suggest, at the play's conclusion!

The references to Isabel likewise apply more clearly to Bertram and show that what a man may desire in one context or at one time he may reject at another time and place. The appetite is not always certain or stable, so that although the Clown wants to "do" with "Isabel the woman" in I.iii, he has given her over in III.ii with only the explanation, "I have no mind to Isabel since I was at court" (III.ii.12). Does this willful and callous rejection foreshadow Bertram's rejection of both Helena and Diana? I think it is possible to see such a connection and to see in both "cases" a wry comment on the uncertain, sickly appetite.

Marriage may come by destiny, as Lavatch says, but "Your cuckoo sings by kind" (I.iii.64). It is only natural, it seems, that men and women will deceive one another despite the promises of a lasting and faithful union. Men may think they differ from one another as "rivals," but they are more alike in their deceivable humanity than they may want to believe: "If men could be contented to be what they are, there would be no fear in marriage; for young Charbon the puritan and old Poysam the papist, howsome'er their hearts are severed in religion, their heads are both one; they may jowl horns together like any deer i' th' herd" (I.iii.51-56).

The clown, then, throws up moral objections to any artfully contrived happy ending just as surely as the King's illness will challenge the art of Helena's cure. Although her successful healing marks a temporary victory of

art over nature, the play points out more severe limits to art's power, stubborn facts of mortality and immorality -- deceit and treachery of all kinds --that will not be easily coerced into a final harmony.¹⁸

These reductive views of human motives and human limitations can be applied equally to Helena and Bertram, as can other comments which have no specific referent. For example, when the Clown desires to "go to the world," he gives as his explanation, "I am driven on by the flesh, and he must needs go that the devil drives" (I.iii.28-30). This follows both Bertram's going to the King's court and Helena's planning to do likewise. It reflects suspiciously on both of them, as does the pun on "holy" and "reasons" ("raisings") in the Clown's further explanation of his wishes: "I have other holy reasons, such as they are" (I.iii.32-33).

Moreover, Lavatch knows how artfully hypocrisy can hide the pride of a "big heart" under the seeming virtuous actions either of healing a King or of acquiescing in his edicts. "Though honesty be no puritan, yet it will do no hurt; it will wear the surplice of humility over the black gown of a big heart" (I.iii.94-96).

Finally, the Clown believes that "Service is no heritage" (I.iii.23); that is why he wants to go to the world. He throws suspicion, then, on both the motives and the likely outcome of Helena's and Bertram's diverse offers of service. If Helena offers to serve Bertram ("I dare not say I take you, but I give/ Me and my service, ever whilst I live/ Into your guiding power" [II.iii.104].), Bertram, in turn, both serves the Duke of Florence (III.ii.53) and offers to serve Diana: "...I love thee/ By love's own sweet constraint, and will forever/ Do thee all rights of service" (IV.ii.15-17). Are they both deceived in their offers of allegiance and both as likely to be knaves and fools serving the devil, the "prince of the world" (IV.v.25-56)?

The perspectives which the Clown's comments open up only increase the difficulty of interpreting the actions of this play. Some might seek to neutralize the Clown's perspective by interpreting it as Shakespeare's way of indicating that the cynical point of view is "low" -- the thoughts of a churlish household retainer. But this is too easy. The actions of Helena and Bertram show in themselves an ambiguity which the Clown's comments only serve to mirror and to magnify.

THE AMBIGUITY OF THE ENDING OR ALL SEEMS WELL

Despite the subtlety with which Shakespeare has defined his terms through Act IV, he seems especially insistent from IV.iv onwards to end well with a comic resolution. Helena invokes the saving power of time and the approach of summer as she returns to France; Lafew arrives at Rousillon to announce the King's proposed match of Lafew's daughter to Bertram which will reconcile the men after Helena's supposed death; Parolles is reconciled to Lafew, and after the King enters Bertram's home with the Countess, Lafew and others in attendance, Bertram is reconciled to his sovereign.

King: The time is fair again.

Bertram: My high-repented blames,
Dear sovereign pardon to me.

King: All is whole.

(V.iii.36-39)

In rhetorical terms, Shakespeare is setting up expectations through syllogistic progression that the action will lead to reconciliation, even though the audience knows that reconciliation cannot occur by a marriage with

Lafew's daughter. All the pointers indicate that marriage with Helena is Bertram's "destiny" from the time that she fulfills his tasks with Diana's help and Diana says ironically to Bertram, "You have won/ A wife of me, though there my hope be done" (IV.ii.64-65).

In fact, the haste with which events begin to move toward a comic close struck Dr. Johnson as indecent, considering as he did "that Bertram's double crime of cruelty and disobedience, joined likewise with some hypocrisy, should raise more resentment."¹⁹ But the speed is deceptive. Soon enough Shakespeare deviates from his source by raising charges against Bertram for the alleged murder of Helena, blackening Bertram further by showing him to be a liar and a coward in defense of himself, and tuning the action to such a pitch that only the arrival of Helena can resolve the accumulating discords.²⁰

Shakespeare's deliberate frustration of the progress of the plot takes place in three stages, each of which seeks to establish the true state of Bertram's marital status, and each of which concludes with a climactic revelation about a ring.

In the first stage of the resolution, the King is reconciled to Bertram and then, after concluding Helena's eulogy, sends for Lafew's daughter, all in the space of two lines: "Be this sweet Helen's knell, and now forget her./ Send forth your amorous token for fair Maudlin" (V.iii.67-68). The seemingly indecent haste to proceed toward another marriage (which Dr. Johnson attributed to Shakespeare's desire to finish his play and to seize his reward) is soon stopped by Bertram's handing Lafew a ring which, it turns out, the King had given to Helena and, with it, "bade her, if her fortunes ever stood/ Necessitated to help, that by this token/ I would relieve her" (V.iii.84-86).

The second stage takes longer to develop as the King turns the scene into a trial and seeks to unravel the mystery of how Bertram came to possess

the ring. All of the testimony (including his mother's) is against Bertram; the ring is clearly Helena's, and Bertram's lie that it was thrown to him from a casement does not convince anyone. He is sent away under guard and under suspicion of murder. When Diana Capilet is admitted into court and claims that he has promised to marry her, Bertram is brought back and adds detraction of Diana and another lie to his discredit as he denies that he had taken her virginity: "She's impudent, my lord," he says, "And was a common gamester to the camp" (V.iii.187-188).

At this point, Diana brings the nature of Bertram's marital status into further confusion by denying his charge and dramatically presenting the evidence:

He does me wrong, my lord; if it were so
He might have bought me at a common price.
Do not believe him. O, behold this ring,
Whose high respect and rich validity
Did lack a parallel; yet for all that
He gave it to a commoner o' the camp,
If I be one.

As the Countess lets the audience know, "He blushes, and 'tis hit!/....This is his wife,/ That ring's a thousand proofs" (V.iii.189-199).

In the third stage, the court sifts this new evidence in light of Bertram's denial that it proves he promised Diana anything, in light of Diana's claiming that the ring on the King's finger (which he had given to Helena) is actually hers, and in light of Bertram's retraction of his earlier story that Diana had thrown it to him from a casement. Diana calls in Parolles to witness her story and he does, but this still leaves unsolved the question of where Diana got the ring that the King had given to Helena.

From the evidence so far extracted, it seems to the other characters that Bertram has at least promised marriage to Diana and that Diana is

unwilling to explain in what way she has received the ring. The King's impatience and displeasure turn against them both: "Take her away; I do not like her now./ To prison with her. And away with him" (V.iii.281-282).

Diana then confounds the confusion further by withdrawing her charge against Bertram and by putting his relationship to her in conditional and paradoxical terms:

Diana: By Jove, if ever I knew man, 'twas you.
King: Wherefore hast thou accused him all this while?
Diana: Because he's guilty and he is not guilty:
He knows I am no maid, and he'll swear to it:
I'll swear I am a maid and he knows not.
Great King, I am no strumpet; by my life
I am either maid or else this old man's wife
(V.iii.287-293).

These incidents in the trial of Bertram frustrate the expectation of an easy solution aroused by the earlier progression of events and, in doing so, the delay accomplishes two purposes: it allows all the characters on stage, including Parolles, to unite against Bertram, making his position even less tenable in light of their testimony against him and his own action; also, it allows the obscuring of Bertram's true marital status to such an extent that it frustrates the King and brings Bertram to the point of maximum danger unless that identity can be sorted out.

In The Merchant of Venice Shakespeare handled much differently the situation of confusion over the ownership of rings (which, of course, have a sexual as well as marital significance). Like All's Well, Merchant also concludes with some confusion about who has the rings which, in this case, were given by Portia and Nerissa to their husbands, but the momentary embarrassment of Bassanio and Gratiano is nothing compared to Bertram's predicament. More to the point, the husbands of Belmont clearly desire their wives, however much they may have compromised their promises and given away

the rings in order to help a deserving friend. Generosity, in this play, is easily distinguished from promiscuity which, for a moment, it seems to resemble.

Bertram's case is darker in that he has tried to give away his ring to another woman in an act of infidelity and then has tried to deny any significance in having done so. As a result, his status as a hero baffles clear definition. He does not want Helena or Diana, and so is unfit to be a comic hero; on the other hand, neither he nor his predicament is fit for a tragedy. What is to be made of Bertram's status? Does he end up with a clearly defined relationship to Helena?

According to some critics like R.Y. Turner, the build up of damaging evidence against the "hero" suggests the conventional ending of a "Prodigal Son" play in which circumstances at a trial are "so intense that by implication the suffering the hero undergoes would be momentous enough to change him, an experience we now call traumatic."²¹ In other words, according to this reading, Shakespeare is using the repeated frustrations of syllogistic progression to create in Bertram a sense of longing for relief and a welcoming of it when it comes, making his final plea for "pardon" a genuine sign of repentance. Moreover, fear and dread on behalf of Bertram and Diana and frustration with the delay of deliverance prepare the audience for the change to the opposite quality of joy when the solution reveals itself.

That Shakespeare intends to offer some such refuge in a conventional, comic resolution can be ascertained by his introduction, once again, of incantatory couplets to mark a marvelous point of transition. As the King orders her to prison, Diana sends her mother off to fetch her "bail" (which Helena will surely prove to be) and then winds up her charm with summarizing paradox and priestlike competence:

Stay, royal sir,
The jeweler that owes the ring is sent for
And he shall surety me. But for this lord
Who hath accused me as he knows himself,
Though he never harmed me, here I quit him.
He knows himself my bed he hath defiled
And at that time he got his wife with child.
Dead though she be, she feels her young one kick.
So there's my riddle: one that's dead is quick.
And now behold the meaning.

(V.iii.295-303)

Enter Helena with the Widow. The effect, of course, is pure magic. At one stroke Helena proves that the accusations against Bertram are false, and she resolves the identity of his relationship with Diana, pointing to the ring from off his finger as the sign that she has, indeed, completed the tasks required of her in his letter. Like Hero in Much Ado and Hermione in The Winter's Tale, Helena rises up as if from the dead to save an apparently impossible situation.

In the romances generally, Shakespeare presents such a "wonder" which engages all who gaze on it, characters and audience alike. The resolution, which is "the more delay'd, delighted" (Cymbeline, V.iv.102), arrives with the power to compel acceptance because it not only relieves burdens but also solves paradoxes, dilemmas, and confused identities at once.²² Unlike Hero and Hermione, however, Helena has taken considerable pains to ensure the ending she wants. The wonderful effect of her entry is such that an audience will no doubt forget for the moment that Helena has been stage managing the solution through Diana all of the time. On the way to the reunion with Bertram, Helena has given Diana her "instructions" (IV.iv.27) to the end that Helena will appear a welcome relief after the confusion which she herself has set afoot.

For the moment, however, the scheming is forgotten and it seems that all is ending well. In fact, says Kenneth Muir, if Bertram were to be given a longer speech at the end and the Clown better jokes, the ending would be

satisfactory indeed. But Shakespeare has not obliged Professor Muir, and critics are almost unanimous in their agreement that the ending does not satisfy.

Besides admitting that certain romance or "Prodigal Son" conventions have lost their savor for contemporary audiences, those troubled by the ending present three principal objections: first, according to Turner, because Helena is as much a Machiavel as a miracle worker and Bertram is no prize either, "our moral sensibility flinches at the aggressive Helena who traps the hero into marriage and at the same time is repelled by Bertram who snobbishly rejects Helena and lies ruthlessly in the trial scene."²³

Secondly, the ending seems forced and moves so quickly to take advantage of Helena's reappearance that no one seems to have learned very much. The King is ready to marry off Diana to another unsuspecting ward, Helena seems, according to Howard Felperin, "blithely unaware that the self-discoveries [she has] precipitated represent only half the struggle toward self recovery,"²⁴ and, according to Anthony Dawson, the principals "leave the stage without coming to terms with themselves, their evil, or the evil around them."²⁵

Finally, many critics explain their unsettled feelings by an appeal to the clash of forms or modes. According to A.P. Rossiter, "the fairy tale solution we might like to believe in (and are adjured to by the title, and the 'historical method' interpreters) is in conflict with the realistic, psychological exposure -- which is very much more convincing."²⁶ As Clifford Leech says, "A traditional story and realistic characterization can be fused as in Lear...But here there is no fusion."²⁷ A variant of this last explanation supposes that the clash of modes is a sign of Shakespeare's experimenting with the genre of romance, testing both its ability to contain recalcitrant material like unrepentant people and its sense of an "endless

ending" which can be interrupted only arbitrarily by the need to finish a play.

According to the rhetorical analysis of this thesis, the ending does indeed leave the audience uneasy because for several reasons it is unable to identify with the presented solution. Shakespeare has deliberately frustrated his formal development in such a way that the qualitative change introduced by Helena's entry is undercut; no effective scapegoat takes away those attitudes which threaten the acceptance of a new order; and Helena herself remains an ambiguous good, leaving audiences not only unreconciled to Bertram, as Dr. Johnson was, but unreconciled to the heroine as well.

Thus, despite Tillyard's belief that "there is not the least cause for doubting [Bertram's] sincerity,"²⁸ an audience will harbor some doubts if it would ask upon hearing Bertram's plea for "pardon," "Haven't we heard 'pardon' before?" A comparison between the Trial scene and Helena's first being presented to Bertram for marriage raises the suspicion that Bertram may very well be exercising the better part of his reputed valor and giving up only because "there is no fettering of authority." Moreover, Lafew's choric comment that his eyes "smell onions" may be no more trustworthy a guide to audience response than his comments in the earlier scene that the young lords were rejecting Helena.

Bertram's conditional acceptance ("If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly, / I'll love her dearly, ever, ever dearly" V.iii.314-316), which has troubled all but the most optimistic critics, reenforces the resemblance to the marriage scene in which Bertram had taken Helena's hand in obedience to the King but did not promise to say that she would be his. Shakespeare, then, not only has frustrated the progress of the plot by the introduction of conflicting testimony at Bertram's trial, but has also undercut the quality of

the resolution by actions analogous to those earlier in the play which show at least Bertram's resistance to the promised joy. This is an example of what Burke calls "self-interference" on the part of the playwright, the act of counteracting the drift of his own resolution in the name of "pure persuasion" or truly open interpretation.

Besides using formal frustrations, Shakespeare has failed to show that Bertram has learned anything about himself which would incline him to repent like the Prodigal Son and Fallen Humanity which an allegorical reading supposes him to be. A quick comparison with the unmasking of Parolles has convinced some critics that Bertram has been similarly relieved of any illusions about himself. As G.K. Hunter maintains: "... Bertram's promise to marry Diana is based on nothing but words, and his unmasking in V.iii, no less than Parolles' in IV.iii, is a stripping away of the screen of words with which he, no less than Parolles, has concealed himself from his own deeds."²⁹

However, as I believe, Parolles' influence on Bertram is not so decisive that his exposure need prove anything to the young man. Besides, during Parolles' interrogation, Bertram distances himself from his companion, refusing either to admit or to deny the damaging revelation that he is a "whale to virginity." He leaves the scene of the unmasking showing no sign that it has changed him for the better. To be effective, a scapegoat has to be acknowledged and disowned; Bertram does neither.

Moreover, if any analogy is to be drawn between Bertram and Parolles, it should be noted that Parolles remains unchanged by the unmasking. He knows who he is before it takes place, and he determines to live by finding a place for himself as he is once it is over. What looks like an unmasking of false seeming turns out to be no such thing, and if this is an analogy for Bertram's

situation at the Trial, it means that he has not changed any more than Parolles has.

With no scapegoat to serve a playwright-rhetoricians's purpose of separating out the true from the false attitudes, the audience cannot be moved to see the "drift" of the argument in some plausible direction and consequently cannot prepare itself to identify with the proposed conclusion.

Finally, Bertram's conditional acceptance of Helena mirrors the predicament of the audience which has not been shown any definition of her character which is not ambivalent. She is the presented solution, the promised relief from the burden of confused identities and the threat of punishment. However, she is also forced on Bertram by the King and the Countess who have identified their interests with hers and who have either tried to prevent Bertram from achieving an honor of his own or have disparaged the honor he has received. Marriage with Helena is at once Bertram's destiny and a regressive action, binding Bertram to his fortune in a place he thought he had left behind.

In bringing the full weight of authority against Bertram, Shakespeare has contrived to bring the King to Rousillon and thus assures the rhetorical fitness of having the trial as well as the enforcing of the marriage take place at Bertram's "home." As a result of this, Lafew's words to the Countess and Bertram in I.i prove ironically prophetic: "You shall find of the King a husband, madam; you, sir, a father." And Bertram's words in the same scene come true more grimly than he had expected: "I must attend his Majesty's command, to whom I am now in ward, evermore in subjection" (I.i.4-6). All of this leaves an audience, as well as Bertram, unable to move beyond an acceptance of Helena which is not somehow qualified. If this play is to end

at all, it must end with "all seems well" and "if it end so meet" because, as Touchstone knows, your "if" is a great peacemaker.

I believe that Shakespeare's rhetorical skills in this play, in Troilus and Cressida, and in Measure for Measure leave an audience more aware than usual of its craving for a resolution with which it can identify. For whatever reason, Shakespeare has refused to provide it; instead, he presents us with an alternative: either we "crush this a little" so that the play bows to "what we will," as Malvolio did, or we face the fact of an unsatisfied appetite for order and remain content with complexity.

Perhaps, as John Barton suggests, Shakespeare had become dissatisfied with conventional forms as adequate accounts of experience. Perhaps he was concerned with how to sophisticate the form so that it could give "that sense of reality breaking in on convention...a wry sense of what life's really like and what people are really like...at odds with what the story-line dictates."³⁰ Barton sees this sense of a split between romance convention and a sense of reality as "coming to a boil" in Shakespeare's dramatic development from the time of As You Like It and Twelfth Night; Stephen Booth, as I have said in chapter 2, would locate Shakespeare's experimenting with a sense of "indefiniteness" at least as far back as Love's Labor's Lost. Shakespeare, the great story teller, knew with what contrivance an ending has to be provided; as a rhetorician, he knew that where the story ends up is a matter of deciding on what side one chooses to argue.

For whatever reason, Shakespeare, in the so-called problem plays, is more content than he is elsewhere to leave the argument open-ended and to provide the kind of ending which John Fowles in The Magus suggests is more true-to-life, at least to an audience in the twentieth century:

The smallest hope, a bare continuing to exist, is enough for the antihero's future; leave him, says our age, leave him where mankind is in its history, at a crossroads, in dilemma, with all to lose and only more of the same to win; let him survive, but give him no direction, no reward; because we too are waiting, in our solitary rooms where the telephone never rings, waiting for this girl, this truth, this crystal of humanity, this reality lost through imagination, to return; and to say she returns is a lie.

But the maze has no centre. An ending is no more than a point in sequence, a snip of the cutting shears. Benedick kissed Beatrice at last; but ten years later? And Elsinore, that following spring?³¹

Dr. Johnson, who accepted Helena as simply good, complained because Bertram is "dismissed to happiness." But Bertram, I suggest, is dismissed to Helena, and what this will mean for both of them remains undefined.

IV. TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

...my soul aches
To know, when two authorities are up,
Neither supreme, how soon confusion
May enter 'twixt the gap of both and take
The one by th'other.

Coriolanus (III.i.108-112)

For Shakespeare and his contemporaries, stories of the fall of Troy had a special significance insofar as they could be translated into stories about England itself. According to popular belief, Great Britain had been founded by Brutus, a Trojan general, and London was New Troy. The inherent drama of a city subject to siege and of heroic action in its defense was complemented by the sense that, in the case of Troy, this was family history.¹

Before Shakespeare tried his hand at it, the Troy story had become popular primarily through Caxton's edition of The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye (c.1474), Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde (c.1480), and Lydgate's Troy-book (1513). Not much evidence of dramatic versions survives, although the outline exists of a play written by Dekker and Chettle for the Admiral's Company c. 1596.

As Chaucer tells the story, the poem is a meditation in the manner of Boethius on the fickleness of Fortune, the instability of all goods of the world (of which Criseyde is the best example), and on the importance of trust in Providence over all. In Chaucer's presentation of her, Criseyde is not so much blamed for abandoning Troilus as pitied for her "slydyng corage," and Troilus is pitied, too, for his helpless condition and blindness to the consolations of philosophy. According to one interpretation of this subtle poem, Chaucer, who also lived in times troubled by "lak of stedfastnesse," wrote of a way out for his audience through an attitude which is granted to

Troilus only after he has left behind the perspective of this world for that of his heavenly home.

According to Bullough, Henryson, who follows Chaucer, began the tradition of blaming Cressida for treachery and of punishing her with leprosy, thus simplifying Chaucer's story by making the woman a scapegoat of those values which were to be shunned by a society seeking to pattern itself on the heroic virtues represented by Troilus. Likewise, Caxton, and especially Lydgate, simplify the story by exalting the chivalry and warlike courage of Troilus and Hector through whom Trojan (and implicitly English) virtues are commended.²

Shakespeare approaches the story of Troy differently, with the result that his is, indeed, a troubling play. For Shakespeare, no attitude is commendable. Trojans along with Greeks, Troilus and Cressida alike, are all sunk in the quicksands of time, and there is no way out for any of them. Shakespeare eschews the rhetoric of the chroniclers (who commend the Trojans at the expense of the Greeks), of Chapman (whose translation of the Iliad in 1598 restores the Homeric emphasis on Greek virtues), and of Chaucer (who pities both Troilus and Criseyde and then supplies the perspective that would transcend their troubles).

Along with Bullough, therefore, I do not believe that analyses like G. Wilson Knight's, for example, accurately account for the play. Knight's thesis is that Shakespeare is contrasting Trojan intuition and Greek intellect, between which Troilus is torn as Cressida, symbolically, is transferred from Troy to the Greek camp. According to Knight, "The Trojan party stands for human beauty and worth, the Greek party for the bestial and stupid elements of man, the barren stagnancy of intellect divorced from action, and the criticism which exposes these things with jeers." Therefore,

"Troilus champions, not only Troy, but the fine values of humanity fighting against the demonic powers of cynicism."³

I do not think that Shakespeare believed in such simple contrasts, and, by examining the formal construction of the play, it will be obvious how Shakespeare makes it impossible for an audience to identify with either Trojans or Greeks. My reading owes much to Una Ellis-Fermor, who suggests that Shakespeare is using form to create the experience of formlessness (the idea of chaos), and to Katherine Stockholder and Rosalie Colie, who analyze how Shakespeare frustrates an audience's generic and formal expectations in order to empty all values and all categorical expectations of significance. ⁴

These analyses coincide exactly with Kenneth Burke's philosophy of literary form: that its usual purpose is to arouse expectations in an audience in order to fulfill them, thus leading the audience to agreement about the way out of a presented tension. When this purpose of form is frustrated, the audience is unable to identify with a way out through the play and is both thrown back on its own resources and forced to recognize the limits of any formal constructs or attitudes to encompass a situation.

"WHAT A PAIR OF SPECTACLES IS HERE!"

(Troilus and Cressida IV.iv 14-15)

Shakespeare sets to work immediately as Troilus's entrance in I.i.1 frustrates the expectations set up by the Prologue and thus initiates the audience into a pattern that will be observed throughout the play. The Prologue had entered armed, "suited/ In like condition to our argument" (Prologue, l.25), and had announced the "quarrel" of the Trojan war.⁵ Troilus

enters, announcing that he will "unarm again," leaving the battle without because of the battle within his heart. He seems, like Romeo, too love sick for battle, and, for the moment appears to provide an alternative to war through love. He seems, so to speak, an audience's "way in" to the play so that through him it will find a way out of the burden represented by the war. However, unlike Romeo's love, Troilus's does not develop into any deep rooted, constant, or transforming commitment. He disengages himself from the war but finds no lasting alternative to it.

Moreover, Troilus's love is subverted from the start. Like Romeo, Troilus uses many similes to describe his heart-sick condition. He is "weaker than a woman's tear,/ Tamer than sleep, fonder than ignorance " (I.i.9-10). Like Romeo, Troilus has his Mercutio in the person of Pandarus to insinuate a more sensual interpretation of the motives and the progress of love. However, in Romeo's case, the proverbial conceits and the bantering of Mercutio are a way of measuring the difference between Romeo's commonplace love for Rosaline and his transforming love for Juliet. Romeo does not joke with Mercutio about Juliet; in fact, he does not mention her. Even as his friends seek to "raise up" his spirit in the name of his mistress Rosaline, Romeo is turning his back away from them and his face toward the light in Juliet's window.

Troilus, by contrast, speaks openly of Cressida to Pandarus, and his love for her suffers a cheapening by Pandarus's likening her "somewhat" to Helen and by reminding the audience that he and Cressida are kin. As the go-between and instrument of their love, Pandarus is like Juliet's nurse, the drudge in their service. But the Nurse, like Mercutio, functions as a way of distinguishing a merely sensual interpretation of love from its transforming nature. Pandarus, on the other hand, functions as a reminder that the love of Troilus and Cressida will not transform either of them. Knowing that he can rely on an audience's common knowledge of how the Trojan war and the love of

Troilus end up, Shakespeare uses Pandarus as a way of undercutting Troilus's high-sounding assessment of his own condition. Troilus is not a Romeo; he is as self-deluding as Orsino, and, as such, is more laughable than tragic.

To emphasize that Troilus's love cannot be taken as seriously as he tries to make it sound, Shakespeare ends the scene with Troilus's arming once again at the call of Aeneas, leaving his thoughts of love for the "sport abroad" in the field.

In 120 lines, Shakespeare enacts the rhythm of the entire play by frustrating syllogistic progression at the beginning and at the end of the scene. The Prologue's promise of an armed conflict is undone by the entrance of Troilus unarming himself, and his purpose to unarm himself fails as he takes to the field. By frustrating formal expectations in this way, Shakespeare prepares an audience for Troilus's actions later when, once again, he will desert Cressida for battle; at the same time, Shakespeare implicitly warns an audience not to identify with any action as a way out of the situation of the war.

Shakespeare also shows that the purpose for action may in fact be frivolous or arbitrary, thus vitiating the act as unworthy of serious attention. Cressida is no Juliet, we soon discover, and neither is Helen. In his soliloquy after the exit of Pandarus and before the entrance of Aeneas, Troilus sums up his attitude toward Helen and toward Cressida which, under analysis, shows him to be untrustworthy not only for his inconstancy but also for his arbitrary idealism.

First, Troilus reasserts his resolution to retire from the fighting because Helen is not worth the battle; she is only made worthy by the amount of blood spilled on her behalf:

Peace, you ungracious clamors! Peace, rude sounds!
Fools on both sides! Helen must needs be fair,
When with your blood you daily paint her thus.
I cannot fight upon this argument;
It is too starved a subject for my sword.

(I.i.93-97)

This position, which he takes up now, he will retract in the Trojan council, reversing himself in order to propose the worthiness of fighting to keep Helen in Troy. His assessment of Cressida as "stubborn, chaste, against all suit" (I.i.101) will likewise be reversed not only when Troilus succeeds in winning her, but when Diomedes succeeds too.

Given the inconstancy of actions in this play, the question of identity will become problematic. Troilus hints that this is already the case by asking, "Tell me, Apollo, for thy Daphne's love,/ What Cressid is, what Pandar, and what we" (I.i.102-103). Ironically, Apollo's love for Daphne was so hot and lawless in its pursuit that it lost him the nymph, who also lost her own life, when she was changed into a bay tree trying to escape from him.⁶ Troilus's hot love will meet a similar frustration, and he will come no closer to finding an answer to his question. This is largely because Troilus is a naive idealist, adept at finding similes for his experience which name it as he would like it to be and not as it is. To him,

Her [Cressida's] bed is India; there she lies, a pearl.
Between our Ilium and where she resides
Let it be called the wild and wand'ring flood,
Ourself the merchant, and this sailing Pandar
Our doubtful hope, our convoy, and our bark.

(I.i.104-108)

The key to Troilus's self-deluding state is the phrase "Let it be called." Obviously, the simile he suggests is arbitrary. Moreover, the mercantile imagery makes Troilus's love-quest sound at first exotic and adventuresome, but it is at the same time implicitly reductive, making of love a purchase or acquisition. The same imagery of trade will reappear in arguments for the

keeping of Helen, likewise called a "pearl," and besides linking Helen with Cressida will reduce both of them to bartered objects. There is also, I think, an ironic suggestion for Shakespeare's audience in Troilus's likening himself to a merchant in search of a fine pearl. According to the parable of Jesus in Matthew 13:45-46, a merchant will sell all that he has to buy a pearl of great price (the Kingdom of Heaven), but the merchant actually loses nothing for the exchange because of the pearl's intrinsic worth. Troilus and the Trojans, on the contrary, are giving everything they have for "pearls" of doubtful worth, making their service greater than the god, as Hector will say, and thus calling their wisdom into question.

Troilus, then, is an idealist who cannot be trusted to name his experience accurately and who cannot be expected to remain constant even to the purpose he has mistakenly conceived. After resolving that he cannot fight, Troilus, immediately after this soliloquy, goes off to battle along with Aeneas. As the play continues, Shakespeare uses the frustration of formal expectations to show that every action on the scene of the war is like Troilus's: without constant or credible purpose. This leaves an audience able to identify neither with Troilus nor Cressida, neither with Hector nor Achilles. As rival attitudes contend for which will win or lose, an audience becomes increasingly disturbed by the suspicion that the outcome makes no difference either way. There is small choice in rotten apples. Cressida's betrayal of Troilus is indefensible, but so is naive idealism. Achilles' butchery of Hector is barbaric, but Hector's chivalry is beside the point. On the scene of war, no action presents itself as seriously able to wrest significance from impending doom.

In I.ii, the entrance of Cressida continues the pattern of frustrating expectations. According to Troilus's account of her, we expect a scornful mistress of rare beauty; instead, she enters asking trivial questions in

ordinary prose, eliciting gossip about Hector and Ajax from her servant Alexander. However, Cressida quickly shows herself to be shrewd as well as inquisitive. As Pandarus enters, Cressida makes sure that he overhears her praising Hector to Alexander:

Cressida: Hector's a gallant man
Alexander: As may be in the world, lady.
Pandarus: What's that? What's that?

(I.ii.39-41)

Thus begins a game between uncle and niece in which Pandarus tries to forward the suit of Troilus, Cressida anticipates his moves, puts him off by pretending to be unimpressed with Troilus's qualities, and ends up revealing her true feelings only in soliloquy.

In this scene, as in the first, the question of identity comes to the fore as Pandarus matches Troilus with Hector to Troilus's advantage and Cressida rejects the comparison, giving the impression that she thinks Hector is the better man, while explicitly saying only that each man is what he is:

Pandarus: Troilus is the better man of the two.
Cressida: O Jupiter! There's no comparison.
Pandarus: What? not between Troilus and Hector?
Do you know a man if you see him?
Cressida: Ay, if I ever saw him before and knew him.
Pandarus: Well, I say Troilus is Troilus.
Cressida: Then you say as I say, for I am sure he is
not Hector.
Pandarus: No, nor Hector is not Troilus in some
degrees.
Cressida: 'Tis just to each of them; he is himself.
Pandarus: Himself? Alas, poor Troilus, I would he
were.
Cressida: So he is.

(I.ii.61-75)

Cressida also refuses to be made jealous by Pandarus's saying that Helen praised Troilus's complexion above Paris's. To her, "Paris hath color enough" (I.ii.102). Clearly, the men are what they are, and there is no comparison possible. Ironically, what each one is will never become clear because they

all end up looking alike in their merely willful pursuit of questionable goals.

After Pandarus tells Cressida a long tale about the hair on Troilus's chin (where, once again, the build up to a punch line leads to the let down of the actual joke), uncle and niece review the return of the soldiers to Troy. Pandarus describes each of the heroes while building up anticipation for Troilus, but when Troilus enters the effect is deflating. First of all, his place in the procession is after Helenus, a priest who fights "indifferent well"; then, Cressida points to Troilus with the question, "What sneaking fellow comes yonder?". Pandarus, who ought to know his man, confuses Troilus with Deiphobus and recovers without much conviction: "Where? Yonder? That's Deiphobus. 'Tis Troilus! There's a man, niece, hem? Brave Troilus, the prince of chivalry!" (I.ii.235-237). Finally, to cap the anticlimax, more soldiers enter after Troilus, identified by Pandarus as "Asses, fools, dolts; chaff and bran, chaff and bran; porridge after meat" (I.ii.250-251).⁷

Deflation by association could hardly be more complete, and then Cressida suggests another comparison: "There is amongst the Greeks Achilles, a better man than Troilus" (I.ii.256-257). Pandarus chides her for not knowing what a man is, praises her for defending herself skillfully, and then leaves to attend on Troilus. The comparison with Achilles is not accidental. It suggests a contrast between Greek and Trojan, warrior and lover, which will end up merely as a distinction without a difference. If Troilus's love for Cressida unfits him for battle, Achilles' love for Polyxena will do the same; if Achilles' fierce rage at the loss of Patroclus will cause him to hack at Hector, Troilus's rage at the loss of Cressida and Hector will cause him to vow revenge on Diomedes and Achilles.

At the conclusion of scene ii, Cressida's soliloquy shows her true feelings for Troilus and her shrewd assessment of his unstable intentions. "Men," she says, "prize the thing ungained more than it is;/ That she was never yet, that ever knew/ Love got so sweet as when desire did sue" (I.ii.301-303). Cressida knows that "Things won are done, joy's soul lies in the doing" (I.ii.299). Unlike Troilus, who trusts in the time to come for fame to canonize him, Cressida knows that the present is the moment that matters, and she knows also how quickly the present becomes the past.

In thinking this, she is no different from Ulysses when he urges Achilles to remember that "To have done, is to hang/ Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail/ In monumental mock'ry"; therefore, "Take the instant way" (III.iii.152-154). Cressida and the Greeks share a pragmatic stance toward action; they are without illusions. Ironically, however, their best laid plans cannot come to any satisfactory conclusion in this play. Cressida calculates the opportune moment for giving in to Troilus, only to lose him overnight. What she calls her "firm love" is doomed from the start, not only by the chance of war, which sends her to the Greeks, but also by her pragmatic skill at adaptation to those circumstances. She survives by her wits, but no better for Diomedes than for Troilus.

Achilles, too, seizes the opportune moment to kill Hector, but the result is only increased incentive for slaughter by the Trojans and a war that continues past the end. The argument that the Greeks eventually win the war is beside the point, since the play does not present this and since outside the play they are defeated by time in any case. The tragedy of Agamemnon by Aeschylus begins at the point where the Iliad ends.

With the close of scene ii, the audience should be actively cooperating in a critique of rival attitudes represented by Troilus and Cressida. The

conventional understanding of Cressida as a whore for betraying Troilus undercuts her profession of "firm love" and makes her dallying not only trivial but even sinister; on the other hand, Troilus's vacillation between love and war proves him to be less than the constant lover he claims to be, while the presentation of Cressida undercuts the naive idealism with which he insists on evaluating her. Cressida is no prize, and Troilus is no trustworthy appriser.

Working differently than he has in All's Well, Shakespeare is representing rival attitudes in two different characters and two different camps; thus, having begun with an even-handed critique of both attitudes in the lovers, Shakespeare opens up the stage of fools to include the Greeks.

THE GREEKS IN COUNCIL: THE FACTION OF FOOLS

The first long moments of I.iii are devoted to the speeches of the generals in council, whose reiterations of some proverbial wisdom from moral philosophy make it sound hollow even as they speak. To say that as metal is tried in fire, trials test the constancy of men is true enough. But there is a subtle difference between a proverb and a cliché, and the long-winded, simile-laden, repetitious development of this simple thought by Agamemnon and Nestor helps to empty their speeches of whatever wisdom they contain. Moreover, they seem to be using a kind of argument, but it amounts to a rationalization for the stalemate at which the war action has arrived. By using moral wisdom in this way, they show the disjunction between their inactivity and any reasonable explanation for it. Whether Jove is testing their "mettle" or not, the result is the same: events have gone beyond their

power to manage them, and they are looking for a way not to bear it with constancy but to act with effectiveness.

Ulysses' speech on the importance of observing "the specialty of rule" or "degree" has a similar effect. It contains commonly accepted images and analogies (the general is like "the hive/ To whom the foragers shall all repair"; the commandment of a king is like the medicinable effect of the sun on evil planets) but these have only a descriptive, not a prescriptive power. They amount to a rationalization of the order that happens to exist at the moment; they are not a cogent defense of an order that ought to exist. It is true enough that without some accepted basis for distinction, "Force should be right, or rather right and wrong --/ Between whose endless jar justice resides --/ Should lose their names, and so should justice too" (I.iii.116-118). It is true that mere appetite, "seconded with will and power,/ Must make perforce a universal prey/ And last eat up itself" (I.iii.122-124). But Ulysses' speech provides no criteria for determining which person or which principles serve as the "authentic" basis of order. Rather, his speech amounts merely to an upholding of the present authorities with the implication that whatever is, is right. Moreover, his belonging to the inner circle of the order that exists creates a conflict of interest which undercuts the force of his argument.

Ulysses' arguments may be true in the abstract, they may be proverbial or even a cliché; as such, they can provide a means for an audience attuned to these orthodoxies to identify momentarily with the wisdom of the analysis. However, Ulysses' use of these arguments is pragmatic: to bring Achilles to heel as an effective instrument in the hands of those who have a use for him. This speech on degree is a set piece of orthodox Elizabethan theory, but because it appears in the mouth of the wily Ulysses, its wisdom is qualified;

its applicability to actual events is questionable. It is like Rosencrantz's applying to Claudius the orthodox teaching that:

The cress of majesty
Dies not alone; but, like a gulf, doth draw
What's near it with it: it is a massy wheel
Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
Are mortis'd and adjoin'd; which, when it falls,
Each small annexment, petty consequence,
Attends the boist'rous ruin. Never alone
Did the King sigh, but with a general groan.
(Hamlet III.iii.15-23)

Since Claudius is a usurper, the disturbing question arises: even if this doctrine is true, how does it apply? How can it serve as a criterion for distinguishing a true symbol of order from a false one?

The lengthy discussion of the generals establishes that the danger of others' imitating Achilles' insubordination is great and that their authority must be reasserted. At this point, a trumpet cuts short the speech making, and the abrupt arrival of Aeneas further undercuts the credibility of the generals' authority and even the greatness of the danger.

Aeneas, either pretending not to recognize Agamemnon or intending to insult him, calls into question any intrinsic basis for his authority: "How," he asks, "may/ A stranger to those most imperial looks/ Know them from eyes of other mortals?" (I.iii.223-224). This is a daring question, and one that raises again the problem of identity. Among rival positions or claimants to power, how is one to determine the difference between them and the priority of one over the other?

Leaving this question in the air, Aeneas issues a challenge from Hector which deflates the serious nature of the rivalry between Greeks and Trojans. The chivalric challenge is over a lady who bears only a conventional resemblance to the real woman in question. Hector boasts that "He hath a lady

wiser, fairer, truer, / Than ever Greek did compass in his arms" (I.iii.275-276). This estimate of Andromache's character did not prevent Hector from chiding her on his return from battle, taking out on her his anger at Ajax, nor will it keep him from silencing her when she pleads with him not to go into battle in Act V. Hector's challenge is over something or someone who does not exist and, as such, reflects not only Troilus's estimation of Cressida, but Helen herself, the ostensible cause of the war. As Diomedes and Hector himself will argue, Helen's worth is out of all proportion to the blood spilt on her behalf. There is something unconvincing about the rivalry of Greeks and Trojans if they fight for causes that cannot be substantiated.

Aeneas's challenge, then, demonstrates the impossibility of applying Ulysses' philosophy on authority and degree with any certitude, at the same time that it shows the hollowness of the Trojan alternative. At his exit, Ulysses and Nestor come together to plot how to use this challenge to build up Ajax for the discomforting of Achilles. As they do so, they show how little bearing the seeming-substance of Ulysses' previous arguments has on practical policy.

Nestor at first suggests the common sense response of waking Achilles to answer Hector; after all, he is their best man and surest chance of winning. Ulysses, however, suggests the more devious approach of using Ajax whose success in the contest will shame Achilles into action and whose failure will prove nothing against the Greeks. This rapid shift from abstract philosophy to practical policy makes Ulysses' moralizing on appetite seem all the more platitudinous and unable either to account for the actions he himself undertakes or to influence their direction. In this play, rival parties and rival actions will seek to affect the course of the war and to defeat opposing positions, but in the absence of clear criteria for distinguishing their

worth, neither will emerge as the undisputed way out of the chaos caused by their strife.

Given the presentation of all the attitudes so far, Act One fittingly closes with two deflating perspectives on the immediate action drawn from images of trade and eating which also recur throughout the play. Ulysses compares his scheme of entering Ajax into the lists to sharp business practices:

Let us, like merchants,
First show foul wares, and think perchance they'll
sell;
If not, the lustre of the better shall exceed
By showing the worse first.

(I.iii.358-361)

And Nestor "digests" this advice readily:

Now, Ulysses, I begin to relish thy advice,
And I will give a taste thereof forthwith
To Agamemnon.

(I.iii.386-388)

According to Caroline Spurgeon, the images of food, drink and cooking in this play far exceed their use in other plays.⁸ As Derek Traversi explains, these images, which include the act of tasting, fit the play well because they express two sides of the digestive process: "Taste is a sense at once luxuriant, delicate, and transitory; also, it can be connected, in gross opposition to Troilus's bodiless idealism, with digestion and the functioning of the body...In fact, the very sense which expresses the related intensity and lightness of Trojan passion becomes, in the Greeks, a symbol of inaction and distemper out of which issue the boils, 'the bothey core,' of Thersites' disgust."⁹

Of course, Ulysses clearly knows that "Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all/ To envious and calumniating time" (III.iii.172-173) which puts

the "scraps" of "good deeds past" into his wallet, "devoured/ As fast as they are made, forgot as soon/ As done" (III.iii.148-150). But taste serves well to show that all the transformations in this play are from the refined to the vulgar, from (as Troilus says) "love's thrice-repured nectar" to the "orts," "bits," and "greasy relics" of Cressida's "o'ereaten faith" (III.ii.21 and V.ii.155-157). Obviously, cynicism, couched in gastro-intestinal language, is not confined to the Greeks.

The appetites of both Greeks and Trojans will seek to devour one another for the sake of "sweet" Helen who, it will be said, is, in fact, "bitter" to her country. They will become more alike one another in their rapacious rivalry than they are different from one another in principle. That is why Nestor's concluding couplet neatly summarizes the action of all the rivals, even though he applies it only to the immediate plan of pitting Ajax against Achilles:

Two curs shall tame each other; pride alone
Must tarre the mastiffs on, as 'twere a bone.
(I.iii.389-390)

THERSITES: A PRIVILEGED MAN

Patroclus: Then tell me, I pray thee, what's thyself?
Thersites: Thy knower, Patroclus.
(II.iii.48-50)

By Act II a frustration of purposeful action is emerging as the rhythm of the play so that we will not be surprised to discover that the seeming-wise plan of Ulysses and Nestor comes to nothing. As Thersites reports: "They set me up in policy, that mongrel cur, Ajax, against that dog of as bad a kind, Achilles; and now is the cur Ajax prouder than the cur Achilles, and will not arm today" (V.iv.12-16).

It is beginning to emerge that one rival attitude looks very much like the other, both as intrinsically flawed and as powerless to control the flow of events. Neither Troilus's visionary idealism nor Cressida's short-sighted pragmatism can recommend itself to an audience seeking a kind of salvation through significant action in the teeth of devouring time. As Act II begins, the choric comments of Thersites voice a feeling of disgust as purpose is reduced to appetite, action to motion, and man to beast. Thersites has only invective to offer, but it serves as an audience's outlet for nausea at what is being "digested" in this play.

No sooner is the council concluded and the plotting of Ulysses begun than Thersites enters railing: "Agamemnon, how if he had boils -- full, all over, generally?...And those boils did run? -- say so -- did not the general run then? Were not that a botchy core? Then would some matter come from him. I see none now" (II.i.1-9). The generals have just decided that Achilles is to blame for the "fever whereof all our power is sick" (I.iii.139), and now Thersites suggests that the diagnosis is not that simple. The disease is "general," and, as the pun suggests, this means that it affects the person of the "head and general," as Agamemnon describes himself (I.iii.222), and does so completely. Through him, of course, the entire Greek camp is affected. There is no "matter" in their designs worth more than the matter of an erupted boil.

From this perspective, the Greeks at war lose all heroic stature and are reduced to sick men whose actions are symptomatic of disease, not of health and vigor. If Thersites is right, it will not work for Ulysses to make a scapegoat out of Achilles in order to save the order of which Agamemnon is the head. The order itself is too "generally" far gone to be saved. This is like the state of Denmark in which King Claudius calls Hamlet (his "mighty opposite") the "hectic" in his blood and an ulcer, while he is himself,

according to the Ghost, the one whose incestuous lust and fratricide have poisoned all of Denmark.

The disease imagery is one of several ways in which the railing of Thersites reduces the heroic action, however rationalized, to mere appetite or motion with only an ostensibly defensible purpose. Thersites also uses animal imagery to reduce the actions of men to a bestial counterpart. Combining animal with disease imagery, Thersites turns on Ajax who has struck him: "The plague of Greece upon thee, thou mongrel beef-witted lord!" (II.i.12-13). Thersites' bestiary would make of Ajax and Achilles mongrel curs, Ulysses a dog-fox, Troilus an ass, Diomedes a hunting hound, and Menelaus a bull baited by the dog Paris.

As this list makes clear, Thersites' invective applies to all -- no Greek or Trojan excepted. By taking all men to be beasts and by reducing all heroic action to the level of sensual appetite, Thersites makes clear that there is no reasonable distinction between the rivals and that therefore a victory on either side will gain nothing for anyone. There is hardly a more troubling perspective in all of Shakespeare's plays. If Thersites is right, all action is merely a rationalized license to slaughter. Neither the Greeks who seek to regain Helen nor the Trojans who have stolen her (in retaliation for the theft of their aunt) "deserve" to win. "A plague on both your houses!", as Mercutio would say.

Because Thersites tries to debunk the heroic postures of men who are intent on destroying one another, Kenneth Burke calls him Saint Thersites -- an example of quizzicality toward symbol structures which are erected or used for a deadly purpose:

And what of Thersites,
Despised of all his tribe
Whipped by power, wisdom, and heroic love, all three:

(By Agamemnon, Ulysses, and Achilles),
Loathed by the bard that made him,
Ultimate filth, speaking against epic war?
What of Thersites?
Salute -- to Saint Thersites.¹⁰

Thersites' invective may serve a purgative purpose, but as mere railing it does not offer any way out through action. With a war on and with rivals in conflict, man, the symbol-using animal, is radically frustrated if he suspects that there is no action he can take which is not illusory. Thersites, however, is not obliged to provide answers. He tells only what he knows and leaves others to make of his remarks what they will.

As Achilles explains to Patroclus, Thersites is a "privileged" man (II.iii.59). He is like the Fool who is licensed to speak his mind for his betters' instruction and entertainment. The analogy explains much about Thersites, including the vehemence with which he is made to speak out in this play. As a bastard and as a soldier serving voluntary among the Greeks, Thersites is an outsider, able to take a disinterested perspective on the action. However, as a Fool, Thersites belongs to a household of sorts, obliged to share what he knows with his master.

Like Lear's Fool, Thersites speaks out not only because it is his job, but, even more, because in some sense he cares about his fellows. True, Lear's Fool speaks in gentler, more riddling ways, but his message is a hard one for all that: Lear has made a mistake, and he will pay a price. The Fool's astringent comments seek to cure Lear of the blinding pride which proves to be his undoing. In no way, however, does the Fool use what he knows to desert his master; he can advise Kent, according to common sense, that no one should follow a wheel as it goes down hill, but he refuses to heed his own warning and follows after Lear into the storm. The perspective he offers,

then, is a sympathetic critique of Lear's tragedy, not merely a satirical indictment of Lear's folly.

Thersites' bitter style conceals his care about what is happening to Ajax and to Achilles, his two masters. His concern is not as evident as Lear's Fool's, but it is there, exasperated by the folly which leads men to their own slaughter. Thersites' words to Ajax are harsh but true: "Thou hast no more brain than I have in my elbows; an asinico may tutor thee. Thou scurvy-valiant ass, thou art here but to thrash Trojans, and thou art bought and sold among those of any wit like a barbarian slave" (II.i.45-50). It does not sound like a caring critique, but it is a true abstract of Ajax's condition and, to that extent, it is a service to say it. Ajax beats Thersites, but in doing so he is silencing the only one who can tell him who he is.

Thersites has similar words for Achilles: "A great deal of your wit, too, lies in your sinews, or else there be liars." Then, addressing both Achilles and Ajax, he says, "Hector shall have a great catch if he knock out either of your brains. 'A were as good crack a fusty nut with no kernel...There's Ulysses and old Nestor...yoke you like draft oxen and make you plow up the wars" (II.i.102-111).

This is precisely how Ulysses views Achilles -- as the "sinew and the forehead of our host" (I.iii.144), who, along with "dull brainless Ajax" (I.iii.380) should submit to those who will guide his power like a battering ram in the hands of those "that with the fineness of their souls/ By reason guide his execution" (I.iii.207-210). Thersites, then, offers a perspective which sounds radically reductive but which is also partially true. It is even half-way to compassion through concern. Like other satirists such as Voltaire and Mark Twain, Thersites' railing implies values he is trying to protect, and

the scurrility of his invective indicates how desperate he has become when he is not heeded.

Even more than his verbal commentary, Thersites' functioning at two points serves to reenforce the awareness that in this play rival attitudes -- both in love and war -- are more alike than different and equally have no effect on the flow of events.

On the field of battle in Act V, Thersites, surprised by Hector, admits that he is "a rascal, a scurvy, railing knave, a very filthy rogue," and he is allowed to live (V.iv.29-30). In this encounter Thersites shows that he is obviously not "for Hector's match" (V.v.27), and Hector's chivalry in letting him go seems easily to distinguish heroic from vile behavior. For the moment, Thersites, like Falstaff on the field of Shrewsbury, survives because he comically side-steps any commitment to a serious action or identity. He lives, but at the price of diminishing his significance for anyone trying to identify a reason for living. For the moment, Hector's code, which can distinguish man from man, stands out as the one attitude able to guide events in some significant way.

However, the illusion that this is so is short-lived. Two short scenes later, Hector, after once more showing courtesy by letting Achilles retire, hunts a nameless Greek in armor for his hide. The result is that Hector's courtesy seems arbitrary and his chivalry without reasonable motivation. Ironically, he refers to the cause of his own death when he addresses the corpse of his victim: "Most putrified core, so fair without,/ Thy goodly armor thus hath cost thy life" (V.viii.1-2). Hector is admirable for his courtesy but contemptible for his stupidity. Perhaps Troilus is right to call Hector's standards "fool's play" even as Hector defends them as "fair play" (V.iii.43).

In any case, Thersites lives to comment on the conflict, and his most telling commentary falls in the scene between Hector's pursuit of the armor and his return with it. Thersites meets his opposite in the bastard son of Priam:

Bastard: Turn, slave, and fight.
Thersites: What art thou?
Bastard: A bastard son of Priam's.
Thersites: I am a bastard too; I love bastards.
I am bastard begot, bastard instructed,
bastard in mind, bastard in valor, in
everything illegitimate. One bear will not
bite another, and wherefore should one
bastard?

(V.vii.13-20)

From one perspective, this exchange confirms the earlier impression of Thersites as merely a coward in order to live; from another perspective, this meeting mirrors all the others. If Thersites has met his exact double in the Bastard, has not Menelaus met his in Paris: "The cuckold and the cuckold-maker are at it. Now, bull! Now, dog!" (V.vii.9-10)? Has not Troilus met his double in Diomedes: "Hold thy whore, Grecian! Now for thy whore, / Troyan!" (V.iv.24-25)? Has not Hector met his exact double in Achilles? Ajax thinks so:

Diomedes: The bruit is, Hector's slain, and by
Achilles.
Ajax: If it be so, yet bragless let it be;
Great Hector was as good a man as he.
(V.ix.3-5)

Hector may be more courteous than Achilles, and Achilles more ruthless than Hector, but they talk the same under battle conditions. After killing his Greek, Hector says, "Rest, sword; thou hast thy fill of blood and death" (V.viii.1), and, after killing Hector, Achilles uses the same imagery of eating and sleeping to describe his action: "My half-supperd sword, that

frankly would have fed,/ Pleased with this dainty bait, thus goes to bed"
(V.viii.19-20).

Thersites' meeting with the Bastard, then, functions as a denigrating comment on the rivals of the war plot. Like Thersites, they are all "bastards." Earlier in the play, his transfer from the service of Ajax to the tent of Achilles served as a deflating comment on the transfer of Helen from the Greeks to Troy and of Cressida from Troilus to Diomedes. In all three cases there is a transfer without a change, motion without progress, more similarity than difference between one master and another, Ajax and Achilles, Paris and Menelaus, Troilus and Diomedes.

In II.i. Thersites is in Ajax's service; in II.ii the great debate in the Trojan council seeks to determine whether to surrender Helen, and at the opening of II.iii, Thersites comments on the equally poor merits of Ajax and Achilles before being "inveigled" into Achilles' service. Like Launcelot Gobbo's debating with himself before leaving Shylock's service and entering Bassanio's, Thersites pauses to weigh the alternatives. Unlike Gobbo, however, Thersites sees nothing to distinguish one lord from another and therefore transfers from Ajax to Achilles without explanation.

HELEN: A THEME OF HONOR AND RENOWN?

Thersites' reductive views in which all are alike and equally less-than-human is confirmed by the Trojans in council who are doubles of the Greeks for pursuing a policy that sounds honorable but which has no reasonable basis. Troilus's defense for keeping Helen not only contradicts his earlier complaint ("I cannot fight upon this cause") but is also unreasonable in itself. After

dismissing reason as merely a check to heroic action, Troilus overturns the moral hierarchy of reason, will, and senses by locating the value of Helen in an act of "will enkindled by mine eyes and ears/ Two traded pilots 'twixt the dangerous shores/ Of will and judgment" (II.ii.63-65). He argues from the analogy that in electing to "take" a wife, one does not go back on the commitment, no matter, it seems, what the commitment is. "How may I avoid,/ Although my will distaste what it elected,/ The wife I chose?" (II.iii.65-67). Ironically, it is Menelaus's wife who has been "taken," in the sense of stolen, and this should suggest that the act is indefensible from the outset. The one possible justification for having taken Helen and for keeping her is that the Greeks keep their aunt, yet even this reason is spurious since Troilus admits that there is no comparison between an "old aunt" and "a Grecian queen, whose youth and freshness/ Wrinkles Apollo's and makes pale the morning" (II.ii.79-80).

Even as he speaks, however, Troilus inadvertently impugns Helen's worth by likening her not only to stolen goods but to soiled silks which are not to be returned and to the "remainder viands" of a meal which are not to be carelessly discarded. He makes the act of her "fair rape" less heroic by using mercantile imagery which alters Marlowe's famous lines about Helen even while alluding to them. Marlowe had said that Helen's "face" had launched above a thousand ships and had burnt the topless towers of Ilium. For Marlowe, tragedy follows from a romantic cause at the same time that the lure of beauty implies tragic consequences. For Troilus, the tragic potential of taking Helen is ignored, while the action itself is likened not to heroic but to mercantile adventures: "Why she is a pearl/ Whose price had launched above a thousand ships/ And turned crowned kings to merchants" (II.ii.81-83).

Finally, Troilus argues that the decision to take Helen cannot be reversed without impugning that decision. In other words, loss of face will

ensue, even if the original deed was a theft. "O theft most base," he concludes, "That we have stol'n what we do fear to keep!" (II.ii.92-92). A speech of 34 lines could hardly contain more illogical arguments and self-damaging allusions, proving that Troilus and Paris, too, are, as Hector says, "not much/ Unlike young men, whom Aristotle thought/ Unfit to hear moral philosophy" (II.ii.165-167).

The apt comment on this speech and, in fact, the entire situation immediately follows in the wailing of Cassandra:

Cry, Troyans, cry! Practice your eyes with tears!
Troy must not be, nor goodly Ilion stand;
Our firebrand brother, Paris, burns us all.
Cry, Troyans, cry! A Helen and a woe!
Cry, cry! Troy burns, or else let Helen go.
(II.ii.108-112)

But Cassandra is dismissed as mad by Troilus and Paris whose honors are engaged to make the quarrel gracious, and Priam -- the nominal authority of Troy -- is too weak to do more than issue a mild protest:

Paris, you speak
Like one besotted on your sweet delights.
You have the honey still, but these the gall;
So to be valiant is no praise at all.
(II.ii.142-145)

Hector knows better than Troilus; he knows, for example, about the "law in each well-ordered nation/ To curb those raging appetites that are/ Most disobedient and refractory." He argues:

If Helen, then, be wife to Sparta's king,
As it is known she is, these moral laws
Of nature and of nations speak aloud
To have her back returned.
(II.ii.180-186)

Despite his knowing this, Hector agrees to follow a policy that has no reasonable basis. Because of that, his reversal of his stand shows less

constancy than Troilus's reversal and leaves an audience with little to choose between Greeks and Trojans. Both camps know their orthodox philosophy, and both camps leave it hanging in the air in order to pursue policies that are calculated to bring victory and fame.

The proof that the Trojans are mistaken rather than noble idealists is not only the commentary of Cassandra within the debate and the commentary of Thersites after it, but also the presentation of Helen herself. Just as Cressida's entrance had deflated Troilus's references to her as a "pearl," Helen's entrance with Paris does the same for her. Pandarus is waiting for them and jokes with them, just as he does with Cressida and Troilus. Both women are trivialized by being compared with one another in this scene while Helen tells bawdy jokes, dallies with Paris to the soft sounds of music, and encourages Pandarus's lewd love song.

The constant repetition of the epithets "fair" and "sweet" throughout the scene not only reduces the conversation to a banal level but also affects an audience with nausea at too much sweetness. As Friar Lawrence counselled Romeo, "The sweetest honey/ Is loathsome in his own deliciousness/ And in the taste confounds the appetite" (Romeo and Juliet II.vi.11-13); and, as Orsino knows, excess of any food causes the appetite to sicken and so die (Twelfth Night I.i.1-3). Some productions, like Ashland's in 1984, will make Helen not only nauseating but also obviously corrupt by showing her suffering the symptoms of venereal disease. As a result, she, the occasion if not the cause of the war, appears as the "putrified core" at the heart of the action of which the Grecian's armor in Act V is only another emblem.

Helen, as she is presented, differs, then, from the Helen of Troilus's defense before the council just as surely as his estimate of Cressida differed from the presented woman. If the women are to be blamed for fickle and even

adulterous behavior -- and this had become the conventional appraisal of both by Shakespeare's time -- the men are no better for their wishful thinking in the guise of heroic rhetoric. Throughout this play, Shakespeare allows no attitude to win out over the other. The Trojans and the Greeks fight each other over a worthless Helen; Troilus and Diomedes fight over a worthless Cressida, but neither rival deserves the woman more than the other nor is she worth deserving. And, to repeat, the woman who is not worth deserving is also no less despicable than the brutes who fight over her.

A GORY EMULATION

Thersites' body is as good as Ajax'
When neither is alive.

Cymbeline (IV.ii. 252-253)

Throughout this play, Shakespeare empties every attitude and action of significance; by arousing an audience's expectations only to frustrate them, he teaches it to expect only disappointment. He forces it to share in a rhythm which arouses frustration when "The ample proposition that hope makes/
In all designs begun on earth below/ Fails in the promised largeness"
(I.iii.3-5). An audience is forced to experience the failure of any symbolic action to achieve a significant ordering of mere motion. In this play, Shakespeare is exploring to the full that dramatizing of opposites and that scepticism about scapegoats which he began with 1 Henry VI.

It is Hector's fight with Ajax that shows the true state of the rivals in this play: they are so much alike, so related in fact, that the only reasonable issue of their quarrel is "embracement." In no way can Hector dissect Ajax so that it would be possible to say "This hand is Grecian all,/ And this is Trojan; the sinews of this leg/ All Greek, and this all Troy; my

mother's blood/ Runs on the dexter cheek, and this sinister/ Bounds in my father's" (IV.v.124-128).

The build up to this match, which began with Aeneas's challenge to Agamemnon in I.iii, is frustrated by Hector's refusal to bring it to any conclusion. Like all the other frustrations of progressive form, this disappoints an audience's expectation of an outcome to the combat. In doing so, it educates the audience into the state of ironic contemplation of opposing stands or rival attitudes in which action is frustrated while the range of opinion is also recognized.

Hector's refusal to defeat Ajax, whom he might have killed, is the rhetorical equivalent of recognizing the opposite term's inalienable existence. Throughout the canon of his works, Shakespeare's way with an opposing or dissenting attitude is highly realistic: the term is not to be killed off, but is to survive either in opposition to the dominant order or in an uneasy truce with it. Shylock is not killed but offered conversion; Malvolio is entreated to a peace; Jaques' melancholy unfits him for the company's festive mood and so, with reluctance, he is allowed to seek the society of Duke Frederick somewhere on the fringes of Arden; in Much Ado, Don John is returned to Messina under guard and survives to threaten his brother's authority as he has from the beginning. In these plays, the dominant attitude accommodates the subordinate one with some sense of its right to be heard but with no recognition of its right to dominate. In Troilus and Cressida, the attitudes clash more equally, frustrating an audience's need for a symbolic action that shows itself capable of establishing some order in the teeth of chaos, some durable significance against the destructive flow of time.

After the match between Ajax and Hector, and an amicable exchange between them and among Agamemnon, Ulysses and Nestor, Achilles demonstrates

the usual attitude of a rival by refusing to recognize any distinction in Hector's parts. They are all one, and all worthy of death. This taunting draws from Hector a similar boast, which he admits is foolish even as he says it. The contrast cannot be clearer between the issue of embracement because rivals are essentially related, and the issue of death because one rival refuses to recognize in the other the mirror image of himself. The imagery of eating returns in order to emphasize that the desire for slaughter is more appetitive and insatiable than reasonable, and would reduce the protagonists to "orts and bits" of themselves as soon as they have tasted and digested one another:

Achilles: Now, Hector, I have fed mine eyes on thee,
I have with exact view perused thee, Hector,
And quoted joint by joint.

Hector: Is this Achilles?

Achilles: I am Achilles.

Hector: Stand fair, I pray thee; let me look on thee.

Achilles: Behold thy fill.

Hector: Nay, I have done already.
(IV.v.230-235)

The imagery of eating also links the actions of both the war and the love plots, suggesting not only that the slaughter can be sensual and that love can be a battle, but that both are appetites which cannot make distinctions in what they do because of the mere movement of their desire to be satisfied.

Achilles, enraged by Hector's killing of Patroclus, will reenter the battle and slaughter Hector, but, as I have implied earlier, the action will prove nothing for either side. Granted, Hector will get a eulogy from Troilus, and his loss will be felt because he was, for the most part, courteous in an anachronistic way. But he was also as violent as Achilles in battle (Nestor calls him a "belching whale") and also apt to seek "bad success in a bad cause" (II.ii.117) against his own reason and against the warnings of Andromache, Cassandra, and Priam.

Troilus, like Hector, holds to beliefs which are endearing for their courtesy and devotion but which are also shown to be foolish. Troilus's estimate of Cressida, as I have said, bears no resemblance to the Cressida an audience knows from legend and from this play. As a result, Troilus's disillusionment with her in V.ii. is simultaneously a sorry shock for him, a source of wonderment for Ulysses ("May worthy Troilus be half attached/ With that which here his passion doth express?" V.ii.158-159), and a subject for scorn from Thersites ("Will 'a swagger himself out on's own eyes?" V.ii.133).

Troilus's idealism is, in fact, no more a constant and trustworthy attitude than is Cressida's accommodating pragmatism, the proof of which is Troilus's desertion of Cressida in Act I, when he follows Aeneas to battle, his slinking away from her house in Act III, and his refusal to read her letters after witnessing her tryst with Diomedes. Troilus is hardly as "true as truth's simplicity" (III.ii.170), and his rivalry with Diomedes is, as a result, without a basis. Troilus becomes as fierce as Achilles over a cause which was misconceived from the start, pursued with only indifferent loyalty, and deserted in fact while fighting in its name.

In this play, Shakespeare leaves an audience no way out of a situation clearly presented as corrupted and corrupting. Neither Greek nor Trojan, Achilles nor Hector, Troilus nor Diomedes, characterizes an attitude which is superior to another and able to wrest significance from the flow of events.¹¹ Instead, this play is a quizzical analysis of the attitudes which arise in the attempt to grapple with devouring time in the guise of war, and, at the same time it is a refusal to argue for any one of them. Rhetorically, then, this explains the darkness of Troilus and Cressida: an audience is kept from finding in the drama a "ritual of rebirth" or a "salvation device," in Burke's terms, which will point to the way out of its burden through identification with a surviving term.

In place of a symbolic action with purpose and hope of success, Troilus exits after Hector's death with the promise of motiveless motion that proves nothing: "Hope of revenge shall hide our inward woe" (V.x.31), and Pandarus explicitly bequeaths to the audience the corruption of diseases which it has already shared in a figurative sense through identification with brutal Greeks and self-deceiving Trojans. The enactment of inaction through a quizzical study of rival attitudes could hardly be more complete than it is in Troilus and Cressida. As Ellis-Fermor suggests, the "way out" cannot be found in this play but can only be suggested later, in the tragedies and romances.¹²

V. MEASURE FOR MEASURE

Rhetorically, Measure for Measure is a disturbing play because it presents corruption or lawlessness in terms of lust but does not show any "property of government," any law of justice or mercy, that can extirp it from the life of a city or from the heart of a man. Corruption is intolerable since it cannot provide the basis for positive action; it frustrates the symbol-using animal who orders the lawless world of motion through terms which identify his purposes for action and which allow him to join with others in achieving those purposes. Without authoritative principles of order, a person faces social and even personal disintegration.

Measure for Measure begins as the Duke's controlled experiment to solve a problem of government and to test his deputy Angelo. The problem, simply put, is whether lawlessness or corruption can best be controlled by justice or mercy. These conflicting attitudes qualify one another in heated debate but leave the corruption of Vienna as unreformed as ever. In the course of the debate, the problem of the city becomes the problem of one person: Angelo discovers in himself a war between the conflicting attitudes of sense and honor which lead him to conclude "We are all frail"; no one in Vienna can trust that his adherence to one attitude will prevent him from espousing its opposite. More troubling, no one can be certain that one attitude is virtuous and the other vicious, since virtue and vice often appear as their opposites.

The play concludes with the Duke's offer of pardon to all and an allocation of marriages which conventionally betoken that obstacles have been overcome and that destinies have been achieved. A closer look at the Duke's judgment, however, will show that the issues raised earlier in the play have not been solved but sidestepped. Having seen "corruption boil and bubble/

Till it o'errun the stew," the Duke, in effect, puts the lid back on the pot. He covers the dilemma over with the appearance of merciful judgement and by tolerating all attitudes prevents a resolution in terms of any one of them.

ANGELO AND ISABELLA: A FIERCE DISPUTE

The problem of this play and the problem of government begins and ends with what to do about Claudio. This young man has gotten his fiancée, Juliet, with child -- a natural act which, in this case, falls outside the law governing its exercise. Theirs is not a lawful marriage because it lacks the outward form of public rites. Of some importance to the themes of this play, the union appears to be fornication in the eyes of the civil law no matter how truly married the couple may be in their own eyes and according to commonly acknowledged conditions for clandestine marriages.¹

Angelo, who has been given the Duke's own scope of authority to correct the abuses of liberty in Vienna, has drawn the line in such a way that the law applies to Claudio's case. Escalus, his vice regent, may protest that the line is drawn too widely, and Lucio, Claudio's fast talking friend, may dismiss the offense as a game of "tick tack" and of no legal importance. But Claudio himself, while alleging the extenuating circumstances of his case, while protesting that the law has been so neglected as to be almost dead, while insinuating that Angelo has enforced the law for the sake of gaining a reputation as a strict governor, even Claudio admits that his offense can be called "lechery" and that it comes within the compass of the law. Wryly, he suggests that the restraint to which he is subjected comes from too much liberty, just as fasting is the price of surfeiting. With this analogy, Claudio describes a movement of "measure for measure" which will characterize many actions of this play. Attitudes of one kind necessarily provoke their

opposites, and the two compete as equally plausible motives for action. Liberty and restraint have their counterparts in justice and mercy, sense and honour, frailty and grace.²

Claudio's is a good test case for arguing the ordering of the commonwealth. On the one hand, he is guilty of a crime which, figuratively, represents willful appetite at war with the right reason of law. Lechery or lust in all of its forms, if given too much "liberty," would dissolve all social relationships like the one represented by marriage. On the other hand, Claudio's guilt is slight and much closer to impetuosity than malice. He respects the law regarding marriage but has been caught in a technicality on the way to assuming that relationship. For Claudio, as for everyman, the law only serves to point out how impossible it is to act perfectly. In Claudio, then, an audience can see itself in its frail humanity, wanting the good but failing to achieve it completely. The Provost is the spokesman for an audience's common sense perspective when he laments, "All sects, all ages smack of this vice, and he/ To die for't!" (II.i.5-6).³

The way out of his predicament, it seems, is through mercy rather than justice, and so he appeals through Lucio to his sister Isabella that she intercede for him with Angelo. Before he meets with her, however, Angelo's precise views on justice and the law are made clear in an interview with Escalus. For Angelo, the law is not a "scarecrow," standing still while "birds of prey" perch as they please; to be effective, it must be put into execution. Escalus's special pleading on Claudio's behalf -- that he had a noble father -- is clearly beside the point, and his more subtle argument, that Angelo, too, could easily become subject to the law and should therefore show mercy, receives a most just and severe response: "You may not so extenuate his offense/ For I have had such faults; but rather tell me/ When I

that censure him do so offend,/ Let mine own judgement pattern out my death/
And nothing come in partial. Sir, he must die" (II.i.27-31).

The response, of course, is ironic in view of Angelo's subsequent fall, but it shows his impartial commitment to justice. If faults are to be extirpated from the commonwealth, they must first be "open made to justice" and then "seized," not ignored. It makes no difference who has committed the fault. Angelo's thinking on this matter, in fact, echoes the Duke's, who has explained the condition of Vienna in similar terms:

Now, as fond fathers,
Having bound up the threatening twigs of birch,
Only to stick it in their children's sight
For terror, not to use, in time the rod
Becomes more mock'd than fear'd so our decrees,
Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead,
And liberty plucks Justice by the nose,
The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart
Goes all decorum.

(I.iii.23-31)

Much like Ulysses' speech on degree in Troilus and Cressida, these words present an image of society turned upside down for lack of right relations. In the battle between mercy and justice, then, justice must prevail if decorum is to be retained. If Angelo's views are severe and precise, they are also just and, for that reason, represent an attitude which is desirable for the ordering of society which it can effect. Of course, this attitude, however desirable, has only a limited scope; despite their rightness, the "biting laws" can never coerce all behavior. So, for example, Vienna's bawdiness will live on in the person of Pompey the tapster despite any litigation against it. In an episode that follows immediately upon Angelo's apologia for justice, the audience finds this out in comic terms. Escalus, interrogating Pompey, asks him:

Pompey, you are partly a bawd,
Pompey, howsoever you colour it in being a

tapster, are you not? Come, tell me, it shall be the better for you.

Pompey: Truly, sir, I am a poor fellow that would live.

Escalus: How would you live, Pompey? By being a bawd? What do you think of the trade, Pompey? Is it a lawful trade?

Pompey: If the law would allow it, sir.

Escalus: But the law will not allow it, Pompey; nor it shall not be allowed in Vienna.

Pompey: Does your worship mean to geld and splay all the youth of the city?

Escalus: No, Pompey.

Pompey: Truly, sir, in my poor opinion, they will to't then.

(II.i.216-230)

The value of justice, then, is admittedly limited. Nevertheless, its value must be recognized in order to appreciate the dramatic conflict that occurs when the claims of justice as a principle for the ordering of society clash with the claims of mercy. The question is this: if justice cannot extirp lawlessness, will mercy do any better?

It is during Isabella's plea before Angelo that Shakespeare sets up this clash of attitudes -- one of the most absolute and famous confrontations in all of his drama -- and in this debate Angelo is not a straw man. What emerges from the scene is no clear victory for either attitude but a keen appreciation by the audience of the reasonableness and the limits of each.

Isabella herself, at the beginning of her plea, admits that her brother's fault should "meet the blow of justice," but asks that the fault be condemned and not her brother. Angelo responds, recalling his earlier scarecrow analogy: "Mine were the very cipher of a function/ To fine the faults, whose fine stands in record,/ And let go by the actor." "O just but severe law!," concedes Isabel, "I had a brother then" (II.ii.39-42).

The case seems closed until prompting from Lucio causes Isabel to plead for the possibility of mercy as an alternative to justice. In effect, since

justice cannot be answered, she seeks to supersede it. Unlike Cassandra, her counterpart in Shakespeare's source (Whetstone's Promos and Cassandra), Isabel offers no argument that would mitigate the justice of Angelo's ruling.

Cassandra, for example, had argued for her brother:

Weigh his yong' yeares, the force of love, which forced his amis
Weigh, weigh, that Mariage works amends for what committed is.
He hath defilde no nuptial bed, nor forced rape hath mov'd,
He fel through love, who never ment but wive the wight he lov'd.
And wantons sure to keepe in awe these statutes first were made,
Or none but lustfull leachers should with rygrous law be payd." 4

Isabella, however, speaks completely beside the point of what justice requires and suggests, instead, that mercy is possible, that it is a becoming attitude for rulers, that in a hypothetical change of places Claudio would not be as stern to Angelo as Angelo is toward him and, finally, that God himself has shown the best example of mercy by forgiving all the debt owed by a forfeited humanity(II.ii.49-78).

This last argument might carry weight with the individual Christian; however, it provides no guidance for a legal system which must function according to norms of justice interpreted impartially for all. Angelo seems to acknowledge the force of Isabel's argument for himself as a person at the same time that he rules it out of court as a judge: "It is the law, not I, condemn your brother;/ Were he my kinsman, brother, or my son,/ It should be thus with him. He must die tomorrow" (II.ii.80-82).

Angelo stands for justice, as he says, because it ends present evils in order to prevent future ones. With justice he shows pity both to society, whose thirst for justice must be satisfied, and to the criminal, who not only gets what he deserves (which is a kind of satisfaction) but is also prevented from committing further wrongs.

Justice, then, has many arguments on its side at the same time that Isabella's plea for mercy seems right because it would save Claudio, a person whom no one in the audience wants to die. Shakespeare has done well to make Claudio his proving ground for contending attitudes. If Isabella had pleaded for mercy toward all the bawds of Vienna, if she had, in effect, argued that nothing be done to prevent babies from beating their nurses, an audience could not have accepted her plea. But her arguments, however much beside the point of what justice requires, retain some cogency because they would effect what the audience wants -- the life of Claudio.

So far, an audience has witnessed the drawing of the line in a debate between two attitudes. Angelo draws it in such a way that Claudio's death is required in the name of justice; Isabella has drawn it so that Claudio's death is excluded in the name of mercy.

THE FRAILTY OF OUR POWERS

Isabella's arguments, however convincing they may be to an audience, do not reach their most cogent pitch until she uses again an argument that Angelo has already used and answered for himself. "Go to your bosom," she challenges him, "Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know/ That's like my brother's fault. If it confess/ A natural guiltiness, such as is his,/ Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue/ Against my brother's life" (II.ii.137-142).

Isabella would make the execution of justice impossible if the judge were to share the same crime with the criminal. Earlier, Angelo had offered an alternative to this position: that impartial judgement should "pattern out [his own] death" if he were guilty of the same crime which he himself

condemned (II.i.27-31). However, as Isabel speaks, the Deputy begins to turn toward her point of view: "She speaks, and 'tis such sense/ That my sense breeds with it" (II.ii.143-144).

No doubt an audience is supposed to share the Provost's sentiments, whispered in an aside, "Pray heaven she win him"; no doubt it is to welcome the change in Angelo's attitude because it will save Claudio. But for Angelo, this moment is clearly a temptation. It means the abandoning of his earlier conviction that even thieves recognize a kind of law among themselves and the taking up of an entirely different proposition: that "Thieves for their robbery have authority, / When judges steal themselves" (II.ii.176-177). "Quite athwart goes all decorum" if Angelo's sharing of Claudio's condition means that justice must be jettisoned. "O, let her brother live!" is not the impartial judgement of a just but severe law; it is the abandoning of a sentence because the judge does not want to apply it to himself as well.

The depth of Angelo's agony has to be measured not only by the depth of depravity which he discovers in himself at which he exclaims, "Having waste ground enough/ Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary/ And pitch our evils there?" (II.ii.170-172). His agony is deepened by the conclusion to which this lust leads him -- the abandoning of a strict adherence to justice.⁵ Shakespeare has so set up the terms of this dilemma that each attitude is an extreme exclusive of the other. Pure justice is unmerciful and leads to death; pure mercy is unjust and leads to indecorum. To abandon one untenable position leads, by an equal and opposite reaction, to the adoption of the other.

Isabella's arguments, then, have meant the victory of sense in two ways. For the audience, the sparing of Claudio makes reasonable sense; for Angelo, however, it means the victory of appetite. His sense "breeds," but it is with

"the strong and swelling evil/ Of my conception" (II.iv.6-7). He feels in himself the force of blood leading to lawless ends and, at the same time, abandons a view of impartial justice that would regulate this appetite with deadly force.

Claudio had, ironically, anticipated this effect of his sister on the Deputy when he told Lucio of her talents as a persuader in words of double meaning: "in her youth/ There is a prone and speechless dialect/ Such as moves men; besides, she hath prosperous art/ When she will play with reason and discourse/ And well she can persuade" (I.ii.172-176).⁶

With keen insight, Shakespeare presents Angelo's lust for Isabella -- not the rightness of her reasons -- as the cause of his abandoning a commitment to impartial justice. Moreover, the playwright has so structured the first interview with Angelo that Lucio's presence and his promptings against Isabella's coldness seem much like pimping for a prostitution of justice. As Shakespeare has set up the dilemma, the audience has little room to maneuver. In wanting Claudio to live, it must also accept the victory of "sense," and Angelo soon shows what this means by tyrannically giving his "sensual race the rein" and commanding Isabel to "Fit thy consent to my sharp appetite...Redeem thy brother/ By yielding up thy body to my will" (II.iv.159-163).

Even as he pursues his own lustful intentions, Angelo shows Isabella the limits of her own merciful attitude. When Isabel refuses to act as Claudio has done and as Angelo is trying to do, Angelo points out: "Were you not then as cruel as the sentence/ That you have slander'd so?" (IV.iv.109-110). In other words, are there not actions that mercy would proscribe as surely as justice would? Isabel's answer corroborates Angelo's point: "Ignomy in ransom and free pardon/ Are of two houses: lawful mercy/ Is nothing kin to foul

redemption" (II.iv.111-113). She implicitly admits that mercy is limited to actions that are lawful so that under some conditions redemption can be foul. She admits still further that she would "something excuse" Claudio's deed, even though it deserves to be hated, "For his advantage that I dearly love" (II.iv.119-120). Clearly, it is as unhelpful for mercy to excuse evil for the sake of private feelings as it is for justice to condemn what should be saved merely for the sake of public order.

Angelo's comments on this dilemma show compassion not only for his own predicament but for what he sees as Isabel's struggle too: "We are all frail" (II.iv.121). He sees before Isabel does, and he sees with tragic awareness, that neither perfect justice nor perfect mercy is possible. At the same time, he sees that the "affection that now guides [him] most" makes him false and tyrannical. From the first moments of his temptation, he has seen that his identity is at stake: "What dost thou, or what art thou, Angelo?," he asks (II.ii.173). It seems that he cannot be himself without acting justly and yet he cannot act justly at least in this one case where he is severely tempted.

As commendable as he is for many reasons, Angelo has lost his honor by wanting to do one deed which will disparage it. That is why it is with increasing irony that he is addressed as judge with the title "your honour" and with the customary good wish, frequently repeated, "Heaven keep your honour" (II.ii.25;27-28;43;158). In the last exchange of II.ii, Angelo explicitly points the irony: Isabella says, "Save your honour." And Angelo replies, "From thee: even from thy virtue!" (II.ii.162).

It is also ironic that Angelo's entire temptation of Isabella has taken place within the context of the Duke's testing of him. This is made clear by a direct verbal parallel between Isabella's situation and Angelo's. She presents herself for their second interview with the words, "I am come to know

your pleasure," (II.iv.31) and this will mean, of course, learning of Angelo's willful designs upon her. Likewise, Angelo had presented himself to the Duke with the words, "Always obedient to your Grace's will,/ I come to know your pleasure" (I.i.25-26). The Duke's designs on Angelo have been to see "If power change purpose, what our seemers be" (I.iii.54). The Duke has succeeded in showing Angelo that given power he would prove unjust, but Angelo has likewise shown Isabella that, given the power to save her brother, she herself would prove to be unmerciful. It is disturbing, moreover, to notice that both tests are "willful," not reasonable. Neither the Duke nor Angelo can appeal to "right reason" as the basis for their actions. In this play, all people -- especially the authorities -- proceed willfully and create confusion, a process whose disturbing implications for order are enacted in the frustrations of formal expectations at the close of the play.

Isabella learns the full willfulness of her world when she goes to Claudio in prison, seeking his support for her decision. She is frightened and shaken by Angelo's loss of honor and by the proud man of authority who has bid "the law make curtsy to [his] will/ Hooking both right and wrong to th'appetite,/ To follow as it draws." Surely, she expects, Claudio "Though he hath fall'n by prompture of the blood [as Angelo has]/Yet hath in him such a mind of honour/ That had he twenty heads to tender down/ On twenty blocks, he'd yield them up/ Before his sister should her body stoop/ To such abhorr'd pollution" (II.iv.174-182).

Claudio's willing death would vindicate Isabel's position -- that, if lawful mercy cannot be procured, life must yield to a higher principle. It has damaged Isabella's position in the eyes of many critics that this principle happens to be her own chastity. After all, the heroine of Shakespeare's source, Cassandra, consents to lose her chastity in order to save her brother's life, and consents, as well, to lose her honor with it.

Why should Isabella stick at this point? One obvious reason is that Shakespeare is writing a different play. If Isabella were to consent to Angelo, and if, further, he were to go back on his promise and kill Claudio anyway, as Whetstone told the story, the issue to be resolved would be simply that of how to get justice against a tyrannical judge. Isabella's refusal to surrender her chastity raises the question of whether life should continue at the cost of any principle. Isabella has pleaded against Angelo's "Justice" in order to save Claudio; must she also surrender the principle for the sake of which she is "giving up" (or at least dedicating) her own life? Should she be merciful at any cost or would not life lose its meaning for her if it were lived for no purpose?

When Isabel seeks out Claudio in prison, she finds that he is already prepared to die, thanks to the Duke's "consolation," delivered in the guise of Friar Lodowick. Claudio, in fact, is "absolute" for death, a dangerous position as we have seen, since absolute attitudes tend to provoke their opposites. This, in fact, is what happens. At the least glimmer of hope for life, Claudio surrenders his willingness to die for the sake of his sister's chastity and pleads that he be allowed to live. He gives up his brave speech about encountering darkness as a bride and, like Pompey the bawd, shows himself to be "a poor fellow that would live" (II.i.220).

Claudio acts on Angelo's example, taking courage from his conviction that a wise man like Angelo must know what he is doing, and is willing to call the sin that would save him a virtue. It is his desperate pleading for life at any cost, it is his Angelo-like willingness to do anything for the sake of will or appetite, his juggling of names for virtue and vice, that cause Isabel to turn on her brother with a loathing proportionate to her fear:

O, you beast!
O faithless coward! O dishonest wretch!
Wilt thou then be made a man out of my vice?"

(III.i.135-137)

Her reaction is as extreme as her fear of unbridled appetite. She sees in Claudio's attitude a surrender of all attempts to live for some purpose. In rhetorical terms, Isabel sees the failure of any symbol to order the world of motion -- to provide a purpose for action. That is why she says, "Thy sin's not accidental but a trade." Claudio's impetuous fornication with Juliet was but a hint of more unrestrained appetite to come. She who pleaded for mercy now believes that even that principle has its limits. "Mercy to thee would prove itself a bawd," she says, "'Tis best that thou diest quickly" (III.i.147-149).

What to do with Claudio, then, has become a problem both for those who would kill him for the sake of justice or save him for the sake of mercy. He is not so wicked that he deserves to die; he is not so innocent that he deserves to live. He is the natural ground on which two contending attitudes meet and debate the merits of their claims to decide his fate. A sensitive response to their confrontation should be a troubled one, since neither justice nor mercy can provide an obvious answer about what to do. An audience at this point cannot identify with either position represented by Angelo or Isabella, nor can it allow Claudio to live unless he can in some way be pardoned or exonerated.

The difficulty of finding a term that will resolve this dilemma is complicated by the difficulty of naming anything for what it is because appearance and reality are often interchangeable. The central act of deception (or deceiving act), of course, is Angelo's appearing to be a just judge and a "precise" person while actually being less innocent than Claudio. With Shakespearean irony, his deceitful intention is clearly stated to Isabel:

"...on mine honour,/ My words express my purpose." To which she replies, "Ha? Little honour, to be much believ'd/ And most pernicious purpose! Seeming, seeming!" (II.iv.146-149).

Angelo's reality is clear enough, at least to Isabel, but the troublesome question arises, how often does the appearance of authority based on impartial justice (including the Duke's?) hide a reality grounded in will or appetite.

O place, O form,
How often dost thou with thy case, thy habit,
Wrench awe from fools, and tie the wiser souls
To thy false seeming!

(II.iv.12-15)

How often is apparent mercy nothing of the kind?

Justice: Lord Angelo is severe.

Escalus: It is but needful

Mercy is not itself, that oft looks so.
Pardon is still the nurse of second woe.

(II.i.279-281)

How often is life itself a kind of death and death itself a kind of life?

Duke: Thou hast nor youth, nor age,
But as it were an after-dinner's sleep
Dreaming on both... What's yet in this
That bears the name of life? Yet in this life
Lie hid moe thousand deaths; yet death we fear
That makes these odds all even.

III.i.32-41)

In such a world, where truth is hard enough to determine, slander of authority is especially fearsome and detestable because it complicates an already complicated task. Concern with slander runs as a motif throughout this play, and culminates in the trial of Act V, where it will be analyzed more fully.

THE COMIC SUB-PLOT: I HOPE HERE BE TRUTHS

The themes which arise over the case of Claudio are repeated by Shakespeare in the sub-plot so that a study of that action will serve to sum up and to fill out what has been said so far. Most obviously, the brothel life of Vienna is a diseased world, unreformable by "grace," however grace is to be defined and even if it is personified in his Grace the Duke himself. Like Pompey, its spokesman, the underworld may suffer the checks of law, but it will find some means to live. When the proclamation for pulling down houses of prostitution goes into effect, Pompey counsels Mistress Overdone to take courage: "Though you change place, you need not change your trade" (I.ii.99-100). After Escalus warns him of a whipping unless he ceases to be a tapster, Pompey boasts: "Whip me? No, no, let carman whip his jade;/ The valiant heart's not whipt out of his trade" (II.i.252-253). And when he is finally thrown into prison, he finds that it is very much like a house of prostitution once again; all the regulars are there, and the "mysteries" of hangman and bawd are much the same: they both thrive on "dying" and "beheading." In a daring pun, Shakespeare associates the forces of law and lawlessness as workmen toward a common end: death and disease in the name of order and life. Pompey the bawd will join Abhorson the hangman in calling Barnardine to "rise and be put to death" (IV,iii.28), an action required by the state and also, through the puns on "rise" and "death," suggestive of the bawd's profession.⁷

The history of Pompey suggests that the disease of sexual license can never be eradicated from the state, not only because it is a highly adaptable virus, but because no one is exempt from catching it. Even ministers of state whose purpose is just judgement can have that purpose changed by power. Their "heading and hanging" may serve no social purpose at all but only appetite, as

the history of Angelo has shown. He was a man who saw himself as "precise" and a just judge, but who soon discovered "blood thou art blood" (II.iv.15). His appetite had been restrained easily enough before he met Isabel, but it had been piqued by her because in two ways she represented a challenge worthy of his efforts. As a "saint" and a virgin, Isabella is Angelo's equal, and, like him, is keeping powerful sexual feelings under strict control. Deep is calling to deep in their encounter, all the more powerfully because the feelings are implicit and a mutual union is ostensibly unattainable. On another level, Isabella is defending an example of lawlessness that had become known to Justice; she represents virgin territory into which the absolute application of Justice might be extended. Angelo's appetite, then, takes the form first of trying to "behead" Isabella in the name of the law which, he claims, "requires" this act as redemption for her brother; then, he tries to behead Claudio anyway to save himself from the danger of revenge against the abuse of his authority.

Through punning, then, and through the sub-plot action, Shakespeare raises disturbing questions about authority and order in society. Angelo's appetite for order is shown to be as unruly and destructive as lust can be in sexual relations. Both the body politic and the human body are equally subject to a rage for order that can be deadly. This creates a dilemma. On the one hand, authority is needed to prevent disorder in terms of lust and disease; in rhetorical terms, authority enables a society to "identify" its own purposes and to act together accordingly. On the other hand, authority is limited and fallible; it cannot extirp the life of dissident attitudes, and it cannot keep from acting in a way inconsistent from its own stated ends.

The bawds of Vienna therefore present a problem; they need to be regulated in some way, but how? As we have seen, Claudio has become the test case for what to do, and he is a good choice because an audience will want

authority to save him. He is too much the ordinary person and his offense is too common to be sacrificed to any rigorous reason. On the other hand, if Claudio is to be spared, what grounds will authority provide consistent with a public order with which an audience also needs to identify? The problem authority faces is where to draw the line: how to name the action in such a way that an attitude can be taken toward it.

For Pompey and the bawds, Claudio's offense presents no problem, and their word play suggests both how natural it is and how difficult to identify in legal terms:

Mistress Overdone: Well! What has he done?
Pompey: A woman.
Mistress Overdone: But what's his offense?
Pompey: Groping for trouts in a peculiar river.
Mistress Overdone: What? Is there a maid with child by him?
Pompey: No: but there's a woman with maid by him.
(I.ii.80-85)

But human society requires names for actions and relationships. It is full of "thou shalt nots" in order to preserve the order it wants. Only if thieves ignore the injunction "thou shalt not steal" can they have warrant for what they do (I.ii.7-16), but even as outlaws to established order, thieves will make some law to govern themselves, because no society can exist without it. "What knows the laws/ That thieves do pass on thieves?," says Angelo (II.i.22-23). Claudio's fate has to be decided in some way; hence the inconclusive debate between justice and mercy, Angelo and Isabella in Act II, scenes 2 and 4.

Shakespeare takes another perspective on the problem of Claudio by presenting Elbow's arrest of Froth and Pompey and their trial before Escalus in II.iii. Elbow's misplacings (a curious defect shared with fellow constables Dull and Dogberry) are especially appropriate to the themes of this

play. Once again they show how slippery language can be; its naming of an offense is not always accurate. "Notorious benefactors" are, of course, malefactors, and an "honourable" man is clearly dishonourable (an ironic glancing at his "honour" Angelo). "Respected" means "suspected" as Elbow uses the term, but as Pompey uses it referring to Elbow's wife, "respected" means "respected" in two senses of the word, allowing him to insult Elbow and to keep clear of slander at the same time. The misplacings of Elbow, the man who leans on Justice, are laughably correctable, but they echo the more painful difficulty of symbolic action in the main plot where authority's naming of Claudio's action is a matter of life or death.

In the course of the trial, Pompey's defense of Froth rests upon trusting to appearances: "Doth your honour see any harm in his face?...I'll be supposed upon a book, his face is the worst thing about him" (II.i.151-155). Of course, such a criterion is dangerous; it would condemn Claudio because his offense is "writ large" upon Juliet and would preserve Angelo because he seems innocent up until the trial scene. Yet, as the Duke implies in a sententious soliloquy, Angelo's and Claudio's crimes are the same:

Shame to him whose cruel striking
Kills for faults of his own liking!
Twice treble shame on Angelo;
To weed my vice, and let his grow!

(III.ii.260-263)

Given a choice between Elbow's misplacing of names and Pompey's sophistic reasonings, no wonder Escalus asks, "Which is the wiser here, Justice or Iniquity?" (II.i.169). Once again, the workings of the law and the bawd prove to be strikingly similar.

In the course of the trial the concern with slander is also raised, a subject of some concern to authority. When the Duke appointed Angelo as Deputy, it was, in part, to avoid being slandered for a tyrant if he were to

enforce laws whose transgression he had seemed to tolerate (I.iii.39-43). Slander will be something of which the Duke disguised as Friar will be accused during the trial of Act V and of which Lucio will be convicted. The State cannot be slandered for what it does without losing allegiance to its authority, and authority is all that mediates between a society's yearning for order and the "disease" of lawlessness. As the trial before Escalus makes clear, however, it is not always easy to tell when slander has occurred.

The issue arises when Pompey gives Elbow's wife the equivocal compliment that she is "respected." When Elbow demands proof of the charge, or "I'll have mine action of battery on thee," Escalus suggests, "If he took you a box o' th' ear, you might have your action of slander too" (III.i.175-178). Not only are the actions of slander and battery confused, but the supposed action of slander has literally been a compliment, even if it was intended to be an insult. In the main action of the play, it will not be any easier to tell when there has been slander to the State or not.

Finally, Escalus's judgement seems to mirror what we know of the Duke's rule before the play: namely, a tolerant attitude that has so far left everything as it is. Escalus warns Froth not to frequent tapsters; he warns Pompey of a whipping if he is caught at his trade again, and he seeks to replace Elbow as constable since it both pains him and leaves justice undone. Such authority may seem a model of moderation or temperance, but in the context of a state which has known fourteen years or more of neglected law enforcement, the result is indecorous. By the Duke's own admission to Friar Peter, his giving the people scope was a "fault" and is to be remedied now by whatever means Angelo can devise (I.iii.35).

The trial of Froth and Pompey, like the case of Claudio, presents the irreformable fact of lust along with the conviction that something must be

done about it. Authority is provoked to act for the sake of order, but how it should act by heading or hanging or by kindly warning, is hard to tell. The dilemma is made all the more difficult by law enforcers who misname the crime and merely bumble their way to whatever justice is to be found.

HIS GRACE THE DUKE: LIKE PROVIDENCE DIVINE?

For some critics, the Duke represents the solution to this dilemma. He is, for example, the Disguised Ruler of folklore, like King Severus, who seeks out abuses in disguise in order to bring them to justice. He is like King Corvinus of Promos and Cassandra, the all-powerful and final court of appeal who delivers the innocent and renders just judgement. For others, Duke Vincentio represents a third "term" that can transcend and so mediate the claims of Justice and Mercy. He is Temperance, for example, like the kind enjoined upon rulers in James I's Basilikon Doran or he is Aristotelian Moderation. More mystically, he represents Providence itself; he is like the Lord of the Christian parable who went away leaving his servants in charge of his affairs and commanding them to spend their talents well until his return. The Duke is "Grace" in contrast to Angelo's "honour"; he represents a divine deliverance for frail humanity based on a mercy beyond any justice of human devising.⁸

These folkloric and biblical motifs are reenforced by the quality of the verse in the second half of the play -- the Duke's sphere of action. At times, sententious couplets point the moral; at other times, a brisk expository prose serves the necessities of plot manipulation. We are in a world where realistic dilemmas, presented earlier in powerful blank verse, are now to be viewed partly from that perspective and partly from a perspective conventionally romantic and mystical.

In various ways, critics have argued the success of the Duke's devious methods, the wisdom of his supposed point of view, and the dignity of his divine identity. They say that he educates Angelo to repentance of his crime, Isabella to worldly respect for the claims of the world against her well-defended honor, and Claudio to the recognition that "That life is better life, past fearing death,/ Than that which lives to fear" (V.i.395-396).⁹

However, even those who defend the Duke remain troubled by the sense of some frustration which remains at the end of the action. Robert Ornstein, for example, who claims that the Duke succeeds in "rehabilitating" Angelo's character and provides a "comic resolution" adds immediately, "This does not mean that the many readers who find the ending of Measure for Measure unsatisfactory are insensitive or mistaken. The ending of the play is unsatisfactory in that it disappoints our longing for a more perfect justice than the world affords and because it avoids the very moral problems which lend reality and meaning to a contrived novella fable."¹⁰ In rhetorical terms, formal expectations have been frustrated. The syllogistic development of the conflict between justice and mercy halts with Isabella's refusal to give in to Angelo; the Duke's maneuvers signal a qualitative shift to another perspective which is beside the point of what to do about lawlessness, and the conventional ending of marriage is provided only to be resisted.

The Duke's character as supreme authority, buttressed as it is by allusions to folklore and the bible, seems to offer hope of a resolution to a troublesome human dilemma: the ordering of personal and social relationships. But the darkness of this play stems from the fact that the Duke's authority orders a solution which originates merely with his will to provide it (he offers no reasonable motive for his proceeding) and which proves ineffective upon examination. It is the Duke's kind of rule which has allowed the dilemma

of Claudio to arise in the first place, and it is the Duke's kind of solution which leaves that dilemma just where it is.

Vincentio, like Angelo, begins the play believing that the laws of Vienna have been neglected:

We have strict statutes and most biting laws,
The needful bits and curbs to headstrong jades,
Which for fourteen years we have let slip.

(I.iii.19-21)

Moreover, his first act upon donning his disguise is to urge Claudio to be absolute for death. He gives no hint to the audience that he has any ulterior and beneficent purpose for this advice. He seems, rather, to be cooperating with his Deputy in the act of extirpating lawbreakers. Even if Claudio is relatively harmless and innocent, the law must begin somewhere; justice must seize what is open to it, and Claudio's offense is undeniably public. Only after overhearing Isabella's report of Angelo's injustice and Claudio's pleading for his life does the Duke spring into action. In doing so, he leaves behind the question of whether Claudio deserves to die or not, accepts the assumption that he ought to live, and devotes his full energy to frustrating Angelo's plans. The focus of the play shifts from a serious resolution of a debate over lawlessness to the engineering of an ending in which everyone lives, including those who want to die. A study of the Duke's methods will show that, as usual, he is avoiding a resolution rather than providing one.

Since Isabella refuses to give in to Angelo, the Duke must find a substitute who will satisfy Angelo's conditions for saving Claudio's life. Conveniently, Mariana lies ready to hand, and the Duke explains to Isabel in business-like prose the fourfold benefit of her going to Angelo: "...by this

is your brother saved, your honour untainted, the poor Mariana advantaged, and the corrupt deputy scaled" (III.i.253-256).

Elegant as it is, the bed-trick solution has always caused problems for critics. Admittedly, it is a "deceit" and, as such, taints the Duke's character and the act of his saving Claudio. Shakespeare, however, seems to have taken pains to defend the device against these charges. Three times the Duke gives assurances that the trick is an acceptable means to a remedy: here, in Act III, scene 1; again, in the soliloquy of III.ii.270-275:

Craft against vice I must apply,
With Angelo tonight shall lie
His old betrothed but despised:
So disguise shall by th'disguised
Pay with falsehood false exacting,
And perform an old contracting.

and to Mariana in IV.i.71-75:

...gentle daughter, fear you not at all.
He is your husband on a pre-contract:
To bring you thus together 'tis no sin,
With that the justice of your title to him
Doth flourish the deceit.

The Duke ignores the moral issue of whether the end can ever justify the means; instead, he favors the poetic justice of the device (deceit defeats deceit) and the dramatic paradox of the trick (deceit will establish what the Duke regards as the true relationship of Angelo and Mariana). The bed trick could, for these reasons, be defended by the standards of a "higher law" whose ways are not always human ways. To accept the trick is to accept the Duke as a Providence who is free to act for his own benevolent purposes and whose results should prove the wisdom of his actions.

We will return to this point momentarily. Meanwhile, it is clear that the Duke intends to save Claudio by substituting one head for another:

Mariana's maidenhead for Isabella's. When Angelo, however, reneges on his agreement with Isabella and decides to behead Claudio anyway, the Duke of dark corners is cornered again. Once more he seeks to get out by a substitution: to submit someone else's head for Claudio's. This time, however, he meets a greater challenge than the one Isabella posed for him. He wants to use Barnardine, but the man, like Isabel, refuses to "die." Like Pompey and Claudio, Barnardine is a poor man who would live. He has no specific purpose, just a brute, habitual, instinctive clinging to life. He is "fit" neither to live nor to die. Since his very presence in the prison is the result of the Duke's earlier, lenient decision to live and let live, Barnardine is a comic reminder that the Duke has been unable to do anything about him before and cannot do anything now.

The Duke is delivered from the impasse which his own inaction has caused by an "accident that heaven provides." Thanks to the death of Ragozine the pirate, the Duke now has another head to send to Angelo, and, with danger averted, he is free to proceed to unmask Angelo for what he has done and to wrap up the ending by assigning rewards and punishments. This deliverance, welcome as it is, shows that the Duke is as helpless as Angelo or Escalus before the lawlessness of Vienna. He is as incompetent as he ever was, and an audience's laughter at this point stems from its rueful awareness that the best of supposedly authoritative wisdom is a patchwork affair; that, at bottom, even the Duke cannot decide if Barnardine is fit for life or death; and that if anything is to be done to move on, it will have to depend on an "accident that heaven provides."

This is a dark indictment of human incapacity, if looked into too curiously, and it is compounded by the question, do the Duke's substitutions even accomplish the purpose he intends for them? Certainly Ragozine's head saves Claudio's, and no one, I think, objects to that. For reasons it may

never be able to explain (and which it is never required to understand) the audience wants Claudio to live. But does Mariana's head substitute for Isabella's? The Duke thinks so, but does Angelo? More importantly, does the audience? Does not Harriet Hawkins speak for many when she asks, "...one may well wonder just what might have happened in the bed of Angelo. How would [Isabella] have responded? Could he be right in attributing to her a latent sensuality equal to his own? Who wouldn't like to find that out?...In certain works, the author arouses a desire, on the part of his audience for climax, not anticlimax. Thus -- sometimes -- for the audience, as well as for certain dramatic heroes and heroines, there can be no contentment but in going all the way. Indeed, fictional characters of various kinds may serve as surrogates for our own desires to 'try the utmost,' to experience whatever it is we most desire, or fear."¹¹

The objection to the bed trick, then, is not so much on moral as on formal grounds. It prevents Angelo and Isabella from resolving their relationship in the terms that they have set up. Angelo's act of lust from which he has already learned so much about his frailty, is countered with a forced commitment from which he gains nothing except a love he does not want.

The Duke, who cannot decide what to do about Barnardine, seems to have no problem deciding about Angelo. In effect, he "beheads" him with Mariana. It is no accident that immediately after the Duke explains to Mariana the rightness of her action and his deceit, the Provost asks Pompey, "Can you cut off a man's head?" (IV.ii.1). The Duke is like Pompey, then, who also comes to the prison and there takes upon himself the dual role of hangman and bawd (IV.ii.14-16).

The Duke may defend his actions as best he can, and an audience may yearn to accept them for the sake of the desired ending. Both the Duke's

authority and the authority of the conventional form of a tragi-comic ending may work to persuade the audience to applaud the saving of Claudio. But Elbow's entrance immediately after the Duke's explaining the bed trick to Isabella, like the Provost's comment, casts an oblique but damaging perspective on what has just transpired. The Duke has just presented his "remedy" to Isabella (III.i.198) when Elbow enters, chiding Pompey: "Nay, if there be no remedy for it, but that you will needs buy and sell men and women like beasts, we shall have all the world drink brown and white bastard" (III.ii.1-4). Logically, Elbow's "it" refers to something like concupiscence or sexual appetite for which Pompey would provide a remedy through pimping. On the open Elizabethan stage, however, with no break in the action, Elbow's "it" can refer semantically if not logically to Claudio's situation.

The Duke's authority, then, comes under severe scrutiny. It is the principle of order on the one hand; from this authority we expect the power to provide a happy ending — just as Oberon and Prospero are able to provide in their plays. On the other hand, this authority has limits to what it can do, and moreover uses methods which make it, at times, indistinguishable from actions like pimping which it would control. This troubling, ambivalent view of "the properties of government" is brought to "light" especially through the role of Lucio.

LUCIO: AN "INWARD" OF THE DUKE

Lucio is Shakespeare's most distinctive addition to his source and is therefore a sure clue not only to his intended emphases but also to the troubled response of the audience at the end of the play. Through Lucio's role we can see Shakespeare working both to provide a happy ending and to

frustrate it, and it is this dual effort of authority -- the Duke's and the author's -- which prevents an audience from identifying with a symbol of order and which troubles them.

Lucio is not only the scapegoat the Duke would like to make of him; he is also a reflector of the Duke's attitudes and, as such, creates for the audience two perspectives on the role of authority: it is the only hope for order; it also fails to coordinate competing attitudes successfully in the order it would establish.

Lucio is fit for his role by being the only character who acts and speaks so much like the Duke. Only Lucio goes about as much as the Duke does into the dark corners of Vienna, visiting with each of the citizens, commenting on their fates, and urging them to action. His thoughts on several subjects also mirror the Duke's. Both, for example, think that Angelo's attitude is too severe; both believe that Claudio should be spared; each in his way encourages Isabella to work toward that end, and each offers the same advice to her when these efforts seem in vain: the Duke's "Show your wisdom, daughter,/ In your close patience" (IV.iii.117-118) is echoed soon after by Lucio's "O pretty Isabella, I am pale at mine heart to see thine eyes so red: thou must be patient" (IV.iii.150-151).

It is because the audience wants Claudio to live that it sides with Lucio and the Duke in their efforts to save him. It never raises the question, as Angelo and Isabella do, on what grounds he should live. For Lucio, the question is absurd: "Why should a man lose his life for a game of tick tack?" He assumes that the Duke shares his thinking on this and says so to his disguised face: "Why, what a ruthless thing is this in [the Deputy], for the rebellion of a codpiece to take away the life of a man! Would the Duke that is absent have done this? Ere he would have hanged a man for the

getting a hundred bastards, he would have paid for the nursing a thousand. He had some feeling of the sport; he knew the service; and that instructed him to mercy" (III.ii.110-117).

The Duke's defensiveness ("I have never heard the absent Duke much detected for women; he was not inclined that way") is laughable because he shows such Elbow-like resistance to an intended compliment. He also presents the very image of repression as he struggles under his monk's cowl to beat back Lucio's suggestion of sexual license and his own rising anger at the charge. Clearly, he does not want his compassion for Claudio to be misconstrued as complicity with his crime. He is sensitive to the "slander" which suggests that his authority winks at lawless behaviour. Yet he offers no explanation for his decision to free Claudio consistent with his opposition to promiscuity .

That opposition was shown most strongly in the Duke's stinging rebuke to Pompey as he was escorted to prison: "Fie, sirrah, a bawd, a wicked bawd;/ The evil that thou causest to be done,/ That is thy means to live.../ Canst thou think thy living is a life,/ So stinkingly depending?...Take him to prison, officer:/ Correction and instruction must both work/ Ere this rude beast will profit" (III.ii.18-32). And these admonitions are echoed by Lucio who turns on Pompey in mock triumph just as he has (we learn later) betrayed Mistress Overdone to the authorities: "Art going to prison, Pompey?...Why, 'tis not amiss, Pompey. Farewell: go, say I sent thee thither" (III.ii.59-61).

Lucio's dramatic function is largely to echo the Duke. When this means pleading for Claudio's life in Part One, Lucio is at Isabella's side, urging her to ever more impassioned pleas for mercy. When this means condemning fornication as a crime, Lucio even betrays his friends to do so. Lucio, then, serves as an extreme example of both tolerance and harshness and, as such,

distracts from an audience's noticing and feeling the Duke's own contradictory attitudes so keenly.

The Duke not only has an inconsistent policy toward the examples of lechery which he sees alternately in Claudio and in Pompey, he is also far from understanding the pull toward lechery in himself. It is Lucio's function, again, to show how much Vincentio's lofty intentions of bringing order to Vienna are bound to fail because they seek to repress -- both in the city and in the man -- attitudes which are lawless and yet would live. The Duke tells Lucio that he is "not inclined that way" as he has told Friar Peter that he has a "complete bosom"; but one recognizes in this an absolute self-assurance which is bound to crumble as surely as Claudio's and Angelo's have. Lucio is like the Duke's shadow self, throwing light in Luciferian fashion on the neglected attitude, the forbidden fruit.

The Duke's response is to repress any suggestion of acquiescence in such an attitude at the same time that he tolerates it in the case of Claudio. Lucio will be made a scapegoat for supposedly slandering the Duke's character. But, in his antic fashion, he actually throws light on the Duke's twofold efforts: to provide a happy ending for Claudio and, at the same time, to extirpate the lawlessness of which Claudio's offense is an example. By making a scapegoat of Lucio, the Duke and Shakespeare preserve the image of the Duke as a mean between extremes and distract from the disturbing fact that the Duke, like Lucio, is also patently inconsistent. Moreover, Lucio helps to raise more than a suspicion that the Duke's authoritative conclusion will be little better than a whitewash, since the Duke shows more signs of repressing lawless lust than of accommodating it with any wisdom or patience.

THE CONCLUSION: THIS LOOKS NOT LIKE A NUPTIAL

As the Duke returns to Vienna for a trial of justice in which Angelo will be called to account, the audience expects him to provide the happy ending which he has been preparing. In the conventional sense, he does. No one dies, and multiple marriages are provided. But a closer look at the Duke's arrangements has caused many audiences to respond with only rueful mirth at best.¹² Why is this so? Why are they unpersuaded? In rhetorical terms, the answer is to be sought in the Duke's frustration of formal expectations and in his failure to provide a symbol of authority with which an audience can identify.

The trial in Act V is concerned, of course, with discovering the truth and with punishing those who slander authority. However, it begins most indirectly to find these directions out. Isabella, under instructions from the Friar, accuses Angelo falsely of having forced her to lie with him, claiming that her charge is true "to th'end of reck'ning."

Although her accusation seems like madness, the Duke allows her to tell her story but dismisses its tenor immediately ("This is most likely!") and arrests Isabella for slander. The Duke's judgement, of course, is technically correct; Angelo has never violated Isabel, and one wonders why she has been advised to proceed this way.

At this point, Friar Peter produces the veiled Mariana as a witness against Isabella. Mariana will not lift her veil until her husband bids her, and so only after some puzzled questioning to determine her identity and only at Angelo's command -- "Let's see thy face" -- does she say, "My husband bids me; now I will unmask" (V.i.204-205).

The unveiling has a dramatic effect; it "reveals" the truth of Angelo's relationship with Mariana which, hidden up to now, is announced to all, even to Angelo himself. This is also the first of three unveilings at the trial in which the revealing of someone's head seems to contribute to the resolution. Fittingly, the punning on "heads" earlier in the play is picked up at the conclusion and reenforced; the energy of life seems irrepressible as heads emerge from veils or cowls which have concealed them. However, as in All's Well (where three climaxes at the trial concerned "rings"), the build ups lead to let downs. Progressive form is frustrated and the dramatic moment is wasted. At this point, for example, Angelo has no reason to acknowledge Mariana as his wife, since he thinks that he has violated Isabella. He therefore dismisses the revelation and is given leave to find out who is behind these seemingly false accusations. The Duke leaves him to his office with the injunction "stir not until you have well determined/ Upon these slanderers" (V.i.257-258). With the discovery of the truth delayed and frustrated, the tension mounts toward a second revelation.

When the Duke, disguised as the Friar is brought in to defend himself against the charge of having slandered Angelo through the women he counselled, he not only defends himself but further indicts the "absent" Duke, Angelo, and Vienna itself for various injustices and villainies. Speaking to Mariana and Isabella, he says:

The Duke's unjust
Thus to retort your manifest appeal,
And put your trial in the villain's mouth
Which here you come to accuse...

Then, speaking to all, he says:

My business in this state
Made me a looker-on here in Vienna,
Where I have seen corruption boil and bubble
Till it o'errun the stew: laws for all faults,

But faults so countenanc'd that the strong statutes
Stand like the forfeits in a barber's shop,
As much in mock as mark.

To which accusations the shocked Escalus replies:

Slander to th' state!
Away with him to prison!

(V.i.298-321)

If the Duke's indictments of Vienna and Angelo are true, and not apparent slanders, are they not also true of himself? Is he not here accusing himself of injustice for having installed Angelo as Deputy not only in this scene but at the beginning? These questions are answered affirmatively in the contest that ensues between Lucio and the Friar. Lucio slanders the Friar's character and testimony, accusing him of having been the one to speak ill of the Duke in his absence, whereas it is clear to the Duke and to the audience that Lucio himself is guilty of the charge. Angelo orders Lucio to help the Provost arrest the Friar, and, in the figurative contest between Falsehood and Truth, Lucio forces the hood from the Friar's face.

A second revelation of a head occurs as the Duke shows himself for who he is and Lucio starts to slink away. Surely, now, this will be the promised end. It begins to look that way. The Duke pardons Escalus and implicitly establishes the truth of his own recent indictments against Vienna; Angelo confesses his crime and is married to Mariana; and even Isabella is pardoned for having "employ'd and pain'd" the Duke's sovereignty. However, the Duke has further plans for frustrating the expected ending.

First, he lies to Isabella and tells her that Claudio is dead; then he orders Angelo to die for it, setting up the tense scene of Mariana's begging with Isabel to join with her in a plea for mercy, all the time that the Duke is insisting that "He dies for Claudio's death." Some see in Isabella's plea

the high point of her moral development and the true test of her doctrine of mercy. Her speech is a beautiful moment of selfless love, however qualified it may be by the suggestion of sadism in the Duke's forcing it upon her. It is beautiful, indeed, but ineffective. The Duke allows Isabella's ingenious defense of Angelo to proceed, only to announce: "Your suit's unprofitable. Stand up, I say/ I have bethought me of another fault" (V.i.453-454).

This time it is the Provost who supposedly needs pardoning for having supposedly killed Claudio, but since both he and the Duke know that Claudio is alive, the pardon is useless and the stage is set for yet another dramatic climax. As the Provost leaves to fetch Barnardine and Claudio, Angelo's words show that he has accepted his fate and looks forward to death as the tribute he owes to justice. Responding to Escalus's offer of sympathy, he says: "I am sorry that such sorrow I procure,/ And so deep sticks it in my penitent heart/ That I crave death more willingly than mercy;/ 'Tis my deserving, and I do entreat it" (V.i.472-475).

These are the last words Angelo will say, and they are consistent with his tragic history. Rhetorically speaking, he is trying to transform himself by dying for the sake of justice. He is trying to resolve the inconsistency in his identity caused by the act of tyranny into which his lust led him. For this reason, marriage and a happy ending are furthest from his mind. The Duke, however, will not let Angelo be; he intends to force upon him a future he does not expect and does not want.

The Provost brings in two prisoners. One is Barnardine who, of course, is promptly forgiven. The other is disguised; however, a dramatic unmuffling soon takes place for the third time and reveals the truth that Claudio is alive. In terms of this play, Claudio's "head" has been spared. The visual pun reenforces the verbal punning on this subject and enacts the fact that

life is irrepressible, or, in other words, that the heads of fornicators who should "die" for taking maidenheads are not so easily put down.

Angelo is then pardoned for Claudio's sake and the Duke offers marriage to Isabella for the same reason. It seems, then, that all the machinery of justice has been erected to no avail. All of the tortuous groping for truth in Act V has been unnecessary. The Duke has known what he would do since Act III, and when he does it he finally frustrates the progression toward a knowledge of what to do about Claudio initiated by the grand debate between Angelo and Isabella.

At first glance, the solution the Duke offers seems humane and desirable to the audience; after all, Claudio is to live. But his solution is offered by the same authority which has fulminated against Vienna's corruption. The Duke wants it both ways; he has commanded a solution to the problem of lawlessness and, at the same time, has frustrated the only efforts taken to solve it. He offers no solution of his own, just the same tolerance and pardon for all which he has shown for fourteen years.

Besides frustrating a progressive development that would have led to tragic suffering but also perhaps to tragic wisdom, the Duke supplies his own ending which looks conventionally comic but is nothing of the kind. Every marriage, except Claudio's and Juliet's, is commanded, and every marriage is resisted to some degree. The Duke acknowledges Isabella's possible hesitation when he qualifies the offer of his hand: "Dear Isabel,/ I have a motion much imparts your good,/ Whereto if you'll a willing ear incline,/ What's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine.." (V.i.531-534).

Angelo has said that he would rather die, and it may be only the Duke's wishful thinking that spies a "quickening in his eye" upon the revelation of Claudio. But, as usual, the loudest and most explicit comments come from

Lucio. Like Angelo, Lucio has been exposed for his crime, forced to be married, then threatened with "The nuptial finish'd,/ Let him be whipp'd and hang'd" (V.i.510-511). Just as quickly, he is forgiven his slanders but forced into marriage anyway. Lucio wails in protest, "Marrying a punk, my Lord is pressing to death,/ Whipping and hanging." To which the Duke's final response is, "Slandering a prince deserves it" (V.i.520-521).

Lucio is the intended scapegoat, then, the one whose punishment helps to define what the victorious order stands for. However, his howls of protest carry more than a hint that truth is on his side as much as on the Duke's. This seems not like a nuptial, nor do the other marriages which the Duke is arranging to remedy the lawless fornication of Vienna. Lucio's slanders may be false or true, but they have raised the suspicion that the order the Duke intends to establish has not really worked out a cooperative alliance with the attitudes represented by Pompey and the bawds at one extreme and Angelo's Justice at the other.

The commands to obey the arrangements are not enough to still the suspicion that this authority does not know what he is doing. The haunting question returns, "Who is the wiser here, Justice or Iniquity?" And when an audience asks this, it goes home troubled, not only failing to identify with the proposed symbol of order in this play, but also made to wonder if the "properties of government" may not be such that no authority can coerce contending attitudes into a cooperative commonwealth.

VI. LOOKING BEFORE AND AFTER

" Truth uncompromisingly told will always have its ragged edges...". Billy Budd, chapter 28

In an influential essay, Una Ellis-Fermor suggested that Troilus and Cressida is a play which tests one of the "frontiers of drama" and succeeds in crossing it. Drama, she says, can easily encompass only certain moods, forms and thoughts; it reaches its limits in the portrayal of religious emotion, the scope of action more fitly told in epic, and certain complex ideas which challenge coherent development. In Troilus and Cressida, she maintains, Shakespeare challenges the limits of what dramatic form can express and enacts the very "idea of disjunction." Paradoxically, he achieves "the triumphant revelation of disjunction, of the negation of all order, within the ordered concentration of dramatic shape."¹

In my analysis of the problem plays, I have, in effect, accepted this verdict about Troilus and Cressida and have extended its application to All's Well and Measure for Measure, while corroborating Ellis-Fermor's insight with an examination along the lines of Burkean rhetoric. As we have seen, central to Burke's rhetoric is his definition of man as the symbol-using animal and his definition of rhetoric as persuasion to change through "identification" with a symbol of order. "Rhetoric," he says, "is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols."²

As Burke maintains, the dramatist persuades by his use of several forms, each of which, alone and in combination, causes a collaborative effort between him and the audience which leads it to see the order and the attitude he is

defining. An audience is free to accept or to reject the dramatist's persuasion, of course, but ordinarily it is obvious what kind of order it is ostensibly persuaded to accept. It is possible, for example, that some will secretly cheer on Macbeth despite his villainy, and I believe that Shakespeare provides them with sufficient reason to do so. Meanwhile, however, others are seeking revenge for Macduff's children and with a "blessed rage for order" are piously awaiting the victory of Malcolm. The dramatist's use of forms is only an attempt to persuade; it is not a guarantee that the persuasion will succeed. He establishes the order, but not without first having established dramatic ironies which make the verdict on the order more or less problematic.

In Macbeth, the ostensible order is clear. In the problem plays, however, Shakespeare completely frustrates in several ways the need to identify which is deeply rooted in the symbol-using audience. First, he frustrates its expectations for a definite ending through death or marriage -- states of division or merger respectively which show that the "terms" of the play (the characters) have undergone a clear transformation. Secondly, he provides no "scapegoat" who can carry off the perceived "pollution" or block to resolution. Finally, he supplies no symbol of order which credibly demonstrates its power to win assent and to establish the renewed society.

So, for example, All's Well and Measure for Measure end with the clear reluctance of the groom to take up his bride. Even Beatrice and Benedick in Much Ado are able to convince themselves that they really must love one another after all, deep down, somewhere. But Angelo and Bertram are, at best, only resigned to their lot. It is imposed on them and they accept. In Troilus and Cressida the principals are neither destined for marriage nor allowed to die. Troilus maintains his attitude of naive and savage dedication, first to love and then to war; Cressida persists in her attitude of reluctant accommodation. Neither is able to act upon the scene of war in a

way that will alter events, and so the confusion of battle fitly closes this enactment of "the idea of disjunction."

Appropriately enough, each of the plays either closes or pivots on "if" -- a sure sign that the dramatist has intended an ambiguity, that the frustration of forms has been deliberate. Troilus's argument in front of Calchas's tent shows how much depends on his resolving the identity of Cressida:

This she? No, this is Diomed's Cressida.
If beauty have a soul, this is not she;
If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimonies,
If sanctimony be the gods' delight,
If there be rule in unity itself,
This was not she...
This is, and is not, Cressid.

(V.ii.134-143)

Two perceptions of Cressida remain; "bifold authority" cannot reconcile her behavior and the comforting axioms Troilus lives by. Therefore, not only is there "madness of discourse" but, for the audience, unrelieved shifting between Cressida as she is and Cressida as Troilus would have her be -- her attitude and his.

In Measure for Measure, the Duke says cautiously to Isabella, "I have a motion much imports your good,/ Whereto if you'll a willing ear incline,/ What's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine" (V.i.538-540). He seems rightly aware of the possible resistance to his suggestion which his earlier actions in the play have done something to encourage.

And the King says dubiously at the close of All's Well, with a nervous look, perhaps, at the apparently reconciled Bertram: "All yet seems well, and if it end so meet,/ The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet" (V.iii.333-334). The endings of these plays, then, are not clearly resolved by "worthy" deaths or happy marriages.

Moreover, in each play there is a concerted but futile effort to find a scapegoat whose punishment will end the rivalry of attitudes and clearly establish which are to be expelled and which to be revered. As Rene Girard has succinctly observed, "Even the most banal scapegoat effect is an unconscious structuring process."³ With the scapegoat expelled, a society can come together with a renewed sense of what it stands for.

Girard's theory coincides with much of Burke's thinking on the necessity of the scapegoat's function for establishing an order, but as Girard also suggests, Shakespeare seemed to understand the dishonesty of such a device. For Shakespeare, all attitudes belong in "cooperative competition" (Burke's phrase) for the well being of society or for the defining of an issue. If history were not written by the winners, and if people were not usually conscious only of the recent past, it would be clearer that many attitudes have always coexisted in any order.

So, in Girard's analysis, the scapegoat device in the deaths of Romeo and Juliet is parodied in the ludicrous deaths of Pyramus and Thisbe in Midsummer Night's Dream. The audience so much wants its "order" at the end that it will swallow almost anything to get it, including the nagging doubt that these deaths need not have happened. "Shakespeare," says Girard, "knows that fiction is and must be a lie. The audience is looking for its pharmakos, as Northrop Frye tells us, and even the tiniest little sign in one direction or another will send everybody charging like raving buffaloes, so long as someone is there to be trampled to death. The doubles will be tilted one way or the other; better give them a strong and obvious tilt, in order not to be trampled oneself, or completely ignored, which is the same thing, really, for a playwright." ⁴

However, even if Shakespeare knows that he must please his audience in the end, or even if he is sincerely urging their acceptance of some order at last, he always manages to dramatize the best that can be said for diverse attitudes. Through Helena in All's Well for example, he shows that virginity is a much respected value; through Parolles, he also argues that if everyone were a virgin, where would virgins come from? Unless contrasted attitudes like these can be sorted out, with one expelled and the other preserved, no resolution can occur. This failure to provide a scapegoat, I have suggested, helps to explain the problem of the problem plays.

In Troilus and Cressida, the obvious candidate for scapegoat is Thersites; his reductive views on love and war would, in another play, cause him to excuse himself from the festive conclusion, as Jaques does, or suffer imprisonment and self-exile like Malvolio. There would be a clear attempt to place his attitude on the bottom rung of a scale of values. In his own play, however, his voice shares equally with those of an idealistic lover (Troilus), an idealistic soldier (Hector), and the pragmatic policies of men of action (Ulysses and Achilles). Thersites qualifies rationalizations of all kinds from a perspective so vile that it reduces all actions to the motive of blind lust -- of mere motion without purpose. Although his cynicism and invective dirties him even as he speaks it, some of his judgment also besmears those at whom it is directed. His well-realized attitude keeps an audience off balance, constantly reminding it that its desire for action with credible purpose and its desire for "perfect" consummation through love or war is illusory. In Troilus and Cressida, then, there is no scapegoat, no one to blame more than another, and therefore no way of establishing an order in which one attitude is to be preferred over another.

Likewise, but in more subtle ways, Parolles and Lucio survive attempts to blame them and to cast them out for attitudes which block the way of a

desired resolution. Each, of course, is kept alive, forgiven, and invited to join the comic procession of the close. But each does so without having changed his wry point of view toward the turns of the plot. Therefore, they cast suspicions on the motives of those characters whose fates resemble their own. Parolles' determination to remain what he is casts a qualifying light on the sincerity of Bertram's repentance; Lucio's protest against being married to a punk casts a suspicious light on Angelo's willingness to "die" after his marriage to Mariana. To the extent that the scapegoat has not carried off the qualifying attitude, to the extent an audience is invited to have reservations even to the end, to that extent the order can retain only a shaky hold.

I have implied in my analysis that the problem plays differ from others in the canon not for having conflicting attitudes but for keeping them so much in suspense even to the end. There is more of a protest against the imposition of the conventional ending and against the inexorable grinding forward of syllogistic progression than is to be found in the other plays. Since the protest is not "carried off" or placed securely on a spectrum, the problem of identification for the audience is intensified.

Finally, the order to be imposed seems to depend merely on the will of the protagonists and not on any reasonable grounds. So, for example, the lengthy debate in the Trojan council demonstrates that the Trojans keep Helen because they want to, with no regard for the "moral laws/ Of nature and of nations" (II.ii.184-185). Likewise, the slaughter of Hector makes it clear that the Grecian actions also lack all proportionate cause. In the scene before he attacks Hector, Achilles addresses his Myrmidons, not with explanations but with a weak expletive ("It is decreed") and with imperatives that show a rapacious will to consummate Hector's death:

Come here about me, you my Myrmidons;
Mark what I say. Attend me where I wheel.

Strike not a stroke, but keep yourselves in breath.
And when I have the bloody Hector found,
Empale him with your weapons round about;
In fellest manner execute your arms.
Follow me, sirs, and my proceedings eye;
It is decreed Hector the great must die.

(V.vii.1-8)

An audience needs to know more than the will of the protagonist in order to identify with the results of his actions. Some explanation must be obvious, even if only the conventional one that this action has brought about an order desired by the more reasonable characters. Comedy succeeds when it is obvious that a "saner" society replaces an irrational one; tragedy succeeds when it is obvious that something has been learned by suffering the response to an assertive action. In Troilus and Cressida, the action is not only without reasonable explanation, but also without any desirable results. The brute facts of death and disease remain after willful attempts to wage war and love. Therefore, "Hector is dead, there is no more to say" (V.x.22).

As I have analyzed them, the same willfulness characterizes the decisions of the King in All's Well and of the Duke in Measure for Measure. When the King attempts to marry off Helena to the man of her choice, his anger at Bertram's refusal of this arrangement and his equivocal use of "honor" to mean "will" show that his motives are at best self-interested; they merely cooperate with Helena's plan to marry Bertram because she has effected a cure. Bertram's interests are in no way consulted. Although the conventions of folk tale would suppress such considerations for the sake of the story, Shakespeare, I believe, has raised them deliberately, thus throwing into question the reasonableness of the King's actions and preventing identification with them.

In the same way, the Duke's decisions to test Angelo and then to test Isabella are made without reasonable explanations in either case. Even if the

testings could be justified on allegorical grounds -- such as the Duke's wanting to educate them to a more humane understanding, for example -- why should the rewards of virtue be made to look indistinguishable from whipping and hanging? Because marriage is imposed on Angelo and Lucio and offered to Isabella without preparation, it cannot satisfy even in a conventional way.

The syllogistic progression up to Act III.i.152 pointed the arrows of expectation toward the issue of Angelo's getting Isabella; with the Duke's plotting from III.i.153 onward, the audience learns that he is to get Mariana. In both cases, his getting of the woman is to be the result of an unexplained will that it be so. To see Angelo trapped into accepting Mariana takes away the feeling of a "saner" conclusion, even if marrying her means that he will live. An audience cannot be expected to identify with Angelo's attempt to rape Isabella in exchange for her brother's life; this is willful villainy. It can accept only a little more easily the Duke's willful imposition of a marriage on Angelo in order to satisfy the desires of Mariana.

I have entitled my rhetorical analysis of these plays "A Dancing of Attitudes" because they dramatize more than Shakespeare's other plays an active weaving in and out of divergent attitudes while failing to provide a reasonable basis for sorting out which should be preferred over the other. As its first benefit, this rhetorical method provides a way of understanding in formal terms why All's Well, Measure for Measure, and Troilus and Cressida have puzzled critics and audiences alike.

THIS, THEN, IS THE PRAISE OF SHAKESPEARE

A further use of Burkean rhetorical analysis will help to explain three features of Shakespeare's style which Dr. Johnson also noticed but which he labeled faults: punning, counteracting, and lack of poetic justice.

According to Johnson, Shakespeare interrupts the straightforward telling of his "fable" by turning aside for a pun. It exerts a "malevolent" influence over him; it is like "luminous vapors" to a traveller or, worse, it is the "fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world and was content to lose it."⁵ Rhetorical criticism would reply that instead of losing one world, Shakespeare has gained two, by fusing in one word two perspectives on the same subject. So, for example, Helena is both "grace" and "grass"; Angelo's "sense" breeds at Isabella's words; and Cressida is kissed in "general." The pun shows in little what Shakespeare is doing throughout a play: combining "perspectives by incongruity," arguing opposites, and including a "parliament" of attitudes on the subject he is contemplating.

Several decades after Johnson, Coleridge defended the pun by calling it "one of the most effectual intensives of passion."⁶ Burke would agree, noting how a pun allows an artist to admit even the "thinking of the body" (through scatological meanings, for example) into a thoroughgoing presentation of a subject. Commenting on Gaunt's death bed scene (Richard II II.i) and Richard's question, "Can sick men play so nicely with their names?," Coleridge replies, "Yes! on a death bed there is a feeling which may make all things appear but as puns and equivocation...it is profoundly true that there is a natural, an almost irresistible tendency in the mind, when immersed in one strong feeling, to connect that feeling with every sight and object around it; especially if there be opposition, and the words addressed to it are in any

way repugnant to the feeling itself, as here in the instance of Richard's unkind language: 'Misery makes sport to mock itself.'"⁷

For Coleridge, it seems, a pun serves to reinforce a passion by merging it, when provoked, with ideas and images that help give the passion "presence" and extent. Gaunt's name suggests, easily enough, "gaunt" images, and such is his state on the way to death. But Gaunt's purpose in punning is also important, and Coleridge seems to miss it even though he is, in Biographia Literaria, the best explicator of poetry's function as a reconciler of opposites.

"Misery makes sport to mock itself." That is, Gaunt momentarily takes Richard's attitude toward his dying and, in doing so, makes sport of it, for thus his death appears to Richard. The pun, then, has served as a way not only of expressing Gaunt's passion more intensely but also of conveying Richard's attitude of mockery at Gaunt's gaunt condition. Perhaps the play on words serves to relieve Gaunt of his misery momentarily by giving him an incongruous perspective on it, but, if so, it serves another purpose as well. By taking Richard's attitude, it flatters him, and so it surprises him into asking: "Should dying men flatter with those who live?" "No, no," Gaunt admits, "men living flatter those who die." Richard is puzzled: "Thou, now a - dying sayest thou flatterest me." And Gaunt can now turn the tables on Richard by reversing the terms with which each understands his situation: "O no! thou diest, though I the sicker be/...Thy death-bed is no lesser than thy land/ Wherein thou liest in reputation sick" (Richard II II.i.83-96). Here, then, is an argument of attitudes which began with a pun that contained them both.

It is the rhetorical usefulness of a pun which led Kenneth Burke to declare that "[Shakespeare] had to indulge in his more atrocious puns not only for the sake of the crowd but for his own sake as well. It gave him the basis

for refining them into the more subtle metaphorical leaps of which he is capable."⁸ Empson suggests even further that "...one source of the unity of a Shakespearean play, however brusque its handling of character, is this coherence of its subdued puns."⁹ It is Shakespeare's genius, then, and not his Antony-like turpitude which woos the word that will beget a twin understanding of any issue he dramatizes, any story he tells.

As Stephen Booth points out, it is the pun which exemplifies in little what makes a Shakespearean drama as a whole so troubling or awesome in its complexity. "A pun," says Booth, "is the commonest and smallest practical manifestation of the fragility of definitions. Since a word is a definer -- exists to fix quasi-physical limits to an idea -- the experience of perceiving a pun is a real, though admittedly petty, experience of collapsing limits."¹⁰ The pun is, as Nietzsche called it and as Burke concurs, a "perspective by incongruity." As such, it is a most fit rhetorical form for use in a dramatic definition of terms.

Shakespeare's second fault, according to Johnson, is his tendency to "counteract" himself, of which turning aside for a pun is only one example. As Johnson puts it, "What he does best, he soon ceases to do. He is not long soft and pathetic without some idle conceit or contemptible equivocation. He no sooner begins to move than he counteracts himself; and terror and pity, as they are rising in the mind, are checked and blasted by sudden frigidity."¹¹ Johnson, in thus describing Shakespeare's tendency to qualify one argument by the injection of its opposite, felicitously suggests a resemblance to Burke's idea of drama as an inter-action of terms, or the "comic contemplation" of "cooperative competition" among conflicting attitudes.

As I noted in my analysis, this tendency to "self interference," as Burke calls it, shows especially in the endings of the problem plays where an

audience is most eager for some order to be established.¹² It is as if Shakespeare is deliberately frustrating an easy solution either because he does not believe in it or because he knows that he could continue the debate indefinitely. His "sense of an ending" is that it is potentially endless -- that "every exit (is) an entrance somewhere else."¹³

Shakespeare's failure to end neatly relates, I suspect, to Johnson's gravest dissatisfaction, that "He sacrifices virtue to convenience and is so much more careful to please than to instruct that he seems to write without any moral purpose."¹⁴ Johnson was especially offended, as we know, by the fate of Cordelia. Shakespeare, he acknowledged, may not have violated probability by showing "the wicked prosper and the virtuous miscarry," because it is, after all, a "just representation of the common events of human life." But insofar as everyone loves justice, they will be better pleased, Johnson argued, by "the final triumph of persecuted virtue." He rests his case on the public's acceptance of Tate's revised ending, adding, "...if my sensations could add anything to the general suffrage, I might relate that I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor."¹⁵

In our time, however, the public has decided otherwise, with Shakespeare's version not only restored but played more frequently and turned into three film versions for even wider distribution (Kozintsev, 1970; Brook, 1971; Olivier, 1983). I suspect that this play has found its audience again because of an increased scepticism toward the comfort of ideologies and a greater willingness to hear out all the arguments on behalf of questions such as: "Who is it can tell me who I am?" We understand Lear in Keats's terms as "a fierce dispute betwixt damnation and impassioned clay," and we sit still to learn what can be learned as one human act counteracts another, as clothes are

doffed and donned, as puns on "nature" and "kind" encapsulate divergent perspectives on the human condition. We know that neither Lear's view nor Edmund's is self-evidently just, and that therefore the honest course for the playwright is the one that Shakespeare has taken: to present the issues and to trust the audience to decide the merits of each.

Shakespeare's morality, then, is what Burke would call "linguistic scepticism, which we synonymize with linguistic appreciation, on the grounds that an attitude of methodical quizzicality towards language may best equip us to perceive the full scope of its resourcefulness."¹⁶ Given the human tendency to "perfect" any one symbol or attitude to the exclusion of others, Burke sees linguistic scepticism as a strategy for survival. Any method which shows the limits or ambiguities of one symbol (Lear's "nature," for example, or Edmund's) also assures a place for the other in the unending conversation of the "human barnyard." Stalemate does not satisfy those who would perfect an ideology at the expense of a scapegoat, but at least it ensures the survival of all attitudes, honestly recognizing the truth of each perspective.

Coleridge, I think, inadvertently explained the "morality" of Shakespeare's plays by noting one of the salient features of his life-like character portrayal: "signal adherence to the great law of nature, that all opposites tend to attract and temper each other" and, again, "In Shakespeare the heterogeneous is united, as it is in nature."¹⁷ The plays, like life itself, show the interaction of many attitudes and, by doing so, convey whatever truth we are prepared to accept, and whatever definition of justice we are prepared to agree upon. To use the terms of renaissance rhetoric, Shakespeare's imagination has found the "available arguments" touching the subject he is contemplating; it is up to us, the audience, to assent to what we believe is most probably the case.

Ironically, Johnson himself is the best defender of Shakespeare's morality when he praises Shakespeare for having, above all poets, "the largest and most comprehensive soul." Moreover, he says, "This is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life, that he who has mazed his imagination in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies by reading human sentiments in human language, by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world and a confessor predict the progress of the passions."¹⁸ Johnson is specifically contrasting Shakespeare with writers of sentimental comedy for whom "the universal agent is love." Shakespeare, by contrast, knew that "love is only one of many passions; and as it has no great influence upon the sum of life, it has little operation in the dramas of a poet who caught his ideas from the living world and exhibited only what he saw before him. He knew that any other passion, as it was regular or exorbitant, was a cause of happiness or calamity."¹⁹ Johnson praises Shakespeare, then, for dramatizing a variety of passions or attitudes operating in life; furthermore, Shakespeare's dramaturgy is natural in that "His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated and the whole system of life continued in motion." Shakespeare's plays are "just representations of general nature," then, in their mirroring both of the variety of passions and of the way these passions operate.²⁰

Johnson, like Coleridge, has recognized the truth-to-life in Shakespeare's drama, and, in doing so, has located the salient principle of his morality. The praise of Shakespeare as the poet of nature means, in rhetorical terms, that he has shown a variety of passions or attitudes interacting in his "fable" and has traced their progress in such a way that they impress an audience as true to the movement of its own spirit. From the knowledge of itself which an audience gains by such a "comic contemplation,"

it is more ready to accept an ironic juxtaposition of conflicting terms as the necessary condition for any definition of order.

If this, then, is the praise of Shakesperare, it should be enough not only to explain why his plays reward attention, but also why he excels so many other playwrights including the brightest candidates. Bernard Shaw, for example, granted Shakespeare his "word music" and pitied the person who could not enjoy Shakespeare on that account, but he scoffed at Shakespeare's ideas. "Shakespear's morality is a mere reach-me-down," he says, full of accepted ideas against which some characters, like Hamlet, struggle only fitfully and unsuccessfully. Shakespeare had no original contributions to make to morality and religion and was therefore inferior to Ibsen -- and, of course, to Shaw himself.²¹ Shaw, like Johnson, seems to think that Shakespeare's morality should be identifiable with paraphrasable sententiae or a comforting ideology. That is why he says: "We have got so far beyond Shakespeare as a man of ideas that there is by this time hardly a famous passage in his works that is considered fine on any other ground than that it sounds beautifully, and awakens in us the emotion that originally expressed itself by its beauty. Strip it of that beauty of sound by prosaic paraphrase, and you have nothing left but a platitude that even an American professor of ethics would blush to offer to his disciples" (my emphases).²² The answer to this, of course, is that Shakespeare, unlike Shaw, is able to contemplate more than one great idea at a time -- especially those attitudes which are part of life even if they seem repugnant to a realistic philosophy: like Henry V's patriotic speeches and Cleopatra's immortal longings. Therefore, what seems to Shaw a muddle is actually a complex network of meaning, too "intrinse t'unloose" (King Lear II.ii.81).

As an example of his own dramatic method, Shaw felt compelled to tidy up the ending of Cymbeline by omitting the religious references to Jupiter's

intervention and by putting into Imogen's mouth an explicit and strident instruction on the proper way to treat a woman. Shakespeare worked otherwise, and it is his contemplation of the interaction of several attitudes, his arguing of opposites, his methodical quizzicality toward all symbolic actions which constitute his morality. After all, it is a truthful man, as well as a just and brave man, who will try to hear every argument that can be heard and to give every reason that can be given, even if he proposes to "vote" for one over the other in the end.

IS THIS THE PROMISED END?

As I have discussed them, the problem plays show Shakespeare's morality at its most scrupulous, offering several perspectives in an act of "pure persuasion" which is so evenly argued that no attitude emerges as the one the audience is clearly asked to accept. The arguments in these plays are more unrelieved by a persuasion to order at the end than those in other plays of the canon.

With the tragedies, Shakespeare once again returns to resolving the conflict of attitudes as he has done in his earlier plays, at least in this sense: he brings his characters or terms through the total transformation signified by death. Rhetorically, he makes them worthy of a "eulogy"; he praises their worth as the "vessels of meaning" or scapegoats that have helped us -- the audience -- reach an understanding through their act and suffering. Of course, it is not possible to put this understanding easily into the words of a theme. What we learn from Hamlet's pained predicament, Lear's rashness, and Othello's jealousy comes from years of contemplating the interaction of attitudes which have made the deaths of these characters surely pitiful and somehow necessary. It would take another thesis to put my own paraphrase into

decent order, and I would, at that, only be adding a small contribution to the understanding of so many others. Nevertheless, I should emphasize that my understanding would be rhetorical; it would assume that I am "consubstantial" with these heroes and with their antagonists, that I can see in them attitudes I have in myself and that I therefore can learn from them. In this I would differ from those who are persuaded otherwise. I remember two undergraduates, for example, to whom Lear's rashness seemed "unrealistic," his refusal to accommodate himself to changing times impractical, and his choice of Cordelia sentimental. Therefore, they lost interest in Lear and transferred it to Edmund because his attitude more clearly matched their own: he is the up and coming man of "nature" who gets shortchanged by an outdated society and who, despite a sentimental death-bed conversion, survives in the memory as the one whose attitude calls every Lear-like and Albany-like order into question. I believe that most people are persuaded as I am -- that Lear is the "vessel of meaning" in this play -- but I am also convinced that Shakespeare has presented Edmund's attitude so well that latter-day Machiavels and neo-Nietzschean supermen (certainly the two undergraduates) will identify with his attitude and his tragedy, even to the extent of downplaying Lear's.

What could become for a few the tragedy of Edmund does become, for many, the tragedy of Macbeth. His death is also a "transformation." Granted, his heroic evil gets no eulogy; instead, it is made "immortal." By dying for the principle of self-determination, as a rebel to Malcolm's order, Macbeth, in rhetorical terms, shows that such a principle is worth dying for. For that reason, I would qualify slightly Stephen Booth's recent and excellent analysis of this play. For Booth, Macbeth, like any formal tragedy, is the attempt to define an indefinable experience. The audience feels a conflict between its customary, neat moral judgments and how it really experiences the character of Macbeth. The clash between what it feels and what it ought to say goes

unrecognized consciously, but since it is sensed subliminally and endured, the audience feels good for having survived this grave threat to its cosy, everyday assumptions. Macbeth's lawless attitude threatens every attempt to define a moral order, but his death expels that threat at least within the confines of the play.²³

Booth assumes, then, that the audience retains some measure of comfort; a rhetorical analysis would not be so sure. Many in the audience, no doubt, believe that the surviving order is well rid of the "dead butcher and his fiend like queen." Others, however, will sense only a fragile peace in the victory of Malcolm, a mere act of wishful thinking that his coronation at Scone will unite his subjects and satisfy their ambitions. In his film of Macbeth (1971), Roman Polanski has tinkered with the text to give more weight to this pessimistic view. As Jack Jorgens describes it:

The time is not free at the end of Polanski's melodrama, for there will be no end to the chain of ambitious killings, repression, and fear. In the concluding scene a rider approaches the ruins of the witches and the sour bagpipes sound again. It is Donalbain, Malcolm's younger brother, whose limp links him with the young murderer and whose looks were as dark as Macbeth's when Duncan named Malcolm successor. He takes shelter from the rain under the ruins as Macbeth and Banquo did. Hearing the witches' chanting, he goes to investigate. The film's final image is a sustained long shot of the ruin in the rain with the horse outside awaiting its master.²⁴

Of course, Polanski need not have strayed far from the text to make this point. An attentive audience will hear again in Malcolm's promise to plant "newly with the time" whatever needs to be done (V.viii.66) an echo of his father Duncan's similar promise: to "plant" Macbeth and to make him "full of growing" (I.iv.28-29). And in this echoed promise of calm after a storm is also heard the sequel of disappointed ambition and of a radical refusal to serve that can be traced back both to the man and the woman in the garden and to the rebellion of Satan to whom Macbeth and his Lady have been implicitly

compared. Since, rhetorically speaking, every "god term" needs a "devil term" in order to define itself, an audience cannot help but suspect any promise of pure grace and peace. In the tragedy of Macbeth, the audience has, in a sense, witnessed the devil being given his due, and some may even be persuaded that the devil has only lost a battle, not the war.

For Burke, Macbeth is Shakespeare's way of expressing "outlaw" attitudes while giving proper deference to the order that commands for the moment. He represents a mounting middle class ambition which tries to grasp the "golden round" for itself in order to establish a new order based on its principles.²⁵ One need not accept Burke's socially weighted analysis in order to accept his principal point: that Macbeth, like every drama, enacts attitudes that will appeal in different ways to several constituencies in the audience. According to William Empson, who is discussing irony in the novel, "double irony is somehow natural to the stage" where a dramatist can appeal to different parties in the audience in order to help him argue a complex matter of concern.

It is when the ironist himself begins to doubt...that the far-reaching ironies [of a novel] appear; and by then the thing is like a dramatic appeal to an audience, because both parties in the audience could swallow it. The essential is for the author to repeat the audience in himself, and he may safely seem to do nothing more. No doubt he has covertly, if it is a good irony, to reconcile the opposites into a larger unity, or suggest a balanced position by setting out two extreme views, or accept a lie (more or less consciously) to find energy to accept a truth...I think it must be conceived as like a full-blown "dramatic ambiguity," in which different parts of the audience are meant to interpret the thing in different ways.²⁶

As the audience interprets, heated debate will ensue over whether the order finally proffered is adequate or not, desirable or not. As I have said, the tragedies move away from the problem plays by clearly presenting an order for acceptance or rejection. In the same way, the romances provide a clear pointer to a comic kind of acceptance: to the deep joy that comes when the

lost are found, identities are clarified and accepted, and the sinful are forgiven. The conventions of romance are used with less formal qualification; they are not felt to be an imposition on a plot struggling to go elsewhere. The characters are also drawn with less inherent ambiguity. Imogen, for example, not only loves Posthumus but is clearly lovable in return. It is wrong to doubt her and to harm her while it is not as obviously wrong for Bertram to resist Helena. Also, Imogen's search for Posthumus is not presented as a scheme to win him back. No one would call Imogen a "clever wench" of folk tale, much less defend her on those grounds which W.W.Lawrence chose in order to defend Helena's apparently "predatory monogamy."

Of course, even in the romances, Shakespeare does not entirely give up contrasting attitudes and including qualifications to the order he would establish, although the formal construction is more of a piece than in the problem plays. The qualifications come, instead, from reminders within the play of its fictive and illusory nature and of the loose ends that have not been included within the charmed circle of the resolution. For example, the loose bones of Antigonus rattle against the final harmony of The Winter's Tale and, in The Tempest, it is clear both that Antonio will never accept forgiveness from Prospero and that Caliban is one upon whose nature the nurture of art will never stick. These are recalcitrant materials, not to be wrestled, it seems, to any resolution.

Moreover, the fictive nature of the play itself is relentlessly pointed out as if to qualify its claim to serious attention. Pericles is a "song that old was sung," told by "ancient" Gower; the reunion of Hermione, Leontes and Perdita "were it but told you, should be hooted at/ Like an old tale" (Winter's Tale V.iii.116-117); and the pageants of Prospero, like those of the artist generally and of nature itself, are but a "baseless fabric" (Tempest IV.i.151).

Let Autolycus, the thieving seller of incredible ballads, stand in for the playwright himself. Let him test your credulity with a story about "a fish, that appeared upon the coast on Wednesday the fourscore of April, forty thousand fathoms above water, and sang this ballad against the hard hearts of maids; it was thought she was a woman and was turned into a cold fish for she would not exchange flesh with one that loved her." Let him convince you that "the ballad is very pitiful and true," and you will be ready for anything -- even for a statue that moves (Winter's Tale IV.iv.279-287). "There are cozeners abroad; therefore it behooves men to be wary" (IV.iv.256-257). We have been warned, but, if we stay in our seats, it is because we have solved for ourselves the relationship between art and nature; we have come to know how "what is so" about us can reach us through "what is not so," how we can be persuaded to a truth through a fiction.

The argument of attitudes, then, has moved to another level of abstraction. Within the romance, the order is clearly established, and the playwright has used every formal means to move us to accept it. The preferable order, then, is not in doubt; what remains in doubt is the possible relevance of this order to anything we know in nature.

IMAGINARY GARDENS AND REAL TOADS

The strength of Burke's rhetorical method, which attends closely to the use of form for specific effects on an audience, can best be appreciated by comparing it with the structural criticism of Northrop Frye. As I mentioned in the Introduction, Frye sees no problem with how to interpret the problem plays. For him, the question is settled by detecting the convention or mythic

structure which serves as the general framework of the narrative. If its mythos is comic rather than tragic, its genre and the response to it are obvious. Frye asks the question baldly: "Does anything that exhibits the structure of a comedy have to be taken as a comedy, regardless of its content or our attitude to that content?" And his response? "The answer is clearly yes. A comedy is not a play which ends happily. It is a play in which a certain structure is present and works through to its own logical end, whether we or the cast or the author feel happy about it or not."²⁷

According to Frye, the problem with the problem plays is the clash between the convention used and "the unacceptable behavior" it imposes on the characters as they are developed. So, "If the hero of a thriller miraculously gets out of his scrape, that is convention: but if he had to be invincibly stupid to have got into the scrape in the first place, we may become impatient with the convention."²⁸ Therefore, the problem with All's Well is how Helena will accomplish her tasks; the problem with Measure for Measure is how Isabella's chastity will effect the resolution.

For Frye, Cymbeline is the "apotheosis of the problem comedies"; it is "much ado about everything."²⁹ In it Shakespeare recapitulates earlier concerns and motifs, including the theme of reconciliation, and moves his scaled down characters inexorably through myriad disguisings, disclosures and tearful reunions until the promised end arrives. According to Frye, "The difference between Cymbeline and the earlier problem comedies, then, is that the counter-problem force, so to speak, which brings a festive conclusion out of all the mistakes of the characters, is explicitly associated with the working of a divine providence, here called Jupiter. Jupiter is as much a projection of the author's craftsmanship as the Duke in Measure for Measure; that is, the difference between Cymbeline and the problem comedies is not that Cymbeline is adding a religious allegory to the dramatic action. What it is

adding...is the primitive mythical dimension which is only implicit in the problem comedies. Cymbeline is not a more religious play than Much Ado, it is a more academic play, with a greater technical interest in dramatic structure."³⁰

The elevating of Much Ado, All's Well, and Measure for Measure and the flattening of Cymbeline would make these plays resemble one another as more or less explicit and successful attempts to use romance conventions; they are not "dark comedies," therefore, but rather plays within the penumbra of romance.

However, if my analysis has any merit, it has shown that the problem of the problem plays cannot be resolved by isolating the "narrative framework" alone and making that the sole criterion for the audience's principal response. I say "principal" because Frye acknowledges that responses to a play vary -- one may view the festive ending through the eyes of Orlando or Jaques. Nevertheless, he maintains that if the play is a comedy or incipient romance according to its structure, it must be taken to be such regardless of one's responses otherwise. This procrustean determination of the genre of a Shakespearean play should be contrasted, however, with the views of others who have sensed something "sui generis" in Shakespeare's dramas, like Kenneth Muir who argues that Shakespeare wrote tragedies, not tragedy, and like Ralph Berry, who argues the same for the comedies.

Frye is led to his conclusion, I believe, by his emphasis on mythos or conventional form. Rhetorical criticism, however, takes a broader approach. It places the primary focus on communication between author and audience, and then recognizes progressive, repetitive, and minor forms in addition to conventional forms as means of persuasion. These forms may overlap and complement one another, or they may collide, but in any case they subserve the

primary purpose of persuading the audience to identification with the artist's contemplation of a matter which concerns them both.³¹

One of the principal concerns of Cymbeline, for example, is to distinguish true nobility from that which is merely inherited. Cloten and his mother are killed off while Posthumus and Imogen are married partly to satisfy an audience's sense of the kind of nobility which belongs to a desirable public order. Unlike the problem plays, Cymbeline does not confuse the issues. The terms are clearly defined through the conventional form of a romance or fairy tale (wicked stepmother seeks to poison beautiful daughter of the King), and the ending is, for all the complexity of its unravelling, "the more delayed, delighted." In the spirit of reconciliation which prevails at the close ("Pardon's the word to all"), both the claims of natural vigor coupled with a generous spirit and the claims of inherited title are recognized. Not only does the brave Leonatus Posthumus marry the princess Imogen, but the King's sons are recognized to be such both by their brave behavior in battle as well as by Guiderius's distinctive birthmark. Unlike the endings of All's Well and Measure for Measure, no one in this play finally resists the progressive movement to mercy and marriage.

True, King Cymbeline, through whom all the reconciliations are effected, refuses to grant complete forgiveness at first to his own son and to his Roman enemies. However, this is because he possesses only partial knowledge of who is before him and partly because he is still under the evil influence of his queen. Once she is "killed off," Cymbeline comes to learn the full extent of her wickedness, is told the identity of his sons, and is shown an example of noble forgiveness through Posthumus's pardoning of Iachimo. As a result, he is educated to the point where he can effect the final and fullest reconciliation of enemies as he says: "Although the victor, we submit to

Caesar,/ And to the Roman empire, promising/ To pay our wonted tribute, from
the which/ We were dissuaded by our wicked queen." (Cymbeline V.v.460-463).

Cymbeline does more than add "a religious allegory to the dramatic action." It uses conventional, repetitive, and progressive forms for the sake of persuading the audience to the kind of nobility which is celebrated at the close. Unlike the problem plays, this play has made up its mind about what attitude is desirable and argues for it to the end. As my analysis illustrates, then, the difference between a rhetorical criticism and a structural one is the difference between emphasizing the use of form for the sake of persuasion to an attitude and the use of form for its own sake.³²

In his introduction to A Natural Perspective, Northrop Frye suggests that there are two kinds of critic: one is either an "Iliad" or an "Odyssey" critic, depending upon whether one prefers either the didactic or the pleasing function of literature; whether one looks primarily for life-like characterization and high seriousness of theme (literature as allegory of "the nonliterary center of experience") or whether one studies and responds to the story itself (the acceptance of conventions and the tour de force required to overcome them). The Iliad critic prefers tragedy and realism; the Odyssey critic, comedy and romance. Shakespeare, says Frye, is an Odyssey writer, unlike Jonson who respected too much an audience's "subcritical" tendency to equate stage action and real life and who consciously appealed to it. Frye casts in his lot with the Odyssey writers and critics; hence, his analysis of mythoi in Anatomy of Criticism which he constructs with consummate skill and involuted complexity.

In the spirit of Frye's analogy, I would suggest that it is possible to be an "Aeneid" critic: one who, like Vergil, combines both the Iliad and the Odyssey -- communication of attitudes and skill of craftsmanship -- in a

commentary on art and life. I assume, with Sidney and other Renaissance critics, that art "imitates" life in such a way that through the poet's fiction one can learn truths more philosophical than history and more lively than philosophy. At the same time, I assume that only through his formal construction of an artifact can the poet communicate his insight and, in doing so, risk success or failure depending upon the response of the audience to his equations for terms and to the conventional, progressive, and repetitive movements in their exposition.

I believe, then, that Shakespeare is an Aeneid writer, whose artful constructions and arguing of attitudes draw us into a never-ending contemplation of humanity in action and contrive in so doing to give us the pleasure and the wisdom of imaginary gardens with real toads in them.³³

VII. ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Frederick S. Boas, Shakespeare and his Predecessors, (1896; rpt. New York: Greenwood, 1969) pp. 345 and 357-358.

2. W.W. Lawrence, Shakespeare's Problem Comedies, 2nd. ed. (1931; rpt. New York: Ungar, 1960), pp.3-5 and 209; E.M.W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's Problem Plays (1950; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), pp. 3-5; A.P. Rossiter, Angel With Horns: Fifteen Lectures on Shakespeare, ed. Graham Storey (New York: Longman, 1961), p.117.

3. Lawrence, p.207; Tillyard, pp.139-143; Madeleine Doran, Endeavors of Art: A study of Form in Elizabethan Drama (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1954), pp.366-367.

4. Lawrence, p.206: "There appears to be no valid reason for necessarily viewing [the problem comedies] as satirical or ironical. There are no real ambiguities as to which characters are good and which are bad. Heroism and virtue still shine clearly forth, though sometimes in ways which appear to us strange. To this point we must hold fast, forgetting that we are of the twentieth century..."; Northrop Frye, A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965), p.64: "The problems of the problem comedies have to be looked at first of all as conventional descendants of myths. The 'problem' of All's Well is not any Shavian social problem of how a woman gets her man, but the mythical problem of how Helena, like her ancestress Psyche, is going to solve her three impossible tasks. Similarly, the problem in Measure for Measure is how Isabell's chastity, always a magical force in romance, is going to rescue both

the violated Julietta and the jilted Mariana as a result of being exposed to the solicitations of Angelo."

5. Ernest Schanzer, The Problem Plays of Shakespeare: A Study of Julius Caesar, Measure for Measure, Antony and Cleopatra (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p.6.

6. Patrick Murray, The Shakespearian Scene: Some Twentieth-Century Perspectives (London: Longmans, 1969).

7. Philip Edwards, Shakespeare and the Confines of Art (London: Methuen, 1968), pp.95-119.

8. Howard Felperin, Shakespearean Romance (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p.77.

9. E.C. Pettet, Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition (London: Staples Press, 1949), p.160.

10. R.S. White, Shakespeare and the Romance Ending (Newcastle upon Tyne: privately printed, 1981), p.47.

11. Paul de Man, Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism 2nd. ed. Theory and History of Literature, Vol.7 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 220-226.

12. Wilbur Samuel Howell, "The Arts of Literary Critics, in Renaissance Britain: A Comprehensive View," from Poetics Rhetoric, and Logic: Studies in the Basic Disciplines of Criticism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p.86.

13. Howell, *ibid.* p. 119, chides Vickers for his slighting of the concern in Renaissance rhetorical theory for content and form as well as for tropes and figures. "Vickers's willingness to follow Ramus and to isolate rhetoric from its classical concern for content and form leaves him in the position of not being able to live up to the requirements of the title which he has given to his book [Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry]. In short, this rhetoric is not classical rhetoric, but only a part of it."

14. "Longinus refers to that kind of elation wherein the audience feels as though it were not merely receiving, but were itself creatively participating in the poet's or speaker's assertion. Could we not say that, in such cases, the audience is exalted by the assertion because it has the feel of collaborating in the assertion?" Kenneth Burke, Rhetoric of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp.57-58.

15. "For to say truly, what else is man but his mind?...He therefore that hath vanquished the minde of man [by using the figures] hath made the greatest and most glorious conquest." George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie, ed. Gladys Doidge Willock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p.197.

16. Howell, p.104: "To Aristotle, to Cicero, and to Horace..the crucial distinction to be recognized between delight and didacticism in poetry, on the one hand, and delight and didacticism in oratory, on the other, was that the poem accomplished these ends by fictions, the oration by statements." The infighting among rhetoricians about the "proper" matter for their study (whether "discourse" alone [spoken or written] or any persuasive use of a symbol system) should not obscure their agreement that a rhetorician examines the pragmatic and humanizing effects of communication. To that end, he or she continues the Aristotelian analysis of speaker, audience, and message, of ethos, pathos, and logos in order to evaluate how effective and how excellent the use of rhetoric has been. Most rhetoricians (with academic domiciles usually in the Speech Department) have traditionally limited their studies to historical orations or to speeches embedded in the context of literature (see Donald C. Bryant, Rhetorical Dimensions in Criticism [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1973], pp.27-28). Some, like Wayne C. Booth in The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) have studied the strategies in novels by which the implied author seeks to convince his implied audience of a moral stance toward the action. Kenneth Burke stands almost

alone both for examining the rhetoric of every "symbolic action" and for using all that there is to use (psychology, sociology, biography, formal analysis) in order to explain to what effect the communication is couched in the way it is (a process of analysis which he calls "prophesying after the event").

17. Brian Vickers, review of Shakespeare and the Rhetoricians, by Marion Trousdale, Times Literary Supplement, 8 October, 1982, p.1110.

18. Tuve, p.387 and p.397: "Poetry's concern with universals is thus 'intellectual' contemplation. One cannot confine the 'rational' to the activities of the intellectus; it cannot do anything alone. The pursuit of truth requires the interaction of all these faculties, and falsity or lack of discipline in any of them will hinder that pursuit."

19. Tuve, pp.389-390.

20. Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action, 3rd. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p.31.

BURKE

1. In this chapter, the works of Burke will be cited as follows: ATH (Attitudes Toward History. 2nd. ed. Los Altos: Hermes, 1959); CS (Counterstatement. 1931; rpt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); GM (Grammar of Motives. 1945; rpt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); LSA (Language as Symbolic Action. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Othello ("Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method." Hudson Review. 4 (1951), pp. 165-203); PLF (Philosophy of Literary Form. 1941. rpt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); RM (A Rhetoric of Motives. 1950; rpt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

2. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are from The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. Hardin Craig and David Bevington, rev.ed. (Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1973).

3. Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 240-241.
4. Theodore Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man (1942; rpt. Toronto: Macmillan, 1969), p.45.
5. On Directing Shakespeare (London: Crown Helm, 1977), p.77 (Kahn); p.42 (Swinarski); p.92 (Philips).
6. Shakespeare Quarterly, 32 (1981), p.272.
7. Shakespeare Quarterly, 17 (1966), p.206.
8. Ibid., p.208.
9. Ibid., pp. 208 and 211.
10. "Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method," Hudson Review, 4 (1951), p.202.
11. Frank Lentricchia, Criticism and Social Change (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p.86.
12. Critical Responses to Kenneth Burke, ed. William H. Rueckert (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), pp. 190-191.
13. Stephen Booth, King Lear, Macbeth, Indefinition, and Tragedy, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 61-78.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

1. G.K. Hunter, ed., All's Well That Ends Well (New York: Methuen, 1959), p.xlvii.
2. G. Wilson Knight, "The Third Eye" in his The Sovereign Flower (London: Methuen, 1958), pp. 95-160.
3. Drama, Spring 1968, p.27.
4. All quotations are from the Signet edition of All's Well That Ends Well, ed. Sylvan Barnet (New York: New American Library, 1965).

5. Geoffrey Bullough, ed., Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), Vol. 2, p.392.

6. Rene Girard has studied extensively the theme of the "double" in literature, especially as it appears in myths about brothers in the Greek legends and the Hebrew scriptures. He examines the "mimetic desire" of these rivals, which escalates violently until a scapegoat or "sacrificial outlet" establishes a new order based on the sense that some issue has been settled in a final way. See especially Violence and the Sacred, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977). Girard insists as well that only opinion or belief can decide between illegitimate and judicial forms of violence. In other words, only a rhetorician's arguments can create a consensus in which people agree to accept some act as a "final" decision. See Violence and the Sacred, p.24.

7. Kenneth Burke studies such images of catharsis in "The Thinking of the Body"; see LSA, pp.308-343.

8. W.W. Lawrence, Shakespeare's Problem Comedies (New York: Frederick Unger, 2nd.ed., 1960), pp. 32-77.

9. Bertrand Evans, Shakespeare's Comedies (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. vii-xi.

10. Bullough, p.393.

11. Evans, p.164.

12. Bullough, p.393.

13. Bullough, p.394.

14. Muriel C. Bradbrook surveys the literature on the discussion of honor in "Virtue is the True Nobility: A Study of the Structure of All's Well That Ends Well," Review of English Studies, NS 1 (1950), pp. 289-301.

15. Bradbrook, quoted in All's Well That Ends Well, Signet Edition, p.183.

16. See Richard A. Levin, "All's Well That Ends Well and 'All seems Well'," Shakespeare Survey, 13 (1980), p.142: "A society so willfully self-ignorant as the one pictured here needs a scapegoat, and it has one in Parolles. He alone suffers, though many are as corrupt as he...As critics have shown, Bertram is wrongly exculpated by those who would say that Parolles leads him astray."

17. Lawrence, pp.65-66.

18. Shakespeare realistically touches upon the limits of art's power in Lafew's words to the Countess about Helena's father: "He was skillful enough to have lived still, if knowledge could be set up against mortality" (I.i.32-33).

19. Johnson on Shakespeare, R.W. Desai, ed. (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1979), p.135.

20. It seems that deliberate frustration of expectations is a signature of this play. That is how I would explain the changes to Shakespeare's source which make no sense dramatically but which are perfectly consistent if frustration is a theme. The first is in III.v, the soldiers' entrance into Florence. Why does Shakespeare build up their entry only to have the Widow say, "We have lost our labor; they are gone a contrary way" (III.v.7-8)? Why, secondly, does he have Helena seek the King at Marseilles in V.i, only to discover that he has departed for Rousillon? This might have been prevented by a messenger. I think it gives him the chance for more frustration of expectation and the sowing of a little more hope for a happy ending. When the Widow says, "Lord, how we lose our pains!", Helena has her chance to say, "All's well that ends well yet, / Though time seem so adverse and means unfit" (V.i.24-26). The sense of an "endless ending" is created by these oscillating rhythms of expectation and disappointment.

21. Robert Y. Turner, "Dramatic Conventions in All's Well That Ends Well," PMLA, 75 (1960), p.499.

22. See Walter F. Eggers, Jr., "'Bring Forth a Wonder': Presentation in Shakespeare's Romances," Texas Studies in Language and Literature, 21 (1979), pp. 454-475 for a study of Shakespeare's presentation of wonder with the intended effect of engaging an audience to wonder at a marvel and then to wonder about it.

23. Turner, p.502.

24. Howard Felperin, Shakespearean Romance (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p.94.

25. Anthony B. Dawson, Indirections (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), p.xiv.

26. A.P. Rossiter, Angel With Horns (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1974), p.100.

27. Clifford Leech, "The Theme of Ambition in All's Well That Ends Well," English Literary History 21 (1954), p.29.

28. E.M.W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's Problem Plays (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), p.117.

29. Hunter, p.xl.

30. "Directing Problem Plays: John Barton Talks to Gareth Lloyd Evans," Shakespeare Survey 25 (1972), p.63.

31. The Magus: Revised Version (New York: Dell, 1978), p.657.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

1. Nevill Coghill sums up the Troy legend in England in his Shakespeare's Professional Skills (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 86-88.
2. Geoffrey Bullough, ed. Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), Vol. 6, pp.93, 95, and 100.
3. G. Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, 4th. ed. (London: Methuen, 1965), pp. 47 and 70. According to Bullough, p.108, "The difference between them [Greeks and Trojans] is not, as Professor G.W. Knight has argued, between 'reason' and 'intuition', but between pride veiled with policy and pride openly admitted and glorified."
4. Una Ellis-Fermor, "Discord in the Spheres" from her The Frontiers of Drama, 2nd.ed. (London: Methuen, 1964), pp.56-76; Katherine Stockholder, "Power and Pleasure in Troilus and Cressida, or Rhetoric and Structure of the Anti-Tragic," College English, 30 (1968/9), pp. 539-555; Rosalie L. Colie, Shakespeare's Living Art (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1974), pp. 317-349.
5. All quotations from Troilus and Cressida are from the Signet edition of the play, ed. Daniel Seltzer (New York: New American Library, 1963).
6. "Daphne," The Oxford Classical Dictionary, 2nd.ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).
7. I am indebted to Richard D. Fly for an excellent analysis of this episode and others in which he relates the "radical instability in the play's formal elements" to "the devastating and form-denying vision informing it." See his "'Suited in Like Conditions as our Argument': Imitative Form in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida," Studies in English Literature, 15 (1975), pp. 273-292.

8. Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (1935; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), Chart VII.

9. Derek A. Traversi, An Approach to Shakespeare, 2nd.ed. (1938; rpt. Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), pp. 70-71.

10. Language As Symbolic Action (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p.110.

11. Ashland's 1984 production enforced this theme of rivals enmeshed in Time by costuming Greeks and Trojans alike in rusty armor and tattered clothing, while the stage itself was set over a mound containing the skeletons from battles of previous times.

12. Ellis-Fermor, p.75: "In Lear, the indications of this [the emergence from destructive to constructive experience] are more frequent and the conversions that flow in rising and cumulative waves through the last two acts of the play all set towards a positive, though undefined, interpretation, resting upon this foundation [of an order positively perceived]."

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

1. I accept Harriet Hawkins's judgment that it makes no difference to the play whether Claudio's marriage is a "de praesenti" or a "de futuro" contract. These fine distinctions are not drawn out for the audience and, in fact, it makes better dramatic sense if Claudio's contract and Angelo's seem to be the same. In this way, they both fall equally under the law. See Harriet Hawkins, "What Kind of Contract had Angelo? A Note on Some Non-Problems in Elizabethan Drama," College English, 36 (1974), pp. 173-179.

2. Burke describes this process as "The Paradox of Purity": the more one seeks a "pure definition" of a substance, the more one requires an opposite in order to define what it is not. See A Grammar of Motives, pp. 35-38.

3. All quotations are from the New Arden edition of Measure for Measure, ed. J.W. Lever (New York: Methuen, 1965).

4. Promos and Cassandra is reprinted in Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, ed. Geoffrey Bullough, Vol.2 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958).

5. This view of Angelo's tragedy is admirably set out in an article by W.M.T. Dodds, "The Character of Angelo in 'Measure for Measure'," Modern Language Review, 41 (1946), pp.246-255.

6. Empson analyses the innuendo of Claudio's speech in Seven Types of Ambiguity (London: Chatto and Windus, 1947), pp. 202-203.

7. I am indebted for their analyses of the punning on "heads" in this play to Charles Frey, "Shakespearean Interpretation: Promising Problems," Shakespeare Studies 10 (1977), pp.1-8 and to Meredith Skura, "New Interpretations for Interpretation in Measure for Measure," Boundary 2 7, No.2 (Winter, 1979), pp.39-59.

8. For the Duke as King Severus, see Mary Lascelles, "Sir Thomas Elyot and the Legend of Alexander Severus," Review of English Studies N.S. II, No.8 (1951), pp.305-318; as Moderation, see J.W. Lever, ed., Measure for Measure (London: Methuen, 1967), pp.xliv-li and passim; as Providence, see G. Wilson Knight, "Measure for Measure and the Gospels," in his The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearian Tragedy (1949; rpt. London: Methuen, 1961), pp. 73-96; also, Frank McCombie, "Measure for Measure and the Epistle to the Romans," New Blackfriars 61 (1980), pp. 276-285.

9. See J.W. Lever, Measure for Measure, pp. lxxxi-lxxxiii; Patrick Murray, The Shakespearian Scene: Some Twentieth-Century Perspectives (Longmans: London, 1969), p.138; R.W. Chambers, Man's Unconquerable Mind, cited in Measure for Measure, ed. S. Nagarajan (Signet Edition; New York: The New American Library, 1964), pp. 213-214.

10. Robert Ornstein, The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), p.258.
11. "'The Devil's Party': Virtues and Vices in 'Measure for Measure'," Shakespeare Survey, 31 (1978), pp. 109-110.
12. John Barton's landmark production of Measure for Measure at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1970 departed from customary stagings of the ending in order to emphasize the division of critical opinion about the Duke and Isabella's puzzlement over his behavior and his proposal (see "Directing Problem Plays: John Barton Talks to Gareth Lloyd Evans," Shakespeare Survey 25 [1972], pp. 64-66). Influenced by this darker view of the Duke's movements, Jerry Turner's Ashland production of 1978 set the play in Vienna (to give a Freudian perspective) and relentlessly emphasized the Duke as inept and even "kinky" (see Alan Dessen's review in Shakespeare Quarterly 29 [1978], pp.279-280). At this writing (1985), the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Ontario is staging a "punk" version of Measure in which "the duke, with his flat, spreading face and maleficent voice, derives an almost obscene, and curiously sexual, pleasure in finally releasing [his subjects] from their toils" (reviewed by Ray Conlogue in The Toronto Globe and Mail, May 31, 1985, p.12). Although they achieve consistency of a kind at the expense of subtlety, these productions merely emphasize explicitly and strongly a sense of that "shiftingness" of character (Rossiter's word) which is fully warranted by the text.

CONCLUSION

1. The Frontiers of Drama (London: Methuen, 1964), p.15.
2. Rhetoric of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p.43.

3. "To Double Business Bound": Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p.218.

4. "Levi-Strauss, Frye, Derrida and Shakespearean Criticism," Diacritics, 3 (Fall, 1973), p.37.

5. "Preface" to Johnson's edition of The Plays of William Shakespeare, 1765 from R.W. Desai, ed., Johnson on Shakespeare (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1979), para. 44.

6. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lectures and Notes on Shakespere and Other English Poets, ed. T. Ashe (1884; rpt. Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), p.263.

7. Ibid., p.262.

8. Attitudes Toward History, 2nd.ed. (Los Altos: Hermes, 1959), p.239.

9. Some Versions of Pastoral (Norfolk: New Directions, n.d.), p.39.

10. King Lear, Macbeth, Indefinition, and Tragedy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p.71.

11. "Preface," para.43. Johnson gives an example of such counteraction in his comment on Othello V.2.20-21 (Desai, p.171): "'I must weep,/ But they are cruel tears. This sorrow's heavenly;/ It strikes where it doth love. She wakes.'...I wish these two lines could be honestly ejected. It is the fate of Shakespeare to counteract his own pathos."

12. Burke cites "self-interference" as a signal of delight in the act of persuasion for its own sake and not for the sake of an ulterior advantage to be gained. Such "pure persuasion" is only relatively attained, but it is likely to be found most of all in those who delight in the way language works: "...the indication of pure persuasion in any activity is in an element of 'standoffishness,' or perhaps better, self-interference, as judged by the tests of acquisition...Pure persuasion involves the saying of something, not for an extra-verbal advantage to be got by the saying, but because of a satisfaction intrinsic to the saying. It summons because it likes the feel of

a summons. It would be nonplused if the summons were answered. It attacks because it revels in the sheer syllables of vituperation." Rhetoric of Motives, p.269.

13. Tom Stoppard, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p.28.

14. "Preface," para. 33.

15. Desai, p.155.

16. A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p.442.

17. Lectures and Notes on Shakespere, pp. 237 and 241.

18. "Preface," paras. 160 and 14.

19. Ibid., para. 11.

20. Ibid., para. 8.

21. Bernard Shaw, The Irrational Knot: A Novel (1880; rpt. London: Constable, 1950), p.xvii.

22. Bernard Shaw, Our Theatres in the Nineties, Vol.XXV of The Collected Works of Bernard Shaw (New York: Wise, 1931),p.80.

23. Indefinition, p.115: "For the length of Macbeth we are like superhuman beings, creatures capable of being mentally comfortable with infinite possibility. No wonder we enjoy ourselves. I said earlier that an audience to Macbeth cannot keep itself within the category dictated by its own morality, even though its moral judgments are dictated entirely by that morality. The achievement of the play is that it enables its audience to endure the experience of such potential in itself."

24. Shakespeare on Film (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), p.168.

25. Attitudes Toward History, pp. 24 and 29.

26. Some Versions of Pastoral, pp. 62-63.

27. A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965), p.46.

28. Ibid., p.45.

29. Ibid., p.65.

30. Ibid., pp. 69-70.

31. Urging the case for rhetorical criticism as comprehensive, as ready to use all that there is to use, William J. Kennedy presses the point home: "Structuralist critics forget that each literary utterance adds up to more than the sum of its linguistic parts; the study of those parts at whatever level of abstraction represents only a fraction of the whole. Beyond the binary oppositions and equivalences favored by these critics, there are other rhetorical dimensions that originate metalinguistically in the interaction between speaker and audience, and that furthermore participate in the historical unfolding of the text. The total literary work balances all these rhetorical aspects in subtly nuanced relationships which surpass the structuralist method of analysis." Rhetorical Norms in Renaissance Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), p.15.

32. In one brief mention of the play, Kenneth Burke sees Cymbeline as Shakespeare's successful integration of two attitudes belonging to two classes in his audience. Following Empson, Burke sees different languages as signs of different class interests, and he credits Shakespeare with "two triumphs. First, by interweaving country imagery with the new imagery of trade, he integrates for himself the feudal and mercantile worlds... and then tests the depth with which he has accepted the new coordinates by interweaving the imagery of trade into the texture of his play" (ATH, p.281). If Burke's analysis is correct, it would explain why Cymbeline might have been powerfully moving for its original audience. The movement of reconciliation between all parties (and languages) within the play satisfies a need for reconciliation between the classes watching the play.

33. Marianne Moore, "Poetry" in her Collected Poems (New York: Macmillan, 1952), p.41.

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