Shakespeare and Metatheatrical Representation

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Perry McPartland

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Summary

Forholdet mellom scenisk representasjon og metateater hos Shakespeare har tradisjonelt blitt oppfattet antagonistisk: publikum ses enten som fanget inn av scenens skinn av virkelighet, eller som fremmedgjort og skeptisk distansert fra den. Min forskning viser imidlertid at Shakespeares drama kun realiseres gjennom forfalskende effekter og posisjoner, men at det likevel ikke er noe motsetningsforhold mellom representasjon og metateater. Tvert imot suspenderes virkningen av hver enkelt modalitet; begge forblir i spill, og dramatikeren kan utnytte det generative potensialet som ligger i hver av dem. Kort sagt, representasjon og metateater flettes sammen som et overordnet kunstgrep. Dette er en risikabel estetisk strategi som på hvert trinn lett kan feile. Jeg analyserer hvordan Shakespeare lar motsetning, simulering og parodi virke sammen, og hevder at han med dette bidrar til å gi renessanseteatret en unik form for estetisk representasjon.

Note on Publication

The first two articles presented in this dissertation have already appeared in academic journals. "Holy Words and Low Folly in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" was published in *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, vol. 254, no. 1, 2017, pp. 48-66, and "Political Shakespeare and the Blessing of Art" appeared in *EMCO*, vol. 4, no.1, 2018, pp. 1-6. Minor corrections have been made to these two articles. A number of pieces that I have otherwise published have also found their way into the dissertation in one form or another, and these are noted below.

The Introduction makes use of my article, "How to Paint the Plays", published in *EMCO*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2015, pp. 31-40, and "Shakespeare, Art and Artifice: An Interview with Stuart Sillars", published in *EMCO*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2019, pp. 1-31. It also references my "*Titania and Bottom* and a Vitruvian Fairy: A new reference to the work of Leonardo da Vinci in Henry Fuseli's *Titania and Bottom*", published in *American Notes and Queries*, December 2019, as well as my review of *Shakespeare's Pictures: Visual Objects in the Drama* by Keir Elam, published in the *Review of English Studies*, vol. 70, no. 293, 2019, pp. 171-174.

"Holy Words and Low Folly in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" references my "Transgendering Thisne", published in *American Notes and Queries*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2016.

"Green Plots, Hawthorn Brakes and an Ass's Nole: Imaginative Translation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream"* references my review of *A Midsummer Night's Dream;* Third Series (The Arden Shakespeare) by William Shakespeare, edited by Sukanta Chaudhuri, published in *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, vol. 255, no. 1, 2018.

"'Mocked with art': Contradiction and Affect in *The Winter's Tal*e's 'Statue' Scene'" makes use of my "'Quit presently the chapel'; A note on setting in the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*", published in *Notes and Queries*, vol. 67, issue 2, June 2020.

"'Exit [Chuckling]': Exposition, Role and Dissimulation in *The Winter's Tale*" makes use of my "'This seeming lady and her brother': Further remarks on the doubling of Perdita with Mamillius in *The Winter's Tale*", published in *Notes and Queries*, vol. 67, no. 2, June 2020, and references my "References to the doubling of Autolycus and the bear in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*", published in *Notes and Queries*, vol. 66, no. 3, September 2019, pp. 454-457.

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Introduction

1. Metatheatrical representation

1.1 Preliminary definitions

If this discussion of Shakespeare's drama is to concentrate on what I have termed 'metatheatrical representation' it is perhaps best to begin with a preliminary definition of how each of those two words is here utilized. Preliminary, because as this introduction develops these terms will be progressively fleshed out, lent nuance and made more complex. In the case of 'metatheatre' the typical definition supplied to it is mostly sufficient: this refers to the ways in which a work of drama foregrounds its status as a work of drama, that is, to the fact that it is a constructed art object. Metatheatre's inevitable result is that the spectators' attention is refocused; they are pointed back – and the manner and degree of this 'pointing back' is of course dependent on the skill and intention of the playwright and performers – to the relationship they have taken up towards the play. Yet the remarking that a play has a literal as well as a figurative dimension should not be thought a revelation of earth-shattering proportions. Any engagement with an art object clearly requires an awareness of its duality. I perceive the artwork that hangs on the wall opposite me as I write this as a yellowed side of beef hanging in an abattoir and, simultaneously, as a framed canvas with oil paint on it. The baby who visited me at the weekend and contentedly sucked on the corner of another one of my paintings exhibited a clear failure to remark art's duality, and we cannot consider him an aesthete. Recognizing that, unlike our infant philistine, the theatre audience never loses sight of art's double-nature allows me to supply our definition of metatheatre a couple of addenda.

Firstly, it means that we must think of meta-reference as pointing its audience's attention back to something it is already aware of – a point almost banal in its obviousness, but not, as we will see later on, of little importance. Secondly, it suggests we need not confine 'metatheatre' to explicit allusions to the play's artifice, but instead see the essential duality of drama as something that is in play throughout the performance and which may – as will be demonstrated in a few pages' time – draw attention to its own nature through a variety of far more subtle indicators. And of course, in the early modern public theatres where Shakespeare's plays were originally put on – in which performances took place in the open-air, on bare or almost bare promontory stages, and unfolded according to dramatic traditions that had yet to find place for realism and its fourth wall, wherein the performance of persona bore no imprint of Stanislavsky's method – the sense of drama's duality was much more prominent.[1]

[1] The research of modern scholars has provided us with a strong sense of how action on Shakespeare's stage unfolded, as well as with a good idea of the relationship that audiences formed to the plays. See for example, the invaluable historical reconstructions of Andrew Gurr (especially *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642* (Cambridge University Press, 1992); *The Shakespearean Playing Companies* (Clarendon Press, 1996); *Shakespeare's Workplace* (Cambridge University Press, 2017)) and Anthony B. Dawson (especially *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England: A Collaborative Debate* (Cambridge University Press, 2001)), as well as Tiffany Stern's insightful and imaginative

Like ‘metatheatre’, the definition given to ‘representation’ is also broadly construed, although, since I use ‘representation’ in somewhat perverse fashion, its unpacking will be less straightforward. Reflecting the dissertation’s focus on the self-reflexive concerns of drama, when ‘representation’ appears in these pages it most often refers to the presentation afforded by an art object (and ‘an art object’ need not be material; the verbal instantiation of rhetorical performance, for example, can certainly count as an artistic presentation). This somewhat clunky phrase is designed to remark not only the artwork’s depiction, but also an abiding sense of the media and processes by which that depiction is brought about. As would be expected in a dissertation that concerns itself with the contemporary theatrical conditions that Shakespeare’s plays were subject to, the ‘representations’ discussed in this introduction are for the most part the depictions of the stage. But as the reader will see, this particular discussion extends to take in a range of different artworks, and these extend from the classical to the postmodern, going from the grapes of Zeuxis to Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes*. And the inclusion in the discussion of pieces like the latter signals the need to put some distance between the term ‘representation’ and the concept of resemblance.

The equation of artistic depiction and the copying of appearance is a central plank of western logocentrism, and is commonly traced to Book X of *Republic* where Plato states that a painting of an object is a mimesis – that is to say, imitation or representation – of its shape and colour.[2] The etymology of ‘represent’ marks the term’s mimetic provenance; not only do the word’s linguistic origins presume a congruence between sign and signified, but they too underline the implicit hierarchy and ideality that inheres within the sign’s desire to transcend itself, that is, to re-realise itself as full presence. To represent is ‘to bring to mind by description’, also ‘to symbolize, to be the embodiment of’. Derived from the Latin *repraesentare*, the original term can be literally translated as ‘to place before’.[3]

Poetic theory most often follows Aristotle in understanding this process of representation as composed of three elements: ‘the object’ (that which is being depicted), ‘the manner’ (the way the depiction is realised), ‘the means’ (the material, or media, by which this depiction is brought about).[4] The form of theatre, though, and particularly its early modern variety, does not fit neatly with the poetics of mimesis. In fact, without getting too far ahead of myself, it is a central contention of this dissertation that the conventions and material conditions at play in the early modern theatre compel its drama to realise its

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research into the uses of the stage space (“‘This Wide and Universal Theatre’: The Theatre as Prop in Shakespeare’s Metadrama” (*Shakespeare’s Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, edited by Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern, The Arden Shakespeare, 2014, pp. 11-32)) and (here writing with Simon Palfrey) the performance of part (*Shakespeare in Parts.* Oxford University Press, 2007), and also the lucid overview provided by C. W. R. D. Moseley’s *English Renaissance Drama: A Very Brief Introduction to Theatre and Theatres in Shakespeare’s Time* (Humanities-Ebooks, 2008). These perspectives can be broadened by the illuminating research of Lynn Enterline and Leonard Barkan into the education and reading habits of the period (in, respectively, *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016) and in “What Did Shakespeare Read?” (*Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, edited by Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge University Press, 2001)), pp. 31-48), which serve to provide us with a sense of the cultural touchstones that playwright and educated audience member would have shared.

[2] *Platonis Opera*, edited by John Burnet (E typographed Clarendoniano, 2000).

[3] *Oxford English Dictionary*, third edition, edited by Angus Stevenson, first edition edited by Judy Pearsall and Patrick Hanks (Oxford University Press, 2010).

[4] From Book 3 of *Poetics*, translated by Anthony Kenny (Oxford University Press, 2013).

depictions in a way that is at odds with the mimetic prescriptions of classical poetics. For in dramatic performance, a body depicts, through bodily gestures, a body – a representational economy that seems to elide the discrete identities that Aristotle supplies 'means', 'manner' and 'object'. At the same time, when it comes to drama's rendering of locale – this is accomplished through subjecting the almost bare stage of the early modern theatre to what is often a colourless and cursory exposition. Here, 'means' so overwhelm the imagined signified that it is questionable whether such a depiction can even be considered a representation; it seems little more than a nomination, and to function in a manner that more closely resembles simple reference.

As the articles demonstrate, Shakespeare's plays often give presentation to a model of mimesis (or an aligned signifying practice) in order to ironically remark the theatre's incompatibility with such a poetics, and, through an exploration of this discrepancy, to better examine the different economy of representation that drama's form makes available. And so that my own discussion might match this movement of (mis)appropriation and subversion, rather than opting to use in this dissertation's title the more neutral 'depiction' I instead choose to couple 'metatheatrical' with 'representation'.

With that being said, let us briefly make clear by way of illustration the small adjustment that my use of 'representation' asks of the reader. When applied to drama, 'representation' in its conventional use would indicate the fictional depiction of play-world events and persons and would ask that the audience understands these as operating in the terms of reference, resemblance and relation laid down by the poetics of mimesis. When I use 'representation' in this dissertation it should be thought of – to go back to the somewhat graceless definition offered earlier – as 'the presentation afforded by the art object', and understood as referring not only to the fictional depictions of the play-world but also to the manner and means through which these depictions are actualized. The first approach takes it that the audience, in say the case of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* understands the play as offering a depiction of runaway lovers, crisscrossed male and female pairs, lost in a forest at night – that is 'representation' as encompassed by the play-world, and as exclusively imaginary. My approach takes it that the audience understands the play as offering a depiction of runaway lovers, crisscrossed male and female pairs (performed though, as was always the case in Shakespeare's theatre, exclusively by male actors), lost in a forest at night (all of which, nonetheless, occurs of an afternoon on the almost bare open air stage in the rounded theater). The parenthetical marking works serendipitously here to underline something that the articles argue for: that in the early modern spectators' experience of this simultaneous duality, the figurative dimension of the play-world enjoys prominence over the literal dimension – except, that is, where metatheatre would have it otherwise.

This should not of course be thought a radical or innovative revision of 'representation'. It follows a pattern established by the three philosophers who we can argue made the most important contributions to aesthetic theory in the last century. Martin Heidegger, Theodor Adorno and Jacques Derrida each chose to adopt the term mimesis as a descriptor of the aesthetic process at the same time as they shifted its signification away

from its classical roots in resemblance.[5] And if we look at some of those present-day Shakespeare scholars who accord self-reflexivity a place of importance in their research, then we see that to deploy 'representation' in the manner I have suggested is not that unusual (though providing it the sort of extended definition given here perhaps is). Yet despite that fact, Shakespeare's metatheatrically inflected representation has not been given a full and proper account. For even the present-day scholars that explore the exchange between metatheatre and representation do not, for the most part, offer analysis which discloses the full extent of the effects this relationship affords. The current dissertation attempts to redress this. Its aim is to demonstrate the power, variety, complexity and pervasiveness that inheres to the plays' metatheatrical representation, and to map the beginnings of a theory of the relationship metatheatre takes to representation in Shakespeare's drama.

1.2 Metatheatre's relationship to representation

Having glossed the separate terms, we should go on to remark that the yoking of 'metatheatrical' and 'representation' has not been a common critical manoeuvre. In most theorizations, the effects of metatheatre are presumed as coming at the expense of stage illusion. This perspective is reflected in each of the critical models that have dominated investigations into the use made of metatheatre in the drama of the early modern period, and in the drama of William Shakespeare in particular. The first approach can be understood as an extension on the *theatrum mundi* trope, a favourite metaphor in the early modern period, given what is probably its most famous instantiation by Jacques in *As You Like It*: 'All the world's a stage'.[6] It is a critical formulation that understands metatheatre as unfolding through the play's references to actors and impersonation, theatres and staging. This critical topos developed out of Anne Righter's seminal study, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*,[7] and despite it being over half a century since the work's first

[5] See, for example, Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art", in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albeit Hofstadter (Harper and Row, 1971); Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, edited by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor (University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Derrida's "The Double Session" in *Dissemination*, translated by Barbara Johnson (University of Chicago Press, 1981, pp. 173-286). While the reader will note the extent to which 20 and 21st century critical thought has shaped my approach, these developments are not provided extended focus in this dissertation. Patricia Parker, introducing her work, *Shakespeare from the Margins* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), marks out a position which comes close to my own: 'the argument here is that the plays themselves provide a language with which to approach [critical] questions, a historically more concrete and grounded language, finally, than importations from contemporary literary or cultural theory, however helpful the latter might be heuristically at different times' (p. 4). I will return to Parker (in a section which, despite what I have just remarked, develops the relationship that one aspect of her research forms with Derrida's work) later in 2.5.

[6] 2.7.139. All quotations from the works of William Shakespeare are, except where stated otherwise, taken from the third edition of *The Norton Shakespeare*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Suzanne Gossett, Katharine Eisaman Maus, Gordon McMullan (W. W. Norton, 2016).

[7] First published Chatto and Windus, 1962. The book does not use the phrase 'metatheatre'; the term was not coined until the following year when Lionel Abel published his *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (Hill and Wang).

publication, explorations of Shakespeare's use of the *theatrum mundi* motif remain heavily indebted to Righter's conceptualization. Almost invariably this model results in a reading that is compelled to remark the illusory nature of artistic representation, and which in doing so diagnoses the activity of drama as characterized by an essential fraudulence. Such a perspective is often assumed as reflecting the disdain with which Shakespeare regarded his medium. From this initial position a second is sometimes developed, and the inherent artifice of depiction is read as pointing back to the duplicities that mark the world of human experience and to the treachery that all representations admit.[8]

The alternate model of metatheatre derives from an even older critical source, arising out of the theory and practice of epic theatre developed by Bertolt Brecht in the first half of the twentieth century.[9] For Brecht, the effects of self-reflexive drama function to realise a theatre of estrangement. In parallel with the critical fate enjoyed by Righter's work, scholarly discussions which understand metatheatre as effecting to distance the audience almost invariably revert to Brecht's theories of drama, and consequently the central premises of the German playwright's model together with its broader conceptual framework remain very much in place in various present-day applications of metatheatre. This development demands and will later be given an extended study, but for now it is sufficient to sketch it broadly. According to this approach, metatheatre marks the processes and conditions by which the play-world illusion is brought about, and this functions to strip representation of its power to enchant. The spectators, divorced from any imaginative engagement with the stage fictions, are cast back upon reality, and, in good Marxist fashion, the immediate and actual conditions to which they are subject are impressed upon them.

It hardly needs underlining that both models see the exchange between metatheatre and representation as one in which representation is impacted negatively.[10] And this seems problematic. For while we might recognize each approach as elucidating certain aspects of the relationship that an audience must perhaps necessarily take towards incidents of metatheatre, these models inevitably seek to circumscribe the affective power of play-world representations in a way that would seem to contradict our experience of drama. And

[8] This last phrase sounds dramatic but should not be thought as an overstating of this critical position. As I realized on re-reading the paragraph, my wording here echoes a phrase from Keir Elam's *Shakespeare's Pictures: Visual Objects in the Drama* (Bloomsbury), a 2017 study which, while it elaborates for the plays a sophisticated metatheatrical structuring, will often nonetheless revert to this earlier notion of representation. On page 98, discussing the opening of *Timon*, Elam writes 'the scene acts out the treachery of all representations'. In my review of Elam's book (*Review of English Studies*, vol. 70, no. 294, 2019, pp. 171-174), I attempt to offer this perspective a certain qualification.

[9] These ideas are laid out in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, edited and translated by John Willett (Hill and Wang, 1966). Later in his career, Brecht preferred other designations to 'epic theatre': 'dialectical theatre' when he chose to emphasize his drama's instructional merits, and 'non-Aristotelian theatre' when he wished to mark up the contrast his stage representations took to the mimetic model. 'Epic theatre' remains, however, the most familiar and is what I will continue to use here.

[10] Tiffany Stern's "'This Wide and Universal Theatre': The Theatre as Prop in Shakespeare's Metadrama" offers a similar assessment: 'Both approaches to Shakespeare's metatheatre share … a sense that theatrical reference is negative. The first imagines that Shakespeare is conflicted about his art … The other imagines that Shakespeare, like Brecht, set out to alarm his audience with stage references' (p. 14).

that 'our' of the last sentence should not be thought of as a presentist affectation. Documentary evidence from Shakespeare's day attests time and again to the investment that audiences are prepared to give to play-world fictions. Thomas Nashe, for example, writes of the figure of Talbot from *Henry VI Part 1* in the following terms:

> How would it have joyed brave Talbot, the terror of the French, to think that after he had lain two hundred years in his tomb, he should triumph again on the stage, and have his bones new embalmed with the tears of ten thousand spectators at least (at several times) who in the tragedian that represents his person imagine they behold him fresh bleeding.[11]

An excerpt from Henry Jackson's letter to "G.P." September 1610 also provides effective illustration. Translated to English (it was composed in Latin) it reads: 'Moreover that famous Desdemona killed before us by her husband, although she always acted her whole part supremely well, yet when she was killed she was even more moving, for when she fell back upon the bed she implored the pity of the spectators by her very face'.[12] These examples would seem to suggest the incomplete understanding supplied to representation in the models of metatheatre introduced above. For while both indicate that for the early modern spectator the artifice of the play is never quite forfeited, this awareness clearly does not engender the spectators' emotional disassociation – as in the Brechtian model – nor is the stage representation understood as marking the relationship dramatic illusions take to the actual world of experience – as in the *theatrum mundi* model. Unquestionably here, it is representation's presented fiction that makes the greater and more immediate impact.

Another thing that these two models of metatheatre share is that both are structured in a way that offers their analysis prescription. As much of the research conducted according to what we might term the theatrical-reference model of metatheatre demonstrates, it is an approach that – when not realised with the verve and ingenuity of a scholar like Righter – appears constrained by the terms of its own formulation, almost invariably concluding its investigations in a rehearsal of the relationship that artistic representation takes to actuality through the *theatrum mundi* motif. And while it could be suggested that there are varieties of estrangement, something that has been demonstrated in the imaginative uses made of the proto-Brechtian model by, for example, a number of new historicists and cultural materialists, the second model of metatheatre is nonetheless limited to an interpretation that must at some point divest the stage fictions of their power to engage the audience, and which needs see whatever significances the work might have readied as coming to rest in the ideological structures of the world.

It is the aim of this dissertation to provide a more thorough understanding of the relationship that metatheatre takes to representation in Shakespeare's plays. Building on

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[11] *Pierce Penniless, His Supplication to the Devil*, quoted in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, vol. 1, edited by R. B. McKerrow, (Basil Blackwell, 1966), p. 212.

[12] Sep. 1610, Fulman Papers, Corpus Christi College, MS 304, fol. 83v-84r; translation from *Eyewitnesses of Shakespeare*, edited by Gamini Salgado (Sussex University Press, 1975), p. 30. The original text reads: 'At vero Desdimona illa apud nos a marito occisa, quanquam optime semper causam egit, interfecta tamen magis mevebat, cum in lecto discumbens spectantium misericordiam ipso vultu implоraret'.

the work of a number of recent commentators, the articles that follow will articulate an understanding of metatheatre which contrasts with, what even today, remains a highly influential critical understanding. Rather than seeing the effects of metatheatre as attenuating or even invalidating representation's power, the articles demonstrate how metatheatre often operates to lend to play-world depiction an even more dynamic presence. And it is shown that this presence does not come about through an attempt at disguising or abjuring the artifice of representation, but rather through marking this aspect. This arrangement enables the plays to explore the nature of artistic depiction itself, and through this, the manner in which Shakespeare's art challenges traditions of renaissance poetics and contemporary practices of signification. It will be argued that in the early modern period theatre enjoyed a unique set of aesthetic possibilities, and that the drama of Shakespeare remarks and realises these extensively and profoundly through what I have termed metatheatrical representation.

1.3 Metatheatrical representation: a reading

So that the reader might get an idea of how my own critical perspective functions to explore the relationship between metatheatre and representation, and also so that I might instance the methodological approach I will adopt in this study, it seems valuable to begin with an example. Here is the passage from *Troilus and Cressida* where Cressida has just discovered that the Trojans have arranged to give her to their Greek opponents in exchange for Antenor. The lines represent her anguish at the impending separation from her lover, Troilus:

> CRESSIDA I'll go in and weep –
> PANDARUS Do, do.
> CRESSIDA Tear my bright hair and scratch my praisèd cheeks,
> Crack my clear voice with sobs, and break my heart
> With sounding "Troilus". (4.2b.31-35)

Electing to illustrate my argument through this snatch of dialogue may appear an odd choice. These are not lines that most scholars would readily label metatheatrical, neither does it seem has the brief exchange generated any significant critical commentary.[13] Both of these points, however, are useful for my present purposes. Demonstrating the metatheatrical realisation of such a passage will bring with it the implication that rather than metatheatre being considered a technique constrained to a set of particular arrangements (the play-within-the-play, explicit references to dramatic performance, for example) it can be understood as enjoying a ubiquitous presence in the plays, and that as such it represents an aesthetic strategy which audiences and critics are obliged to attend to throughout. At the same time, the value and pertinence of the interpretive approach that I

[13] I have only come across a handful of responses that briefly address the passage, and these are given mention in this discussion.

have adopted will be made apparent if it proves capable of demonstrating a complex and radical play on notions of artistic representation in a passage that has previously been subject to something of a critical oversight. The analysis will also serve to direct the reader's attention to a number of elements that are key to my analysis: the nature of performance and its relation to dissimulation; the discipline of rhetoric, and in particular the figures of *copia* and *ekphrasis*; the discourse of renaissance poetics and the ideal of mimesis. Introduced here, these elements will later be given the fuller treatment they warrant. And I forewarn the reader, perhaps used to essays of this type which open with an illustration that is rather brief, in order that I might make clear the extent and complexity of the episode's use of metatheatrical representation, it is necessary that this example is somewhat lengthy.

Before proceeding to any analysis of the lines it is required that we establish the broader context in which they are given to operate. For in the case of the original audience members that were familiar with the medieval story of Troilus and Cressida, any interpretation given to Cressida's words would necessarily have been filtered through the anticipation of her exposure as inconstant. Since the twelfth century, the story of the two lovers had been reworked in the literature of continental Europe, and the figure of Cressida had developed into the archetype of female perfidiousness.[14] This conceptualization, however, would have lost some of its unilateral force for those members of the audience that had come across Geoffrey Chaucer's version of the tale with its more generous depiction of the Cressida-figure. Composed around 1380, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* highlights the precariousness of Criseyde's situation, and she is presented as an essentially sincere figure that is led astray by the treachery of Pandarus.[15]

This historical-literary inheritance lends itself to one of the most common devices of the English Renaissance, and one that we are compelled to think of as among Shakespeare's favourites. Renaissance *copia* can be understood as the contemporary imitation of earlier – most often classical – models. Compressing multiple layers of experience and artistic statement and foregrounding its own intertextual nature, the transposition makes signification into something compound and contradictory rather than singular and perfect.[16] And Shakespeare makes the most of the referential ambivalence that

[14] While the figure of Troilus of course bears a classical provenance, what later became the story of Troilus and Cresside is taken from Benoît de Sainte-Maure's 12th century *Roman de Troie.* There though, the female character is called Briseida, and it is only with Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* (from around 1335) that Troilus's inconstant lover takes on the more familiar 'Criseida'.

[15] Chaucer of course enjoyed a considerable reputation in early modern England, where he was lauded as 'our English Homer', and *Troilus and Criseyde* was his most popular work. See, for example, Jane Kingsley-Smith's entry for "Chaucer" in *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare,* edited by Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells, revised by Will Sharpe and Erin Sullivan (Oxford University Press, 2015). The impact that Chaucer's work had on Shakespeare has been well explored; see, for example, E. Talbot Donaldson's excellent *The Swan at the Well: Shakespeare Reading Chaucer* (Yale University Press, 1985), and chapter five in Helen Cooper's equally impressive *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (Arden, 2010).

[16] Renaissance *copia*'s complex of representation is most fully treated by Thomas M. Greene's *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (Yale University Press, 1982), Terence Cave's *Cornucopian Text:*

this particular instance of *copia* affords. His Cressida is an elusive and flickering presence, at all times equivocal. This is made apparent only a few lines into the lovers' first meeting. Cressida produces a beautiful and apparently wrenching avowal of her passion for Troilus, and then, seeming to catch herself, ingenuously confesses her ingenuousness: 'Where is my wit? I know not what I speak' (3.2.137-138). But is this, after all, what happens? For a line later, Cressida changes tack, suggesting that she may have been dissimulating all along: 'Perchance, my lord, I show more craft than love; / And fell so roundly to a large confession, / To angle for your thoughts' (3.2.140-142). The audience though cannot be sure if this new position represents disclosure or double bluff. The play-world fictions offer no certainty as to which of these representations represents Cressida herself – if, that is, one of them even does. And neither, as the play unfolds, is any such revelation forthcoming. As Stuart Sillars observes, 'the uncertainty is developed to such an extent that it becomes a certainty, a constant inconstancy'.[17]

Certainly, Cressida's briskly shifting series of emotional self-portraits has its appeal, insinuating as it does an obscured yet sophisticated agency. Yet at the same time, it may be thought to indicate something like a *voiding* of agency. Philip Edwards makes a comment on the play that is equally pertinent when re-applied to its eponymous female; Cressida, it might be argued, 'seems to circle about the Object, exchanging one valuation for another, and demonstrating their invalidity'.[18] The Cressida which the audience watches may be considered as nothing more than a matrix of presentational stratagems, the shifting superficies of a performed identity.[19] Indeed, in actuality, the 'superficies of a performed identity' is exactly what the play's simulated 'Cressida' is. 'Cressida' is a dramatic part fulfilled by a Jacobean actor, a circumstance which these dissimulating displays cannot help but draw the audience's attention to. The realisation given to Cressida is one which throughout emphasizes the role's fictionality; it remarks the part's figuration through literary model and highlights the theatrical nature of the current acted instantiation. Yet, as is apparent, this marking up of the illusory nature of literary and theatrical representation does not automatically neutralize its power to beguile. In fact, the figure's charismatic appeal is it seems in large part predicated on this arrangement. The play's spectators, like Troilus at the lovers' initial meeting, are 'seduced by performative rhetoric and the sheer duality of performance'.[20]

The elements of theatrical impersonation and literary re-configuration that determine the role of Cressida are underlined, in rather emphatic fashion, in the episode

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Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance (Clarendon Press, 1979) and Stuart Sillars in various works, but especially in *Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2015). *Copia* is discussed at appropriate length later in section 2.5.

[17] "'You lie, you are not he': Identity, Rhetoric and Convention in Shakespeare's Art of Lying" *Shakespeare and the Art of Lying*, edited by Shormishtha Panja (Orient BlackSwan, 2013), p. 29.

[18] *Shakespeare and the Confines of Art* (Taylor and Francis, 2013), p. 101.

[19] And we would, I think, be somewhat remiss were we not to remark that the instantiation of Cressida that the narrative presents could very well be thought of as being a strategized projection by which the fragile security of a young widower's war-time existence might be negotiated.

[20] Stuart Sillars, "'You lie, you are not he': Identity, Rhetoric and Convention in Shakespeare's Art of Lying", p. 29.

that I have chosen to discuss. The quoted passage is framed on either side by markers pointing to the literary fate which enfolds the figure. The last half-line from the passage quoted is completed by 'I will not go from Troy', a resolution in plain statement that will, plainly, be overturned. And two sentences prior to Cressida's promise to 'go in and weep', she vows 'Make Cressid's name the very crown of falsehood,/ If ever she leave Troilus!' (4.2b. 26-27), an even more heavily marked piece of dramatic irony, so heavy, in fact, that one is compelled to wonder if the line was not meant to be delivered in somewhat arch fashion.

Another form of *copia* also marks the quoted passage, taking the form of an ironically redeployed textual appropriation. As Stephen Connor points out Cressida's 'Crack my clear voice with sobs' re-figures a line from Ovid's *Remedia Amoris*.[21] Describing Phyllis as she laments her separation from '"*perfide Demephoon*"', Ovid tells us that '*ruptaque singultu verba loquentis erant*' – 'her words were broken by sobs' (597-598).[22] The narrative developments given to each figure extend the intertextual juxtaposition that Connor remarks: where Phyllis, in despair, goes on to hang herself, Cressida will, in the very next act, promise her bed to Diomedes. And the irony can take a further layer still if we remember that in Ovid's *Heroides* Phyllis labels herself '*ingeniosa*' (2.22) and '*mendax*' (2.11), descriptors that correspond rather precisely to the talent for creative dissimulation enjoyed by Cressida.[23]

This flagrant self-reflexivity interweaves the dissimulations associated with the figure of Cressida with the dissimulations by which theatrical representation is itself realised.[24] This is an observation of some importance, for it allows us to recognize that the emotional reaction that Cressida's lines frame is presented as occurring at a number of representational removes. For rather than the exchange revealing Cressida as being consumed by sorrow, she is instead given *a description that rehearses a potential performance* of sorrow (the italicized phrase should, if it is to capture the full extent of the serial recession of the representational gambit, take four beats). Cressida instantiates a projection of herself as tableau; she offers a depiction of the performed representation of her sorrow. Or, given the immediately emblematic terms of the *ekphrasis* Cressida supplies (and, throughout, the role exhibits an inclination for, in Kenneth Palmer's phrase, the 'emblematic pose'[25]), it seems fair to think of the description as referring not to the specific incident of her anguish, but instead indicating a stylized representation of the general

[21] Stephen Connor, *Beyond Words: Sobs, Hums, Stutters and Other Vocalizations* (Reaktion Books, 2014), p. 55; Ovid, *Remedia Amoris; or, The Remedy of Love: Literally Translated into English Prose, with Copious Notes*, translated by Henry T. Riley (Good Press, 2019). Ovid, of course, exercises a profound influence on Shakespeare. See for example, Jonathan Bate's excellent *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Clarendon Press, 1994).
[22] Connor's translation.
[23] Ovid, *Heroides and Amores*, 2nd edition, translated by G. P. Gould and Grant Showerman (Harvard University Press, 1914).
[24] Some of the points in this and the next paragraph have been made previously in my article "How to Paint the Plays" (*EMCO*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2015, pp. 31-40, p. 36).
[25] *Troilus and Cressida* (Methuen, 1982), p. 275, n 106.

condition of 'Sorrow'. Theatrical representation resorts to verbal representation which renders a picture that seems more like an artistic representation than a depiction of actual experience. This sense of a self-reflexive and dissimulating representational transposition is implicated, deliberately or otherwise, in Jean-Pierre Maquerlot's response to the passage: 'the emotion is instantaneously translated into sound and vision. Cressida shares a highly developed sense of pose with the painted or sculpted figures in Mannerist art'.[26] The comment also marks up the gestural short-hand that painting and theatre share, and through the implications brought by 'pose' underlines again the artifice of such signs.

Presented with Cressida's projected spectacle, Pandarus is made over into an audience – and, it seems important to remark, not an audience that reacts with a sentimental identification towards the representation of Cressida's grief, but an audience that, in his repeated 'Do, do', shows an enthusiastic appreciation for the translation of emotion into its own word-painting. Locating Cressida's anguished performance off-stage ('I'll go in and …') adds a further dimension to the layering of representational pretense and erasure. The arrangement ensures that within the play-world, Cressida's performance of anguish remains forever unwitnessed. At the level of 'character', the equivocal nature of Cressida's portrait means that the audience cannot know if she fulfills this apparent intention. And, of course, in terms of stage action, Cressida's performed sorrow never occurs (a point underlined, one imagines, by Cressida's 'I'll go in' being accompanied by a dietic indicator of the actors' tiring house door in the back-wall of the stage through which her stage exit will be accomplished 3 lines later).

I think we have to assume that this sense of a self-reflexive complex of representation wherein the theatrical, visual, literary and rhetorical arts converge is something that would have struck the educated members of the original audience rather forcefully. That Cressida's brief speech operates in the mode of *ekphrasis* is not something likely to have escaped the attentions of the grammar school-educated new humanist. *Ekphrasis* was, as Catherine Belsey notes, 'a favourite device of the period',[27] and the rhetorical training that the educated audience members had undergone would have ensured that at the same time as they recognized Cressida's speech as such, this recognition would have inevitably located itself within the conceptual structure of poetics that defined early modern thinking on artistic representation: the mimetic doctrine of *ut pictura poesis.* Horace's dictum, often understood to mean 'as a painting, so a poem',[28] and indicating, at least for renaissance scholars, that artistic representation's ideal can be imagined in terms of an intermedial exchange, is complemented and completed by another honoured classical formulation, Simonides' 'Painting is mute poetry, poetry a speaking picture'.[29] The operation of *ekphrasis*, whereby verbal representation is infused with such vividness that

[26] *Shakespeare and the Mannerist Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 137-138.
[27] Catherine Belsey, "The Rape of Lucrece", *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Poetry* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 90-107, p. 100.
[28] *The Collected works of Horace,* translated by Lord Dunsany and Michael Oakley (J. M. Dent, 1961), p. 361.
[29] Attributed by Pliny in Plutarch's *De gloria Atheniensium*, 3.347a.

it forms pictures in the imagination of its auditors (or readers) which rival the experience of actually seeing, would seem to perfectly manifest the determining presumption of renaissance poetics.[30] This quality of vividness was termed *enargeia*, and Erasmus provides it illustration: 'We shall enrich speech by description of a thing when we do not relate what is done, or has been done, summarily or sketchily, but place it before the eyes painted with all the colors of rhetoric, so that at length it draws the hearer or reader outside himself as in the theatre'.[31]

In his comparing the internal *visiones* that *ekphrasis* conjures to the immediate experience enjoyed by the theatrical spectator, Erasmus makes use of one of the favourite similes by which rhetoricians time and again exemplified ekphrastic *enargeia*. Yet this formulation begs the question that the Cressida passage enacts: what happens when *ekphrasis* actually occurs on stage – when the auditors or readers are already, in fact, spectators? The rhetorical reification that Cressida's *ekphrasis* pursues is marked as occurring within another representation, and a representation that enjoys the actual presence that *enargeia* can only attempt: the speaking picture of the theatrically embodied Cressida herself. There is a strong sense that *ekphrasis* is presented on the stage so that the poetics which the form epitomizes might be critiqued and ironized, a sense that is sharpened when we remember that despite the differing formulations that the plethora of renaissance treatises on the arts gave to *ut pictura poesis* these theses were, more often than not, content to view theatre as a lesser art which did not warrant inclusion in their aesthetic systems. That the audience hears Cressida paint a picture of her enacted grief rather than, as the theatre uniquely allows, witnessing the instantiated spectacle itself, could be understood as the episode's ironic adoption of the limitations that poetry and painting are subject to. The passage seems to mark that theatre makes available just such representational possibilities – but then, having marked these possibilities, Shakespeare's play withholds them. The implication of reification that Erasmus's description carries is checked, and Edward's 'Object' is again skirted, for as Cressida makes clear, the acting out of these gestures is reserved for when she will 'go in' – with all the suggestions of omission and theatrical duplicity that the announced exit through the tiring house door arouses.

Having plotted the relationship that this short scene forms between performer, performance and representation, a rather intriguing staging possibility presents itself, one that would lend to the episode a further layer of irony and abstraction. For surely rather

[30] This is the understanding of *ekphrasis* that the various treatises and exercise books devoted to rhetoric in the period gave out, and which all educated grammar students would have recognized. For modern readers, a more familiar definition of *ekphrasis* is that of a vivid description of a visual work of art. The way these different understandings can be thought of as coming together in the period will be discussed later. And in my opinion, Cressida's brief description calls both definitions into play.

[31] 'Rei descriptione locupletabimus orationem, quum id quod fit aut factum est non summatim aut tenuiter exponemus, sed omnibus fucatum coloribus ob oculos ponemus, ut auditorem sive lectorem, iam extra se positum, velut in theatrum avocet.' *Desiderii Erasmi Roterdami Opera Omnia*, vol. I, (North-Holland, 1988), p. 202. English translation by Donald B. King and H. David Rix, *On Copia of Words and Ideas* (Marquette University Press, 1963), p. 47. As with *copia*, the extended discussion that *ekphrasis* merits will come later – in section 2.4.

than simply provide a description of Cressida's off-stage gestures, the lines invite the actor playing the part to simultaneously *demonstrate* the gestures that would accompany Cressida's off-stage grief. That is, the stage-Cressida plays these gestures out *as performed.* Where the mimetic ideal of renaissance poetics imagines representation as enjoying a congruent relationship to the represented, the representations of *Troilus and Cressida* underline, variously, their own multifarious treacheries. The grief that Cressida's speech claims is authentic, claims is the thing itself, is not only deliberately absented, but a feigned reproduction comes to stand in its place. And, we need to underline, this feigned reproduction has no original.

The surmise that the player acts out the speech's description at the same time as he declaims it should not be thought wholly speculative either; the speech itself is constructed in such a manner that it works to commentate on the processes of its own performed instantiation. Let us go back to Cressida's lines once more (with Pandarus' interjection removed): 'I'll go in and weep – […] Tear my bright hair and scratch my praiséd cheeks,/ Crack my clear voice with sobs and break my heart/ With sounding "Troilus"'. The passage is realised through a kind of grammatical sleight of hand, whereby active structures take the place of what would usually be passive. The – normally – involuntary gestures of hysterical grief are presented as the effect of a willed agency, and this movement becomes progressively explicit, culminating in Cressida announcing her intention to break her own heart. The sense that this speech acts as commentary for the performance of a skilled actor is most pronounced in the phrase, 'Crack my clear voice with sobs', seeming to declare as it does (and ask for the simultaneous performance of) how the actor brings off the impersonation of anguish.

1.4 Methodology and analysis

Let us then briefly note the method by which my critical analysis of this passage proceeds, a method which for the most part characterizes the approach taken in the articles that follow. We see that the analysis is focused on a short section but that it makes effort to locate the object of its study contextually. It takes in the broader framework of the play narrative as well as the immediate circumstances of the surrounding scene. And this is an approach that, as the last article presented in this dissertation demonstrates, can be extended further – there the initial focus on a single passage is shown as functioning to elucidate the play in something closer to overall terms.

This method also attempts to locate the discussed passage, as best as it is able, according to its original performance realisation. It marks up the theatrical traditions, conditions and conventions that determined the play's original stagings; it emphasizes the

physical nature of the playing space, the 'Action'[32] of the actors, and as such what can be said of the original theatre-goers' experience of the play. This is in turn circumscribed by another context still, as the reading discovers in the self-reflexive play of the episode a concern with renaissance poetics, and by implication, the humanist worldview these poetics embody and seek to enact.

The imaginative investment in the play as an early modern performance is crucial to the success of the approach. A consequence of this is that the readings will, at points, offer imaginative reconstructions as to possible stage action. Such re-imaginings are most often, as is the case with the above reading, supported by arguments that are derived from the text, or that emerge from what we know about early modern theatrical practice. At other times, as the reader of the articles will observe, arguments for picturing an episode as possibly realised through a particular performative arrangement will draw their support from broader social and historical conditions and practices. Certainly, when making use of imaginative reconstruction of this type one must tread warily. It is a process that, as David Scott Kastan has adroitly observed, 'yields too easily to our desire'.[33] Yet it strikes me as a responsibility that the critic must sometimes embrace, or otherwise risk closing off a vital investigative route. If imaginatively reconstructed models of this kind can be used in a manner that is inventive yet mindful, and if these propositions are located within the larger analysis with the necessary circumspection, then this is an approach that is likely to yield more than it stands to forfeit. For it is in the dimension of the performed, and only in the performed, that metatheatrical representation takes place.[34]

Certain points emerge out of the approach outlined above, and, in turn, feed back into it. Unlike in the estrangement model of metatheatre where the literal and figurative are taken to be opposed elements, constrained to pursue an on-off binary, these aspects are not here conceived of as distinct. They are understood as of a piece, and as encompassed within the broader conceptualization of a representational economy that is simultaneous and

[32] The early modern theory of Action underlined that the outward gestures of the actor (and orator) must relate directly to the passion being expressed. Andrew Gurr's article "Elizabethan Action" (*Studies in Philology*, vol. 63, no. 2, April 1966, pp. 144-156) provides the subject insight and illumination.

[33] *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 7. In order to ensure that such an impulse is properly constrained I have taken to submitting examples of my work which incorporate aspects of an informed yet imaginative reconstruction to *Notes and Queries* as well as its transatlantic cousin, *American Notes and Queries* – journals which represent an approach to research which emphasizes, as the inner sleeve of all modern issues of *Notes and Queries* underlines, 'the factual rather than the speculative'. That these pieces have been accepted encourages me in the belief that I am capable of approaching my material with sufficient circumspection. (See for example, my "*Titania and Bottom* and a Vitruvian Fairy: A new reference to the work of Leonardo da Vinci in Henry Fuseli's *Titania and Bottom*" (*American Notes and Queries* (December 2019)); "References to the doubling of Autolycus and the bear in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*" (*Notes and Queries*, vol. 66, no. 3, September 2019, pp. 454-457); "'Quit presently the chapel': A note on setting in the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*" and "'This Seeming Lady and Her Brother': Further remarks on the doubling of Perdita with Mamillius in *The Winter's Tale*" (both *Notes and Queries*, vol. 67, no. 2, June 2020)). I remain of course obliged to keep Kastan's words of warning uppermost in mind.

[34] Emphasizing that metatheatre is dependent on the literal dimension of the performance is not as uncontroversial a statement as it may sound; see, for example, Harry Newman's "Reading Metatheatre" (*Metatheatre and Early Modern Drama*, special issue of *Shakespeare Bulletin*, vol. 36, no.1, Spring 2018, pp. 89-110).

multiplicitous. As the *Troilus and Cressida* passage demonstrates, and as the articles will explore more extensively, such representation is often realised through the figures of *copia* and *ekphrasis* (together with *enargeia*), and lent a further layer of signification through drawing on the renaissance discourses of rhetoric and poetics that these figures afford. Yet as we have seen, when transposed into Shakespeare's dramatic art, these figures function to suspend and interrogate the humanist ideology that they are otherwise assumed to enact. Instead of representation in the plays operating in the archetypal terms that contemporary poetics and the new humanism often prescribe – as a copula connecting the depicted, the actual and the ideal – Shakespeare's dramatic art points up the inherent dissimulation of its own representations, and so positions itself in distinction to such discourses. Remarking this dissimulation does not, however, divorce the audience from its engagement in the play's fiction. The spectators' imaginative translation, by which one impulse is recast in terms of the other, remains self-aware; illusion and the awareness of illusion are experienced simultaneously and both are recognized as occurring through – and never beyond – the confines of drama's artistic construct.[35] Representation is multiplicitous, and, rightly directed, the self-reflective remarking of the work's artifice can in fact intensify the stage action's appeal. For even as the figure of Cressida is marked up as a counterfeited construction it nonetheless remains capable of seducing the audience's attentions. Moreover, as we have seen, this beguiling attraction must in large part be thought of as predicated on a pattern of dissimulation that operates at both the levels of play-world and metatheatre.

This is a view of Shakespeare's dramatic art that emphasizes its concern with its own artifice, while at the same time insisting on the appeal of the play's fictional world; it views metatheatre as a ubiquitous presence, capable of a range of effects, not the least of which is to lend an intensity and a complex urgency to stage fictions; and it understands dramatic representations as compound, multiple, and as acting to interrogate the relationship they take to that which they represent. The approach and the analysis it obtains are indebted to at the same time as they develop the work of a variety of present-day scholars, and this critical framework will be explored in the next chapter.

[35] I discuss 'imaginative translation' at some length in the dissertation's third article, "Green Plots, Hawthorn Brakes and an Ass's Nole: Imaginative Translation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*".

2. A critical framework

2.1 An economy of duality

Of central importance to the critical reformulation of metatheatre that I attempt is the understanding of drama's duality. To repeat what is already an obvious point, all our experiences of physically realised artworks occur according to a simultaneous sense of the object's duality. Hamlet is at one and the same time a prince in the court of Denmark, and a professional actor on a wooden stage; Michelangelo's *Bacchus* is at once a tipsy and flexuous god and a frozen piece of marble.[1] But this duality must be considered as enjoying a particularly prominent foregrounding in the theatre of the early modern period. It is this prominence which leads the estrangement model to view the literal and figurative as discrete elements, and to assume that the aesthetic unity which the play presents and which its audience agrees to observe does not survive metatheatre's self-reflexive indication. This remains, as has been noted, an influential view of metatheatre, and the historicist and materialist enquiries that often form its critical corollary still hold a central position in early modern studies. Yet in the last two decades a certain counter tendency has arisen, as critics have exhibited a readiness to re-invest in the aesthetic aspects of the literary object and to understand their operation in terms that are at least in part independent of historical-materialist discourse.[2] This development has encouraged a number of writers to view anew Shakespeare's metatheatre, and, in doing so, reconfigure how we conceive of the relationship formed by the literal and figurative.

This is not to suggest, however, that metatheatre's operation forms the key critical concern among these Shakespeare scholars. Most often with these writers, metatheatre is explored through the role it plays in a larger critical apparatus. When exclusive attention is devoted to the subject this often takes the form of shorter accounts, usually meaning that there is only space for the exploration of a single aspect of metatheatre, or where broader theorisations are advanced, that these can only be supplied a preliminary sketch. Yet if we lack an extended critical focus on metatheatre, in that these studies share a number of similarly framed concepts, taken together, they can be thought of as offering the outlines of a critical matrix.

Common to these approaches, whether or not it is given explicit statement, is a revised sense of how theatrical duality operates and is perceived. The notion is anticipated

[1] Even works of art as radical as say Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades are still dependent (in fact, here I think we would be justified in saying, *absolutely and exclusively* dependent) on the fact of their duality, on the fact that at the same time as they are a shovel or a bicycle wheel they are a shovel or a bicycle wheel seen as a work of art.

[2] I am reluctant to label this tendency 'new formalism' or 'new aestheticism' or even 'new theatricality'. Such designations suggest a movement marked by a degree of critical consensus and a shared impetus. As Majorie Levinson underlines in her lucid account of new formalism, the development is not bound together by a common theoretical framework, methodology or practice ("What Is New Formalism?" (*PMLA*, vol. 122, no. 2, 2007, pp. 558-569), p. 562).

by William E. Gruber who, back in 1985, provided it a neatly emphatic formulation. He proposes that in contrast to their present-day equivalents, Tudor and Stuart theatregoers would 'not only tolerate visible contradictions' between the actual conditions of the theatre and the fictions there being played out, but that they clearly 'consider[ed] them to be the affective basis of spectating'.[3]

The sense that Shakespearian metatheatre affords a presentation that interweaves the dimensions of the fictional and actual forms an important strand in Stephen Purcell's research on performance studies and audience reception, and his 2018 article "Are Shakespeare's Plays Always Metatheatrical?"[4] gives metatheatre exclusive attention. Like a number of present-day scholars that would understand metatheatre in expanded term, Purcell questions the critical 'eagerness to reach for the word "Brechtian" and its related concepts of alienation and critical distance whenever we see self-conscious theatricality in early modern drama'.[5] He remarks that the notion that metatheatre's 'revelation of the theatrical situation destroys the scenic illusion' requires that the literal and figurative aspects of the performance function as opposed binaries, and for Purcell, this is an arrangement which is wholly at odds with the structures of the early modern theatre space.[6] The conditions in effect on the open-air apron-stage compel in audience and performers an acknowledgement of their actual and immediate circumstances. In such a theatre, the audience never forgets that "the play is just a play" – so no real disruption is brought about by metatheatre's remarking it.[7] Metatheatre instead 'functions as a kind of imaginative game', [8] its moments of self-reflexivity more likely to lead to delight than to disjuncture.[9]

To explain the operation of this imaginative game, Purcell makes recourse to Arthur Koestler's concept of *bisociation,* arguing for metatheatre as operating through 'universes

[3] "The Actor in the Script: Affective Strategies in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*" (*Comparative Drama,* vol. 19, 1985, pp. 30-48), p. 34. Gruber is discussing specifically the contradictions between actor and role, but his observation must be thought to take in the broader terms of the literal and figurative.

[4] *Metatheatre and Early Modern Drama,* a special issue of *Shakespeare Bulletin,* vol. 36, no.1, Spring 2018, edited by Sarah Dustagheer and Harry Newman, pp. 19-35.

[5] "Are Shakespeare's Plays Always Metatheatrical?", p. 21.

[6] Purcell is here contesting the concept of metatheatre outlined in Polish theatre scholar Slawomir Świontek's *Dialog–Dramat–Metateatr: Z problemów teorii tekstu dramatycznego* (Oficyna Wydawnicza Errata, 1999), and elaborated by Jenn Stephenson in "Meta-enunciative Properties of Dramatic Dialogue: A New View of Metatheatre and the Work of Sławomir Świontek" (*The Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, vol. 21, no. 1, Fall 2006, pp. 115-128). Świontek makes the argument for the intrinsic duality of dramatic dialogue, which Stephenson adapts and extends so as to make the case for the essential duplexity of all theatrical elements. Their perspectives premised on a duality whose aspects are conceptualized as mutually exclusive, these researchers inevitably view metatheatre as disruptive of stage illusion. The quoted remark is Świontek's, as translated by Stephenson in her "Excerpts from Le Dialogue Dramatique et le Metathéâtre by Sławomir Świontek" (*Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism,* vol. 21, no. 1, 2006, pp. 129–144), it occurs on p. 25 of Purcell's article. Świontek and Stephenson's research will be discussed in section 3.5.

[7] "Are Shakespeare's Plays Always Metatheatrical?", p. 26.

[8] "Are Shakespeare's Plays Always Metatheatrical?", p. 19.

[9] "Are Shakespeare's Plays Always Metatheatrical?", p. 22.

of discourse colliding, frames getting entangled, or contexts getting confused".[10] This leads Purcell to conceive of metatheatre as an occurrence which takes place when the "Now and Here" of the actual and the "Then and There" of the play-world 'become entangled, a line or theatrical moment resonating on both levels at once'.[11] And while '[o]ften in Shakespeare's plays, bisociative collisions are sustained over whole scenes',[12] in Purcell's model 'metatheatricality cannot be a constant state: it is always the result of a *shift* in the ways in which the two planes relate to each other'.[13] Nor does metatheatricality ever fully undo the claims of the fictional: 'the point at which the planes of fiction and reality become so entangled that the stage action ceases to be legible as the representation of a fictional world at all' is a point that metatheatre might approach but which, if it is to sustain its own operation, can never be realised.[14]

This last point is especially valuable. And it is imbricated in Purcell's conception of a metatheatre which rather than acting to 'destroy scenic illusion' effects an aesthetic awareness that is likely to delight. This corresponds to my own understanding that metatheatre remains, as the *Troilus and Cressida* reading makes clear, an aspect of representation – meaning that representation is art's overall condition, one that metatheatre can only play at escaping. Yet to my thinking, this makes of metatheatre, at least potentially, a permanent presence. As I hope the extended analysis of self-reflexive operations in the *Troilus and Cressida* reading bears out, the case can be made that at the same time as the plays never wholly forfeit their fictional world, they *are* always metatheatrical. Purcell's analysis is it seems still informed by the kind of phenomenological duplexity that he would elsewhere contest. For Purcell, Shakespeare's metatheatre is a momentary or limited operation, which engenders a *shift* between the "Now and Here" and the "Then and There" – and results in an entanglement. My analysis, by contrast, indicates that Shakespeare's metatheatre enjoys a ubiquitous presence, produces a representation that is multiple and simultaneous, and results not in confusion but in complexity.

Tiffany Stern is another critic whose critical investment in the geography of the early modern theatre leads her to reconceptualize how representation and metatheatre functioned. Her work belongs to a field that has emerged from the groundbreaking research undertaken by Andrew Gurr and his peers in the last century into uncovering the original stage conditions and playgoing practices of the early modern era. In the 2000s scholars have often given to these investigations a more specific focus – exploring, for example, the uses stage curtains and cosmetics were put to, or the impact that aspects such as touch or smell had on the original audience's theatrical experience of play-texts.[15] And where the

[10] "Are Shakespeare's Plays Always Metatheatrical?", p. 29 (Koestler's words are taken from his *The Act of Creation* (Danube, 1976), p. 40).
[11] "Are Shakespeare's Plays Always Metatheatrical?", p. 26.
[12] "Are Shakespeare's Plays Always Metatheatrical?", p. 29.
[13] "Are Shakespeare's Plays Always Metatheatrical?", p. 33.
[14] "Are Shakespeare's Plays Always Metatheatrical?", p. 34, n 6.
[15] I am thinking here of Frederick Kiefer, "Curtains on the Shakespearean Stage" (*Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, vol. 20, 2007, pp. 151-186); Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama*

investigations of this earlier generation of critics contributed significantly to an understanding that the plays' representations were confined to an anti-illusionist mode, and their effects limited to estrangement,[16] more recent research in this field has thrown up various fresh readings which oftentimes demonstrate not only how the play's fictional world sustains itself in the face of reference to the actual performance conditions, but also how such reference can function to lend the play-world extension, complexity and intensification.[17]

Of these researchers, it is Stern who most prominently pursues the relationship that metatheatre takes to the theatre space. Her research offers a conceptualization of metatheatre that is liberated from the oppositional arrangement according to which it has so often been theorized, and which even Purcell's work bears the imprint of. Writing with Farah Karim-Cooper, Stern states that for Shakespeare and his contemporaries 'there was no binary between the materiality of theatre and the emotional, metaphoric and poetic registers of the plays themselves'.[18] It is a notion that Stern explores at some length in "'This Wide and Universal Theatre': The Theatre as Prop in Shakespeare's Metadrama" (2013). Stern makes the case that in Shakespeare's drama the theatrical space and its staging potentialities were celebrated; the theatre itself was made over into a dramatic device, and the early modern playwright enthusiastically explored the complexities that the arrangement derived. This perspective means that rather than seeing theatrical reference as being constrained to the undermining of play-world representation, metatheatre is thought of as capable of a range of possibilities. By underlining the way in which the physical reality of the stage meets the fictions played out upon it, Stern is able to demonstrate that '[t]here was not … one form of metatheatre that Shakespeare used with one effect'.[19] Self-reflexive reference to the actuality of the playhouse was used 'sometimes, as a way of querying or undercutting' the stage fictions, and sometimes 'as a way of interpreting and heightening' them.[20] We might further pursue Stern's argument that in early modern dramatic representation there exists 'no binary' between the material conditions of the playing space and its poetic and play-world registers, and suggest that these different aspects need not be thought to manifest themselves in an exclusive and discrete manner. As we saw in the reading I presented earlier, Cressida's indication of the tiring house doors acts to query the scene's action at the same time as it heightens it. The audience experiences the episode according to what I referred to as imaginative translation, whereby the aspects

(Edinburgh University Press, 2006), and *The Hand on the Shakespearean Stage: Gesture, Touch and the Spectacle of Dismemberment* (Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016); Jonathan Gil Harris, "The Smell of 'Macbeth'" (*Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 4, Winter 2007, pp. 465-486).

[16] And it is a position that Gurr sometimes still commits to. See, for example, his "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing" in the 2017 collection, *Shakespeare's Workplace: Essays on Shakespearean Theatre*, pp. 145-166.

[17] Scholars that have made important contributions to this field include, for example, Bridget Escolme, Evelyn Tribble, Nathalie de Carles, Katharine Eisaman Maus, Lucy Munro, Paul Menzer and Angela Stevens.

[18] From the Introduction to *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, edited by Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern, The Arden Shakespeare, 2014, pp. 1-8, p. 3.

[19] "'This Wide and Universal Theatre': The Theatre as Prop in Shakespeare's Metadrama", p. 31.

[20] "'This Wide and Universal Theatre': The Theatre as Prop in Shakespeare's Metadrama", p. 32.

of the literal and figurative are recognized as simultaneous and multiple, and the effects of both enlisted.

This is an arrangement which makes the most of what Gruber terms early modern drama's 'visible contradictions': representation marks itself up as false and also – in the performance of this falsity – playfully absurd. Yet these are the very elements which, when wielded by a sufficiently dexterous dramatist, engender the 'affective basis of spectating'. The part played by falsity and absurdity in Shakespeare's representational economy is something that recent criticism has taken up, and the remaining sections of this chapter will provide this perspective elaboration. But before moving on to this twenty-first century research, it is worthwhile examining an article from 1986 which rather neatly anticipates some of the main strands of this interpretive line. As its title indicates, W. B. Worthen's "The Weight of Antony: Staging 'Character' in *Antony and Cleopatra*"[21] addresses the task of hoisting up the dying Antony to Cleopatra's monument in the last scene of act 4. It is an episode which must be considered as pointedly courting a sense of its own ridiculousness: the difficulties the arrangement presents, both physical and dramatic, must be thought of as risking the richness of the play's concluding mood.

Worthen approaches the passage via the notion that Shakespeare's drama compels its audience to take up 'a double perspective'.[22] Not dissimilar to what I called imaginative translation, Worthen sees this 'double perspective' as brought about through the way Shakespeare 'forces our attention to the means of theatre … as part of our attention to the drama itself'.[23] This allows Worthen to recognize that the difficulties which threaten the integrity of the scene are the very aspects which underpin its dramatic success. As Worthen advances, in a formulation that foregrounds the paradoxical nature of Shakespeare's representational economy, 'what seems in part to prevent the final scene from becoming "ludicrous" is the "ludic" aspect of its theatrical playing, the precise physical and histrionic challenges that the performers engage in so as to present the tragic scene on the stage'.[24] This juxtaposition is repeated in the discussion of Cleopatra's speech in which she laments how the story of her and Antony will become the stuff of stage comedians, and that her own greatness will be reproduced by some squeaking boy (5.2.215-220). Worthen writes:

> It's a daring moment in Shakespeare's theater, one that invites us to attend to the means of theatrical "character" – the boy actor's performance – in order to deny it, to affirm that "Cleopatra" somehow transcends those means. Cleopatra's "grotesquely sceptical" self-portrait asks us to "behold and see" the boy actor only to insist that we overlook him, and enter Cleopatra's imaginative perspective, if we are to "see" the play through to its finale.[25]

[21] "The Weight of Antony: Staging 'Character' in Antony and Cleopatra" (*Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, a special issue of *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 26, no. 2, Spring 1986, pp. 295-308).
[22] "The Weight of Antony: Staging 'Character' in Antony and Cleopatra", p. 298.
[23] "The Weight of Antony: Staging 'Character' in Antony and Cleopatra", p. 296.
[24] "The Weight of Antony: Staging 'Character' in Antony and Cleopatra", p. 302.
[25] "The Weight of Antony: Staging 'Character' in Antony and Cleopatra", p. 303.

The scene's power derives itself from the dissimulated nature of dramatic representation and the essential absurdity which this obtains, and the spectators, in that they must overlook the boy actor that their attention is being drawn to, and 'enter Cleopatra's imaginative perspective' repeat these performances of dissimulation and absurdity. In fact, in the process of exerting metatheatrical pressure on stage fictions to the point where they risk their dissolution in a ludicrous actuality, it seems that they somehow exceed the absurd arrangement of such a realisation, and that they manifest themselves all the more richly.

The next section will develop further our understanding of the use that Shakespeare's metatheatrical representation makes of dissimulation, and the gambits of aesthetic absurdity that dissimulation affords. The critical framework will be expanded, and the application that the plays make of rhetoric, *ekphrasis* and *copia* properly introduced. This discussion will bring about a shift in critical and historical focus. Where the voices in this section can be considered as responding to, and to a great extent rejecting, 20th and 21st century instantiations of the estrangement model of metatheatre, the investigations will more firmly locate themselves in the critical discourses of the early modern era, and demonstrate the manner in which the plays challenge and, at the same time, exploit the reigning poetic model of the day: mimesis.

2.2 Dissimulation and mimesis: rhetoric, ekphrasis, copia

If, in the early modern period, the concept of mimesis coordinated the relationship between representation, reality and the ideal, and in this way underwrote the structures and impetus that would later be referred to collectively as logocentricism, it was through the discipline of rhetoric that these claims were announced and, to a large extent, understood as embodied. As we have seen though, Shakespeare's art counters the poetics of mimesis through its emphasis on the artifice of dramatic form, an emphasis which by implication remarks the dissimulation of all artistic representation. Yet, and this may be the favourite irony of an art that is rarely, if ever, without irony, this process is itself carried out – as in the early modern theatre it must be – through rhetorical performance. Perhaps though it would be more precise to write '*the staging* of a rhetorical *performance*'. For at each turn Shakespeare's drama announces its layered artifice, and in this way, rhetoric in the plays, rather than – as in its classical formulation – acting as the promise and instantiation of the connection between representation and the real, between language and the ideal, becomes instead the means by which this artistic dissimulation is itself carried out and remarked. And while as we have seen this shift does not rob rhetoric of the powerful effects it can realise, it does mean that these effects are dislocated from their structuring in the ideal, and, following from this, that this structuring is itself presented for interrogation.

In exploring the plays' staging of rhetoric, the articles of this dissertation have been compelled to give attention to a pair of devices which enjoyed great prominence in the scholary and artistic practice of early modern England, and which we have already come

across in the earlier reading from *Troilus and Cressida*: *ekphrasis* and renaissance *copia*. These figures lend animation and intensity to rhetoric's ideology of representation, and as such have urgent application to the poetical discussions of the day. *Ekphrasis*, in promising the self-identification of the verbal and visual, can be considered as the exemplar of the mimetic desire for full presence, and *copia* – as it is understood here – too seems a device of mimetic excellence, predicated as it is on the imitation of classical paragon. As the work of Stuart Sillars and Richard Meek[26] has underlined, Shakespeare's drama, to an extent that is exceptional even for the period, exhibits a fascination for these rhetorical figures. Their utilization is manifold, and they are often configured in a way that structures the overarching sense of Shakespeare's drama. And, I would argue that in similar fashion to the way in which rhetoric is made to perform its own staging, these figures are given an ironic and self-reflexive presentation which operates to underline not only their own dissimulation, but of that of the work of drama itself. Sillars and Meek often understand the figures' function in similar fashion and the prominence enjoyed by both scholars in the following pages as well as in the articles themselves reflects the influence that their research has had in forming my notions of Shakespeare's dramatic dissimulation.[27]

[26] Most especially *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare* (Routledge, 2016).

[27] A word needs to be said about my use of the term 'dissimulation' in light of the manner in which these two scholars discuss Shakespeare's remarking of artistic pretence. When exploring this artistic strategy Meek does not, as far as I am aware, use 'dissimulation', but the sense the term suggests is not far removed from that of his favoured descriptors. Meek most often uses 'duplicity' and 'deception' when describing this aspect of Shakespeare's art, a choice of vocabulary which reflects his concern with demonstrating the plays' consciousness of their own contrivance. And while Sillars will sometimes resort to using 'dissimulation' he most often labels this aesthetic phenomenon through a lexis drawn from the vocabulary of the plays and their contemporary discussion. Where 'dissimulation', like Meek's 'duplicity' and 'deception', necessarily frames itself negatively, Sillars mostly opts for terms like 'artificial' and 'counterfeit' – adjectives which could in Shakespeare's time still indicate a perfectly valid representation (and even when Sillars marks out more explicitly Shakespeare's playing off of notions of ideal and aesthetic truths, as in his article, "'You lie, you are not he': Identity, Rhetoric and Convention in Shakespeare's Art of Lying", his lexis is still taken from the plays themselves and the poetical discussion occurring around them). The different descriptors that Meek and Sillars elect to use reflects the difference in their respective critical takes, something that Sillars has commented on in "Shakespeare, Art and Artifice: An Interview with Stuart Sillars" (conducted by Perry McPartland, *EMCO*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2019, pp. 1-31). His remarks on the *The Rape of Lucrece* are worth repeating in this context. Discussing Lucrece's response to the techniques of painterly representation, Sillars remarks 'That Lucrece takes this as deceit undermines the whole poem, and of course the whole poetic and visual tradition of the rape of Lucrece itself. This makes it far more real to the reader because her objection to artistic deceit makes her claim to being a "real person" all the more powerful. Also, it's not just a description of that painting, whatever "that painting" may be. It is an account of Lucrece's reading of that painting – something which doesn't take away the idea of deceit but puts it on a completely different level … to me the point is that it isn't a deceit, it's artifice – and that's the only way that artifice is going to work' (pp. 12-13).

My own preference for 'dissimulation' derives from the fact that the metatheatric episodes that the articles have focused on often foreground the plays' self-conscious games of aesthetic pretence (the articles on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example, give attention to how the play's spectators must conceive of a rather quotidian prop as instancing marvellous transformation, or the way in which they are asked to see Theseus as both subject to, and as reversing, the tragic fate that classical myth attributes him), but also because these articles often discuss episodes which concern some kind of dissimulation within the narrative itself (whether this is Edgar's description in *King Lear* of the non-existent view from a non-existent precipice, or the various deceptions that the parts in *The Winter's Tale* perform on each other – the exaggerated performances of the courtiers in the play's first act, or Autolycus's con-trickery, or, most fantastically, Hermione's impersonation of her own sculpted likeness). Another reason for my preference for 'dissimulation' across the different articles is born out quite simply a desire for a consistent vocabulary

2.3 Rhetoric

The first reason that Aristotle provides for the usefulness of the discipline in the *Rhetoric* is that discourse is inevitably bound up with truth (1355a 21-24). For Aristotle, it is not that rhetoric supplies the means by which truth might be best disseminated but, as William M. A. Grimaldi explains, simply 'that rhetoric *qua* rhetoric reaches out to truth'.[28] So conceived, rhetoric is, as Bradford Vivian terms it, 'doubly representative'. It allows mankind to represent and unfold the absolute, and it provides the means by which truths and laws might be expressed. As such rhetoric represents 'the definitively human capacity of human beings, the activity in which humans personify the truth of their being'.[29] A system of this kind must be considered dependent on and must be thought of as enacting a conjunction of mimetic ideality. The claims of truth, presence and speech are fundamentally aligned, and the rhetorical display of *ethos* remarks nothing less than an embodiment, providing testament to the fact that rhetoric's outward display corresponds to an analogous inner state.

Though cast in the terminology of the present, this is, broadly speaking, the understanding that the Elizabethan and Jacobean humanists would have derived from their extensive training in classical rhetoric. Yet the very educative methods which ensured that the practice of rhetoric, together with the metaphysics that sustained it, had such a profound impact on the period must also be thought of as sowing the seeds for a more equivocal understanding of the discipline – and, it must be added, an understanding that the theatre was uniquely placed to exploit. Despite the claims that the Aristotelian emphasis on *ethos* served to underwrite, the rhetorical training that schools provided was conducted in a manner which meant that the expression it made available was neither immediate nor unmediated. The lessons of rhetoric were embodied in Latin and could only be absorbed into English through a process of translation and transposition. This was made more involved due to the fact that Latin was distinguished from the vernacular in how it was construed as well as through a teaching process that approached it structurally (that is to say, focusing on grammar and syntax rather than lexis). This produced, in Leonard Barkan's words, 'a consciousness of language as a thing in itself, and not just a frictionless instrument'.[30] This consciousness would have been intensified by the means through which rhetoric was both studied and realised – this being, essentially, performative. In the early

throughout the project. In the first stages of my research it seemed my arguments were best made if I employed terms like 'dissimulation', together with 'duplicity' and 'deception'. Some of these early efforts were soon after accepted for publication, and as the official guidelines for the dissertation ask that any such articles are presented in their published form, rewriting them with a different critical lexis was not an option. So while my later research has made clear to me that in a number of critical instances the vocabulary of Shakespeare's time (especially with the positive representational value that terms like 'artificial' and 'counterfeit' denote) is often at least as adequate to convey my intended meaning, in order to facilitate the dialogue that the different articles take to one another, I have elected for the most part to continue with the critical lexis employed in my first efforts.

[28] "Rhetoric and Truth: A Note on Aristotle. "Rhetoric" 1355a 21-24" (*Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 11, no. 3, Summer 1978, pp. 173-177), p. 173.

[29] *Being Made Strange: Rhetoric Beyond Representation* (SUNY, 2004), Preface, p. x.

[30] "What Did Shakespeare Read?", p. 34.

stages of instruction master and pupil conducted question and answer conversations in Latin, and this progressed through to the delivery of epistles and verse, and the training culminated in the production of full-blown orations. Workbooks like the *Progymnasmata* would supply the classroom with examples of classical texts, derived from sources such as Quintilian and Cicero, and the students would be directed to create their own Latin compositions in which they placed themselves in some hypothetical historical or mythological situation. The resulting exercises were, as Barkan remarks, 'inevitably full of tropes self-conscious about their status as discourse, and – most importantly of all – they amounted to dramatic impersonation'.[31]

Such an educational process inevitably disturbs the sense that rhetoric unfolds according to the metaphysical model that Aristotle affirmed. For if, as a modern critical survey remarks, '[t]he ability to perform outstandingly in *declamatio* shows that the student has absorbed his moral as well as his intellectual lessons',[32] then, as Sillars points out, the first four words of the sentence reveal rhetoric as an essentially performative device, and remark 'the deception that is implicit within the whole tradition of rhetorical phrase-making'.[33] Jay Fliegelman underlines this sense that the mastery of rhetoric depended on and could only be had through deliberate simulation:

> For all the insistence that eloquence was an art of magnifying feelings actually experienced not of deceptively fabricating feelings, to teach the code of voice and gesture – to elide the distinction between the production of natural sounds and the reproduction of them made possible through a deceptive taxonomy in the service of a mechanical science – was to equip all men to deceive, to act a role … Distinctions between 'sincere' and 'artful' to the contrary, 'the art of speaking' was always artful, the show of naturalness was still a show.[34]

Inevitably, it was the early modern theatre – and Shakespeare's theatre in particular – which made the most of these ambivalences. In Shakespeare's plays, the dissimulations of dramatic performance underline the dissimulations of rhetoric and these in turn function, as Sillars writes, 'to destabilise a series of assumptions earlier held in common between the world of play, the audience and the world beyond'. According to Sillars, it is the simulated nature of rhetoric which makes possible in Shakespeare's drama the weaving together of 'a richly variegated textual fabric within which a whole series of pretences, imitations, limitations, affectations and personations function together'. In this way, the plays profit from the effects made available by rhetoric's performative dimension, while at the same time offering these effects interrogation. What emerges is a 'quality of compound,

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[31] "What Did Shakespeare Read?", p. 36.

[32] Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities* (Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 131.

[33] "'You lie, you are not he': Identity, Rhetoric and Convention in Shakespeare's Art of Lying", p. 24. Sillars discusses this aspect at some length in "Shakespeare, Art and Artifice: An Interview with Stuart Sillars", at one point declaring that the key element of rhetoric is its artifice (pp. 3-4).

[34] *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language and the Culture of Performance* (Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 80.

generative ambivalence', that itself rests on 'the dissimulation of theatre', and which enables a 'rich, inventive playfulness that exploits to the full the elements that it ostensibly rejects'. Rhetoric then functions at all points in the plays as a particularized form of metatheatrical irony, and one which we are constrained to recognize as, Sillars argues, 'fundamental to Shakespeare's playmaking'. [35]

2.4 Ekphrasis

The early modern humanist would have been introduced to *ekphrasis* through his (for it was nearly always a he) scholastic training in rhetoric, most probably through what we have noted was the preferred instructional manual of the day, the *Progymnasmata*. The *Progymnasmata* provided a series of preliminary rhetorical exercises begun in ancient Greece that were used to train students in basic compositional skills, of which the writing of an *ekphrasis* is one of the more advanced. In contrast to the understanding the modern reader is likely to attach to the term, that of a poetic account of an artwork,[36] Shakespeare and his contemporaries would have been taught that *ekphrasis* referred to a description which was applicable to a catholic range of subject material. The recommended topic list that the various versions of the *Progymnasmata* takes in, for example, battles and battlements, storms and plagues, seashores and meadows, extending even to crocodiles and hippopotami.[37] Artworks are accorded no particular distinction in any of these indexes, most often in fact, they make no appearance whatsoever.[38] What distinguishes the particular quality of classical *ekphrasis* is not the specific nature of the represented object, but rather the manner of its representation: as the instructional manuals repeatedly insist, *ekphrasis* is compelled to manifest *enargeia*. In the versions of the *Progymnasmata* credited to Theon, 'Hermogenes', Apthonius and Nikolaos – despite their being separated by up to almost four centuries – the definition given to *ekphrasis* remains identical: 'a speech which leads one around, bringing the subject matter vividly before the eyes.'[39]

[35] "'You lie, you are not he': Identity, Rhetoric and Convention in Shakespeare's Art of Lying", p. 19.

[36] Leo Spitzer gave this version of *ekphrasis* formulation in his 1955 essay, "The 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,' or Content Vs. Metagrammar" (*Comparative Literature,* vol. 7, 1955, pp. 203-225), categorizing Keats' poem as belonging 'to the genre, known to Occidental literature from Homer and Theocritus to the Parnassians and Rilke, of the *ekphrasis*, the poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art, which description implies, in the words of Theophile Gautier, "une transposition d'art," the reproduction through the medium of words of sensuously perceptible objets d'art (ut pictura poesis)' (p. 207).

[37] See, for example, Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata* 118.6 – 120.11, edited by M. Patillon (Les Belles Lettres, 1997), pp. 66– 69. Ruth Webb's *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Ashgate, 2009) offers extensive research into the classical definition of *ekphrasis* and allows her to demonstrate that throughout the various versions of the *Progymnasmata* – despite the fact that they are separated by up to almost four centuries – the suggested subjects remains standard: persons *(prosopa),* places *(topoi),* times *(chronoi)* and events *(pragmata).*

[38] And even when some of the discussions of *ekphrasis* found in the different versions mention artworks (Nikolaos, for example, offers instructions for 'when we describe statues or paintings or anything of this sort' (quoted in *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*, p. 82)), they are never included in the main subject list.

[39]As Webb makes clear in her article "*Ekphrasis* Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre" (*Word and Image,* vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 7-18). She provides the following collation: 'Theon, *Progymnasmata,* ed. M. Patillon (Paris, 1997), pp. 66-69 (with French translation); Hermogenes, *0pf:fa,* ed. H. Rabe (Leipzig, 1913), p. 22; Aphthonios, *Progymnasmata,* ed. H. Rabe (Leipzig, 1926), p. 36; Nikolaos, *Progymnasmata,* ed. J. Felten (Leipzig, 1913), p. 68.

Understood in these terms, the device of *ekphrasis* would seem, as Murray Krieger notes, to give itself out as having 'been created expressly for mimetic purposes'.[40]

However, outside of the classroom the contemporary practice and discussion of *ekphrasis* would have inevitably meant that the cultured Elizabethan or Jacobean would have a sense of *ekphrasis* that coincided rather closely with the understanding reflected in modern definitions of the term. Throughout the early modern period the most exalted exemplifications of *ekphrasis* drawn from the classical world remained descriptions of artistic representations. In the early Renaissance Homer's elaborate account of the imagery of the shield of Achilles was held up as the genre's paradigm, and by the late Renaissance Virgil's description of Aeneas' shield was lauded in similar terms.[41] And antiquity, of course, offers a range of instances beyond the celebrated examples of the descriptions of Homer and Virgil where *ekphrasis* takes the artwork as its subject. We encounter it as early as the 6th century BCE, in the renowned Hesiodic fragment, 'Shield of Herakles', and the pattern is still in place almost a thousand years later, in 4th century CE works such as Paul the Silentiary's *Ekphrases* of the church of St. Sophia, and Christodurus' *Ekphrasis of the statues in the public gymnasium called Zeuxippos*.[42]

This instantiation of *ekphrasis*, as the poeticized description of a visual artwork, would have had a special pertinence for the early modern humanist. The transposition of *enargeia* from the visual arts into the verbal arts would seem to animate the central and foundational precept of early modern poetics: the doctrine of *ut pictura poesis*. At the same time, the arrangement seems to offer the paragone between painting and poetry – what Joel Elias Spingarn calls 'almost the keynote of renaissance criticism'[43] – the perfect means by which to unfold itself. And early modern writers were not slow to recognize the form's attractions. There was, as Meek remarks, 'something of a rediscovery of the delights of ekphrasis in the Renaissance',[44] and Belsey, as we saw earlier, describes *ekphrasis* as 'a favourite device of the period'.[45] And the fact that both of these critics are content to refer to the poetic presentation of a visual artwork at this point in history as *ekphrasis* only speaks further to the centrality that such descriptions enjoyed at the time. Yet this early modern fascination often realised itself in literary performances that were quite removed from the precepts that classical poetics laid down. The lively and not un-sceptical sensibility of the early modern artist would sometimes lead him – especially when that 'him' was

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The only difference in terminology is that Nikolaos has *aphegematikos* (from *aphegema* 'a telling, a tale') instead of *periegematikos*' (p. 11, n 20).

[40] *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (John Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 18.

[41] See for example, Francois Rigolot's "The Rhetoric of Presence: Art, Literature, and Illusion" (*The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 3, edited by Glyn P. Norton, Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 161-167, p. 164.

[42] Paul the Silentiary, *Ekphrases*. Translated by C. A. Mango (*The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, Prentice Hall, 1972); Christodurus, "Christodurus of Coptus, Ekphrasis on the Zeuxippos Baths, Introduction, Translation, and Notes." Translated by Marion Kruse (*Greek Imperial Epic*, edited by P. Avlamis and E. Kneebone, University of California Press, forthcoming).

[43] *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance* (Columbia University Press, 1920), p. 42.

[44] *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare*, p. 16.

[45] "Rape of Lucrece", p. 100.

Shakespeare – to uncover in the poeticized account of an art object the means by which a self-reflexive critique of mimesis might be effected. Such an artistic development was not, however, without a classical precedent. The structures of aesthetic paradox that *ekphrasis* makes available were something that the sophists recognized and, in their playfully self-reflexive manner, seized upon.

The finest example of this is probably Philostratus' *Imagines* (third century CE), which presents itself as a description of 65 paintings that the writer saw in Naples. The work prompted a second series of *Imagines* by Philostratus the Younger, and inspired in turn Callistratus' *Ekphraseis*, an imitation of Philostratus' work which describes fourteen sculpted pieces as performed by various eminent artists. Diana Shaffer's article, "*Ekphrasis* and the Rhetoric of Viewing in Philostratus's Imaginary Museum",[46] provides an insightful reading of *Imagines*, and happily for our present purposes, her observations often chime with my own analysis of Shakespeare's representational economy. Her comments on *Imagines* serves to highlight the use made of ekphrastic accounts of artworks in the plays and underline their sophistic deployment. *Ekphrasis*, writes Schaffer,

> functions not only as an elegant literary *topos*, but also as a sophistic critique of the epistemological stability of viewing – a critique intended to unmask both the deceptions of mimetic illusionism and the assumed correspondence between representation and reality … Whereas Homer's *ekphrasis* firmly grounds the tradition of the sister arts (poetry and painting) in the *mimesis* of human actions, Philostratus's *Imagines* explores the hermeneutic, persuasive, and prescriptive force of this ancient Trope [*sic*].[47]

This exploration draws the readers back to art's duality and entangles them in its projections. Shaffer concludes by underlining the challenge that such representational poetics bear for the mimetic model:

> Undermining the concept of verisimilitude itself, Philostratus's *ekphraseis* reveal the tensions between description and interpretation and word and image characteristic of this ancient trope. Moreover, his *ekphraseis* dramatize both the futility and the fascination of the attempt to display the world in visual and verbal language. Contrary to Homer, who praises the supplementary relationship of word and image in the representation of the world perceived by the human eye and mind, Philostratus challenges the veracity of *mimetic* illusionism, pointing to the paradoxes of both visual and literary representation.[48]

Belsey makes a similar point in her discussion of Shakespeare's own use of *ekphrasis*: 'There is by definition no *im*mediate *re*presentation. Even while it comes so close to truth,

[46] *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, vol. 31, no. 4, 1998, pp. 303-316.
[47] "*Ekphrasis* and the Rhetoric of Viewing in Philostratus's Imaginary Museum", pp. 303-304.
[48] "*Ekphrasis* and the Rhetoric of Viewing in Philostratus's Imaginary Museum", p. 315.

Shakespeare's ekphrasis has the effect of confirming the difference between life and its likeness'.[49]

While the inherent self-referentiality that a poetic meditation on an art object makes *ekphrasis*' reflexive qualities all the more pronounced, this quality – though signalled with less urgency – also inheres to *ekphrasis* even when conceived according to the broader impulses classicism's definition supplies it. *Ekphrasis*, of either type, at the same time as it desires to make its reader or auditor 'see' can also be highlighted as a set piece, as a self-conscious display of artfulness that points back to its own writtenness.[50] When the device (in both its narrow and broad forms) is transferred to the theatre of Shakespeare's age these tensions are amplified. As Joel Altman remarks, 'Ekphrasis could be used not only to waft an audience out of its own theatre to one in a distant land but could also function as a mirror in which the audience was invited to observe itself looking and listening; in this way, ekphrasis became a vehicle for concentrating an audience's theatrical self-awareness'.[51] For Altman, 'ekphrasis instantiates early modern theatricality'.[52] It manifests itself as a doubled effect, enlivening the imaginative investment in illusion while also pointing up representation's artifice. Altman expounds *ekphrasis*' theatrical operation in the following passage:

> If we think of theatricality as a quality attending any *performance*—whether in a theatre, court, innyard, street, or river barge—that solicits the kind of attention not usually accorded the ordinary behaviour encountered in daily life, then ekphrasis is a distinctively *verbal* form of theatricality. In its very nature as a stop-action device – and in its relation to epideictic rhetoric – it calls attention to itself … If, on the other hand, we think of theatricality as a term that emphasizes the *mimetic* activity that occurs in any 'framed' setting – theatre, court, innyard, street, barge, etc. – with whatever degree of verisimilitude, soliciting a commensurate suspension of disbelief in accordance with current convention, performance style, mode of representation, audience disposition and experience, then ekphrasis augments mimesis through its own unique power to inform the imagination … Ekphrasis, then, might be said to be quintessentially theatrical, since it can invite critical attention to itself as performance yet also bracket that performance to infiltrate, captivate, and illustrate with images the mind of the listener, effecting through the skilful mimetic expression of its content both intellectual and emotional conviction.[53]

[49] "Invocation of the Visual Image: Ekphrasis in *Lucrece* and Beyond", p. 197.
[50] See Claire Preston, "Ekphrasis: Painting in Words" (*Renaissance Figures of Speech,* edited by Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander and Katrin Ettenhuber, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 115–29, pp. 119-20), p. 124.
[51] "Ekphrasis" (*Early Modern Theatricality,* edited by Harry S Truman, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 270-290), p. 278.
[52] "Ekphrasis", p. 274.
[53] "Ekphrasis", p. 274-275.

To better realise the significant place that *ekphrasis* takes in Shakespeare's drama we can return once more to the work of Stuart Sillars and Richard Meek. Sillars' *Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination* approaches the plays according to an understanding 'that accepts the elision of verbal, visual and performative genres as at the least a possibility and at the most a constant presence'.[54] He argues that our appreciation of the canon is enriched if we recognise that there was a ready artistic exchange between word and image in Shakespeare's period, and that playwright and audience both were familiar with not only the major visual forms of the age, but also with the ideas on which they rested.[55] In this way, Sillars' work reveals 'the absorption of visual elements into dramatic or poetic forms, through their reinvention within verbal or theatric structures, their contribution to the themes and ideas of a play or poem, and larger reflection on the workings of poetry or theatre to the sensible universe'.[56] What emerges from this coming together is 'an analytical address between forms that interrogate, undermine, parody and extend each other, word and image held in balance as mirrors that depend on and intensify each other's compound identity. The self-reflexive processes of metatheatric or metapoetic examination, rarely absent in the canon, are thus further enhanced'.[57] In such a complex exchange between visual and verbal, *ekphrasis* will oftentimes function not merely as a bracketed rhetorical instance, but something more like one of the work's configuring principles; the device and the allusions it activates folding back into 'the action that drives the play and the issues that it debates'.[58]

Richard Meek's 2009 monograph, *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare*, also approaches Shakespeare's use of *ekphrasis*, and his response overlaps with some of the notions Sillars elaborates. For Meek, *ekphrasis* (in both its classical and modern applications) is the principal device by which Shakespeare explores and coordinates, as the title of his study indicates, the relationship between the visual and the narrated. While recognizing the prevalence of *ekphrasis* in the literature of the era, Meek argues it enjoys a particularly prominent place in Shakespeare's artistic repertoire, suggesting that the 'continual fascination with ekphrasis' that Shakespeare demonstrates 'is perhaps unique among early modern authors'.[59] Revisiting the lesson of the sophists, Meek remarks that while *ekphrasis* gives itself out as an exemplification of *enargeia*, as offering a natural and unmediated representation, it must also be thought of as a purposeful rhetorical contrivance, and in this way *ekphrasis* realises an arrangement by which the nature of representation is itself tabled: 'ekphrasis highlights and crystallises something of the paradoxical nature, even duplicity, of literary description more generally. Perhaps, then,

[54] "Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination", p. 1.
[55] "Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination", p. 1.
[56] "Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination", p. 2.
[57] "Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination", p. 2.
[58] "Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination", p. 39.
[59] *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare*, p. 20.

the fascination of ekphrasis derives from the fact that it is an extreme – or at any rate more explicit – example of what all representation tries to achieve'.[60]

Yet as with Sillars, Meek is far from viewing Shakespeare's intensification of the paradoxes of *ekphrasis* as undermining representation's effect. Instead, he sees it as offering a literary and self-reflexive transposition that acts to contrast and make available different modes of representation – or, perhaps it would be more in keeping with Meek's analysis to say, different modes of *literary re*-presentation.[61] Approached in this way, 'ekphrasis represents a particularly suggestive example of – or even a metaphor for – the seductive effects' of Shakespeare's art.[62] And for Meek, the key to this metaphorical relationship is that this seduction is produced through the self-aware play of aesthetic deception. He suggests that some of the most powerful moments of Shakespeare's dramatic art can, 'like *ekphrasis* itself, […] be read as a sophisticated confidence trick'.[63] Moreover, a cataloguing of Shakespeare's rogues and tricksters allows Meek to demonstrate the 'particular Shakespearean interest in the relationship between ekphrasis and con-trickery' and to assert how the 'ekphrastic moments in Shakespeare's work invite us to compare his aesthetic strategies with those of the various con-men he depicts'.[64] Yet the plays' pointing back to the duplicity of their art does not of course undo their effects; it becomes, in fact, a further means of dramatic seduction.

Before moving on, a few more words need to be said about early modern *ekphrasis* and how the device lends itself to the layering effect of 'literary re-presentation'. For as well as furthering our understanding of the utilization that Shakespeare's art makes of *ekphrasis,* these points will serve to introduce another, related device central to Shakespeare's metatheatrical representation, that of renaissance *copia*. As Meek notes, 'any consideration of ekphrasis in the period demands that we consider the relationship *between* literary texts',[65] an observation that chimes with Grant Scott's assertion that the device is 'necessarily intertextual',[66] and which is underlined once more by W. J. T. Mitchell's pun that *ekphrasis* is as much about citing artworks as it is sighting them.[67] Time and again, Shakespeare will have his ekphrastic accounts unfold within *copia*'s re-presentations. Even Shakespeare's descriptions of art tend to be, as Meek notes, 'based on

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[60] *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare*, p. 6.
[61] See, for example, p. 6 in *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare*, where Meek makes recourse to Roland Barthes' *S/Z* to underline how the descriptions of *ekphrasis* imitate not actuality, but merely other modes of literary representation.
[62] *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare*, p. 8-9. The original phrase in full reads: 'ekphrasis represents a particularly suggestive example of – or even a metaphor for – the seductive effects of Shakespearean mimesis'. Meek is clearly not using 'mimesis' here in its classical sense, and throughout the book he will often use the term to refer to a more broadly conceived notion of literary representation, one which it seems is not incompatible with the meaning I supplied to 'representation' in the opening pages of this dissertation.
[63] *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare*, p. 178.
[64] *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare*, p. 20.
[65] *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare*, p. 18.
[66] *The Sculpted Word* (University Press of New England, 1994), p. 1.
[67] *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 152-153, n 4.

other works of ekphrastic literature rather than actual paintings'.[68] E. H. Gombrich suggests, for example, that the painting which Shakespeare describes in *The Rape of Lucrece* has its source in Philostratus' *Imagines*,[69] an observation which, rather happily for the current discussion, would suggest the playwright self-consciously locating himself in relationship to the sophistic tradition, while also demonstrating how *ekphrasis* and *copia* will often operate in tandem.

2.5 Copia

The notion of renaissance *copia* that this dissertation makes use of is indebted to the research of Sillars, Thomas M. Greene, Terence Cave, and the just mentioned, Ernst Gombrich.[70] Overlapping with the concepts of *translatio, imitatio* and *aemulatio, copia* is understood as a complex of presentation realised through a revitalized imitation of earlier originals, an aesthetic strategy common to the visual, verbal and literary arts of the period.[71] 'Revitalized' is key, for these works are, in both concept and execution, far more than reproductions of their artistic predecessors. Sources are appropriated, recontextualized, modified and enlarged in a process that Sillars glosses as 'enriched imitation'.[72] Describing these artistic developments, Sillars writes:

> Following the renaissance notions of *copia*, they modify their earlier originals with directly contemporary references, adding immediacy and enrichment by yoking together the two areas of experience and artistic statement. Imitation of an earlier form, with its narrative or political meanings, is thus not simple reproduction: as David Lowenthal remarks, the word copy at this time 'denoted eloquent abundance', reflecting through a macaronic pun the concept of copia to reflect fullness caused by such doubly enriched significance.[73]

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[68] *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare*, p. 6.
[69] *Art and Illusion* (Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 176.
[70] Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*; Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance*; Ernst Gombrich "The Style *all'antica:* Imitation and Assimilation", in Ernst Gombrich, *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Remaissance I* 3rd edition (Phaidon, 1978, pp. 122-128).
[71] *Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination*, p. 1-27.
[72] "Shakespeare, Art and Artifice: An Interview with Stuart Sillars", p. 12.
[73] *Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination*, p. 6-7. Lowenthal's phrase occurs in a discussion which also makes use of the works of Cave and Gombrich cited above, and which serves as an illuminating addition: 'Distance offered a new insight into the venerated past; imitation was the main mechanism for coming to terms with it. Renaissance imitation embraced a spectrum of meanings that our narrow and pejorative usage of the term no longer suggest, meanings elaborated from roman precursors expressly to cope with the glories and burdens of classical antiquity. The word *copy*, now also confined pejoratively to mere reproduction and repetition, then denoted eloquent abundance'. And Lowenthal adds: 'Imitation taught Renaissance painters, sculptors, architects, and men of letters how to reanimate ancient models and yet also improve on them. The reuse of classical exemplars ranged from faithful copying to fundamental transformation … Each mode of imitation expressed a different relationship with precursors, but most

Copia offers to the work an aesthetic architecture, in terms both practical and conceptual: 'it allows an earlier form to provide both structural basis and intellectual immediacy'.[74] And while in the plays it is most often 'an earlier form' that is given redeployment, as Sillars' work itself demonstrates, sources from Shakespeare's own day are often treated to the same artistic transposition.[75] Such imitation, rather naturally, takes up a relationship to the orderings and orthodoxies of the classical and contemporary world that has about it something of the parodic. But parody in its early modern instantiation should not be thought of as limited to an instrument of comic deflation. Most often, as the articles in this dissertation make clear, Shakespeare employs parody in serioludic fashion, the serious and comically absurd aspects overlapping and acting to invigorate each other. Occasionally even, the serious will outgo the comic; some of the most gruesome scenes in the entire canon are realised in a modality that is best described as parodic *copia*.[76]

A second strand of *copia* must be placed beside this. Where the 'elaborated imitation' Sillars discusses makes for an application of *copia* that is usually configured in broad and discursive terms, and which looks at the plays' representations as deriving from and unfolding against the rich and variegated textual tapestry that the accumulated layerings of culture lend to its tropes, figures and discourses, this second aspect takes narrower terms and is closer to a reproduction than an imitation. Given insightful outline in Patricia Parker's *Shakespeare from the Margins*,[77] this dimension of *copia* most often operates through the play-dialogue's reproduction of other texts.

The relationship of reproduction to *copia* had contemporary pertinence. As Cave observes, the classical understanding of *copia* as indicating copiousness, had by the medieval era, owing to a productive accident of usage, extended to embrace 'copy'.[78] This is an understanding implied in Parker's discussion of *All's Well That Ends Well*, where she notes how in the early modern era, '[*c*]*opia* itself, in the sense of abundance or fertility, also had its double in the simulacra-like copies' that the plays' stage figures realise.[79] At the same time as this 'double' then draws from traditional notions of *copia*, it also unsettles them, juxtaposing classicism's copious and fruitful varying with an iteration that as Parker argues is conceptualized in terms that are heavily indebted to the early modern advances

humanists employed not just one but several of these modes' (*The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 80).

[74] *Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination*, p. 8.

[75] For Sillars even the translations of contemporary continental works evince this transposing elaboration, a point he underlines by remarking these new works are often described not as 'translated' but rather as 'Englished' ("Shakespeare, Art and Artifice: An Interview with Stuart Sillars", p. 12). A rather nice example of the instinct to appropriation, amelioration and invention within *copia* is provided in the subtitle to Geffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes, and other devices* which runs: *For the moste parte gathered out of ſundrie writers, Englished and Moralized. And divers newly devised* (Leyden: Francis Raphelengius, 1586).

[76] To stick with Sillars for our example, see the discussion of Lavinia's accusation of her attackers in *Titus Andronicus* from "'You lie, you are not he': Identity, Rhetoric and Convention in Shakespeare's Art of Lying", pp. 19-22.

[77] University of Chicago Press, 1996.

[78] *Cornucopian Text: Problems of writing in the French Renaissance*, pp. 3-4.

[79] *Shakespeare from the Margins*, p. 214.

in mechanical reproduction.[80] In practice these reproductions often unfold themselves through, to phrase it in a way that recalls the points that Scot and Mitchell made about *ekphrasis*, what today would be referred to as intertextual citation.

Iteration is Parker's preferred term for these reproductions. Her use of the word must be considered as coloured by Derrida's concept of the same name, and aspects of deconstruction are evident in Parker's analysis of the effects of Shakespeare's dramatic iteration.[81] Whether these textual echoes draw on classical sources or refer to the new orders of humanist discipline, Parker argues that the process of their repetition shifts them away from a signification that is secure and univocal. Iteration realises instead a discourse that is inversionary and powerfully multi-faceted: 'what often appears in the plays as a rehearsal or replaying of … closural procedures is frequently closer to the contemporary sense of parodia as an iterative reproduction, a repetition that simultaneously dislocates or displaces what is being shown, without necessarily enabling a particular deciphering'.[82] One key aspect of this effect Parker labels the 'preposterous', drawing on Elizabethan definitions which remark the term's carnivalesque character. Contemporary dictionaries gloss 'preposterous' as '"contrary to all good order" … disruptive of a "natural" or "proper" sequence';[83] descriptions which themselves demonstrate how language in the period was 'intimately linked to the production and reproduction of social order or precedence'.[84] For Parker, the plays' use of iteration works to call into question 'the very priority of the "original"', and in this way undermine ideological strata.[85] Discussing *Hamlet*, for example, she argues how '[t]he very proliferation of simulacra, forgeries, and likenesses in this play … undoes its own language of first and second, original and sequel'.[86]

Central to Parker's reading of the preposterous function of intertextual reference is the transposition that occurs in moving from the written, and, most usually, printed 'original' to the performed 'iteration'. That is from a medium which unfolds lineally and sequentially, and which, more powerfully, brings with it the connotation of deriving directly from, and reproducing exactly, an original, to a medium which self-reflexively marks its freedom from such constraints.[87] In providing classical or contemporary orthodoxies – together with the notions of priority, order and rule that inhere to these discourses – re-presentation in a theatrical performance that marks itself as simulated, secondary and unreal, the claims these discourses would otherwise advance and institute

[80] *Shakespeare from the Margins*, p. 132.
[81] See for example, the paper, "Signature Event Context" (*Limited, Inc*, Northwestern University Press, 1988, pp. 173-286).
[82] *Shakespeare from the Margins*, p. 15.
[83] *Shakespeare from the Margins*, p. 21. The definitions use John Barret's *an Alvearie or quadruple Dictionary* (London: H. Denhamus, 1580) and Richard Huloet's *Abecedarium Anglico Latinium* (Londini: ex officina Gulielmi Riddel, 1552).
[84] *Shakespeare from the Margins*, p. 24
[85] *Shakespeare from the Margins*, p. 147. The point is repeated passim, but see especially pp. 157-164, 180-184.
[86] *Shakespeare from the Margins*, p. 180.
[87] *Shakespeare from the Margins*, p. 23.

become themselves vacated and open to interrogation. When Parker writes how duplicates and doubles in Shakespeare connote 'duplicity and treachery' this is not an observation that is limited to theme and narrative,[88] but instead indicates an approach to theatrical representation that aligns itself with the notions of dissimulation and artifice that we have already seen rehearsed in the writings of Sillars and Meek.

These two notions of *copia*, that of an 'elaborated imitation', and that of an iterated citation, are of course complementary. and often they operate together. We can, for purposes of example, turn to the readings of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* offered by Parker in *Shakespeare from the Margins* and by Sillars in "'However strange and admirable': *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as *via stultitae*".[89] Both treatments draw attention to the classical provenance attached to Theseus, and remark the dislocative effects that are made available by Shakespeare's decision to give this particular figure central position in what is a marriage comedy. As the educated members of Shakespeare's audience would have been aware, myth paints Theseus as a notorious philanderer and reports that his marriage to Hippolyta – the marriage that Shakespeare's play celebrates – ends in a bloody debauch. And both Parker and Sillars' studies place this 'elaborated imitation' in the context of an investigation into textual reference. Parker's essay reveals the play's preposterous subversion of the vows of the Marriage Ceremony from *The Book of Common Prayer* and illuminates the more profound dimensions of Bottom's account of his 'dream' by exploring the passage's echoes of *Corinthians 2* in the Geneva Bible. Sillars analyses the same speech, uncovering and exploring it allusions to Erasmus' *In Praise of Folly,* and – as the article's title emphasizes – the spiritual traditions of the *via stultitae*. The re-utilisation of folk proverb in Puck's speech of impending reconciliation from act 3 scene 2 together with the passage's disruption of sequence and rhetorical order further underline the drama's inversionary play of high and low, and the spiritual accord of the play's resolution is underlined in what Sillars argues is a textual echo of Julian of Norwich's most famous motto.

2.6. A critical convergence

While then no overarching theory of Shakespeare's use of metatheatre has established itself in recent times, in the work of the scholars discussed in this chapter a patterned series of related ideas emerges suggesting the possibility of a critical convergence. Underpinning these different strands of research is the investment in the plays' early modern staging together with the manner of their performing. Developed from this, is a more precise sense of the operation of the early modern theatre's artistic duality that contests, often pointedly, the binary structure by which the estrangement model posits the literal and figurative. The formulation it offers is at once simple and radical: the audience never takes the play-world

[88] *Shakespeare from the Margins*, p. 133.
[89] *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, vol. 244, 2007, pp. 27-39.

as ‘real’, and this means that metatheatre’s self-reflexive remarking of its unreality never proves fatal to the play’s presented fictions. The artwork’s paradoxes are the very thing that the audience has agreed to observe and, in their spectating, sustain. A perspective is obtained that sees representation as compound and multiple; poetic and material registers are intertwined, and a variety of depictional modalities and their associated effects can unfold simultaneously.

Formulated in this way, the plays’ self-reflexivity does not so much point back to the material and actual conditions of the play’s construction as it does mark up their own aesthetic nature and processes. It is an attention which highlights the form’s artifice, and which underlines the dissimulations and absurdities which this artifice obtains. The *re*-presented nature of drama’s representations is emphasized, and the representation is made to explore the gap that it takes to its original. Such an economy contrasts sharply with the poetic operation that the contemporary model of mimesis describes, and the plays make the most of this contrast in their appropriation of the discourse. The familiar poetic model is undermined and parodied at the same time as it is extended; its effects are re-realised and redeployed at the same time as the significances it would secure are interrogated. What the plays reveal then are the myriad possibilities of an art that is wholly particular to the form of theatre.

3. Metatheatrical representation and the model of estrangement: a survey of metatheatrical criticism

If this dissertation proposes that Shakespeare's dramatic art unfolds in distinction to the poetical models of estrangement and mimesis, it is then necessary to give these theorisations a fuller assessment than space has so far allowed. This will be taken up over the next two chapters. The shift in focus does not, however, mean that we are abandoning our previous discussion; the consideration of these different aesthetic models will demand a response, and this response will serve to clarify and extend our understanding of Shakespeare's metatheatrical representation. The current chapter considers the model of estrangement, approaching it though a survey that traces the historical development of metatheatrical criticism.

3.1 The theatrical reference model

While any historical survey of the criticism of Shakespearean metatheatre is bound to remark the prominence of the estrangement model, it is too obliged to make space for a second theoretical framework: the theatrical reference model. Developed in the 1960s, the approach offered a conceptual frame which determined in large part the responses to Shakespearean metatheatre throughout the next two decades. It is an interpretation of metatheatre which, as noted earlier, must be thought as emerging out of Anne Righter's seminal *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* from 1962. Righter's research into the earlier English dramatic traditions of the mystery and miracle plays together with the later morality plays leads her to argue that the central transition of early modern drama is toward a more self-contained play-world, one more heavily marked by stage illusion. Theatrical representation remains hybrid however, and this hybridity is secured by the use to which Shakespeare's puts the *theatrum mundi* metaphor. Righter's study interprets this commonplace metaphor in amplified and extended terms, seeing it as taking in tropes of acting, subterfuge, disguise, and as being further explored through the relationship that the audience is made to take to actor and stage. The metaphor functions self-reflexively, remarking how reality is represented in the plays, as well as highlighting the conventions and conditions which themselves determine the performance. Righter reads this arrangement as serving to reveal Shakespeare's shifting attitude to the theatre, arguing that his initial sense of the powerful possibilities of the medium yields later to a sardonic disillusionment.

As subsequent critics have taken this model up, its central focus has become dramatic form itself, with the *theatrum mundi* motif acting to provide such investigations their sustaining metaphor. Most often, theatrical dissimulation is read as pointing back to the falsity of all appearances. So even though Righter's original study argues for the

hybridity of representation, and remarks the innovative power of stage illusion, this becomes a far less central concern in later realisations of the theatrical-reference model. The critical interest in stage illusion is less concentrated on aspects of its play-world operations, and more focused on how such a presentation remarks its fictionality together with how it relates this dissimulation back to the world beyond the stage. Approached in this manner theatrical performance is most often taken as indicating the deceptive nature of all representation.

3.2 Brecht's model of estrangement

Brecht's model of dramatic estrangement derives from and feeds back into his development of epic theatre in the first half of the twentieth century. This new form arose as a response to the naturalistic drama of the day, an entertainment that Brecht dismisses as 'culinary'[1] and which he sees as perpetrating an aesthetic and ideological fraudulence. Theatre of this kind is dependent on the audience's empathic identification with the illusions it presents; an engagement which facilitates an emotional circuit whereby the audience's desires are reproduced in order that they might be represented as fulfilled. These though are merely 'psuedo-satisfactions', they operate on the spectators in the manner of a 'palliative', enabling them to bear the 'agonies, disappointments and impossible tasks' that a mercenary reality imposes on them.[2] What Brecht calls 'the general drug traffic conducted by bourgeois show business' works to stupefy its audience and in this way render it acquiescent in its own exploitation.[3]

In Brecht's drama the 'audience's tendency to plunge into illusions has to be checked by specific means'.[4] As such, epic theatre takes no pains to divert attention from its own constructedness, but rather, as Walter Benjamin observes in a remark that highlights the form's metatheatricality, 'incessantly derives a lively and productive consciousness from the fact that it is theatre'.[5] As Brecht determines it, in epic theatre form and content do not correspond, but must be realised as separate elements. This dissonance serves to disrupt the spectators' uncritical submission to stage illusion and instead engenders in them the *Verfremdungseffekt* – the best translation of which is probably 'the estrangement effect'. Estrangement need not of course be thought of as producing an attitude of cool indifference, and in epic drama, and as Benjamin's description implied, it can even make for an invigoration – as a bracing return to the real. Brecht writes:

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[1] *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 35.
[2] *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 41.
[3] *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 88.
[4] *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 136.
[5] *Understanding Brecht* (Verso, 2003), p. 8.

> The V-effect consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware, to one which one's attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected. What is obvious is in a certain sense made incomprehensible, but this is only in order that it may then be made all the easier to comprehend. Before familiarity can turn into awareness the familiar must be stripped of its inconspicuousness.[6]

Brecht held that in this alienated and distanced state, the audience is better placed to reflect intellectually and objectively on the line of argument that the play presents. And, according to the Marxist and dialectical configuration by which epic theatre was framed, this process of estrangement would in turn force the audience members into a confrontation with the 'real' conditions of their own ideological conscription.

Brecht himself sees epic theatre's *Verfremdungseffekt* as anticipated in the metatheatrical techniques of Elizabethan drama, and he claims Shakespeare as the outstanding example of this tendency, even going so far as to credit Shakespeare with achieving 'a theatre full of alienation effects'.[7] As W. E. Yuill observes, Brecht found in Shakespeare 'a model for the revolutionary style to which he aspired': that is, 'a stage with minimal technical resources, incapable of creating illusion or mesmeric "atmosphere", depending for its effects on word and gesture'.[8] The sense that Shakespeare's theatre conforms to the dramatic model advanced by Brecht is a perspective that criticism on Shakespearean metatheatre has time and again returned to, and when in 1985, the essay collection that brought cultural materialism to Shakespeare studies, *Political Shakespeare*, was published, space was made to explore the relationship between the two playwrights. In "How Brecht Read Shakespeare" Margot Heinemann revisits Yuill's line of argument, asserting that 'because of the particular nature of his theatre' Shakespeare's plays would have inevitably realised themselves within epic drama's model of estrangement:

> it was an informal theatre with a very mixed public, popular and educated, close to both 'beer-gardens and colleges' and using the language of both. Since illusion was impossible anyway, with daylight performances, boys playing girls and so on, it was easy to include direct address to the audience, narrative and commentary, and the action could move freely from one place or country to another on the unlocalised stage, so that remote as well as immediate causes could be represented and distant opponents brought into confrontation.[9]

In the context of my overall thesis it is worth underlining that both commentators imagine Shakespeare's stage representations as subject to the same categorical restrictions: the

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[6] *Brecht on Theatre*, pp. 143-144.

[7] The quotation occurs in "How Brecht Read Shakespeare" (*Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, Manchester University Press, 1985, pp. 202-230), p. 208, and is derived from the pages of the *Messingkauf Dialogues* found on pp. 57-64 in *Brecht on Theatre*.

[8] *The Art of Vandalism: Bertolt Brecht and the English drama: an inaugural lecture* (Bedford College, 1977), p. 8.

[9] "How Brecht Read Shakespeare", p. 208. Heinemann's quotation draws on Brecht's *Messingkauf Dialogues*, translated by John Willett (Methuen, 1977), p. 32.

creation of illusion, or even a 'mesmeric "atmosphere"' is considered 'impossible' on Shakespeare's stage. Moreover, this assumption appears to be consolidated as a critical given to the extent that in the quotations from both Yuill and Heinemann its statement requires nothing more than a breezy sub-clausal iteration.

We are obliged to note here that Brecht himself may not have always considered stage illusion in such totalizing terms. His pronouncements, reflecting as they do decades of practical and theoretical investigation, do not always follow a single consistent line. So while in Brecht's writings there are a number of passages which demand that aspects such as illusion, identification and empathy (and the last two are plainly dimensions of the former) be extirpated from drama, and although Shakespeare's plays are often valorized for their apparent realisation of just such an arrangement, there are here and there glimpses of a more rounded view of the earlier dramatist's aesthetic operation. For example, Brecht's discussion of the role of empathy in Shakespeare's plays in "A Little Private Tuition for my Friend Max Gorelik" cedes to it an occasional though not inefficacious operation: 'What a *contradictory, complicated* and intermittent operation it was in Shakespeare's theatre' (emphasis added).[10] Brecht's adjectives here suggesting not so much a minor element as they do an intricate and potentially impactful effect that the playwright has taken pains to direct. And I would argue that the German playwright's own drama is often prepared to take advantage of the effects that varied representational modality allows, something which Brecht himself sometimes remarks. For example, in "On Experimental Theatre" he writes:

> It must never be forgotten that non-Aristotelian theatre [realised, that is, according to Brecht's estrangement model] is only one form of theatre; it furthers specific social aims and has no claims to monopoly as far as the theatre in general is concerned. I myself can use both Aristotelian [which is to say, conventionally mimetic] and non-Aristotelian theatre in certain productions.[11]

However, as we have seen in the commentary of Yuill and Heinemann, and as we will observe time and again throughout this survey, critical approaches that consider Shakespeare's metatheatre through the estrangement model most often take Brecht's pronouncements regarding stage representation rather categorically. In these interpretations, stage illusion is understood as evacuated of its enchantment, and the spectators' attention is ineluctably redirected to the actual and immediate conditions of their own existence. Even in the more nuanced versions of the model the notion of metatheatre's antagonism to stage illusion prevails.

[10] *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 172.
[11] *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 161.

3.3 The impact of estrangement in the theatrical reference model

If Righter's 1962 book framed the theatrical reference model with ingenuity and insight, Lionel Abel's *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form*[12] from the following year, lent this impetus a lexis and brought with it the strong suggestion that the development warranted a structured theoretical complement. A number of scholars were encouraged to explore this version of 'metatheatre', with the result being that for the next two decades the theatrical reference model dominated investigations into Shakespeare's self-reflexive practices. While this focus meant that the model underwent certain innovations – most especially in the work of James L. Calderwood – as we will see, the extent to which these developments remain impacted by a conceptual structuring owing to Brecht is marked.

It is in the books *Shakespearean Metadrama* (1971), *Metadrama in Shakespeare's Henriad* (1979), and *To Be and Not to Be: Negation and Metadrama in Hamlet* (1983),[13] that James L. Calderwood gives the theatrical reference model of the 1960s what must be considered its most significant extension and elaboration. Calderwood observes that while the metaphor of life-as-drama is a frequent resource of the early modern dramatist, it is Shakespeare who transforms the trope into an epistemology of theatrical poetics, making it possible to read back into it a 'complex and coherent mode of dramatic meaning'.[14] Introducing his thesis, Calderwood remarks how 'dramatic art itself – its materials, its media of language and theatre, its generic forms and conventions, its relationship to truth and the social order – is a dominant Shakespearean theme, perhaps his most abiding subject'.[15] The theatrical form inclines itself to such an emphasis: its dual nature is foregrounded to a unusual degree and this means that all dramatic representation is marked by 'curious ambiguity', which Calderwood terms 'duplexity'. [16]

As the term indicates, Calderwood's model realises the literal and figurative in binary terms; the illusory depiction of the play-world is juxtaposed to the drama's metatheatrical remarking of its processes and construction, and this makes for a pair of more or less distinct representational modalities. Calderwood invokes one of the favourite concepts of natural realism, 'the willing suspension of disbelief', to argue for the audience's faith in the play-world: 'Shakespeare's audience probably suspended disbelief as willingly as any other, transforming … a stage full of costumed actors playing soldier into the battle of Shrewsbury Field, and Shakespearean blank verse into the speech of living and dying men'.[17] 'The play', Calderwood claims, 'will not work otherwise', adding, 'We cannot be simultaneously conscious of actor and character, of theatre and depicted life, of

[12] Hill and Wang, 1963.
[13] Published by University of Minnesota Press, University of California Press, Columbia University Press, respectively.
[14] *Shakespearean Metadrama*, p. 5.
[15] *Shakespearean Metadrama*, p. 5.
[16] *Shakespearean Metadrama*, p. 12.
[17] *Metadrama in Shakespeare's Henriad*, p. 79.

art and nature. We cannot be imaginatively involved in the immediate experience of the play and, at the same time, be intellectually detached from it'.[18] And spectators who engage with illusion according to the structures of experience that Calderwood ascribes to them, must it seems inevitably experience the disruptions of metatheatre in the manner of the *Verfremdungseffekt Hamlet*'s numerous 'instances of theatricalization', for example 'serve as Brechtian alienation devices to shatter our illusion of Danish reality and cut the cord of our imaginative life there'.[19]

The influence of the Brechtian model is apparent; the aspects of the literal and figurative are still conceived in oppositional terms, and metatheatre's operation acts to effect estrangement. And this influence persists in the work of scholars who take up the theatrical reference model in the wake of Calderwood's research. Richard Hornby's *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception* (1986),[20] for example, offers a survey of metatheatre that goes from Sophocles to Harold Pinter, yet the broad sweep does nothing to dissuade the author from viewing metatheatre as producing in its audience an 'unease' which will often explicate itself in 'the most exquisite of aesthetic insights, which theorists have spoken of as "estrangement" or "alienation"'.[21] And five years later, in Judd D. Hubert's *Metadrama: The Example of Shakespeare*,[22] we see that metatheatre is still conceived as a device that illuminates the essential incompatibility that abides at the heart of the artwork's duality: devices of metatheatre 'transfer or transport elements involving content to performative schemes ascribable to the medium",[23] and it follows that 'a constant performative thrust informs and subverts the various significta of the script'.[24]

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[18] *Metadrama in Shakespeare's Henriad*, p. 79. The sentence in full reads 'We cannot be imaginatively involved in the immediate experience of the play and, at the same time, be intellectually detached from it, playgoer and critic at once, any more than we can register Hamlet's feeling while deliberating on Gielgud's competence in the role, or take in the meaning of a soliloquy while parsing the lines'. I repeat it here, firstly, because Calderwood's words demonstrate rather precisely the shared assumptions that inform the conceptualization of representational economy in, for all their apparent differences, models of both mimetic illusion and of metatheatrical disenchantment: the notion that the depiction of a fictional world is only capable of gratifying its spectators for as long as they delude themselves as to its actual nature. And secondly, because this contrasts almost diametrically with my own sense of artistic engagement, whereby the playgoer never forfeits her critical awareness. The familiarity of Calderwood's position, inspired as it is by a conventionalized reformulation of Coleridge's concept of 'a willing suspension of disbelief', can distract us from recognizing just how untenable a perspective it is. To imagine that we engage with art's fictions without a simultaneous critical consciousness of the nature of our engagement is a conceptualization that quickly falls apart. Our critical evaluation is coeval and abiding; however invested in art's depictions we might be, our awareness of our own engagement with the art object is never wholly forfeited. We always have a sense of how successful the work is, or more naively, the degree to which we are enjoying it. It is the quality that allows one – resorting here to personal experience but keeping to the subject of our discussion – to walk out of *Shakespeare in Love* after five minutes, or to discard *Interred with Their Bones* before the second chapter.

[19] *To Be and Not to Be: Negation and Metadrama in Hamlet*, p. 167.

[20] Associated University Presse.

[21] *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception*, p. 32.

[22] University of Nebraska Press, 1991.

[23] *Metatheater: The Example of Shakespeare*, p. 1.

[24] *Metatheater: The Example of Shakespeare*, p. 7.

3.4 Metatheatre's critical consolidation

The research of the seventies and eighties served to establish metatheatre's critical relevance, and today it is one of the given analytical tools by which scholars approach Shakespeare's drama. 'Metatheatre' as Sarah Dustagheer and Harry Newman underline in the introduction they provide to the 2018 issue of the *Shakespeare Bulletin* devoted to the subject, 'has become an absent-present concept in a field where early modern theater is seen as intrinsically self-reflexive, always concerned in some way with "the idea of the play"'.[25] Critical investigations of this type most often interpret metatheatre through the theatrical-reference model,[26] and unfold its signification through the simple transposition that the *theatrum mundi* affords. And as the language of the last two sentences implies, metatheatre's critical consolidation has come at a certain cost. Dustagheer and Newman point out that the semantic ambiguity and flexibility that attaches itself to the concept means that 'once-fresh terms such as "metatheatre," "metadrama," "reflexivity," "self-referentiality," and "the play-within-a-play" … are too often used with a lack of self-consciousness'.[27] In these applications of the theatrical reference model, metatheatre is made into a conventional and rather modest critical tool; the breadth of its incorporation less a testament to its utility than to the fact that it will behave. It yields no radical dividends that might otherwise compel these differently situated readings to reposition themselves but lends itself instead to an application that is localized and facilitating. And this, for the most part, seems the theatrical reference model's critical fate. Only a handful of studies given over to metatheatre have since the 1980s made use of it, and in present-day critical discussions that are focused on metatheatre it is rarely allocated much, if any, space.[28]

The estrangement model of metatheatre has, as remarked, fared better. While in recent times critical engagement with this model also most often occurs when it functions as an element in a more broadly framed research area, it is rarely subsumed in the way that the theatrical-reference model of metatheatre is. In many of these studies the estrangement model acts to determine, or at least to significantly impact, the theoretical framework by which these investigations are conducted. In turn, the model itself often undergoes extension and refinement. What must be thought of as the most significant of these developments has come from fields that locate early modern metatheatre within the historical and material conditions of its original performance: in research designed to illuminate the immediate conditions and contexts that informed early modern performances, as well as in the work of new historicism and cultural materialism. In these approaches to metatheatre, the traces of Brecht's original formulation of what we have

[25] "Metatheatre and Early Modern Drama" (*Shakespeare Bulletin*, vol. 36, no. 1, Spring 2018, pp. 3-18), p. 10.
[26] As Dustagheer and Newman also observe. They note that in the various fields of Shakespeare studies that incorporate metatheatre into their interpretations and which mostly employ metatheatre as 'a means to another end', 'Abel, Righter and Calderwood continue to dominate' ("Metatheatre and Early Modern Drama", pp. 9-10).
[27] "Metatheatre and Early Modern Drama", p. 7.
[28] See, for example, the lack of attention accorded it in the essays in the aforementioned edition of the *Shakespeare Bulletin*.

termed the estrangement model are more heavily marked than previous, and oftentimes the critics that make use of the model will pursue the broader ideological effects that Brecht argued derived from the audience's estrangement.

3.5 Shakespeare's 'theatre of estrangement'

As we saw earlier reflected in the comments of Yuill and Heinemann, there is a critical perspective that understands the conditions of Shakespeare's theatre as precluding any successful realisation of illusion, and which, following from this, conceives of performance as unfolding according to the estrangement model. It is a view often propounded – and usually in terms just as unilateral as the earlier quotations from Yuill and Heinemann would indicate – by scholars committed to recovering aspects of early modern theatre practice. Andrew Gurr, a pioneer in this field, is often happy to conceive of Shakespeare's work as unfolding in a 'theatre of estrangement', and his essay "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", collected in his *Shakespeare's Workplace* from 2017, offers a rather categorical inflexion of the idea.[29] The essay sees metatheatricality as operating to direct attention back to the duplicities of stage representation itself, and in this way producing a disengaged audience. Gurr argues that Shakespeare's use of metatheatre is more extensive and urgent than criticism most usually allows, and that it is only through an appreciation of metatheatre's impact that Shakespeare's plays can be properly experienced. He writes that '[w]e need to heighten our consciousness about the places where the early players' sharp use of metatheatricality impacted on their performances, and how deeply they might have affected the original staging practices and therefore our reading of the plays'.[30] Understood according to Gurr's approach, metatheatre becomes a determining and all pervasive structure in Shakespeare's drama, something underlined in his comments on *Hamlet*, where he asserts 'the play's insistence that the whole performance was anti-realist, metatheatre, a play within a play'.[31]

In fact, as early modern drama is configured by Gurr, its representations cannot function otherwise. For Gurr, as for Yuill and Heinemann, the playing conditions and conventions in place in the early modern theatre compel an 'openly unrealistic' staging.[32] Gurr argues that features such as natural light and the almost bare apron-stage, together with soliloquys, asides, and the speaking of verse cannot help but function so as to undermine the production of artistic illusion.[33] Furthermore, the early-moderns that Gurr posits have been socially conditioned so that any representational counterfeiting engenders

[29] Cambridge University Press. Gurr is less categorical in many of his other writings. See, for example, the previously mentioned "Elizabethan Action".
[30] "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", p. 166.
[31] "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", p. 166.
[32] "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", p. 145.
[33] "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", p. 145.

in them a powerful apprehension – and in the instance of theatrical representation this consciousness is further intensified. As Gurr puts it, '[t]he association of playing and deception with evil is basic to Elizabethan thinking'.[34] In such a context metatheatre operates to defuse the dangerous allurements that theatrical illusion might otherwise realise – and to make his point, Gurr returns to the familiar model: 'Like the alienation of audience from the emotions of the actors in Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt,* the obviousness of the pretence could save the participants from the fear of being really deceived'.[35]

The influence of the estrangement model is even more pronounced when it comes to the research of new historicism. Most models of metatheatrical criticism which make use of Brecht's notion of epic theatre, in their borrowing of the concept of estrangement tend to extract it from, or at least shift its focus away from, the ideological structures within which Brecht's original model configured it. By contrast, new historicism's approach to early modern drama operates at all times to locate performance within the anatomy of state power. This concern is reflected in new historicism's version of metatheatre, which replaces the focus on artistic form that was often the primary concern of Calderwood and the critical line that can be thought as emerging from his work with what became called 'theatricality'. The concept of 'theatricality' derives from critical theory's uncovering of the role that performance played in constituting what had previously been considered unambiguously real. In Laura Levine's words, 'as New Historicism has broadened its scope' it has 'in the process, extended the number of things … existing only in the performance of themselves'.[36] Drama's particular theatricality, in that it represents a self-conscious marking of such performance, becomes at once the instantiation and exploration of 'performance'.

This produces a shift in status accorded to metatheatricality, and this is outlined by Louis Montrose in *The Purpose of Playing* (1996),[37] a work which re-examines Elizabethan politics of representation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

> That the play foregrounds the dramatic medium and the poetic process does not necessarily imply a claim for the self-referentiality of the literary object or the aesthetic act. I suggest, instead, that it manifests a dialectic between Shakespeare's profession and his society, a dialectic between the theatre and the world … The much noted metatheatricality of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is no more apparent and striking than in [the] process by which the play assimilates its own dramatic effects. When I suggest that the play simultaneously subsumes and projects the conditions of its own possibility … I am attempting to locate it more precisely in the ideological matrix of its original production. [38]

[34] "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", p. 150.
[35] "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", p. 158.
[36] *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminization, 1579-1642* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 7.
[37] University of Chicago Press.
[38] *The Purpose of Playing*, pp. 204-205.

Earlier in the same book Montrose describes how theatricality might be conceived:

> the source of this theatre's power was its very *theatricality*, and in the implications of theatricality for the construction and manipulation of social rules and interpersonal relations – implications touching fundamental epistemological and sociopolitical issues of causality and legitimacy, identity and agency. … The theatrical power that I am seeking to describe did not lie in the explicit advocacy of specific political positions but rather in the implicit but pervasive suggestion – inhering in the basic modalities of theatrical representation and dramatic conflict – that all such positions are relationally located and circumstantially shaped and that they are motivated by the passions and interests of their advocates.[39]

In this way Montrose argues that the relationship between the Elizabethan state and its theatre was 'complex and equivocal', that it 'was not constant but was subject to numerous shifts'[40] and that theatre's 'ideological positioning' was itself 'ambiguous, diverse and contradictory'.[41] It is an emphasis that complicates the more familiar new historicist account of an early modern theatre obliged to unfold according to the subversion-containment concept. Most closely associated with the work of Stephen Greenblatt, and particularly with the rather apodictic form of the model set out in the earliest versions of his "Invisible Bullets" essay,[42] the subversion-containment theory refers to the 'capacity of the dominant order to generate subversion so as to use it to its own ends'[43]. Montrose, however, makes explicit that the impact that he attaches to theatricality would not necessarily be subject to such confines: 'I wish to resist arguments that bind the practices of the professional Elizabethan theatre to the practices of the Elizabethan state and that bind Shakespearean theatricality to political absolutism'.[44]

As implied above, Greenblatt's work does not always take such an absolute line, and one of the most significant contributions to the new historicist understanding of theatricality can be found in his essay "Shakespeare and the Exorcists".[45] The piece looks at *King Lear*'s borrowings from Samuel Harsnett's *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* so as to explore the larger cultural text generated by the intertextual exchange and to make apparent the interests which the borrowing serves. While the reading remains ordered within the subversion-containment model, the essay presents a more qualified

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[39] *The Purpose of Playing*, pp. 104-105.
[40] *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 99.
[41] *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 100. Montrose discusses the subversion-containment model at some length in the book's prologue, pp. 8-12, and later on pp. 78-79.
[42] The essay was originally appeared in 1981 and was republished three times in successively revised and enlarged versions between then and 1988. *Glyph* 8 (1981), pp. 40-61; *Political Shakespeare: New essays in Cultural Materialism*, pp. 18-47; and in Greenblatt's *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (University of California Press, 1988), pp. 21-65.
[43] Montrose's description from *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 8.
[44] *The Purpose of Playing*, p. 78.
[45] *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, edited by Geoffrey H. Hartman, and Patricia Parker (Routledge, 1985), pp. 163-186.

version of the concept than that proposed in "Invisible Bullets". Theatricality is still characterized as servicing power, but at the same time it can be read as lending to the performance space a qualified autonomy – and even granting it a certain liberty.

Harsnett's text attempts to demystify the charismatic appeal enjoyed by the Catholic ritual of exorcism by remarking 'exorcism's cunning concealment of its own theatricality' and demonstrating how its practices echo the 'falsity, tawdriness, and rhetorical manipulation' of early modern drama.[46] The theatre, as Greenblatt characterizes it, is 'marked off openly from all other forms and ceremonies of public life precisely by virtue of its freely acknowledged fictionality';[47] the play-world it presents is 'clearly designated as a fiction' and the performance itself is 'bounded by the institutional signs of fictionality'.[48] In that drama offers its dissimulations theatrical foregrounding, it becomes for Harsnett the perfect means by which he can remark the fraudulence and essential untruth of Catholic exorcism. Greenblatt gives an account of the negotiation that arises: 'The official church dismantles and cedes to the players the powerful mechanisms of an unwanted and dangerous charisma; in return, the players confirm the charge that those mechanisms are theatrical and hence illusory'.[49]

Yet while theatricality underwrites power, it can also be understood as deconstructing it. The re-presentations that theatricality affords effects a series of 'institutional exchanges'; when the extra-artistic world is made over into performed fiction its 'signs' are 'renegotiated and shifted'.[50] The results that Greenblatt remarks as derived from this process demonstrate the continued influence of the estrangement model:

> Harsnett's arguments are alienated from themselves when they make their appearance on the Shakespearean stage. This alienation may be set in the context of a more general observation: the closer Shakespeare seems to a source, the more faithfully he reproduces it on stage, the more devastating and decisive his transformation of it …What happens, as we have already begun to see, is that the official position is *emptied out,* even as it is loyally confirmed.

And this 'emptying out', as Greenblatt underlines, 'bears a certain resemblance to Brecht's "alienation effect"'. [51]

Greenblatt's description of the theatre makes clear the complex relationship that he sees between the ideological matrix in which Shakespeare's plays are given to operate and their theatricalized re-presentation of that matrix:

[46] "Shakespeare and the Exorcists", p. 170.
[47] "Shakespeare and the Exorcists", p. 173.
[48] "Shakespeare and the Exorcists", p. 177.
[49] "Shakespeare and the Exorcists", p. 176.
[50] "Shakespeare and the Exorcists", p. 171.
[51] "Shakespeare and the Exorcists", pp. 177-181.

> the theater, a fraudulent institution that never pretends to be anything but fraudulent, an institution that calls forth what is not, that signifies absence, that transforms the literal into the metaphorical, that evacuates everything it represents. By doing so the theater makes for itself the hollow round space within which it survives … Shakespeare's theater has outlived the institutions to which it paid homage, has lived to pay homage to other, competing institutions which in turn it seems to represent and empty out.[52]

And for Greenblatt, it is the theatre's particular location within this ideological matrix rather than any self-aware aesthetic strategies which grants it this discrete operation: 'This complex, limited institutional independence, this marginal and impure autonomy, arises not out of an inherent, formal self-reflexiveness but out of the ideological matrix in which Shakespeare's theater is created and recreated'.[53]

The ideological dimensions of the estrangement model of metatheatre also concerns several critics associated with new historicism's transatlantic cousin, cultural materialism. According to the Marxist analysis which underpins cultural materialism, the artwork, being as it is a cultural-historical product, cannot help but reify the ideological dissonance of the society from which it emerges. Consequently, many cultural materialists find metatheatre's foregrounding of the disjunctures of form and content fertile territory, and they often conduct their explorations into early modern drama according to the model that Brecht originated.[54] Cultural materialism's demand for a politically invested criticism finds natural correspondence in the ideological agenda by which the theory of epic theatre is configured, and of all the critical lines that make use of the estrangement model, it is cultural materialism which can be said to adhere most fully to Brecht's original Marxist dialectic.

This is an attitude that one of the founding talents of cultural materialism, Jonathan Dollimore, makes explicit in his 1984 *Radical Tragedy*,[55] where he writes of the need to approach early modern drama via a 'critical perspective deriving from Brecht'.[56] Dollimore reminds us that Brecht advocates a drama reflecting a reality – that is, a society – 'full of conflict, contradiction and ideological misrepresentation'.[57] And when Brecht turns to early modern drama he sees that this element of conflict functions as a central structural element; it is realised in a way that is 'complex, shifting, largely impersonal, never soluble'.[58] Representation in early modern drama is fractured, and it is in the

[52] "Shakespeare and the Exorcists", p. 182.
[53] "Shakespeare and the Exorcists", p. 182.
[54] Of course, some cultural materialists elect to ignore metatheatre, altogether. If the artwork is already seen as inherently dissonant, then metatheatre's self-reflective marking of its internal contradictions is therefore superfluous – or, at worse, such reference may even perhaps represent an ideological subterfuge whereby an open declaration of these discontinuities works to smooth them.
[55] University of Chicago Press.
[56] *Radical Tragedy*, p. 63.
[57] *Radical Tragedy*, p. 65.
[58] These words come from *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 161, they are quoted in *Radical Tragedy*, p. 67.

disconnectedness of Shakespeare's plays that 'one recognizes the disconnectedness of human fate',[59] and from which, quite naturally, estrangement follows.

Dollimore demonstrates the extent that the representations of the early modern stage are rendered discordant and dislocated through an analysis of the markedly metatheatrical drama of John Webster. In his reading of *The White Devil* 2.2 Dollimore remarks how various aspects of the action are rendered in a way that is 'bizarre', 'gratuitous and indeed incongruous', and he underlines the scene's 'unnaturalness' as well as its 'sudden alteration and deliberate contrast of mood'. The depiction of the court is described as 'lacking in emotional coherence, unity of purpose or predictability – in a word discontinuous'.[60] Similar effects are remarked when Dollimore turns to Bosola's mistaken killing of Antonio in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*, and the estrangement that derives from such a mannered presentation is made clear: 'Indeed from a Brechtian perspective what is most relevant is the incongruity … One effect of that incongruity is to check the expected climax … Checked expectation, not enthrallment or empathy, is the result and we are thereby provoked to dwell critically'. Metatheatre's self-reflexive marking is seen, in line with Brecht's original formulation of the estrangement model, as producing a critical consciousness: 'The artifice of the scene …is central. The drawing attention to the play as play … is a kind of estrangement effect, an invitation to engage critically with an issue rather than accept a transparent truth'.[61] Dollimore claims that the incessant attention that metatheatre gives to its own dramatic structures effects an estrangement whereby 'the "obvious" is made in a certain sense incomprehensible but only in order that it be made the easier to comprehend – that is, it is properly understood for the first time'. And, as Dollimore underlines, 'to defamiliarize the "obvious"' is 'a crucial step towards ideological demystification'.[62]

The imaginative and effective arguments that derived from the estrangement model of metatheatre made by critics working within the fields of cultural materialism and new historicism as well as by researchers like Gurr, working to elucidate the original performance conditions, have proved impactful. Even later and more formalist-inclined work on Shakespearean metatheatre still tends to view dramatic representation according to the terms established by the estrangement model, as in, for example, the research of Jenn Stephenson. Stephenson is one of the few scholars from the 2000s to give extended and concentrated study to metatheatre, with Shakespearean metatheatre figuring prominently in her writing. Her work draws on Polish theatre scholar Slawomir Świontek's research into the intrinsic duality of dramatic dialogue.[63] Świontek sees dialogue as unfolding along either the stage-stage axis, whereby characters interact with each other, or the stage-house

[59] This remark comes from Brecht's *Schriften Zum Theatre,* vol. 7 (Suhrkamp Verlag, 1964). It is quoted by Dollimore on p. 67.
[60] *Radical Tragedy,* p. 62.
[61] *Radical Tragedy,* p. 66.
[62] *Radical Tragedy,* p. 64.
[63] In *Dialog–Dramat–Metateatr: Z problemów teorii tekstu dramatycznego.* (Oficyna Wydawnicza Errata, 1999).

axis, whereby characters address the audience. In "Singular Impressions: Meta-theatre on Renaissance Celebrities and Corpses" (2007),[64] Stephenson proposes a concept of metatheatre that extends Świontek's theory so that it is conceived as marking up the ontological 'duplexity' (Stephenson borrows the term from Calderwood) not merely of speech, but also of set, props, costumes, lighting, bodies and gestures. This makes for a theoretical model which prioritizes the geography of the theatre and its materiality, together with the temporal nature of the performance and the perceptual processes of spectatorship, and which at the same time understands all of these elements as innately self-reflexive:. As Stephenson writes in "Meta-enunciative Properties of Dramatic Dialogue: A New View of Metatheatre and the Work of Sławomir Świontek" (2006),[65] drama is marked by a 'particular fluid characteristic of identity in the spatial matrix between the actual "here" of reception and the fictional "not-here" of execution'.[66] Instances of metatheatre are thought of as activating a 'phenomenological shift in perceiving consciousness', with the 'shift' being understood as 'a change of flow, rather than an act of violence shattering the theatrical illusion'.[67]

Describing the movement between fictional and actual planes in terms of fluidity and flow might seem to suggest that the effects of metatheatre do not negate the presence enjoyed by the fictional play-world representations, that dramatic representation need not be restricted to either the disjunctures that cultural materialism sees metatheatre as producing, or confined to the kind of anti-illusionistic effect that must inevitably derive from other instantiations of the Brechtian model. Yet Stephenson's conceptualization of metatheatrical representation as characterized by 'fluidity' and 'flow' remains encompassed within the binary structuring that informs Świontek's dialogical model, and which purposes a physical and spatial separation between the stage's fictional 'not here' and the audience's actual 'here'. This framework leads Stephenson to understand the impact that performance conditions have on illusion in terms remarkably similar to those proposed by Heinemann and Gurr. Stephenson argues that 'daylight performances, the bare minimally adorned stage and boy-players in female parts, demanded significant interpretive work on the part of the audience to manage the relationship between the actual … and the fictional', and the result is that 'the perceptual gap between the fictional and the actual is wide and inescapable'.[68] We see once more that we return to a conception of metatheatre which estranges the audience from the drama's depiction of its play-world.

This survey makes apparent that what must be considered the most extended and influential theorisations of metatheatre – and regardless of whether they make use of the theatrical reference model of metatheatre of the estrangement model – are united by the belief that the relationship between metatheatre and representation is an antagonistic one, with the various theories differing really only in the particular cast they supply to this

[64] *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 137-153.
[65] *The Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, vol. 21, no. 1: Fall 2006, pp. 115-128.
[66] "Meta-enunciative Properties of Dramatic Dialogue", p. 118.
[67] "Meta-enunciative Properties of Dramatic Dialogue", p. 118.
[68] "Singular Impressions: Meta-theatre on Renaissance Celebrities and Corpses", p. 138.

antagonism. Most often this relationship is viewed in rather unilateral fashion; metatheatre reveals stage illusion as false, and in doing so, evacuates it of all enchantment. At their most categorical these theories assert the impossibility of the audience's investment in a play-world illusion that is metatheatrically marked, yet even in more nuanced versions, metatheatre still acts to radically attenuate the audience's engagement in the fictional play-world.

The most powerfully theorized versions of the estrangement model offer formulations which assert that the performance conditions and conventions prevent the realisation of a successful representational illusion (as in, for example, Gurr), or which demonstrate that dramatic success hinges not on illusion but on illusion's puncturing (as Dollimore's reading makes apparent), or else they remark how metatheatre's highlighting of the performative uncovers, at the same time as it enacts, the mechanics of the spectacle – an operation which, once more, acts to engender illusion's dismissal, or which limits artistic representation merely to displays of power (as is the case with the research of new historicists like Greenblatt and Montrose). And while the theatrical reference model is formulated in such a way that it is obliged to attend to dramatic form and to invest in art's duality, an arrangement that would in itself seem to offer alternative to the unilateralism by which the estrangement model necessarily configures metatheatre's effects, as we have seen, this attention often fails to extend beyond the mere re-rehearsal of art's double-nature. When drama's representational duality is further pursued, as in, for example, the work of Calderwood and Stephenson, this duality is often configured as a binary and oppositional relationship. In such a formulation, metatheatre works in one direction only, its remarking of drama's artifice operating inevitably to undo the play-world's integrity and to sever the audience's connection to it.

3.6 In response to the estrangement model

If I am to make a case that Shakespeare's stage fictions enjoy a power and impact that is not wholly undermined by the audience's awareness of their constructedness then spme of what are the key premises of the estrangement model must be contested. Let us begin with the critical assertion, rehearsed in the arguments of Heinemann, Yuill, and Gurr, and informing and underwriting the notion of duplexity in the work of Calderwood and Stephenson, that the conditions of Shakespeare's theatre, with 'daylight performances, boys playing girls and so on', meant that 'illusion was impossible'.[69] This is a position which seems not only to assume that for a representation to engage it must realise itself as mimetic reproduction (something implied in Gurr anachronistically labelling the style of

[69] Margot Heinemann, "How Brecht Read Shakespeare", p. 208.

early modern theatre 'anti-realism'[70]) but which makes of illusion a vitreous and brittle thing, fated to shatter in the revelation of the actual.

It is also a position which seems to underestimate what Catherine Belsey terms the early modern audience's 'eagerness to be beguiled'.[71] Nearly any art form, broken down to its component means and conventions, would seem to evince an incongruous relationship to anything like a convincing reproduction of reality. Film, a medium almost exclusively given over to depictions of high realism, cedes to the viewer multiple and often impossible viewpoints, and in doing has its screen figures enlarge and shrink. Edits and cuts serve to thrust audiences across impossible gaps of time and space – a narrative device so 'unreal', that when it is made use of in Act 4 of *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare elects to play it as farce. But these features do not function as an obstacle to the audience's engagement with filmic representation – most usually in fact they intensify it. Imagination, once it has made itself familiar with the particular configuration by which a medium is realised, seems happy to collude with any of the unrealities presented it.

Certainly, it is true that in the early modern theatre the actual conditions by which representation is realised lie close to illusion's surface. And this means that the playwright can, in opting to frame the actual and illusory as binary and oppositional, foreground the former so as to disrupt the latter. But this need not be the only effect derived, nor the only way by which the actual and fictional are made to relate. As I have argued earlier, it is equally possible that the proximal relationship that the two modalities enjoy could be thought as making possible a mutual interaction, coordinated through complicity and adulteration. Let us, for example, re-examine the 'impossible illusion' of 'boys playing girls' in light of the already quoted letter of Henry Jackson concerning how the Jacobean actor, to revert here to the revealing ambiguities of Nashe's formulation, 'represents the person' of Desdemona: 'although she always acted her whole part supremely well, yet when she was killed she was even more moving, for when she fell back upon the bed she implored the pity of the spectators by her very face'. We can observe that the attention to the actual and performed nature of the part does not invalidate, or even work in opposition to, its dramatic appeal. Rather, the stage figure is experienced as a fluid configuration, conceptually compound to the extent that the experience of the stage action serves to mingle not only the actor with his part, but also actual gender with its performed opposite ('Note too,' writes Anthony B. Dawson, 'that the actor's vitality is invoked even though the represented character is dead', a remark which suggests that such a theatre makes no final and unadulterated representational positions available[72]). Jackson's words warn us against an understanding that sees stage fictions as vaporised when their occurrence in the actual is remarked, and argues instead for an appreciation of early modern drama in which play-world illusion is not so easily overthrown – in fact, one in which the representations

[70] "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", p. 145.
[71] "Invocation of the Visual Image: Ekphrasis in *Lucrece* and Beyond" (*Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol, 63, no. 2, Summer 2012, pp. 175-198), p. 189.
[72] "Performance and Participation: Desdemona, Foucault, and the Actor's Body" (*Shakespeare, Theory and Performance,* edited by James C. Bulman (Routledge, 2003), pp. 31-48), p. 37.

of the stage are just as likely to subvert the plays' self-referential remarking of the actual as the other way around.

A similar failure to properly account for the centrality and power of play-world illusion can be found in the theories of metatheatre that follow more closely the ideological impetus of the estrangement model as originally formed. This critical line is perhaps best epitomized in the early work of Dollimore, and to better examine it we will return to his discussion of Webster. As noted earlier, the Dollimore of *Radical Tragedy* understands metatheatre as a force of dislocation and disjuncture, acting to bring about dissonance and disengagement. Play-references which highlight the constructed nature of the stage representation realise 'a kind of estrangement effect, an invitation to engage critically with an issue rather than accept a transparent truth; in Raymond Williams' characterization of the process, a "falsely involving, uncritical reception' is checked and replaced with 'an involved, critical inspection"'.[73] As we have seen, Dollimore illustrates his critical perspective through a reading of Bosola's mistaken killing of Antonio in *The Duchess of Malfi*. He begins by observing that

> the episode is not intrinsically implausible: the play makes it clear that it is night and that Antonio and Bosola are in darkness (the servant exits at line 42 to fetch a lanthorn) – and so on. In this connection John Russel Brown and Lois Porter have suggested that Webster may have been exploiting the partially darkened stage made possible by the enclosed Blackfriars theatre.

But he goes on to remark that,

> from a Brechtian perspective, what is most relevant is the incongruity between Bosola's measured meditation and the sudden disruption of the moment – one *sharpened* by the actual or implied transition from darkness to light (the servant returns with the lanthorn- 5.4.48). One effect of that incongruity is to check the expected climax: in fact, the episode is a kind of anti-climax: both revenge and poetic justice are anticipated but suddenly denied through the disclosure that it is Antonio not Ferdinand who lies dying. Checked expectations, not enthrallment or empathy, is the result.[74]

While Dollimore argues that the scene estranges the play's spectators, we might point out the extent that his own analysis reveals this affect is made possible and is predicated on the preliminary and ongoing operations of illusion. For the effects of – and here I revert to a handful of terms by which this line of criticism constructs its position – *dislocation, discontinuity,* and *demystification* can only be brought about by an initial relationship with the work that is, to some extent or other, *located, continuous,* and even *mystified* – that is to say, through an experience of the play which is only had through an imaginative investment in its illusions. As Dollimore remarks, the episode of Antonio's

[73] *Radical Tragedy*, pp. 66-67. The quotation from Raymond Williams comes from *The Long Revolution* (Fontana, 1976), p. 385.
[74] *Radical Tragedy*, p. 66.

stabbing, outrageous though it is, is nonetheless lent a fictional plausibility – and plausibility must rightly be considered a species of illusion-making. Furthermore, the affect that the outcome of Bosola's scheme delivers can only be felt as an 'incongruity' when a preceding illusion (or at the least, an expectation) of congruity has been established, and such an affect can only be '*sharpened*' when the audience has invested itself in play-world events. In the same vein again, in order that an anti-climax is brought about, the movement by which 'revenge and poetic justice are anticipated' must have its momentum. And finally, when Dollimore argues that the scene produces 'Checked expectations, not enthrallment or empathy', it must be observed that expectations can only be checked if the audience is already sufficiently engaged (– and if instead of 'engaged' I had made recourse to Belsey's 'beguiled' that would, I feel, be fair description to what some portion of the spectators must be feeling, or, to go further, a fair description of what each spectator must be feeling in some portion).

While the demystifications of new historicism's theatricality do not operate according to such a pronounced binary, theatricality still understands the plays' self-reflexive indication as limiting the extent of the play-worlds' imaginative appeal. The theatre remarks the fictional and fraudulent status it enjoys, and in doing so, dramatic representation engenders a dislocation between the theatrical signifier and the real-world signified. This allows theatricality to demonstrate the performed nature of discourses which would otherwise present themselves as authentic and absolute – yet at the same time, it allows the theatre to re-realise the performance of these discourses and to reify their power. This is a conception of self-reflexive dramatic representation which has impacted a number of subsequent approaches to Shakespeare, including, of course, my own. Yet there is a key difference. I do, somewhat similarly, see the plays' representational economy as acting simultaneously to assert and interrogate itself, yet I would argue that while the interrogation underlines that the representation as false and acts to empty it out, the effects that such a representation might bring about remain to be had. The spectators know very well the play-world is a false and empty thing, only, having come to the theatre, they have agreed to allow these fictions to make their claims on them. Where my analysis is prepared to understand the redeployment of these borrowed effects as not only affording but amplifying the range and appeal of play-world fictions, for new historicism, such a representational economy remains determined by the ideological matrix from which it is presumed to emerge, and the claims of the fictional world are confined to elaborating the power structures within which they unfold.

It is a limitation already remarked in one of the earliest critical responses to new historicism. Anthony B. Dawson, in his 1988 article, "*Measure for Measure*, New Historicism, and Theatrical Power" makes the point that 'just because power defines itself theatrically doesn't necessarily mean that every theatrical act is a part of power'.[75] And he

[75] "*Measure for Measure*, New Historicism, and Theatrical Power" (*Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 3, Autumn, 1988, pp. 328-341), p. 334.

points to moments in new historicist analysis where 'a "nostalgia" for the subject and his/her freedom, however inconsistently, breaks through', arguing that these 'reveal a hidden desire or lack in the theory itself, one that should … be given some theoretical weight (especially since one way of appeasing such desire would be to go the theatre)'.[76]

This is a criticism elaborated by Harry S. Turner in his "Towards a New Theatricality?".[77] Turner argues that the theatricality of new historicism, as well as cultural materialism, is marked by a failure to 'consider the formal aspects of theatre in a sustained way'. Terms like "playing" or "spectacle" are made over into 'generalized metaphors for royal power and display, useful for analyzing gender relations but rarely grounded in a detailed analysis of precisely how the stages operated'. An analysis of the stage's operation demands that we recognize that while the theatre is a material and historical phenomenon it is also 'intellectual, mental, fictional, verbal, signified, abstract' and these aspects are not always and absolutely subject to ideological determination.[78]

In responding to these different instantiations of the estrangement model, then, it seems that a comprehensive understanding of metatheatre can only be had by a reincorporation of that which the estrangement model in its different versions either lacks, ignores or refutes. Central to this understanding is the acknowledgement that play-world illusion, even as it is self-reflectively remarked as such, still powerfully engages its audience's imaginations. Certainly, metatheatre can be utilized for purposes of dislocation and estrangement, but when it does so, we observe that this is a contingent rather than absolute effect. It does not exceed the art object that is the play but is itself one of the play's processes. For while metatheatre might often produce a distancing, this effect does not ever completely outdistance the claims that stage fiction makes on the spectator's imagination. The estrangement which the audience experiences is relational, coordinated by and sustained through the play's ongoing processes of representation. When metatheatre functions to estrange, this does not then represent a final position, neither can it be thought of as severing itself from the art-object. And, coordinated in this way, it becomes clear that metatheatre is not, as it is even in the rather subtle realisation given to aesthetic self-reflexivity in new historicism's theatricality, confined to effects of dramatic estrangement. Metatheatre is understood as an aspect of drama's unfolding, an unfolding that makes use of the possibilities of both the figurative and literal, but which avoids coming to rest in either. Which is to say, an adulterated process where illusion and a sense of illusion's falsity are mingled and in which neither impulse is allowed to make itself wholly distinct from the other, an unfolding in which dramatic art is acknowledged as both fraudulent and enchanting.

[76] "*Measure for Measure*, New Historicism, and Theatrical Power", p. 340.
[77] "Towards a New Theatricality?" (*Renaissance Drama* New Series, vol. 40: *What is Renaissance Drama?*, pp. 29-35).
[78] "Towards a New Theatricality?", pp. 32-33.

4. The poetics of mimesis and the early modern theatre

4.1 Mimesis in the early modern era

The remarks by which the previous section concludes are not intended as a dismissal of the discontinuities that metatheatre allows but are an attempt to qualify this impulse and place its operation in a broader representational context. Neither is this to contest the understanding that metatheatre serves to reject the poetics of mimesis – an idea as old as the critical concept of metatheatre itself[1] – but rather to remark that this rejection does not preclude the redeployment of mimetic effects. This idea may strike the reader as a critical having my cake and eating it, but I ask her to bear with me. As the following paragraphs will make clear, my approach to metatheatre does not attempt to minimize what we might think of as the essential incompatibility of the poetics of estrangement and those of mimesis; in fact, it depends on understanding each aesthetic position in its most extreme incarnation.

The version of mimesis that determines renaissance poetic theory is of course heavily indebted to its classical predecessor. It remains marked by a Platonic idealism and must be thought of as embedded in the correspondence theory of truth. As such, this model of mimesis asserts a congruous – and generally available – relationship between representation and object, between figuration and meaning. Offering a harmonizing language of unity, it locates itself within, and operates to underwrite, an ordered universe. All of which is to say, it represents a system of metaphysics – and one, we should add that the estrangement model would appear at each turn to contest. And, as would be expected, it follows that the artistic processes that each model describes (and would institute) are diametrically opposed. Where the estrangement model seeks to undo the sign, remarking its constructedness, mimesis by contrast would naturalize the sign; its representations are to be infused with *enargeia* – that is, rendered with such vividness that they rival the objects of the actual.

Mimesis can be thought to embody what aesthetic philosopher Arthur C. Danto in his book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* describes as 'the aspiration … of redeeming art for reality'.[2] As Danto's phrase implies, it seems somewhat inevitable that this aspiration would seek ultimately for representations so wondrously vivid that they might be mistaken for life itself. And in the early modern era where Horace's dictum *ut pictura poesis* ('as is painting, so is poetry') represented 'the universal presumption of all writers on poetry and poetics',[3] it was the visual arts, and particularly the legendary

[1] As Richard Fly observes, 'After Abel, it becomes increasingly difficult to defend the poetics of mimetic presence in Shakespearean drama' ("The Evolution of Shakespearean Metadrama: Abel, Burckhardt, and Calderwood", *Comparative Drama*, vol. 20, no. 2, Summer 1986, pp. 124-139, p. 127).

[2] Harvard University Press, 1981, p. v.

[3] Christopher Braider, "The Paradoxical Sisterhood: 'Ut Pictura Poesis'" (*Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 3, edited by Glyn P. Norton, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 168-175), p. 168.

artworks of antique description, which most often served as paradigmatic exemplar of how representation might render immediate presence. We can turn, for example, to Marsilio Ficino's *Theologia Platonica* for a colourful roll-call of the classical world's most famous mimetic paragons: Zeuxis' painted grapes at which birds pecked, Apelles' depictions of horses and hounds that confused their real-world counters, and the marble Aphrodite by Praxiteles which excited the salacious gazes of men.[4]

Yet the imitation that mimesis offers should not be thought of as limited to a direct empirical reproduction of nature, for its representations may also be constructed through selection and idealization. While the tale of Zeuxis' painted grapes was endlessly rehearsed, so too was the somewhat different story concerning the same painter's portrait of Helen. Tasked with realising the Image and Type of female beauty, Zeuxis chose the most beautiful women he could find, and composed his Helen through a selection of the best features from each of his models. This second story broadens our understanding of mimesis. Its imitation is no slavish reproduction, instead it borrows from the real to achieve what remains its principal aspiration: the rendering of a representation that would enact its presence with the same immediacy and fullness as the objects of reality themselves. And the effect of such a representation should not be confused with the quotidian, for in 'redeeming art for reality' the imitation acts to affirm the connection between the actual and ideal – a notion reflected in Zeuxis' name, with its meanings of 'bridging' or 'method of yoking'.

So rather than associate mimesis first and foremost with the powerful instancing of verisimilitude, it is more precise to see it, principally, as a strain of idealism. What mimesis seeks is nothing less than the creation of 'an overwhelming sense of direct physical presence carrying both the matter and inner meaning of the actions it portrays into the spectator's very soul'.[5] Neoplatonist thought ensured that of all the arts it was painting which was taken as manifesting *enargeia*'s presence in most immediate terms. For, as Christopher Braider elucidates, where poets have to make use of 'conventional verbal signs standing for, but thereby also displacing, the things they represent, painters deploy the "natural signs" constituted by the images of things themselves'.[6] As such, when renaissance poetic treatises, already structured as they are according to the notion of intermedial analogy, expound on the verbal or literary utilization of *enargeia* they will oftentimes resort to the criterion of the painting. Erasmus, for example, writes: 'We use [*enargeia*] whenever … we do not explain a thing simply, but display it to be looked at as if it were expressed in colour in a picture, so that it may seem that we have painted, not narrated, and that the reader has seen, not read'.[7] But as we saw earlier, also in a quotation from Erasmus, there is another art which renaissance poetics invoked almost as often as it

[4] *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animorum* (Olms: Nachdr. d. Ausg. Paris, 1559), xiii.3.
[5] Christopher Braider, "The Paradoxical Sisterhood: 'Ut Pictura Poesis'", p. 169.
[6] "The Paradoxical Sisterhood: 'Ut Pictura Poesis'", p. 169.
[7] *De Copia,* in *Omnia Opera,* 9 vols (Basil: Froben, 1540), vol. 1, p. 66. The translation is Terence Cave's and is taken from his "*Enargeia:* Erasmus and the Rhetoric of Presence in the Sixteenth Century" (*L'esprit Créateur*, vol. 16, 1976, pp. 5-19, p. 7).

did painting when instancing the kind of presence that *enargeia* must manifest: 'We shall enrich speech by description of a thing when we do not relate what is done, or has been done, summarily or sketchily, but place it before the eyes painted with all the colors of rhetoric, so that at length it draws the hearer or reader outside himself as in the theatre.'

By placing the stories of antique artworks of legendary verisimilitude beside the two explications of *enargeia* provided by Erasmus, it is possible to see these instances as revealing another aspect which operates to coordinate the structures by which mimetic representation is realized. These instances remark, implicitly, how the medium is itself expected to function within the mimetic model, a point which, it is perhaps worth remarking, contemporary poetics give little overt attention. As both the glosses of Erasmus and the described artworks of antiquity serve to intimate, the medium is expected to conduct itself rather conscientiously: at the same time as it fulfills its representational function, it must it seems efface its own presence. In the first quotation from Erasmus *enargeia* transposes narration into something 'not narrated', and makes text into something 'not read', while in the second, *enargeia*'s successful transportation of the reader or hearer into the imagined-actual acts to expunge its own literary or verbal description. The artworks of Zeuxis, Apelles and Praxiteles that were earlier introduced fare likewise; paint and surface do not survive their transposition into image, and marble is made over into something more limber. This sense that successful depiction, that mimetic realization of representational immediacy, is dependent on the absenting of the medium's actuality is a notion that time and again informs renaissance accounts of the painting process. Leon Battista Alberti's famous description rehearses the idea: 'First of all, on the surface on which I am going to paint, I draw a rectangle of whatever size I want, which I regard as an open window through which the subject to be painted is seen'.[8] And Leonardo da Vinci provides an equally well-known rendition of the same principle: 'Perspective is nothing else than the seeing of an object behind a sheet of glass'.[9]

Having elucidated the parts played by *enargeia*, idealism and the medium of representation in the Renaissance's conceptualization of mimesis we might now return to the second quotation from Erasmus and to the question it prompted in the earlier discussion of *Troilus and Cressida.* In urging rhetorical and literary representation to replicate the qualities of immediacy and (it must be thought) intensity that inhere to theatrical performance Erasmus's words beg the question: what happens when the representation is not directed to a 'hearer or reader' but to a spectator, one who is already 'in the theatre'? While in the early modern period the arts of painting, sculpture, poetry, and rhetoric sustain an analogous relationship that happily incorporates and works to further explicate the mimetic model, the art of the theatre seems, circumstantially, to exist outside the parameters that determine the sister arts; for the representations of the theatre are already the stuff of actuality. As Leonard Barkan observes, 'What renders the theater special among

[8] Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture: The Latin Texts of De Pictura and De Statua*, edited and translated by Cecil Grayson (Phaidon, 1972), p. 55.
[9] *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci*, vol. 2, edited by Edward MacCurdy (Jonathan Cape, 1938), p. 369.

these debates is the ever-present possibility that it will make poetics literally visible, that it will take the *ut* out of "ut pictura poesis", that it will realize the promises implicit in all those definitions of poetry that want to give it presence and materiality'.[10]

We must add to Barkan's comment, however, that at the same time as theatre appears to offer to mimetic representation its manifest realization, it would also seem to realize its dissolution. As the paragraph before the last argued, mimetic success demands that the medium is assimilated to the point where it disappears. But in the case of the early modern theatre the 'presence and materiality' of the successful representation is simultaneously the 'presence and materiality' of the medium. 'Desdemona' is at once the representation of Desdemona and the actual actor. Yet, early modern theatre is, at the same time, happy to make use of representations that fail the most minimal tests of mimesis – and this too is due to the 'presence and materiality' of the medium. As briefly touched on in this text's opening pages, the early modern play was, with next to no help from props or scenic indicators, constrained to establish the location of the scene (when, that is, it chose to do so) through announcing it. And this oftentimes merely nominative reference would not have been anywhere near sufficient to re-realize as convincing mimetic illusion the wooden promontory stage, nor to produce a sense of fictional locale that overwhelmed the spectator's experience of the theatre structure that rounded the stage and of the other audience members that filled the venue.[11] As this arrangement demonstrates, and in contrast to the imaginative relationship present-day audiences most often take to dramatic representation, on the early modern stage, actor precedes setting, with the latter being derived from the former.[12] This means that almost every scene begins, up until the point where the actors establish setting, in a locale which takes no representative value, and as such must be thought to throw the audience's imaginations back again onto the actual conditions of the stage. And of course, setting in the plays is only indicated where it is pertinent; a large portion of the action in early modern drama takes place in a 'location' that is wholly undefined, and, if it is imagined at all, can only be given the vaguest and most circumspect envisioning. It is, in short, a representative arrangement almost wholly at odds with the mimetic dictates of *enargeia*.[13]

Early modern theatre then seems to present two contrasting difficulties for mimesis. On the one hand, it threatens to realize the dream of *enargeia*, rendering to the representations of Talbot or Desdemona actual presence. Only it does so in a way that makes explicit the medium in which these representations are constructed, something which must be thought to complicate the sense of their mimetic realization, pointing back as it does to the dissimulation of this actualized representation. On the other hand, when it

[10] *Mute Poetry, Speaking Pictures* (Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 107.

[11] Even when Shakespeare lends to setting an extended and beautiful poetry, as, for example, in the description of the exterior of Inverness (*Macbeth* 1.6.1-10), it is difficult to imagine that this would have served to wholly displace the theatre's material presence.

[12] A point discussed by Helen Cooper in *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, pp. 96-97.

[13] Particularly with the idea that *enargeia*'s quality of verisimilitude needs be based on *circumstantiae*, that is, precision of detail. As Dionysius of Halicarnassus for one observes, *enargeia*'s power 'arises out of [this] grasp of circumstantial detail' (Quoted in Leonard Barkan's *Mute Poetry, Speaking Pictures*, p. 7).

comes to other aspects of the theatre's representational poetics – as is the case with setting – the material conditions of the space are allowed to manifest themselves with what seems like a cavalier disregard for the coherence and potency of play-world illusion. In fact, at times it seems that the physical facts of promontory and scene are so devoid of rendering that they can barely be considered to function as representation.

The strains of incorporating the form of theatre into the mimetic model were certainly remarked by the theorists of the early modern era. Most often this resulted in a view of drama that denied the form inclusion in the sister arts, and consequently relegated it from full aesthetic consideration. This perspective probably found its most forthright formulation in what was the most important English language work on poetics in the Renaissance, Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* (written around 1580, published 1595)[14]. Sidney's work addresses itself to the difficulties which I have shown that the representational practices of early modern theatre present for the poetics of mimesis, and in doing so offers a rather delighted denunciation of the form taken by contemporary dramatic art.

Before getting to that however, it has to be underlined that the date of writing places *An Apology for Poetry* prior to not only Shakespeare's work, but what must be considered, the blossoming of English theatre. And it too needs to be remarked that in introducing Sidney's critique of the form of early modern drama I am not suggesting that the self-aware and myriad representational economy that I argue Shakespeare's drama takes is something wholly contrasting with Sidney's own art, or even for that matter, Sidney's poetic testimony. Sidney's poetry and fiction are themselves marked by an ambiguity and a deep dramatic irony which plays elaborate games with speaker and style. Similarly, *An Apology for Poetry* might best be approached bearing in mind Margaret W. Ferguson's comment that 'Sidney was a master of "deep dissimulation"', together with her suggestion that if we view Sidney as 'a counterfeiter … his case for poetry becomes at once more cogent as a theoretical statement and more interesting as a literary performance'.[15] I make use of Sidney's condemnation of the theatre then not to invent a false opposition between poetical practices which share much common ground but rather to illustrate a contemporary conception of drama's mimetic incapacity that must be thought of as reflecting, and in turn influencing, a view that that held sway in early modern antitheatricalist circles and beyond.

A few words must also be said as to the version of mimesis that Sidney's *Apology* argues. Unsurprisingly, Sidney's poetics takes *ut pictura poesis*, and the ancillary dictum of Simonides, 'painting is mute poetry, poetry a talking picture', as its presiding doctrine. The latter formulation finds place in Sidney's celebrated definition of poetry: 'Poesy therefore is an art of imitation. For so Aristotle termeth it in the word *mimesis*, that is to

[14] *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defence of Poesy)*, revised and expanded second edition, edited by R. W. Maslen (Manchester University Press, 2002).

[15] *Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defenses of Poetry* (Yale University Press, 1983), p. 138 (the phrase 'deep dissimulation' is borrowed from William Blake's "Jerusalem").

say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth – to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture'.[16] Sidney's preference for the Aristotelian rather than Neoplatonic framework allows him to move his model of mimesis further away from understanding poetical representation as obliged to reproduce the objects of the world, and instead to press 'imitation' into greater dimensions of ideality. While in Sidney's system each other art and science is constrained to and dependent upon the 'proposed matter' nature has assigned to it 'without which they could not consist, and on which they so depend, as they become Actors & Plaiers, as it were of what nature will have set forth' (Sidney exemplifies this through the astronomer, who is committed to treat of the stars), the poet is free to range 'within the zodiac of his own wit'. '[L]ifted up with the vigor of his own invention', the poet 'doth grow, in effect, into another nature, in making things either better than nature brings forth, or quite anew, forms such as never were in nature'. Where nature's 'world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden'.[17] It is a poetics that lends itself to conceive of the artwork in terms which are formal, ideal and autonomous. This has led Paul H. Fry to argue for *An Apology for Poetry* as anticipating Kant's work on aesthetics,[18] and prompted Barkan to characterize Sidney's system as a 'utopian poetics, a dream that poetry can do just about *anything*'.[19]

Such a rarefied poetics is beyond the reach of contemporary public theatre. Elizabethan drama is, for Sidney, an essentially vulgar and adulterated medium, mingling 'kings and clowns',[20] as well as illusion and actuality. And when it comes to the problems that dramatic representation poses for the mimetic model – where the theatre, in some of its aspects, would appear to offer representation the dream of actualisation, yet in others, seem to surrender to the stage reality and give up on any attempt at creating convincing illusions – Sidney's *Apology* sees these discrepancies as argument for dismissal of the contemporary realisation of drama. Sidney characterizes theatrical representation as 'inartificially imagined', meaning that stage depictions cannot help but betray both the conventional and actual means through which they have been brought about.[21] Theatre's attempts to realize the illusions of place and time – constrained as they are by the limited area of the stage and the window of time allocated for the experience of the performance – are, as Sidney's notorious denunciation of contemporary drama would show, bound to be absurd:

> you shall have Asia of the one side [of the stage], and Afric of the other, and so many under-kingdoms, that the player, when he cometh in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived … Now of time they are much more liberal, for ordinary it is that two young princes fall in love. After many

[16] *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 9.
[17] *An Apology for Poetry*, pp. 7-8.
[18] *Theory of Literature* (Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 59-60.
[19] "Making Pictures Speak; Renaissance Art, Elizabethan Literature, Modern Scholarship" (*Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 2, Summer 1995, pp. 326-351), pp. 326-327.
[20] *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 36.
[21] *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 48.

> traverses, she is got with child, delivered of a fair boy; he is lost, groweth a man, falls in love, and is ready yet to get another child; and all this in two hours' space.[22]

These violations of the classical unities also serve to undo the sense of the stage-part's presence; for even though the actor lends the persona a realization in the actual, subjecting this persona to such impossibilities makes the persona too impossible. A second objection to the representation formed by the dramatic embodiment of persona might be inferred from Sidney's argument for the unique nature of poetry. For, as we have seen, when Sidney asserts that the poetic art of 'imitation' is distinguished from all other areas of human activity, he somewhat tellingly characterizes the latter pursuits as performed by 'Actors and Plaiers'. The metaphor suggests that dramatic performance, in that it is realized through real-life 'Actors and Plaiers', lacks the aesthetic independence which for Sidney characterizes art. The acted character is not '[L]ifted up with the vigor of his own invention'; the vigor of invention is the playwright's, and in that this invention can only be given form in its reproduction in the actual (that is in the physical performance of the actor) it would appear to forfeit the unique position that Sidney's poetics argues pertains to 'imitation'.

For Sidney the poetics of *enargeia* must remain distinct from the embodiment that theatre is constrained to give them. Imagination can find no true purchase on the stage since drama is condemned to a form of representation in which the actual remains always an element of the illusory: 'What child is there that, coming to a play, and seeing Thebes written in great letters upon an old door, doth believe that it is Thebes?'[23] As Barkan writes, 'Sidney wants his poetry to speak pictures, but he does not want the pictures to be real. A picture that really talks is for him something of a freak show'.[24] We might diagnose then from the objections that *An Apology for Poetry* levels at the theatre that an essential quality of mimesis is that its illusions remain imaginary. Despite tradition measuring mimetic success according to how closely artistic depiction approaches the actual, it is vital that this re-presentation is never actualized; the exchange of aspects that *ut pictura poesis* proposes is to remain, in Sidney's terms, wholly metaphorical.

4.2 Representation's rhetoricality: the poetics of mimesis and estrangement

This last point asks that we qualify the position that renaissance theories of mimesis themselves most often outline. Despite tradition measuring mimetic success according to how closely artistic depiction approaches the actual, it is vital that this re-presentation is never really actualized. The translation of representation into reality is to remain, as Sidney underlines, wholly metaphorical. Were the impossible desire of a transfiguration into the

[22] *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 48.
[23] *An Apology for Poetry*, p. 36.
[24] *Mute Poetry, Speaking Pictures*, p. 108.

real ever accomplished, the artwork that achieved this would cease to exist as an artwork. Once Pygmalion's statue becomes Galatea, Galatea ceases to be a statue. Correspondingly, this would indicate that the sublation of the medium that the mimetic model infers is too merely a 'metaphorical' position, something never to be wholly realized. And rather than describing the qualification that frames these aspirations as 'metaphorical' it would seem more precise to term it 'rhetorical'. The rhetorical question seeks no answer, and the same adjective can characterize the apparent ambitions of mimesis: for although the impetus of *enargiea* affirms an affective investment in the urgency of its own claims, it remains however essential that the claims themselves go unrealized.[25]

These observations prompt us to return to the phrase we earlier borrowed from Danto's *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* and ask, if the objectives of mimesis are merely rhetorical then what of the 'aspiration … of redeeming art for reality'? And – a question that we will come to subsequently – what might the early modern theatre, a form which distinguishes itself from its contemporary arts in configuring a wholly different relationship to reality, make of a mimesis understood as merely rhetorical? And it seems somewhat appropriate that we should pursue this inquiry according to the preferred method of the renaissance theory itself: via analogy with a work of visual art.

While Danto's study of the 'aspiration … of redeeming art for reality' takes in, as we might expect, the theories and practices that inform classical iterations of mimesis, its principal energies are devoted to the analysis of an artwork that would appear to challenge not only the poetics of mimesis, but also the very categories of representation and reality: Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* (1964). This is an artwork whose description risks tautology; *Brillo Boxes* is, according to the evidence of our eyes, a pile of Brillo boxes. In visual terms, the only thing that distinguishes Warhol's boxes from their real-world counterparts is their location in the gallery space. As deliberately banal as the work is its aesthetic complexity should not be underestimated, and it is not being in the least fanciful to see the piece as parodying the ideal ambitions of mimesis. I have already elucidated how the formulas of mimesis ask for a representation that overwhelms the spectator's sense of the medium itself, and turning to *Brillo Boxes* we can see that the medium and its associated processes have been wholly, almost absurdly, subsumed. Similarly, *Brillo Boxes* can be conceived as offering to the dreams of aesthetic actualization *actual actualization* – yet as realizing this desire through the most quotidian of forms. In blandly effectuating the

[25] In my discussion of 'rhetoricality' in the article, "Dissimulation and the Dover Cliff: Metatheatrical Representation in *King Lear*" I supply the term with the following footnote: 'The reader most probably does not require a definition of 'rhetoricality' – and an attempt to cover its application in contemporary theory would take us well beyond the extent of a footnote – but should a reminder be required, the preliminary definition provided by the philosopher with claims to be the first post-structuralist will suffice to re-introduce the term: he tells us that we call 'a style "rhetorical" when we observe a conscious application of artistic means of speaking' (Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Nietzsche's "Lecture Notes on Rhetoric": A Translation', translated by Carole Blair (*Philosophy & Rhetoric*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1983, pp. 94-129), p. 107). And the term can be seen as offering a broad application when we recognize that all artistic practice occurs as the result of a conscious decision, and that it takes place through the particular language that each specific medium makes available.

transposition which mimesis posits as the ambition of all artistic representation, *Brillo Boxes* underlines that mimesis really seeks nothing of the sort. When manifested in the real, the artwork forfeits all wonder and ideality. If the mimetic artwork is to retain these qualities then it must stop short (and in the ideal dimensions of the classical model, just short) of the aspirations that its poetics claim for it. It is not, however, simply the rhetoricality of mimetic practice that *Brillo Boxes* marks up. The work indicates the essentially rhetorical nature of all artistic representation; the only thing which prevents Warhol's 'sculpture' from being swallowed up, unremarked, by the extra-artistic world is its nomination as art. *Brillo Boxes* are separated from Brillo boxes by an italicization. And for Danto, the realization of such a position signals the end of art.[26]

Yet it is not only the poetics of mimesis that Warhol's work can be seen as commenting on. The piece can too be read as remarking the function and limitations that the aesthetics of estrangement would realize, and demonstrating that its poetics are also rhetorically formulated. At first glance, one might be forgiven for taking *Brillo Boxes* as a rather neat reification of estrangement aesthetics. The piece subjects it representational processes to a self-reflexive scrutiny, and, probably as thoroughly as any artwork is capable of doing, it underlines its real-world presence and status. Characterizing the work as 'anti-illusionist' – the term Gurr used to describe what he imagined was the alienated early modern theatre – would be rather precise, and I think we are obliged to recognize in the piece the kind of distancing effect that the estrangement model of theatre would have its artworks realize. Placed in a gallery space, Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* operate, to return to Dollimore's formulation, to 'defamiliarize the obvious', and so effect a certain 'demystification' concerning the art object itself. In evacuating aesthetic considerations from the work, *Brillo Boxes* places into question the ontological categories which work to separate the artwork from the extra-artistic world. The piece enacts – or it may be more accurate to write, advertises – its own commodification, at the same time as it points away from itself to place under scrutiny the nature of art and aesthetics, and the status and value that our society confers on these objects.

But this would be to take the estrangement model at its word, as well as to make Warhol's piece into something more simplex than it is. A fuller appreciation of both the estrangement model of art and *Brillo Boxes* would act to demonstrate a differently coordinated significance. We have in Chapter 3 already remarked how the estrangement model is configured in less absolute terms than it would give out. It is adulterated, and dependent for its effects on the spectator's engagement with an imaginary dimension of representation that the model would itself either deny or radically delimit. And we know from the discussion of the *Brillo Boxes*' apparent 'mimesis' that Warhol's piece has to it a strong strain of the burlesque – that at the same time as it portrays itself as enacting an artistic position the piece too presents its parody. This aspect of *Brillo Boxes* can be thought

[26] And so as not to misrepresent Danto for readers unfamiliar with his rather fine work, we should add that it is Danto's writings which have most thoroughly elucidated the seminal nature of *Brillo Boxes*, and that the 'end of art' which Danto proposes is at the same time framed – and only somewhat perversely – as offering to artistic practice invigoration; a position Danto outlines in *After the End of Art* (Princeton University Press, 1998).

to bring us full circle. For Warhol's work underlines how estrangement aesthetics too seeks redemption for art in reality. As we have seen, a prominent strand of early modern drama criticism insists that illusion is made impossible by the actual conditions of the plays' staging, and that it is to the latter that the audience's attention is deliberately directed. Another variation makes use of stage illusion only so that it might be repeatedly punctured – a process of defamiliarization that brings about the critical awareness of the immediate ideological structures in effect. Yet the redemption that *Brillo Boxes* offers is the most banal of realities. It would seem to indicate that the critical consciousness which the work encourages its spectators to is destined to remain embroiled in the most mundane and, in fact, conditioned of (commercialized) realities.

Even new historicism's theatricality, which might seem to accommodate the kind of contradictions that a work like *Brillo Boxes* advances, must still be thought as an attempt to transpose art into reality. Theatricality will either – when operating in subversion mode – have drama discover the actual performance of power, or – when operating in containment mode – see drama as the unvarnished spectacle itself, an auxiliary to ideology that enacts real power. And as *Brillo Boxes* makes clear this transposition into the real brings with it problems. For perhaps the most urgent issue that *Brillo Boxes* would seem to raise for the estrangement model concerns how the actual art object might maintain itself once it has been redeemed for reality. As Danto has remarked, *Brillo Boxes* can be thought to mark the end of art, and the estrangement that the piece offers suggests a final position which would (and this should not be considered as offered without parody either) claim that nothing more needs to – or even can be – said. In this case, the object that would most perfectly realize estrangement would, at the same time, most perfectly manifest the obsolescence of artistic representation. If the spectator is estranged, and so thrust towards a critical perspective, this goal being realized, this perfectly estranged individual need no longer return to the art object and, in the case of more traditional works, to the representation(s) that the art object affords. And not dissimilarly, if the art object is taken as another manifestation of ideological power – in a system where power is already seen as totalizing – then the object's unique representational function is ignored, and art becomes simply another discourse among discourses.

Of course, representational obsolescence suits well *Brillo Boxes*. The work does not need a second look – may not, in fact, even require a first look; its description alone may be sufficient. But the form of Shakespeare's theatre cannot subscribe to such an exclusive position of conceptual immaculacy; the form of drama is processual, unfolding in the shifting terrains of time and space, and each performance is shaped by the particular conditions which particularly inform it. The estrangement that early modern drama realizes is tied to and must time and again *relocate* itself within these *ongoing* processes of theatrical unfolding – and as such it is incapable of attaining an exclusive position beyond them. At the same time, in that this process of theatrical unfolding is tied to the incongruities and mutabilities that self-reflexivity affords, this drama cannot realize itself as a consummate manifestation of power – as it will never be *only* power that is told. The analogy offered by Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* then brings us back to a point made first in the

reading of *Troilus and Cressida*: that the effect of estrangement is experienced merely as an 'effect of estrangement' – the audience members are not immediately and forever after demystified by metatheatre's self-reflexive marking, instead they remain engaged within a broader and ongoing experience of representation, part of which is an ongoing imaginative investment in the play-world as play-world, and part of which is its self- reflexive critique.

A comment from Roland Barthes is pertinent here. For at the same time as Barthes puts forward his idea of the 'pure text' – that is, the wholly writerly text – he recognizes that such an idea is merely notional, a utopian impossibility.[27] In *The Pleasure of the Text* he remarks how even the most radical text still needs 'its shadow: this shadow is a bit of ideology, a bit of representation, a bit of subject'.[28] We might extrapolate from this and suggest that no aesthetic approach that seeks to redeem the art object is capable of an absolute realization in the real, or, for that matter, a consummate and unequivocal spectacle of power. The essential duality of artistic representation makes no final and unadulterated position available. 'Estrangement' never abandons the art object for good, it must, inevitably, come back to it; and mimetic representation, for all its apparent dreams of actualization, is only itself preserved by the actual presence of the artwork's medium.

4.3 Mimesis and estrangement redeployed

Of all the arts of the early modern period, it seems it is drama which is most compelled to some kind of account of representation's rhetoricality. As *Brillo Boxes*' caricature makes explicit, when representation is provided actual rather than imagistic status, art's relation to reality becomes foregrounded in rather urgent fashion. The philosopher of language, John Searle elucidates the particular condition which distinguishes the representations of the theatre: where the other arts offer 'a presented representation of a state of affairs … a play, that is, a play as performed, is not a pretended *representation* of a state of affairs but the pretended state of affairs itself, the actors pretend to be the characters'.[29] While it is possible to object that a pretended (and presented) state of affairs still deserves the status of 'representation', Searle's comment usefully highlights the extent that dramatic depiction is characterized by both actuality and pretence. This pretence makes for a dramatically realized presentation which is both closer and further away from the 'thing itself' – and in the theatre of Shakespeare's era (Searle's statement pertains to theatre in general) both this proximity and distance would have been accentuated. The early modern theatre would seem to offer realization to, on the one hand, the full and real presence dreamt of by mimesis, and indicated in Erasmus' remarking of theatre's innate *enargeia*, and on the

[27] As Graham Allen points out in *Intertextuality* (Routledge, 2011). Allen is referring to Barthes' *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, translated by Richard Howard (Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 76-77.
[28] Translated by Richard Miller (Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 32.
[29] "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse" (*New Literary History*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1975, pp 319-332), p. 328. In the passage Searle is contrasting fictional stories with the theatre, but his argument holds when making a comparison between the arts of the early modern period and the form taken by the drama of the era.

other, to the disillusionment enacted by the aesthetics of estrangement, through the fact that this same real presence means that theatre's representations cannot help but demonstrate that they are, in Sidney's phrase, 'inartificially imagined', and so point back to their actual – rather than imagistic – nature. Clearly, each impetus contradicts the representational modality that the other would realize.

If then the form of early modern theatre compels it to take up a relationship to contemporary representational poetics that is both contradictory and urgent, we can remark that this is something that the dramatic works of the period exhibit an awareness of. As the articles of this dissertation repeatedly point up, the orthodoxies of contemporary poetics often find their way, in one form or another, into Shakespeare's plays, and antitheatricalist criticisms like Sidney's are played out through the business of stage representation itself. The plays demonstrate – one is tempted to add, brazenly – their incompatibility with the golden poetics that Sidney would have his art deliver, often electing to do so through an ironic superimposition of the practices of mimesis on a medium which cannot help but assert a recalcitrant actuality. In a sense, the arrangement works to illustrate Sidney's sense that theatrical representation is condemned to an absurd 'freakshow' unfolding, and so incapable of proper mimetic effect.

And we should add here that the estrangement model frames itself according to the same foundational principle implied in Sidney's discussion of theatrical representation. The experience of artistic representation is confined to one of two modalities: either illusion is so powerfully realized that the audience forgoes the sense of its unreality, or, the means by which that depiction is brought about are so prominent that the audience forgoes their engagement with illusion. Neither model gives space to the sense that a depiction, recognized and marked as unreal, still makes claims on us. The models of estrangement and mimesis differ from each other only in what this representational impasse is thought as affording. Yet as we have seen, Shakespeare's theatre reveals an ability to realize the most powerful representational effects in the teeth of the directives of mimetic poetics. For the plays make no attempt to downplay the constructedness of their illusions, the opposite in fact: metatheatre constantly draws the audience's attention to the artifice of the plays' representational modality. The sense of the falsity of the presented illusion is insistent, yet this recognition does not prevent the plays' fictions from realizing a vivid and immediate effect. We have seen in the reading of *Troilus and Cressida* how at each turn the play marks up the dissimulation that inheres to its structures of representation, yet at the same time, the figure of Cressida is capable of beguiling not just her play-world lover but (and we have seen this holds too for Henry Jackson's Desdemona) the real-world audience as well.

We might conclude this chapter by summarizing what we have so far determined about the relationship Shakespeare's art bears to the contemporary poetical model of mimesis and the latter-day critical model of estrangement. Where both the poetics of mimesis and estrangement would, in their own ways, redeem art for reality, Shakespeare's plays mark up the essential dissimulation and pretence that is art's innate condition. Certainly, the plays are happy to frame the poetics of mimesis as well as the techniques

and strategies that, centuries later, would become equated with the model of estrangement, and to make use of their different representational energies. But the deployment of these representational complexes remains throughout marked as occurring within art's broader dissimulation. For representation can never exceed its form, can never transpose itself into reality, and the apparent efforts to do so, whether advanced through a poetics of mimesis or estrangement, would only succeed at the cost of their own dissolution. The impetus that each aesthetic system presents as its goal can be characterized as rhetorical, that is, as a pretence, but, of course, not a pretence that can ever be admitted – for pretence is a quality that inheres only to the art object's representation; its real-world counter demands to be thought of as the unfeigned thing itself.

Shakespeare's art distinguishes itself from both of these aesthetic models. In contrast to the poetics of mimesis it foregrounds the falsity of its artistic representation, and in this way marks its separation from *unfeigned reality.* This is plainly something that most versions of the estrangement model would also have their artworks do, understanding the arrangement as facilitating the audience's alienation. Only Shakespeare's theatre does not conceptualize art's essential falsity as something to be escaped. As has been demonstrated, in Shakespeare's drama whether the audience experiences the effect of something like a vividly realized mimesis at the play-world level, or the effect of a powerfully disrupting estrangement from that play-world, these effects are underlined as occurring within the larger pretence that the artwork itself proposes, and as such are never fully realized. The audience completes this pretence: they register the effect of mimesis' full presence without ever taking it as 'real'; they recognize the effect of estrangement without ever abandoning their imaginative investment in the performance. Having established the relationship that Shakespeare's art takes to the poetical systems of mimesis and estrangement we can now proceed to a closer exploration of the form and function of Shakespeare's metatheatrical representation itself.

5. Towards an outline of Shakespeare's metatheatrical representation

5.1 'A willing suspension of disbelief' reexamined and reapplied

To provide the operation of Shakespeare's metatheatrical representation elucidation we can turn back to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famous definition of what constituted the act of poetic faith: 'a willing suspension of disbelief for the moment'.[1] It is also relevant to remark here that Coleridge's aesthetic research can be seen as emerging in large part as a response to Shakespeare's dramas. Moreover, in his consideration of these works Coleridge was, somewhat uncommonly for the time, acutely aware of the plays as early modern performances, and his notion of 'a willing suspension of disbelief' was shaped by his sense of how the plays' representations would be subject to the staging conditions then in effect.[2] This last point alone is enough to suggest that while in subsequent criticism the 'willing suspension of disbelief' has often been seen as a byword for the spectator's romantic surrender to the artwork's mimetic illusions, Coleridge's original notion must be approached as formulated with far more subtlety. We are best placed if we understand that the notion recognizes, in Frederick Burwick's words, 'that volitional acquiescence [keeps] the mediating referentiality intact even while shifting our attention from signifier to signified'.[3] Illusion cannot be thought as overwhelming the spectator in the way mimesis pretends it does, instead it is dependent on a deliberated and ongoing process by which the audience elects to be deceived.

Coleridge states the essence of artistic representation in the following terms: 'It is not a *Copy* of Nature but it is an Imitation'.[4] Here the sense given to 'Imitation' echoes that which we earlier encountered in Sidney's *Apology*. As Coleridge explains, 'the word imitation itself means always a combination of a certain degree of dissimilitude with a certain degree of similitude'. The arts for Coleridge are ideal, they offer 'not the mere copy of things, but the contemplation of mind upon things'.[5] A 'copy' merely reproduces the arbitrary arrangements of the instant whereas the 'imitation' is an arrangement illuminated by the poetic imagination. However, where a similar attitude led Sidney to dismiss the efforts of early modern stage representation as an absurd and unconvincing coupling of the figurative and the literal, Coleridge sees stage illusion as sustained by the audience's

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[1] *Biographia Literaria II* (Oxford University Press, 1907), p. 6.

[2] It is perhaps also relevant to point out that when Coleridge himself turns to drama his work makes use of what we would now call metatheatre. See for example, *Remorse* in *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Clarendon Press, 1957). Frederick Burwick's discussion of the play in *Illusion and the Drama: Critical Theory of the Enlightenment and Romantic Era* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010) highlights well the play's ironic deployment of metatheatre, especially p. 268.

[3] *Illusion and the Drama: Critical Theory of the Enlightenment and Romantic Era*, p. 12.

[4] From Coleridge's fourth lecture on Shakespeare. Quoted in Sanja Sostaric's *Coleridge and Emerson: A Complex Affinity* (Universal Publishers, 2003), p. 172.

[5] From Coleridge's third lecture on Shakespeare. *Coleridge: Lectures on Shakespeare (1811-1819),* edited by Adam Roberts (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 28.

'willing suspension of disbelief'. Even the 'scanty scenery' of Shakespeare's stage elicits the latter's praise, forcing as it does, playwright and audience to draw on what Coleridge terms 'the Strength of inward Illusion'.[6] This is an arrangement which produces

> a sort of temporary half-faith, by which the spectator encourages in himself and supports by a voluntary contribution on his own part, because he knows that it is at all times in his power to see the thing as it really is …The true stage-illusion in this and in all other things consists – not in the mind's judging it to be a forest, but, in its remission of the judgement that it is not a forest.[7]

Where Sidney's critique of early modern drama sees theatrical representation as condemned to an unsuccessful negotiation between the actual and the imagined, the structure of Coleridge's argument means that theatrical representation produces no confusion with reality. Rather, the audience's sense of the essential pretence of the drama operates to distinguish it from the extra-artistic world. In fact, it is this very understanding which makes the experience of the artwork possible.

5.2 A representational register

The last quotation occurs in a passage in which Coleridge compares the painted forest scenery to a landscape painting by Claude Lorrain, and the discussion serves to reveal something more about how the 'willing suspension of disbelief' operates to configure dramatic representation:

> Thus, Claude imitates a landscape at sunset, but only as a picture; while a forest-scene is not presented to the spectators as a picture, but as a forest; and though, in the full sense of the word, we are no more deceived by the one than by the other, yet are our feelings very differently affected; and the pleasure derived from the one is not composed of the same elements as that afforded by the other, even on the supposition that the quantum of both were equal.[8]

We can note that Coleridge distinguishes the different representational modalities, as well as the different investments that the audience makes in each of these modalities. Yet by presaging these remarks with 'though, in the full sense of the word, we are no more deceived by the one than by the other', he underlines that at the same time as the audience's imagination perceives these differences, this perception remains encompassed within a broader recognition of art's pretence. The arrangement demonstrates that there exists within this overall pretence differentiated layers of pretence: the spectators agree to see the

[6] From Coleridge's lecture on *The Tempest. Lectures on Literature, 1808-19: Vol. 5 (Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge),* edited by R. A. Foakes (Routledge, 1987), pp. 539-543.
[7] From the essay "The Progress of the Drama" in *Lectures Upon Shakespeare* (Classic Books, 2001), p. 37.
[8] "The Progress of the Drama", p. 37.

painting as a picture, and the scenery as forest. Further, we should underline that not only does the spectators' approach to the play ensure that they experience these representations in the manner that each representation demands, but, despite the fact that in one sense the spectators 'are no more deceived by one than the other', these different representative modalities nonetheless allow different affects: 'the pleasure derived from the one is not composed of the same elements as that afforded by the other, even on the supposition that the quantum of both were equal'.

Elsewhere, Coleridge suggests that these different representational modalities, together with the particular affects and signification they afford, can be imagined as occurring on a scale, with the location given to each mode being dependent on what we have seen Coleridge refer to as degrees of dissimilitude and similitude, that is, the extent to which the representation reproduces reality or differentiates itself from it:

> This difference between a sense of reality and falsehood admits of various degrees, from the domestic tragedy, which is too real to be compatible with pleasure … and down to the mere dance at an Opera, which is yet capable of giving us the highest pleasure, and which, with music and harmonious motions of the body, can, by thus explaining some tale, deeply affect and delight an audience.[9]

We might extrapolate these points in the following way. While art can provide 'a sense of reality or falsehood', these different representational values remain marked as pretence. As such, it is not reality or falsehood that is realized, rather the audience experiences the representation as offering 'a *sense* of reality or falsehood'. Though Coleridge might range the different representational modalities according to how closely they reproduce reality, it is not this factor that dictates the power of the audience's aesthetic experience (opera's 'unrealistic' tale-telling being in Coleridge's view more capable of deeply affecting and delighting an audience than the 'realism' of domestic tragedy). Instead the extent a representational mode does or does not reproduce reality functions to structure the *manner* (which is to say the particular form of pretence) by which the audience (their belief willingly and accommodatingly suspended) engages with the representation, and the affects and signification which this particular engagement might be taken as affording. In such a schema, even when representation occurs according to a vividly realized imitation, this does not produce in the audience the kind of confusion between representation and reality that *enargeia* strives to achieve. Rather the effect the representation produces – and we must not think of its being any less powerful for this – is recognized, perhaps only half-consciously, as derived from, and itself epitomizing, a particular modality.

Of course, there is no need to take as Coleridge does the extremes of this scale as fulfilled by domestic drama and by opera. We can maintain Coleridge's concept of a representational scale at the same time as we offer it an extension that enables us to accommodate the representations of metatheatre. As was shown earlier, even though metatheatre's drawing attention to the processual construction of the drama is often framed

[9] *Coleridge: Lectures on Shakespeare (1811-1819),* p. 30.

as being a powerfully disruptive force, it never absolutely undermines the audience's sense of drama's duality. The spectator, her belief willingly *suspended*, is never wholly divorced from play-world illusion. Yet at the same time, she is not stunned by the drama pointing up its own fictionality – this last fact being a point which, her belief *willingly* suspended, she has never ceased to recognize. As Burwick observes, metatheatre 'involves not a disruption of illusion, but a shift to another dimension of illusion'[10] – or, as we could term it, making use of Coleridge's concept, a shift to another representational register.

This means that despite the fact that the aesthetics of estrangement frame metatheatre as effecting the audience's escape from the art object's essential pretence, metatheatre actually remains confined to this pretence. This is a point that Theodor Adorno makes in his discussion of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*. Adorno argues that Brecht's approach, for all its attempts to dispel stage illusion, is itself recognized as illusory. While it claims to free the audience from their aesthetic and ideological stupor, these self-reflexive efforts merely provide a further iteration of art's essential duality. And this duality is the representational structure in which the *Verfremdungseffekt* is compelled to operate and in which it remains lodged. For Adorno, no approach exists which is capable of transposing art's duality and pretence to something which is simplex and objective; illusion is not merely a representational characteristic of art, illusion is what art is.[11] Accordingly, metatheatrical 'estrangement' is no more than another representational resource, another aspect of form – a sense that Adorno captures precisely when he comments, 'Brecht's efforts to destroy subjective nuances and halftones with a blunt objectivity, and to do this conceptually as well, are *artistic means*; in the best of his work they become *a principle of stylization*' (emphasis added).[12]

The aesthetics of mimesis and estrangement, then, despite their claims to redeem art for the real, never succeed in leaving behind the art object; their depictions are a species of representation, not representation's overcoming. They remain configured according to art's essential duality, and their affects never succeed in escaping art's essential pretence. A few words from Burwick offer succinct summary: 'The illusion is always accompanied by the evidence that the illusion is only an illusion. Thus the triumph of illusion is never more than a convenient capitulation. By the same token, however, the pretense of annihilating illusion … only thematizes the inherent dialectics of art'.[13]

However, if my approach to metatheatrical representation asks that we expand Coleridge's scale of representational register so as to take in the extremes of estrangement, it also asks that we reconsider the location on that register which Coleridge supplies to

[10] *Illusion and the Drama: Critical Theory of the Enlightenment and Romantic Era*, pp. 4-5. Burwick is here discussing the actor stepping in and out of character in the theatre of Aristophanes.
[11] *Aesthetic Theory*, edited by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 79, 123. See Thomas Huhn's "Adorno's Aesthetics of Illusion" in *Journal for Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 44, no. 2, December 1986, for an extended discussion of this aspect of Adorno's aesthetics.
[12] *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 32.
[13] *Illusion and the Drama: Critical Theory of the Enlightenment and Romantic Era*, pp. 10-11.

Shakespeare's plays. On Coleridge's scale of reality and difference, which to recap goes from domestic tragedy's representations – 'too real to be compatible with pleasure' – at one end, to 'the mere dance at an Opera' – whose unreality may still 'deeply affect and delight' – at the other, Shakespeare's drama is assigned midpoint position. The measurement reflects, as Coleridge reckons it, Shakespeare's balanced perfection: the playwright 'seems to have taken the due medium, & to gratify our senses from the imitation of reality'.[14] This is an assessment from which the current discussion must sharply depart. Coleridge's words indicate that the plays take a representational register that is singular and constant, something refuted by my reading of the passage from *Troilus and Cressida*. As brief as the scene is, no stable representational mode is in evidence. Representation is instead a mobile thing. The illusion of Cressida makes for a convincing and vivid presence, yet the artifice of the performance is also powerfully marked. And the scene does not unfold as a ricochet between these two extreme representational positions but makes use of a range of different representational registers in between depending on the particular inflection the playwright and the performers chose to give them. Neither do these different representational registers occur singly and separately, rather they are simultaneous. Shakespearean representation is something shifting and multiple. It follows that Coleridge's theatrical register might then be redeployed; no longer a general tool by which to measure the effects allowed by different forms and genre, but a concept by which we might better map Shakespeare's representational permutations.

5.3 An outline of Shakespeare's metatheatrical representation

Let us briefly summarize where we have come to. Where both the poetics of mimesis and estrangement claim that they would redeem art for reality, Shakespeare's plays mark up the essential dissimulation and pretence that is the condition of dramatic art. The plays are happy to stage representations realised according to the prescriptions associated with the models of mimesis and estrangement, and to make use of the representational energies such a staging makes available, but these representations are framed in such a way that they remain throughout marked as occurring within art's broader dissimulation. For representation can never exceed its form, can never transpose itself into reality, and the apparent efforts to do so, whether taking shape through a poetics of mimesis or estrangement, would only succeed at the cost of their own dissolution. The impetus that each of these aesthetic systems claims as its goal is a pretence, but, needless to say, not a pretence that can ever be admitted – for according to these systems, pretence is a quality that inheres only to the art object's representation, its real-world counter being the unequivoval and actual thing itself – whether imagined as mimetically embodied, as ideology demystified, or as the performance of real power.

[14] *Coleridge: Lectures on Shakespeare (1811-1819)*, p. 30.

Shakespeare's art distinguishes itself from both of these aesthetic models. In contrast to the impulse which apparently propels the poetics of mimesis, whereby artistic representation aims at becoming another aspect of the real, Shakespeare's metatheatrical art highlights its own falsity, and the result is to mark drama's separation from reality. This is, plainly, the very aesthetic procedure that some versions of the estrangement model would prescribe. Only in contrast to these versions of the estrangement model, in Shakespeare's theatre the recognition of the essential falsity of art does not prompt its abandonment – nor is metatheatre's remarking of this falsity sufficient to sever the audience's connection to the play-world. As has been demonstrated, in Shakespeare's drama whether the audience experiences the effect of something like a vividly realized mimesis at the play-world level, or the effect of a powerfully disrupting estrangement from that play-world, these effects are underlined as occurring within the larger pretence that the artwork itself proposes. And the audience completes this pretence: they register the effect of mimesis' full presence without ever taking it as 'real'; they recognize the effect of estrangement without ever abandoning their imaginative investment in the performance. This arrangement makes available an array of representational effects, only the meaning that we associate with these effects is in Shakespeare's theatre no longer framed in the absolute terms of their original formulation. The essential meaning which these systems of representation offer is made over into a presentation of a position, and this 'meaning' remains, at all times, circumscribed by art's innate artifice.

When Shakespeare's drama is conceived in such terms, metatheatre need no longer be formulated in the categorical manner that the estrangement model supplies it. It is not an overwhelming presence, but a facilitating one; the play's access to a shifting and multiple representational register is afforded through metatheatre's highlighting of art's essential pretence. While the audience never loses the sense that the representation is a construction (a sense, let us remark it again, that no audience engaged in the act of artistic appreciation ever wholly forfeits) metatheatre determines the extent this aspect is emphasized or downplayed, and directs where and when this self-reflexive attention is concentrated. We might conceive of this representational register as a gradated scale, either end occupied by the ideals of mimesis and estrangement – at one extreme you have the fictional play-world conceived of as absolutely real, and at the other, an understanding of everything on the stage as actual, and never as other. As our discussion of *Brillo Boxes* made apparent, art – as long as it is to remain art – does not of course have access to either of these extremes of aesthetic idealism. The usual example by which the absurdity of the first position is illustrated is surely familiar to the reader: no audience member, we are reminded, is ever so overwhelmed by a sense of the play-world reality that she leaps on stage to attend to a wounded Hamlet. At the same time – though this is far less often remarked – no-one is ever made so estranged from the art-audience relationship that on recognizing Duchamp's exhibited shovel as a mere shovel she decides to make use of the object for a spot of gardening. But these two extreme positions aside, all other representational registers – from vividly mimetic illusions to powerfully alienating techniques of estrangement, as well as everything in between – having already been marked

as occurring within art's pretence – and their effects recognized as 'effects' – are made available.

Rather than being then confined exclusively to any single modality, representation in the plays realizes itself as varied, mobile and multiple. The diversity that the register enables can be illustrated by, and acts to explain, the 'dynamic compendium of modes of playing' that Robert Weimann understands as set in motion in *King Lear*:

> These modes range from Lear's madness, Edgar's excessive role-playing, Kent's threadbare disguise, and the "all licensed Fool" to the lower, more earthy "new pranks" (Goneril's phrases [King Lear, 1.4.201, 238]) that recur so frequently in the tragedy. To an unsurpassed, even staggering extent, a thick performative mingles, but only partially coalesces, with a representation of Albion's division. Between them, and over a residual gap, the play is saturated with insights as unsanctioned as its wild assemblage of performance tricks and practices. The rendering of characters alone includes a full, bewildering assortment of acting styles and affects of the personal, from allegorical figuration and iconographic portraiture to the improvised personation and "deep" characterization we have examined in the preceding chapters. Far from narrowing the cultural scope that certain historicist readings have discerned in it, King Lear's astonishing array of dramaturgies enhances that scope.[15]

To illustrate the shifting variety of representational registers through which Shakespeare's dramatic art unfolds, and the manner in which it is made to, in Weimann's terms, mingle and partially coalesce we can turn to the figure of Hamlet. Where early on in our Introduction we made use of the example of Cressida, exploring Shakespeare's play of aesthetic dissimulation and representational multiplicity through a 'character' that was itself composed through deception and a ceaseless exchange of invalid evaluations, we might conclude this discussion by demonstrating how these same aesthetic strategies inform the realization given to a figure which remains the paradigmatic example for the various schools of critical thought that would understand stage personas as representing actual humanity.[16] And, certainly, it would be churlish to argue that the extended speeches supplied to the Danish prince do not realize the kind of representation that an audience would associate with something very close to authentic human agency. The following celebrated lines, for example, are certainly realized in a heightened mimetic key, and the sense of a fraught interiority is vividly conveyed:[17]

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[15] *Shakespeare and the Power of Performance* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 199.

[16] And as the enormous success of Harold Bloom's *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (Riverhead, 1998) indicates, it is still a perspective that continues to determine responses to the work.

[17] The reader no doubt remarks the convolutions and hedging that must go into these lines: 'associate with something very close to', 'realized in a … key', 'the sense of a …'. These roundabout expressions are not fortunate, but they are necessary if I am to avoid repeating the mimetic idealization of representation that Hamlet so often provokes (and it is for the same reason that I made use of quote marks earlier in the sentence when referring to Cressida's 'character'). The reader will observe that at points the articles which follow must too resort to such elaborated formulations.

> What a piece of work is a man – how noble in reason, how infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god, the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals – and yet, to me what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me – nor woman neither (2.2 264-270)[18]

A final clause, addressed to Rosencrantz, attaches itself to these words, 'though by your smiling you seem to say so' (2.2.270), and testifies to Shakespeare's dramatic dexterity. The speech's high colouring is what lends its representation the power to convince, yet this quality also seems to risk theatricalizing the representation.[19] But this is plainly the playwright's strategy, and rather than this self-reflexivity pointing back to the literal performance of the stage figures, it is redeployed: Hamlet's words to Rosencrantz ensure that this theatricality is understood as pertaining to a character trait, and, in a further elaboration of interiority, a trait that Hamlet (and surely Rosencrantz too) is ceded a conscious recognition of. At the same time, another representational redeployment occurs. *Copia*'s iteration pervades the play, and its effects come to the fore in moments such as these. *Hamlet* is a revenge tragedy in which the protagonist repeatedly refuses to assume the part of revenger – a playing off of genre which would be all the more marked through the relation this play took to the *Ur-Hamlet*. Hamlet's monologues, which would conventionally project outward, functioning as a stop-start device that would illuminate play-world action and drive the revenge plot along, turn inwards, and work to stall it.

And if this last point indicates that these different representational registers can be simultaneously realized and played off each other we can powerfully extend this understanding by recalling the lines that precede the speech:

> I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises, and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire – why, it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. (2.2 257-264)

At one level these lines can be taken as representing the initial stages of Hamlet's contemplation, as indicating a line of thought that will lead to the more wrought portrait of 'self' that follows. At the same time the speech serves as an ekphrastic attempt to make its hearers see (underlined by the speech's 'look you'), for the audience to locate Hamlet's

[18] The version of the play used here is that of the Second Quarto with additions from the Folio.

[19] Even when approached in purely mimetic terms, when understood as authentic and possessed of a profound interior life, Hamlet must still be thought of as given to fits of theatricality. There is, as A. L. French writes, 'a certain unreality in his grief, a certain kind of histrionic self-regard … whatever the 'that within' may be, it is, even in Hamlet's own sensibility, deeply involved with the outward show' (*Shakespeare and the Critics* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 45). Similarly, Alison Thorne contrasts Hamlet's denunciation of artificial modes of expression with the role's 'studied theatricality', drawing attention to 'the pointed ostentation of his own "inky garb" and his punning and hyperbolic utterances' (*Vision and Rhetoric in Shakespeare* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2000)), p. 113.

powerfully realised presence in a vividly conjured space. Yet what would have been immediately clear to the original audience is the way in which Hamlet's words – and surely too, the figure's gestures – indicate the actuality of the performance space itself. As Gurr notes, 'This goodly frame' would, in the parlance of the day, make for a description of the theatre's walls.[20] It seems to me possible, however, that here the phrase might refer to the structure of the promontory stage itself. Hamlet's next descriptor, 'the earth' was a term that, as Tiffany Stern remarks, denoted the playing boards[21] – and this means that the comparing of this 'earth' to a 'promontory' can then be understood, comically and absurdly, as making for a simile that undermines its own apparatus of similitude: the figure understood as consisting of no vehicle but only a circuit of tenors.[22] Hamlet goes on to indicate the sky above the stage and audience and to underline their shared space. He then points up the overhanging stage roof, painted as it was with the zodiac's 'golden fire'.[23] The extract ends by echoing a complaint that was often levelled at theatres – the stink of their audience. And it is this (half) recognition of the watching public that prompts Hamlet, gazing out at the spectators, to a contemplation of just what a piece of work a man is.

It certainly does not follow from this that we must revise our opinion of the powerful mimetic effect of the passage which follows this. As these pages have demonstrated, there is no reason that the recognition of such a context would make Hamlet's 'What a piece of work is a man' speech any less charged, or that it would mean the audience would experience the representation of 'authenticity' as any less powerful. What it does though is add to the stage action another, simultaneous dimension of representation. For as charged and 'authentic' a moment of self-reflection as the speech is, the stage arrangement asks that the actor playing Hamlet lets his gaze rove over the audience as he delivers the lines, acting as if it is the sight of these particular spectators which prompts him to each new plaudit. This making over of the performance's spectators into the objects of Hamlet's interiority is wonderfully ironic, and the fact of Hamlet's seeming to single out different spectators would mean that the episode also took a comic dimension for its original public. The dramatic arrangement too gives the actor the chance to make the most of the sequence. Rather than immediately turning to Rosencrantz with 'though by your smiling you seem to say so', the actor can deliver the line in a way that momentarily exploits the ambiguity of its addressee. Audience members might assume, initially, that it is their smiling that Hamlet is remarking, and this would create the effect, both ironic and illusory, that as Hamlet's attention is turned back to Rosencrantz and the play-world he inhabits, so too is the audience's.

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[20] *Staging in Shakespeare's Theatres* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 134.

[21] "'This Wide and Universal Theatre': The Theatre as Prop in Shakespeare's Metadrama", p. 17.

[22] Understanding is facilitated if we borrow for the simile the terms by which I A Richards distinguishes the object and image in metaphor. I have made use of this reutilization elsewhere as the use of *tenor* and *vehicle* seems less distracting than *primum comparandum* and *secundum comparatum.*

[23] That the Hamlet figure gestures toward the roof while speaking 'this majestical roof fretted with golden fire' is a rather traditional supposition – a point made by, for example, A. R. Braunmuller in the Pelican Shakespeare's 2001 version of *The Tragical History of Hamlet Prince of Denmark* (Penguin).

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These pages offer then a revised approach to Shakespeare's metatheatre that separates itself from present-day instantiations of the estrangement model and which marks up how the plays frame their own representational energies in relation to renaissance theories of mimesis. The revision takes in not only metatheatre, but also challenges how representation, the audience, and the artwork itself are conceived in both the poetics of estrangement and mimesis.

In the model that I argue for here, the dramatic artwork can never overcome its inherent duality so as to realize itself in single and unadulterated terms. It can never manifest itself in the ideal terms of absolute illusion or those of absolute actuality; its representation does not establish full presence, and neither, on the other hand, does it work to expose to the audience the conditions of an unvarnished actuality. Which is to say, truth – whether of the metaphysical or ideological variety – is not pursued. For while Shakespeare's plays make use of the powerful effects that illusion can conjure these effects remain subject to the overarching fact of the artwork's dissimulation. The spectators themselves play a doubled game of dissimulation; while at all times aware of the artwork's essential falsity, they remain ready to collude in the affects this falsity derives. For though the sense of the work's dissimulation is, as I wrote, 'overarching', it is only dominant when the playwright elects to make it so. And, in such a context, metatheatre, rather than being an external force that wholly dismantles representation's illusion, operates as another variety of illusion. And the effect is invigorating. Rather than being confined to the singular and absolute terms of truth, representation can be mobile and multiple. Audiences, having signed up to this pretence, recognize the artwork as a dissimulation that is not constrained by binary opposites, but which offers a more complex, subtle and richer interaction between the literal and figurative, and which can play across a range of representational registers. And metatheatre, though confined to illusion, becomes the means by which the effects that the essential dissimulation of art makes possible are activated.

Articles

Introduction to the articles

The article-based dissertation brings with it its own challenges. For purposes of publication each article is required to function as a self-contained entity. At the same time, each text has to form part of the dissertation's broader thesis. One result of this is that points that might serve to elucidate the aims of the dissertation as a whole, when viewed according to the discrete concentration that an individual article demands, may be seen as without urgent or immediate application to the matter at hand, and peer reviewers are likely to suggest their redaction. A second aspect to consider is the fact that insofar as these individual articles are to function as a group, and, as a group, elucidate the dissertation's argument, a degree of repetition and overlap must be accepted as a necessary evil – for each article is obliged, to a certain extent, to introduce ideas and discussions which are also dealt with elsewhere. As such I approached the dissertation in the manner I thought would best enable me to produce articles that acted to fully explore my thesis, yet which attempted to avoid, as far as is possible, reiteration. The first two articles I completed (and these make up the first and second pieces here) were soon after accepted by academic journals, and their focus reflects the demands of publication. These pieces make use of the same concepts and approach as the other articles, but these aspects are not provided a full and explicit marking. The remaining four articles I have refrained from publishing, desiring as I did for them a format where space could be given over to elucidating and developing the dissertation's argument in terms more forthright and thorough. And where it has proved necessary to revisit something already covered elsewhere, most often I have tried to approach this as an opportunity to illuminate a different facet of this aspect. These preliminary comments made, let us move on to introduce the articles themselves.

These articles hold in common a certain methodological structure. They focus on either a single episode or on a small group of brief passages. This concentrated focus, though, remains inflected by, and itself inflects, the immediate context of the scene in which the passage occurs as well as the broader context established by the work as a whole. Through analyzing the relationship metatheatre takes to representation I am able to advance an original interpretation of each episode. These interpretations either radically extend the findings of earlier research – as in, for example, my discussion of religious reference in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or of the part played by metatheatre in the final act of *The Winter's Tale* – or argue for an understanding of the discussed passage which stands in almost direct opposition to received scholarly opinion – as, for example, in the readings of the fairy blessing in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Edgar's 'Dover cliff' speech in *King Lear*, and the opening scene of *The Winter's Tale*. Often such a critical shift necessarily implies a broader reassessment, and the articles explore how these local readings impact the overall signification that the work takes.

Three plays are discussed across six articles. Three of the pieces look at *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, two *The Winter's Tale*, and one *King Lear*. The prominence

given to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reflects an assessment of the play that I share with Hugh Grady. When Grady argues that the year 1595 should be considered the most significant turning point in Shakespeare's career, a year in which Shakespeare realizes a 'break-through [that] was multi-dimensional' it is to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that Grady immediately turns, and specifically to a discussion of 'the central role of a sophisticated concept of the aesthetic' in the work.[1] *The Winter's Tale* occurs at the other end of the canon; the penultimate of the late romances, it was written around 15 years after the *Dream*. It can rightly be considered the most daring of all of Shakespeare's metatheatrical experiments, and placing the discussions of *The Winter's Tale* and the *Dream* side-by-side serves to illustrate the manner of the playwright's technical development. *King Lear* represents a mid-point between these two works (a precise mid-point were we to accept the earliest date attributed to *King Lear* – that of 1603), and so facilitates our sense of Shakespeare's maturation. The choice of plays also means that our discussion occurs across dramatic genres, taking in works labelled comedy, tragedy and tragicomedy.

The first article, "Holy Words and Low Folly in *A Midsummer Night's Dream"*[2] offers a re-interpretation of the *Dream*'s central religious allusion: the echo in Bottom's account of his 'vision' of 1 Corinthians 2.9-10. I argue that the speech's signification must be understood as contextualized by the utilization made of holy reference throughout the play. The approach makes use of the second notion of *copia* that I outlined above. In that the references undergo an iteration that unfolds in the context of a self-aware performance the signification they would assert, and the structures of patriarchy, order and sanctity that they would underwrite, are subject to a certain revision. Bottom's speech itself is approached via Stuart Sillars' suggestion that the lines' allusion to 1 Corinthians also indicates a reference to Erasmus' use of the same passage in his *Praise of Folly*. I show how a more expanded understanding of this intertextual weaving would further explore the play's elevation of the lowly and the foolish and also underline the reversals of authority that this transposition stages. More significantly, I suggest that these allusions act as a self-reflexive marking of the play's artistic strategies, arguing that the effects generated by the traditions of spiritual revelation are appropriated and made over into the aesthetic and secular effects of Shakespeare's drama itself. The garbled iterations of Bottom's speech emphasize the folly-like nature of dramatic performance while at the same time linking this vulgar art form with the epiphanic. More radically perhaps, it highlights that meaning in the *Dream* – religious or otherwise – is inevitably circumscribed by its occurrence within the dissimulating illusions of theatrical performance.

The second article, "Political Shakespeare and the Blessing of Art",[3] also concerns *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, exploring the use the play makes of *copia* in what is a more familiar understanding in Renaissance studies: the elaborated imitation of classical models. This piece develops a strand of the discussion from the previous article, the relationship

[1] *Shakespeare and Impure Aesthetics* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 53.
[2] Published in *Archiv*, vol. 254, no. 1, 2017, pp. 48-66.
[3] Published in *EMCO*, vol. 4, no.1, 2018, pp. 1-6.

that the play's art takes to power, and it contests Leonard Tennenhouse's view that these elements act to underwrite each other. I argue that metatheatre operates to mark up the inevitability of the play's generic resolution, as well as the pretence and power of its illusions. The analysis gives attention to the fairy blessing of the nuptial beds, and I show how rather than acting as consummation to the drama's concluding celebration, the charm's ambiguities operate to disfigure the comedic restitution in marital and civic order by underlining the equivocal nature of the mythic couple at the heart of the marriage comedy: Theseus and Hippolyta. I argue that by metatheatrically marking the play's essential dissimulation, yet at the same time demanding that the audience engage imaginatively with these dissimulations and the multifarious and contradictory signifying practices they make available, the *Dream* realizes for itself an experiential space whose operation is distinct from that in effect in the extra-artistic world. This wins for Shakespeare's art an autonomy of sorts – yet the article concludes by considering whether such an arrangement undoes the ideological interpretation and appropriation of Shakespeare's work or if, somewhat perversely, it works to facilitate it.

The third article on the *Dream*, "Green Plots, Hawthorn Brakes and an Ass's Nole: Imaginative Translation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*", further examines the notion of a reproduction that is capable of radically transforming the signification associated with its original, together with an exploration of the complex effects that can be had through the ambivalent relationship that spoken description takes to stage depiction. Where the subsequent articles consider ekphrastic accounts that are dramatically poised and which would seem to invoke sublimity and wonder, this piece focuses on a pair of pat and comically self-reflexive instances. Nonetheless, each episode affords a vigorous metatheatrical complexity that explores the workings of the poetics of early modern performance. Both occur in 3.1: Quince's initial setting of scene, and the marvelous translation that Bottom soon after undergoes. These passages comically highlight how the business of stage representation is predicated on the audience's act of what I have elected to call imaginative translation. The term refers to the ability to see the stage action at one and the same time as both illusory and real – 'seeing' simultaneously an Athenian forest and an Elizabethan stage – and at the same time retaining an awareness of this perceptual negotiation. The analysis encourages me to an original conceptualization of how the episode of Bottom's transformation was originally realized. I argue that the theatrical management given to Bottom's marvelous metamorphosis, a self-reflexive transposition by which the quotidian is re-rendered as the magical, operates to self-reflectively explore the nature of the audience's imaginative engagement. The arrangement at once comical and ironic and acts to underline the absurdity of artistic pretence, yet at the same time it demonstrates that such a perspective is itself dependent on, and commingled with – via an ongoing process – the claims of illusion.

The relationship between described, actual and imagined representations is pursued in the next article. "Dissimulation and the Dover Cliff: Metatheatrical Representation in *King Lear*" examines the fabricated description of the vertiginous drop by which Edgar deceives the blinded Gloucester into believing he stands on the verge of the Dover cliff. I

argue that the play marks up how the processes by which Edgar creates this false picture correspond to how play-world illusion is itself constructed, and in this way the passage foregrounds the dissimulation of dramatic representation itself. Central to this analysis is the fact that Edgar's description operates in the mode of classical *ekphrasis*. The ambiguities that inhere to the figure of *ekphrasis* allows us to address, on the one hand, critical perspectives that see the passage as mimetic exemplar, or which claim the play is unstageable and only to be grasped by imagination's inward eye, and on the other hand, the view that sees Shakespeare's self-reflexivity as condemned to effect only estrangement. I demonstrate that while Edgar's speech locates itself within the mimetic tradition and makes use of its exemplary contemporary realization, painterly perspective, the description undoes at each turn the representational forces that these aesthetic models would institute. The account deliberately mis-realizes these techniques of verisimilitude, and instead serves to remark how the illusions of dialogue and stage are predicated on dissimulation. Yet this act of metatheatre is not limited to instancing disillusion or distance, in fact it acts so as to conscript and redeploy the effects that illusion would otherwise generate. This arrangement is reliant on the audience's ability to access the transforming vision of an imaginative inward eye while never actually forfeiting the sense of the play's artifice. In the article's conclusion I return to Coleridge's concept of 'a willing suspension of disbelief' to more precisely outline how Shakespeare's metatheatrical representation unfolds as a negotiation between the forces of imagination and disenchantment.

The manner in which Shakespeare's art makes simultaneous use of illusion and illusion's undoing is explored in "'Mocked with art': Contradiction and Affect in *The Winter's Tal*e's 'Statue' Scene'". Like the previous article, it too examines the use made of the device of *ekphrasis* – though here *ekphrasis* is understood in the narrower sense of the representation of an artwork, in this case, the staging of Hermione's statue. My reading makes clear that at the same time as the 'statue' scene makes for one of drama's most profoundly moving spectacles, it too, in an arrangement that would seem paradoxical, redirects attention to the high artifice of its own construction. Yet this movement, rather than working against the dramatic impetus of the scene, intensifies it. The contestation between a belief in play-world illusion and its repudiation engenders in the play's spectators precisely the kind of tension between faith and doubt that the scene's approach to the miraculous requires. And the dramatist is prepared to press this tension to outrageous extremes. Firstly, the play asks that the actor realizes the performance of Hermione's 'statue' with unblinking eyes, and then draws attention to the inevitable failure of the impersonation, a move that threatens the coherence of both play-world and performance. Secondly, the queens' reanimation is framed in such a way that for the original audience it would evoke witchcraft and the blasphemous hoaxes of catholic miracle, together with the empty dissimulation of street magic. And I argue that it is these rather fraught aesthetic gambits which function to structure the scene, and which determine its dramatic success.

The final article is entitled "'Exit [Chuckling]': Exposition, Role and Dissimulation in *The Winter's Tale*" and extends the exploration of how *The Winter's Tale* plays off the audience's imaginative investment in its representations through analyzing the discrepant

mappings that dialogical assertion takes to the visual action of stage performance. Significantly, the piece shows how the critical approach that the articles have taken up until this point, which has tended to focus on a single passage and to concentrate on the metatheatrical deployment of either *copia* or *ekphrasis*, can be applied more holistically. Here, while the centre of analytical attention remains a short section, the 40 lines of the play's opening scene, my focus shifts in and out so as to demonstrate how these first moments fold back onto the play as a whole. Metatheatre is likewise given a broader configuration, and, correspondingly, the article concentrates on the aspects of iteration, discrepancy and dissimulation developed out of the earlier focus on *copia* and *ekphrasis*. The key to this investigation is the original interpretation given to what is the play's often overlooked opening, an effusive exchange of cordialities between a pair of courtiers that seems to make little practical contribution to the narrative's unfolding. The episode, I argue, was not written to be played straight. Properly realized, the scene creates in the audience a set of expectations which it subsequently upends, and what results from this is a rather remarkable coup de théâtre. I demonstrate how this opening feat of artistic misdirection operates to determine the relationship that the audience is to take towards the play's extended use of exposition and report as well as towards the drama's dynamic economy of actor and role. The latter aspect is developed in the second half of the article, where it is demonstrated that a comprehensive experience of the reunions and revivals of the play's last act can only be had by a reading that properly accounts for the aesthetic strategies of the play's opening exchange. Yet whereas the previous article approached the play's final act through a focus on Hermione's revival, and demonstrated the way in which metatheatre coordinated the tension between the fictional and constructed aspects of the play so as to lend the queen's reanimation intensification, this article's discussion of the last scene looks at the metatheatrical return that part-doubling supplies to two other figures, and shows how the play's daring self-reflexivity sustains this restitution while at the same time lending to the scene ironies of the dramatic and comic variety.

Holy Words and Low Folly in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

The eye of man hath not seene, and eare hathe not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.
1 Corinthians 2.9-10 (Bishops' Bible)[1]

The mangled reference to 1 Corinthians 2.9-10 provided in Bottom's confused account of his 'dream' forms the central – and most celebrated – biblical allusion in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. St. Paul's passage asserts the elevation of the low, and its appropriation has often been understood as forming the key contribution to the *Dream*'s complex statement on the exchange between the 'vulgar and celestial'.[2] If, however, we understand the reference as indicating another allusion still, to Erasmus' use of the same passage in *The praise of Folie*, we will see that the relationship between these two elements is given significant reformulation. The allusion would work to restrain the more elevated connotations that the appropriation conjures, while reframing and extending the meaning accorded to the low. What emerges is a serioludic syncretic parody, wherein the vulgar and celestial borrow freely the effects of the other. The utilisation given to religious reference throughout the play appears to establish the context for such a reading, and before Bottom's account of his vision is discussed, the first section of the article surveys the play's various allusions to the sacred.

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Bottom's role may make allusion to the writings of St Paul at its very first appearance. Towards the close of 1.2, after the artisans have met and distributed their parts, Bottom offers his fellow performers an elevated farewell: 'Take pains, be perfect: adieu' (1.2.101-102).[3] These words of counsel may derive from 2 Corinthians 13.11. The Geneva Bible of 1560[4] has 'Finally brethren, fare ye well, *be perfect*, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you' (Emphasis added). The gloss provided indicates the importance the fifteen-hundreds ascribed to the short phrase: '*be perfect:* A brief exhortation, but yet such a one as comprehendeth all the parts of a Christian man's life'. The significance the reference suggests would seem to be underlined by Bottom's final 'adieu' – what may have been otherwise understood simply as an

[1] London: Christopher Barker, 1568.
[2] Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne: Renaissance Essays* (Routledge, 2005), p. 210.
[3] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, The Arden Shakespeare, edited by Harold Brooks (Methuen, 1979). All Quotations are from this edition.
[4] Geneva: Rowland Hall.

affectation would now operate in its proper sense of a commendation to God. Yet the elevation that this reference indicates is not quite allowed to manifest itself.

As we will see happen throughout, the holy allusion is given to operate in a context which would seem to limit and redirect its implications. For the low farce of the artisans' performance preparations – wherein Bottom attempts to grab all available parts – allows the professional actors of Shakespeare's stage to play out their own comic parody. And the ironic allusion to the performative structures by which the *Dream* is itself realised is extended through the rapid succession of incongruous personations that Bottom's role provides. The Elizabethan actor playing the weaver-come-actor gives a turn as a tyrant; attempts to claim Lion's part along with his own, and enacts a dialogue wherein he personates both Pyramus and Thisbe. This last effort seems to me to offer particular metatheatrical commentary. I would argue that the lines given to Bottom suggest that in performing this pair of lovers, he swaps their sex.[5] It is an arrangement that would underline the absurdity inherent in the whole business of contemporary stage personation where female roles were fulfilled by male actors – and in this way the scene's preposterousness would reflect ironically back on the 'straight' performance of the main narrative's tangled lovers.

Quince eventually manages to put a stop to these personations, cajoling Bottom into limiting his performance to the lead-role: 'You can play no part but Pyramus: for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a proper man as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely gentleman-like man' (1.2.79-82). But these lines only work to further highlight the mechanics of the *Dream*'s dramatic illusions. They make comic reference to the 'ill face' of the actor who took Bottom's role, Will Kemp[6] – and surely offer an ideal opportunity for him to summon one of his famous gurns. Paul's words then come at the end of a scene already filled with reversals of both sense and dramatic category. The coherent and certain meaning that the phrase would indicate is undone through its occurrence in a scene that repeatedly references itself as a performed illusion, and in this way, the significance that the phrase volunteers must be understood as checked.

Where the broader context of the scene qualifies and circumscribes the biblical reference within the theatrical, at a more local, syntactical level, the line's spiritual momentum is disrupted by its rubbing shoulders with the bawdy. Bottom's brief valediction tails the final instructions Quince delivers to his troupe. The playwright's instructions to the actors to 'con' their 'parts' would have already pricked the ears of the Elizabethan audience, ever it would seem alert for innuendo.[7] Bottom's response makes recourse to malapropism so that this vein might be pursued: 'We will meet, and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously' (1.2.100-101). The effect of these coarse

[5] See my "Transgendering Thisne" in *American Notes and Queries*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2016.
[6] 'Ill face' is Kemp's self-description, found in the dedication to *Kemps nine dais wonder* (London: Ling, 1600).
[7] 'Con' references the French for pudenda, while 'parts' could indicate the genitals of either sex – as in Hamlet's 'secret parts of fortune' (2.2.223).

punctuations is to mark up the potential double entendre in the next line's 'take pains' – the very words that precede those of Paul. The lewd sense of the phrase has already been used by Shakespeare in *King John*: 'Hath she no husband/ That will take pains to blow a horn before her?' (1.1.218-219). That the pattern of bawdy in the exchange between Quince and Bottom would seem to be deliberate is suggested through the pairing of 'pain' and 'con' later in Act 5 – 'Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain/ To do you service' (5.1.80-81) – where the smutty allusion is underlined by the further bawdy implication of the last three words.[8]

While these innocently voiced obscenities serve to locate Quince's troupe comically, the portrayal the artisans are given cannot be considered ungenerous. The aspects of farce and bawdy that configure their presentation indicate the native vitality inherent in these low performers, and in turn point up the continued presence of these comic elements in the art of Shakespeare's own theatre. The scene's parody is gentle rather than strident, and this temper extends – here at least – to the religious reference. Paul's phrase is allowed an abbreviated resonance, and its significance, rather than being undermined, is merely displaced. For despite the intervening catachresis of 'obscenely', and the bawdy connotations of the words that precede Paul's phrase, Bottom's farewell does nonetheless echo with a certain grandeur. His line solemnly marks the completion of the scene, and asks for a silent group exit – the better that its poetry may linger. The effect, of course, is immediately undone. Quince comes in with: 'At the Duke's oak we meet' (1.2.103), a flat line that robs the artisans' enterprise of the romance and profundity Bottom's words would accord it – and at the same time relocates the magical illusions of Shakespeare's stage within the banal practicalities that performance necessitates. We see, though, that Bottom is allowed to recover. He gets the last words after all, only now the elevated allusion of the holy text is exchanged for the lower – yet not invalid – form of the proverbial: 'Enough: hold, or cut bow-strings' (1.2.104).

The scene's design ensures that Paul's elevated exhortation is imbricated within the vulgar. His words are mouthed by an artisan, and a lewd and comic capering renders their context. At the same time, the *Dream* underlines its recourse to these very crudities, and further points to the realisation of its art as managed through the simplest and most absurd pretense. This allows the *Dream* to ironically rehearse contemporary assumptions that the theatre represented a low form, while simultaneously highlighting the brilliance of its own comic sophistication. By a similar arrangement, the parodic context lent to Paul's words does not wholly rob them of significance, rather it works to elevate the imperfect material of the folk performance. The effect is that the two distinct elements meet on a kind of syncretic mid-ground. The sacred significance of Paul's line is made over, and its meaning is redirected so as to indicate the art of drama itself – as represented by the artisans, and as actuated by the professionals of Shakespeare's stage.

[8] For the Elizabethans, 'do you service' indicated sexual attentions. See Eric Partridge on the phrase's use in *All's Well That Ends Well* 4.5.28-32, *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (Routledge, 2001), p. 235.

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The wedding celebrations with which the *Dream* concludes work, at one level, to confirm the sanctity of union and the stability of an ordered society founded on marriage. Interspersed throughout this movement to resolution and restitution are a series of religious references that – in their original form – would entreat of the same. But as we will see, the manner of their appropriation works at another level to upend such meaning; they provide instead a series of counter-instances that operate to call into question the play's resolution in orthodoxy.

The young lovers have their confusions brought to a close towards the end of the play's third act when Puck anoints the eyes of the sleeping Lysander with the love juice while speaking a magical incantation that promises a happy outcome for the play's various Jacks and Jills:

> When thou wak'st,
> Thou tak'st
> True delight
> In the sight
> Of thy former lady's eye;
> And the country proverb known,
> That every man should take his own,
> In your waking shall be shown:
> Jack shall have Jill,
> Nought shall go ill
> The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well. (3.2.453-463)

Bearing in mind the similar reference in *Love's Labour's Lost* (thought to have its performing less than a year before the *Dream*): 'Our wooing doth not end like an old play./ Jack hath not Jill. These ladies' courtesy/ Might well have made our sport a comedy' (5.2.851-853),[9] we see how Puck's proverb serves to signal the play's dramatic form; after the various comic mishaps, events are now on course to end in happy consummation and restitution within the prescribed structures of patriarchal order and ceremony. At the same time however, the line's operation as a self-aware theatrical marker, together with the reflexive supplying of its own cross-reference, encourages us to view Puck's speech as offering its own burlesque.

In highlighting the play's generically ordained resolution in the sacred ceremony of marriage the speech must surely prompt the audience to recall the various and radical reformulations that the *Dream* has throughout provided the figure of union. Beginning in

[9] *The Norton Shakespeare,* edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus (W. W. Norton, 1997).

the orthodox and state-sponsored love-match of Theseus and Hippolyta, the figure continues via a series of increasingly unconventional formulations in a progress through the proscribed and 'unnatural'. The play is not even twenty lines old when the talk of happy nuptials is interrupted by the shrill claims of Egeus and Demetrius, who recompose the figure of union in terms of a forced marriage. Their suit, though, is not heard finished before the union motif is once more comically reconfigured, this time as a homosexual pairing of the claimants.[10]

The young lovers, having fled to the woods, continue this movement. There they reformulate the figure of union in ever more unorthodox couplings, only now the note of parody is intensified: the irregular pairings they imagine are realised in the language of sacred marital ceremony. In 2.2., having decided to spend the night in the forest, Lysander attempts what may be understood as the sexual coercion of Hermia (2.2.46-51). As Patricia Parker points out, Lysander's lines invoke the wedding vows from the Ceremony of Matrimony as found in *The Book of Common Prayer* 1599, configuring his seduction in the very sacrosanct terms he would unravel.[11] The speech makes use of both 'knit' and 'troth' (2.2.46, 49), terms indicating, respectively, the eternal bond that will join man and wife, and the holy vow that consummates this joining. This irregular appropriation is underlined in the speech's last words. Lysander's lines provide the ceremony's concluding 'Amen' a disorderly repeat – and then continue on, reformulating the service's central vow as a mawkish, feebly rhymed couplet, before tailing off with a banal good night wish:

> Amen, amen, to that fair prayer say I;
> And then end life when I end loyalty!
> Here is my bed; sleep give thee all his rest. (2.2.61-63).

Later in 3.2, when the confusions in the forest are at their height, the distraught Helena, believing herself abused by Demetrius and Lysander, borrows from the same ceremony. Somewhat strikingly, the reference is juxtaposed with an arrangement that again indicates a male homosexual union; Helena berates the men: 'you must join in souls to mock me too?' (3.2.150). Shortly after, a further reconfiguration is provided when, in her address to Hermia, Helena is given lines that reframe the union motif in terms of an exclusively female coupling. Her speech portrays the mutual devotion of their youth as an intense fusion that subsumed their separate selves; she recollects a time when their 'hands, […] sides, voices and minds/ Had been incorporate' (3.2.207-208). Having provided radical transposition to the figure of union, she caps her appeal with the play's most explicit

[10] The theme is first introduced, sotto voce, with Hermia's wish that her father could experience the attraction she feels for Lysander: 'I would my father look'd but with my eyes' (1.1.56); it is reprised when Theseus unpacks the options available to Hermia – though this time round Egeus is matched with Demetrius – '[…] Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would' (1.1.86-89), and Lysander is allowed to pick up on this ambiguity, giving it bald statement in his very first lines: 'You have her father's love, Demetrius:/ Let me have Hermia's; do you marry him' (1.1.93-94).
[11] *Shakespeare from the Margins* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 102.

recalling of the Ceremony of Marriage: 'And will you rent our ancient love asunder/ To join with men in scorning your poor friend?' (3.2.215-216).

The ironic displacement of the comedy's resolve in the forms of patriarchal convention is further underlined through the language which Puck's charm takes. Stuart Sillars observes that the promised restoration of order and accord occurs in a speech beset with jumbled reference and dislocations of sequence.[12] Moreover, Puck's speech sidesteps the figures of classical rhetoric, and in this way the prescriptions of civil governance which such figures underwrite, to instead borrow from the language of folk tradition. The speech's concluding lines highlight the incongruity of this arrangement, where a trite proverb is deemed sufficient to indicate the richness of the play's resolution. This is further underlined, as Sillars observes, by the phrase being provided a self-conscious introduction as well as a superfluous gloss – and by the fact that the audience, in having been promised one proverb, actually gets two. The original audience would also have found comedy in Puck's failure to get his proverbs quite right: Ray's *Collection of English Proverbs* offers 'All is well and the man has his mare again', and in Tilley A164 we find 'All shall be well and Jack shall have Jill', while A165 provides 'All is well and the man has his mare again'.

I think we can understand the humour as taking further explication still, for it appears that Puck's explanatory embellishment makes up another of the play's allusions to St Paul. If the high and holy is indeed employed to provide a gloss for the low form of the proverbial, it is an arresting utilisation of biblical reference that would seem to anticipate the radical inversions suggested later by Bottom's allusion to 1 Corinthians. Unsurprisingly, Puck's appropriation is similarly scrambled. His 'Every man should take his own' appears to offer a muddled echo of 1 Corinthians 7.2. Quite appropriately, it is a passage in which Paul entreats marriage, and the verses either side of it would seem to have particular relevance to the play's themes:

> Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me, It were good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, *let every man have his wife, and let every woman have her own husband.* Let the husband give unto the wife due benevolence, and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not the power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not the power of his own body, but the wife. (7.1-4. *Geneva Bible*, 1560 (Emphasis added.))

'Due benevolence' could be understood as providing an ironic commentary on the behavior of the play's husbands-to-be as well as on the fairy King, Oberon. And the losses of identity and control brought about by the lovers' forest transformation may also be understood as referenced by the wording, if not the sense, of 7.1.4 ('The wife hath not the power of her own body […] also the husband hath not the power of his own body') again

[12] The observations noted in this paragraph come from Stuart Sillars' "'Howsoever, strange and admirable:' *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as via stultitiae" (*Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, vol. 244, 2007, pp. 27-39), pp. 36-37.

working according to the play's 'mispris'd mood' (3.2.74) of appropriation. Any recognition of the reference would immediately effect a broad irony. For while the entreaty on marriage is embedded in a speech that offers a similar prescription, Paul's petition is hedged by its opening and overriding caveat: 'it were good for a man not to touch a woman' – an admonition that would certainly displace the speech's indication of resolution in conventional union.

Despite the anaphoric pattern of Paul's passage working to suggest balance and parity, this introductory frame makes it clear that his text reworks the myth of the female as substantiating potential corruption. That the *Dream*'s reference to these verses could be deliberate is suggested by Puck's speech seeming to operate in a similar manner – only here, the denigration of the female is saved until the end so that it might work as something like a punchline. After generic Jacks have been paired with generic Jills in an arrangement suggestive of equivalence, the next configuration reiterates the relational terms implicit within Paul's words. While still counseling marriage, the phrase portrays the union of the sexes as enacting defilement upon the male through its equating of the female with the animal: 'The man shall have his mare'.

In locating the female in this manner Puck's line makes recourse to the traditional pairing of sexually active women with mares. This represents, of course, a conventional and patriarchal trope, and can be understood as underwriting the play's ostensible movement towards order, reason and marriage. However, as has been remarked, a discordant note is struck by the fact that this indication occurs in the form of a crude proverb. As was exampled in the earlier discussion of the artisans, the low and vulgar seem to function throughout the *Dream* to provide counter-instance to the forces of order and elevation and so offer this relationship a renewed and elaborated significance. The alert audience member would have recognised the reoccurrence of this arrangement in the inversion of Puck's concluding words, and this would have brought with it the expectation that their patriarchal claim will soon meet with a comic reversal.

The volte-face comes immediately, and, in that it dispenses with subtle indication, proves highly amusing. Having informed the audience that 'The man shall have his mare', Puck exits, but only for Titania and the ass-headed Bottom to enter – the mismatched couple providing an emblematic reformulation of Puck's proverb that jumbles its terms and farces its claims. The gender relationship is switched, and the metaphorical beast of Puck's proverb undergoes a comically misprised reification. Moreover, the humour is intensified by the performative context: the usurping female is of course performed by a male actor, and Bottom's magical transformation is realised by what was surely a simple and unconvincing stage prop, '[a]n ass's nole […] fixed on his head' (3.2.17). Yet more than simply inverting the phrase's terms, the charmed lovers detail an arrangement that unravels the categorical conventions Puck's words would assert. The claim of male authority implicit in the proverb's glossed 'every man shall take his own' is comically undone; the scene's opening lines see Titania invite Bottom to her bed for coys and kisses

(4.1.1-4), and remind the audience that when they last saw the weaver he was being conveyed to the Fairy Queen's bower as a gagged sexual hostage.[13] These violations of order extend into violations of category: queen couples with commoner, wife with lover, and – as the proverb's tired and formulaic translation of women into mares is transposed and revivified – human with animal. Bruce Boehrer understands these transgressions as re-indicating the process by which Oberon reestablishes his power over his wayward Queen: revealing authority's own capacity to maintain order as reliant upon the violation of the very kinds of order it itself constructs.[14] It is an observation that brings us back to 1 Corinthians 7.1-4, marking up the disordering of Paul's precepts that Oberon's actions realise. As noted, rather than the passage presenting marriage as an ideal, and an end in itself, Paul's words entreat of union principally for its capacity to restrain the very transgressions Oberon engineers: the marriage concept is introduced with 'It were good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication […]'. Oberon's actions reverse this ordering; for the Fairy King fornication – in its most illicit forms – becomes a device by which order might be reasserted.

Bottom's confused account of his vison, with its central echo of 1 Corinthians, will close out this scene. The signification that the biblical reference can take must, it seems to me, be understood as qualified by the complex of tensions that precede it. The series of inversions work to reposition sacred allusion in a context that is self-reflexive, dissimulating and intensely ironic, and which appears to offer disruption not only to order and reason, but to the possibility for sanctity. Most immediately, the arrangement underlines for the audience that Bottom's holy allusion is prompted by what must be in part understood as a profane descent into illicit sensuality. More radically perhaps, it highlights that meaning in the *Dream* – religious or otherwise – is inevitably circumscribed by its occurrence within the dissimulating illusions of theatrical performance. Yet the dissimulating illusions of theatrical practice may just be, as we will see, the means by which these apparently antagonistic impulses are drawn together and extended.

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The final act gathers the aristocrats, the artisans and the fairies for the nuptial celebrations in the palace, overtly marking the narrative's resolution in orthodoxy, order and peace. Yet the artisans' performance reintroduces the contrary forces that have, throughout the play, shadowed this progression. Most overtly, the interlude provides a parodic re-rendering of the main action; less conspicuously, it offers further development to the *Dream*'s disjunctive appropriation and redirection of religious reference. This continuation is first marked by a gentle yet precise echo of the mangled appropriation of 1 Corinthians by which Bottom described his 'vision'. Where in the previous act Bottom gave us, 'The eye of man

[13] The last line of 3.1 has Titania command her fairies 'Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently' (3.1.194).
[14] Bruce Thomas Boehrer, "Bestial Buggery in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" (*The Production of English Renaissance Culture,* edited by David Lee Miller, Sharon O'Dair and Harold Weber, Cornell University Press, 1994, pp. 123-150), p. 146.

hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen' (4.1.209-10), as the interlude's Pyramus, he offers 'I see a voice […] I can hear my Thisbe's face' (5.1.190-191). A far more sacrilegious note will be struck a few lines later. It will operate to re-indicate the bizarre paths of desire that the main narrative suggested and which the ostensible conclusion would suppress, and, at the same time, underline these presentations as realised through and within illusion.

In "(Peter) Quince: Love Potions, Carpenter's Coigns and Athenian Weddings" Patricia Parker argues that the name given to the interlude's playwright offers a set of biblical references that develops further the relationship that the play's framework of Christian allusion forms with the low.[15] She points to the association that 'Quince' bears to the 'quoin' or 'coign', the term used to indicate the carpenter's 'cornerstone' (from the many biblical references made to cornerstones, the most prominent for the Elizabethans would probably have been *Psalm* 118:22: 'The stone, *which* the builders refused, is the head of the corner' (Wycliffe's Bible, 1395)[16]). She goes on to argue that the role's forename further extends this allusion:

> [i]n Shakespeare's marriage play, 'Peter Quince' already recalls not just the one married apostle but the network of biblical 'stones' that includes the 'Peter' or 'rock' on which a different kind of structure is founded, the rejected 'cornerstone' and the 'living stones' all gathered together in the second Epistle to 'Peter'. (p. 52)

The key reference would actually appear to be 1 Peter 2:5, which gives us: 'Ye also as lively stones, be made a spiritual house, an holy Priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ' (*Geneva Bible* 1560).That Parker's observation is not simply a critical over-determining of associative significance is indicated by what I suggest is the final act's appropriating of the 'living stones' of Peter's text according to the same serioludic strategy that we have seen configure the play's other uses of holy reference.

The allusion is located within a piece of low – and, it appears to me, bawdy – slapstick. Pyramus peers through the chink offered by Snout's Wall in order to espy his Thisbe – she, though, is nowhere to be seen. Pyramus vents his frustration, and the watching Theseus remarks on the performance's silliness:

> BOTTOM [as Pyramus]: Curs'd be thy stones for deceiving me!
>
> THESEUS: The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again. (5.1.179-181)

[15] *Shakespeare Survey*, vol. 57, 2003, pp. 39-54.
[16] *The Wycliffe Bible: John Wycliffe's Translation of the Holy Scriptures from the Latin Vulgate* (Lamp post Inc, 2009).

The lines surely play on the indecorous connotations of 'stones', and so indicate that Pyramus, in his striking Wall, hits Snout in his testicles.[17] This gross farce establishes the context by which the sacred allusion will unfold. Once again, the low entertainment of the theatre is provided disingenuous indicating while at the same time pointing up the complex art of the play's presentational arrangement. The stones of the interlude belong to Wall, and double as the 'lively stones' of Snout's testicles. To give our attention first to Wall's stones, we see that their configuration too functions according to the twin-perspective that Shakespeare's self-reflexive stage effects. At the level of the interlude, 'stones' indicates the artisans' attempt at producing the illusion of an on-stage wall. At the same time, of course, these stones also make up the literal pebbles that were perhaps mixed in Wall's roughcast decking. Snout's stones are similarly configured – for testicles are shared by stage persona and actor alike. Pyramus's striking of the stones that frustrate his vision of Thisbe would act as an assault not only on the literal-yet-illusory 'stones' of Wall, but also on the stage 'stones' of Snout, and, in this way, the actual 'stones' of the actor performing both roles.

Ironically, it is in fact the figure of order and orthodoxy, Theseus, who extends and converts the scene's low comedy into something like sacrilegious allusion. The words which reformulate Wall's stones as the 'lively stones' of Peter are his: 'The wall, methinks, being *sensible*, should curse again' [Emphasis added]. Once more, the elevation that the holy announces is transposed into theatre's low and dissimulating forms. Biblical reference is made to rub up against the vulgar and comic, and its original and absolute signification is recast through its manifest embedding in the incongruous illusions of the theatre.

A few lines later Peter's 'stones' are given reprise. Theatrical dissimulation once more combines with a lewdly configured dislocation, only now the latter is radically intensified. The figuration in which the reference occurs surely represents the most stunningly obscene image of sex that the *Dream* offers: Thisbe's words to Wall: 'My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,/ Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee' (5.1.188-189). Jonathan Bate and Héloïse Sénéchal indicate that 'lime' would be pronounced as a homophone for 'limb', and so suggest penis.[18] My own imaginings may be more lurid; for me it seems just as probable that 'lime' (where the word connotes the substance of lime plaster itself) could indicate ejaculate. My understanding of the scene's dramatic realisation would further suggest that the allusion to fellatio enjoys a ribald visual accompaniment. The two references to Wall's 'stones' indicate their proximity to the 'cranny' the actor forms with his fingers, and this leads one to picture the actor performing Snout's portrayal of Wall as standing with legs akimbo and his parted fingers just below his groin. Such a pose would mean that the lovers kneel into the wall, an arrangement that would best locate

[17] For the various examples in Shakespeare's work of 'stones' being used to denote testicles see *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, p. 250.
[18] Jonathan Bate and Héloïse Sénéchal, "Hark the Bard in all his bawdy beauty" (*Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 13 April 2007).

Pyramus if the slapstick of his striking of Wall in his ‘stones’ is to appear natural and unintentional.

Allowing Thisbe and Wall to assume such a graphic and absurd configuration draws attention back to the fact that Thisbe is performed by the male artisan, Flute, and this would operate in turn to remind at least some of the spectators of how the play-world lovers they have been watching are too all male performers. The scene’s effects – at once both metatheatrical and improper – act to further stress the absurd and unorthodox dissimulations by which the marriage comedy is itself realised. While the *Dream* has its ostensible resolution in a patriarchal and cosmic order, it otherwise seems at pains to impress upon the audience its forays into the low, the unconventional, the irreligious, and – probably most pointedly – the illusory.

It is the play of this theatrical dissimulation that the *Dream*’s spectators are throughout being directed to – and by which, if they are capable of appreciating its sophisticated brilliance, they are given opportunity to distinguish themselves from the their on-stage doubles, the court audience. Spurred on by the behavior of Theseus, and braced by his recent dismissal of imagination and illusion (the celebrated ‘I never may believe/ These antique fables’ speech of 5.2- 22), the members of the court audience ridicule the interlude, complacent in their assurance that their perspective represents the final level of experience. The alert member of the theatre audience would however have recognised the Duke’s response to Pyramus’s striking of Wall as another undermining of this position; the line’s indication of the various yet distinct levels of illusion that the interlude’s performance realises works to metatheatrically point up the limitations of its speaker as well as his acolytes. In a similar vein, where the aristocrats themselves are allowed to assume their misadventures have taken only placid and unambiguous resolution, the line’s sacrilegious allusion points the theatre audience back to the drama’s multiple notes of dislocation, and the manner in which the performance plays off them.

It appears that wherever the *Dream* frames high meaning, it underlines this presentation as occurring within the play’s own fictive structures. Holy elevation is presented rather than realised; the more profound dimensions that the reference would assert being qualified through the self-reflexive conditions of the stage. This arrangement suggests that the *Dream*’s religious appropriations work to point us back to the aesthetic operations of the performance – or to put it more precisely, the significance indicated by holy allusion is reformulated and transposed over into the secular art of the stage. And this, I would argue, is the mode by which we are best to understand Bottom’s account of his vision.

2

The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue conceive, nor his heart report, what my dream was. (4.1.209-212)

Stuart Sillars points out how Bottom's muddling of 1 Corinthians 2.9-10 may also be thought to make reference to the use of the same quotation in Thomas Chaloner's translation of the *Moriæ Encomium* of Erasmus, *The praise of Folie*.[19] The passage comes on the books penultimate page, providing a concluding illustration that explicitly links the visionary wisdom of folly to the purity and simplicity of Christian faith, and in this way it parallels Bottom's account of his 'dream' :

> So muche (loe) are spirituall thynges to be preferred before flesshely thinges, and the inuisible before the other visible. For this vndoubtedly is euin the very gwerdone that the Prophete promyseth, Saiying, *was never mans eie sawe, nor eare heard, nor thought of hert yet compassed, what, and how great felicitee god hath prepared vnto suche as dooe loue him.*[20]

Erasmus' use of the same quotation implies that we should understand the episode of Bottom's dream as operating within a much larger discussion of the sacred nature of foolishness and of the holy position that the low are given to occupy. At the same time, if we are to understand the reference to Erasmus as deliberate, then the process of appropriation could be thought to make the religious significance of the biblical allusion less immediate. Reference to another literary work would indicate a meta-aesthetic arrangement; rather than simply denoting holy folly, the concerns of the *Dream* would extend to the artistic representation of the discourse of folly and to how the aesthetic structures of the theatre might mediate such a re-presentation.

I suggest that the continuation of the passage originally quoted by Sillars lends support to seeing the reference as perhaps a direct one, and in this way allows us a more expanded understanding of the relationship that the *Dream* takes to *Folie*. It runs:

> Who so ever therefore have suche grace (Which sure is genuine to few) by theyr life tyme to tast of this said felicitee, they are subjecte to a certaine passion much lyke vnto madnesse or witrauyng whan ravisshed so in the sprite, or beyng in a traunce, thei dooe speake certaine thyngis not hangyng one with an other, nor after any earthly facion, but rather dooe put foorth a voice they wote never what, muche lesse to be vnderstode of others […] In sort that whan a little after thei come againe to their former wittes, thei denie plainly thei wote where thei became, or whether thei

[19] "'Howsoever, strange and admirable:' *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as via stultitiae", pp. 36-37.
[20] *The praise of Folie, Moriae Encomium, a booke made in latine by that greet clerke Erasmus Roterodame*. Translated by Sir Thomas Chaloner (London: Thomas Berthelet 1549), T3r. Emphasis in the original.

> were than in theyr bodies, or out of theyr bodies, waking or slepyng: remembring also as little, either what they heard, saw saied, or did than, savying as it were through a cloude, or by a dreame: but this thei know certainely, that whiles their mindes so roued and wandred , thei were most happie and blisfull.[21]

The description corresponds rather precisely to Bottom's befuddled attempt to formulate his experience. The 'blissfull' 'felicitee' of Bottom's 'dreame' is evidenced in the amazed tones through which the figure introduces his attempted explication: 'I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was' (4.1.203-205), and the confusions that *Folie* notes are provided close illustration in 'Methought I was – there is no man can tell what. Methought I was – and methought I had – but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had' (4.1.206-209). *Folie*'s use of 'witrauing' seems particularly significant. For the Elizabethans, 'wit' denoted not just 'sense', but was also used to refer to each of the senses. That the sentence in which the term appears in *Folie* combines it with: 'thei dooe speake certaine thyngis not hangyng one with an other' would seem to provide a noteworthy anticipation of Bottom's synesthetic confusion.

It is not only the concluding passage of *Folie* that seems to point to the events of the *Dream* though, for the introduction also reveals another set of resemblances. Where the penultimate page of *Folie* offers a parallel to Bottom's vision, by a happy symmetry the book's second page also links itself to Bottom's transformation:

> I am come foorthe among you: upon condicion ye will not thinke muche to bestowe on me your eares a while. I meane not those ears that ye carie with you to sermons, but those ye geve to plaiers, to jesters, and to fooles. Yea those (hardly) wherewith my friende Midas whilom herkened to the rurall god Pan, in preferring his rusticall songe, before Apollos farre fyner melodie.[22]

If the reference to Erasmus is deliberate then the above passage echoes significantly. The lines make reference to the tale of the punishment that Apollo handed Midas. The myth can be found in Golding's translation of *Metamorphoses*. After having realised the calamitous effects of his wish to have everything he touch turn to gold, Midas prays to Dionysus and the power is rescinded. Thereafter 'Midas hating riches haunts the pasturegrounds and groves, And up and down with Pan among the Lawnds and mountaines roves […] But still a head more fat than wyse, and doltish wit he hath'[23]. He is present for Pan's audacious challenge of Apollo to a trial of musical skill, and there his 'doltish wit' causes him to engender Apollo's displeasure: Apollo is named victor, and all those in attendance second the judgment, bar Midas – who questions the justice of the award. His

[21] *The praise of Folie*, T3r-T3v.
[22] *The praise of Folie*, A1v.
[23] *Shakespeare's Ovid: Being Arthur Golding's Translation of the Metamorphoses*. Translated by Arthur Golding, edited by W. H. D. Rouse (De La More, 1904), p. 222.

preferment of the rustic melody of Pan enrages Apollo and the god transforms Midas's ears: 'And so a slowe paste Asses eares his heade did after beare'.[24] As well as marking the prefiguration of Bottom's transformation, the reference in the passage from *Folie* would also underline the 'doltish' nature of that figure. Yet in that Erasmus addresses the reception of his text to these very ears, the passage once more points to the understanding of which ignorance is capable. Moreover, the passage repeats the *Dream*'s serioludic relationship to the inversionary. That Midas gave preference to Pan's melodies over the god of music's efforts makes play with the hierarchy realised by a Platonic ideal of forms, and points to a reversal whereby the low and rustic are elevated at the expense of the privileged and established.

Rather intrestingly, in tying the conveyance of *Folie*'s message to the activities of 'plaiers […] jesters, and […] fooles', this introduction can also be seen to take in the form and metatheatrical configuration by which the *Dream* is realised (it being apparent that in this instance 'fooles' refers not to the ignorant, but to stage clowns). The passage emphasises the folly-like nature of theatrical performance while at the same time linking its low aesthetic representation with revelation. It also nominates the attentive audience member as the ass-eared fool, yet as the development of *Folie* makes clear – and the *Dream* will do the same – this is not a wholly unflattering comparison.

Once more, a parallel presents itself in Bottom's speech: he states: 'man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had' (4.1.208-209). On one level this represents the figure's attempt to express the incomprehensibility of his experience, yet the line also works ironically to assert another audacious claim for the power of art, suggesting as it does that the 'patched fools' of the stage may be capable of giving presentation to this experience of vision. The fact that Bottom chooses to repeat 'what methought I *had*', rather than 'what methought I was', offers further indication that his transformation is first and foremost a transformation of the stage – emphasising as it does that the transformation is brought about by a stage prop, by the figure of Bottom having a 'nole […] fixed on his head' (3.2.17).[25] The irony is enlarged by the fact that while Bottom's words would – at the narrative level – point away from himself to reference a generic 'man', it is Bottom who is at every turn – and at both the narrative and metatheatrical level – indicated by the term 'patched fool'. 'Fool' obviously indicates his standing in relation to the intellectual tradition that Theseus's speech on the imagination (5.1.2-22) will soon invoke. 'Patched' takes in his low social position, and the word has been used in this sense in Puck's description of the artisans: 'a crew of patches' (3.2.9) (before, incidentally, Puck calls them by what often seems to be preferred term among critics, 'rude mechanicals' (3.2.9)). Yet in that for the Elizabethans 'patch' and 'fool' both denoted 'plaiers', Bottom and his vision are at their climatic moment embedded back into the fictions of performance. Nor is the play satisfied with only these indicators; before asserting that only a fool would try to

[24] *Shakespeare's* Ovid, p. 222.
[25] The uncomplicated means by which Bottom's transformation is brought about on the stage is made evident later when Oberon instructs Puck to return the weaver to human form: his command is simply 'take off this head' (4.1.79).

explain his experience, Bottom makes three attempts: 'Methought I was – there is no man can tell what. Methought I was – and methought I had –' (4.1.206-208). Bottom, of course, is not obliged to continue the struggle to represent his experience; the men who will finally attempt to 'offer to say' what Bottom 'had' are in actuality the fools of the stage.

Yet while Bottom's 'man is but a patched fool' at first appears only to refer to mankind in general so as to make its specific pointing back to the figure of Bottom itself all the more comic, the perceptive members of the audience would have caught the words' echo of Puck's disdainful generalisation on the condition of man in the previous act. There, Oberon and Puck's observing the 'sport' (3.2.353) of the lovers initially suggested that the audience shared their ironic vantage point, and in this manner the lovers' tangles were positioned as something to be understood as distanced and, thereby, absurdly comic. Yet this arrangement is confounded when Puck is prompted to extend his derisory assessment of the lovers to take in all mankind: 'Lord, what fools these mortals be!' (3.2.115). His words operate to undo the privileged and detached position that the audience has assumed it enjoyed, and instead relocates it in the double position of laughing at the lovers while admitting its own susceptibility to such folly.

While Bottom's echo of Puck's line would then initially seem to assert a derogatory status for the audience, as is the case with *Folie*'s introductory configuration, Bottom's passage actually engenders a set of shifts and switches that serve as a compliment to the audience members who recognise them. In reformulating Puck's contemptuous estimate and pointing it back to himself, Bottom's words remove the perceptive audience members from their conceptual doubling of the lovers, and ask them to locate themselves instead as the double of the fool, Bottom. The initial indignity such an arrangement configures is immediately transposed by the reference to 1 Corinthians, and points to the elevation of the audience members who are sufficiently imaginative to play the complex game that the *Dream* asks of them. Like Bottom, they exceed the regular limitations that the 'better' judgement of Theseus's avouched 'cool reason' (5.1.6) would impose on their senses and sensibility. For Theseus sees illusion, regardless of whether it derives from lunatic, lover or poet, as merely a misconception, and one for which he finds a rather banal equivalence: 'in the night, imagining some fear,/ How easy is a bush supposed a bear!' (5.1.21-22). Shakespeare's audience, by contrast, is asked to comprehend art's illusions in the fullest sense. The play demands a doubled-perspective; only by their maintaining a critical awareness of the *Dream*'s high artifice is the audience able to indulge the 'tricks' of 'strong imagination' (5.1.18). This last quality is, as Theseus reminds us, the province of 'The lunatic, the lover, and the poet' (5.1.7) – a tripartite description provided a rather neat syncretic realisation in the figure of the visionary fool, Bottom.

The self-conscious transposing of the traditions of spiritual revelation over into those of secular aesthetic experience takes one more arrangement, and it is one that would seem to point the audience directly to the powers of the dramatist himself. Bottom contemplates getting Quince to write a ballad of his dream and states 'it shall be called

'Bottom's Dream', because it hath no bottom' (4.1.214-215). These words develop, the mangled repeat of 1 Corinthians 2.9, pointing as they do to the next verse as it is found in both Tyndedale's Bible 1526 and the Geneva New Testament 1557: 'For the spirit searcheth all things, yea the bottom of goddes secrets'.[26] This does much more than merely extend the reference, for it stresses the startling – and slightly blasphemous – locating of the fictional Bottom within the holy text. It also serves to develop, and one might even say, exceed, the apophatic dimensions of Paul's writing which understands God as being without parts and beyond comparison. Where 1 Corinthians 2.9 attempts to express the incomprehensibility of God, 'The eye hath not seen, and the ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him', one might suggest that Bottom's serioludic transmogrification provides a more profound representation of the theological concept of the *via negativa*. In Bottom's synesthetic confusions, 'The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue conceive, nor his heart report, what my dream was', the inadequacy of the attempt to define the boundless and incomprehensible nature of God within the limitations of sensory experience is, one could argue, given more emphatic marking. The speech's reference to the succeeding Biblical verse works similarly to outdo the terms of its source. In contrast to a mystical experience that penetrates to 'the bottom of goddes secrets', Bottom's vision is determined by the fact that 'it hath no Bottom', and so better operates according to the removal of boundaries and negating of limits which apophatic theology understands as engendering the experience of God. Implicit within this is the suggestion that the aesthetic powers that the dramatist enjoys are capable of engineering a parody that both undoes and outdoes Paul's holy words.

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One last point must be briefly added. That the final revelation that the play offers occurs in the aesthetic form of the theatrical rather than according to the holy tradition is given indication throughout by the treatment provided to the Corinthians allusion. Its utilisation is consistently configured through the serioludic, and while the reference is employed to indicate the visionary, the specifically sacramental terms of that vision are either elided or undergo compromise. Instead, the impetus to revelation that the reference effects is conscripted by the aesthetic, and vision is given its final presentation within the profane and equivocal structures of theatrical presentation – with these structuring principles being, in turn, subject to the aesthetic conceptualisation that the audience is capable of conceiving. This arrangement would seem underlined by the excision of 'God' from Bottom's appropriations of 1 Corinthians 9 and 10 – where the word occurs in each line. The only use Bottom makes of the term comes before his attempt at expounding his experience, and figures as an expletive: 'God's my life!' (4.1.202).

[26] This has been variously pointed out; see, for example, *The RSC Shakespeare: William Shakespeare Complete Works*, edited by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 402.

Were we to accept Jan Kott's suggestion that Bottom's transformation also operates to indicate the Asinine Mass[27] – a vulgar and extravagantly blasphemous parody of the liturgy – the elements of religious burlesque and inversion would be further underlined by the figure's exclamation a few lines previous to the Corinthians allusion. The homophonic echo of the ass's 'hee-haw' in Bottom's 'Heigh-ho!' (4.1.200) would then not only point the audience back to the role's transformation but, in what the reader will by now recognise as a familiar strategy, would qualify the play's presentation of vision by juxtaposing the sacred with the profane.

The Asinine Mass was a by-product of the Feast of Fools, a festive celebration of the donkey-related stories in the Bible, wherein prominence was given to the tale of words of wisdom spoken by Balaam's ass. While its popularity declined after the Council of Basle forbade the Feast in 1435, the yearly revels did nonetheless continue, with records showing that the Feast of Fools was celebrated in Amiens, France, as late as 1721.[28] While the Feast of Fools had a degree of popularity in England, my research has not uncovered any evidence of the Asinine Mass being celebrated outside of France. This is not of course to say that the tradition would have been unfamiliar in England, and Kott's comment can be entertained as an interesting possibility, and a possibility that the representations found in folk pageants and mummers' plays would seem to lend some support.

The mass featured as the main event on festive days such as Twelfth Night, Plough Monday, and the Feast of the Ass, wherein a man disguised as an ass would be one of the main actors in the day's processions, comic rituals and holiday revels.[29] It took 1 Corinthians 4.10 as its text, urging the congregants to become a 'fool for Christ', and the holiday operated a carnival inversion of the roles of church hierarchies. T. J. Crowley translates the Latin from an extant manuscript to illustrate the valediction: 'At the end of Mass, the priest, having turned to the people, in lieu of saying the "Ite, Missa est", will bray thrice; the people instead of replying "Deo Gratias" say, "Hinham, hinham, hinham"'.[30] The possible reference to the Asinine Mass made by Bottom's brief 'Heigh-ho!' would then seem to supplement and continue the *Dream*'s particular exchange between the 'vulgar and celestial', pointing to an inversion of the conventional strictures that would determine revelatory experience. At the same time, the allusion would underline the parodic and profane dimensions within Bottom's vision, and in this way, it would seem, argue for the transposition of the low forms of illicit representation.

The *Dream*'s revelation, then, belongs, in the main, to the aesthetic and secular. The hierarchical inversion found in 1 Corinthians is further extended, and the experience of the visionary conscripted by the presentational processes of the theatre. The epiphany that the

[27] *The Bottom Translation* (Northwestern University Press, 1987), p. 43.
[28] "Feast of Fools", in Tanya Gulevich's *Encyclopedia of Christmas and New Year Celebrations* (Omnigraphics, 2nd edition, 2003).
[29] *The Bottom Translation*, p. 43.
[30] T. J. Crowley, "Feast of Asses" in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, edited by Charles Herberman (New York: Appleton, 1813).

play asserts is the 'dream' of art itself, realised by the literal illusions of the stage and the fools that pace it, and configured according to the poet's frenzied heaven-rolling eye. It is a dream that is the audience's to share if they are capable of the imaginative investment of supposing, not exactly a bush a bear, but a man an ass-headed fool.

Note on the text: Since the publication of this article I have become acquainted with Peter Holland's excellent Introduction to The Oxford Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Oxford University Press, 2008), a piece which also contains a discussion of the play in light of Chaloner's translation of Erasmus' *praise of Folie* (p. 74-77, 83), but which does not pursue the line of serioludic religious parody that my own article suggests. Had I been familiar with this piece before the publication of this article the overlap in material would have compelled me to provide an account of Holland's research. Holland observes that 'Erasmus' virtuoso mental paradoxes, his Folly's [*sic*] twistings and turnings are as subtle as the paradoxes that surround Bottom and frequently seem, at least, analogous or parallel' (76). And as does my article, he notes the possible application that Erasmus' reuse of the story of Midas has to the *Dream* – rather neatly relating Midas' display of poor musical taste to Bottom's inclination for 'the tongs and bones' (4.1.29) (p. 77). Holland also makes use of the 'whan a little after thei come againe to their former wittes' passage (*The praise of Folie*, T3r-T3v), and sees it as having pertinence not just to Bottom but also to the lovers – a rather neat comparison made more effective by his top-and-tailing the quotation so as to remove the references to grace. This redaction reflects Holland's belief that the critical 'invocation of grace to describe Bottom's experience is excessive and misguided' (p. 84), a position which acts to differentiate our analysis of the relationship formed by these works.

Political Shakespeare and the Blessing of Art: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

It may seem inappropriate that in order to contribute to a discussion on the ideological position that Shakespeare's plays occupy in our culture that the present text gives its central focus to what in many ways is a close reading – and a close reading that will often appear to sidestep this very discussion. It is hoped, however, that through this tangential approach I am able to demonstrate how the plays themselves attempt to frame the relationship their art takes towards culture and society. To this end the text will examine how the plays make use of a particular set of strategies – those of disfiguration and distinction.

The relationship between ideology and the plays has of course been a subject for a great deal of contemporary criticism, one which most often grounds itself in material history. It is a critical approach that – broadly speaking – divides itself into two camps. One perspective that searches for subversion but finds only the illusions and strategies of containment of a dominant ideology, and the other, which sees the operations of power and ideology as more disjunctive, and understands this mass of competing forces as offering the possibility for genuine subversion. Each wing, however, appears fairly consistent in understanding, in the words of Leonard Tennenhouse, 'the opposition between a literary use of language and a political use of the same linguistic materials as being largely a modern invention'.[1] Art is taken to be confined within and seen as working according to larger frames of ideological discourse.[2]

I would like to explore this relationship by going back to Tennenhouse and looking at his discussion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from the 1994 collection, *Political Shakespeare*. For Tennenhouse the *Dream* operates conservatively; he argues that Shakespeare uses his drama to authorise political authority, and political authority, as

[1] Leonard Tennenhouse, "Strategies of State and Political Plays" (*Political Shakespeare: New essays in Cultural Materialism*, edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, Manchester University Press, 1985, pp. 109-128), p. 110.

[2]This sketches out the broader impulses of the movement. There are, admittedly, a number of critical voices that would be categorised as cultural materialists, or new historicists, whose analysis is not confined by the description offered above. Happily, two of these provide readings of the *Dream*. While Louis Montrose in *The Purpose of Playing* (University of Chicago Press, 1996) pursues a 'poststructuralist historical and cultural criticism' (92), he nonetheless provides an interpretation of the *Dream* that works to explore the 'reciprocal relationship between formal innovation and changes in conscious' (92), and which prefers a set of 'inconclusive conclusions' over the 'bold assertions that have become commonplace in the critical literature on the Elizabethan theatre' (104). Similarly, Patricia Parker's work on the *Dream* reveals the play's complex interrelations with a dizzyingly broad field of contemporary discourse, yet still foregrounds the multiple possibilities that the play's poetics uniquely make available (see for example, "(Peter) Quince: Love Potions, Carpenter's Coigns and Athenian Weddings" **(***Shakespeare and Comedy,* special issue of *Shakespeare Survey*, 5, 2003, edited by Peter Holland, pp. 39-54), and "'Rude Mechanicals': *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Shakespeare's Joinery" (Chapter 3 of Parker's *Shakespeare from the Margins*, University of Chicago Press, 1996)).

Shakespeare represents it, in turn authorises art.[3] While Tennenhouse remarks the play's multiple violations of the categories that organise Elizabethan reality, he understands these disruptions as occurring within the framework of festival. He argues that the disorder they voice is in this way displaced onto art – finding example of this in the transposition of the lovers' misadventures into the 'story of the night told over', and in the Pauline inversions of Bottom's vision taking reformulation as dream. Tennenhouse draws his central example from the scene where Theseus and his party come upon the sleeping couples lying intermingled on the ground. Theseus's line, 'No doubt they rose up early to observe/ The rite of May' (4.1.32-33) is understood as acting to identify the lovers as 'revelers', and Tennenhouse argues that in this way Theseus not only decriminalises the lovers' transgression of the law, but identifies their state of disarray with the order of art. When the revelers in turn fall on their knees before Theseus, this is seen as completing the reinstitution of political authority. Tennenhouse goes on to give particular attention to the last act, seeing it as theorising the process of inversion whereby art and politics end up in this mutually authorising relationship.[4]

I agree that the last act foregrounds concerns of art and power, yet would like to argue that the authority that the *Dream* attempts to establish is the sovereign authority of art. And I hope to demonstrate that rather than taking a mutual relationship to the dominant ideology, the play (as I would suggest a great part, if not all, of the canon does) proceeds through disruption to instead claim for its operations a differentiated and distinct space. I will end by briefly discussing if such an arrangement undoes the ideological interpretation and appropriation of Shakespeare's work – or if, somewhat perversely, it works to facilitate it.

The *Dream* operates throughout in markedly self-aware terms. It underlines again and again the artifice of its own aesthetic construction, by which I refer to its configuration in the processes of illusion and dissimulation. And I would argue that it is this arrangement – rather than carnival inversions of category as Tennenhouse has it – that determines the play's subversive energies. Political claims are given presentation – and exploration – but these presentations are revealed as realised through and bound up in the fictions and deceptions of the theatre. This has the effect of undoing – or to put it perhaps more precisely – of disfiguring any final and unequivocal ideological assertion. At the same time, in stressing the unreal conditions of its own realisation, the *Dream* marks its distinction from the world beyond the stage. Tracing these features of disfiguration and distinction through the last act will hopefully provide a fuller picture of how I see the *Dream* as working to position itself.

The last act sees the coming of the artisans to Theseus' palace to perform at the royal nuptials. Their homage would seem to underline the comedy's conservative resolution, reaffirming the centrality of marriage and the authority of state. As C. L. Barber

[3] "Strategies of State and Political Plays", p. 111.
[4] "Strategies of State and Political Plays", pp. 111-112.

has observed, the artisans' visit bears kinship to the mumming May-King and Queen's good luck visit to the great house of their neighbourhood. Barber notes that their arrival also follows the pattern of the May-Games in marking the movement from the town to the woods and back again, 'bringing in summer to the bridal'. [5] This sense of blessing that the artisans' presence conjures is further extended through the associations evoked by the surname of their leader, Peter Quince. As Patricia Parker has noted, the quince not only played an important role in solemnising Athenian nuptials, but also right through to the Elizabethan period the fruit brought to newlyweds the promise of fortunate issue.[6]

The endorsement that these various associations imply though is of course undermined at the first opportunity. Quince's presentation of his prologue immediately introduces the note of disfiguration – its punctuation is disordered, and this transforms what was intended as a civil address into a volley of comic insults. This opening points to how in the last act genre itself undergoes a subtle but certain distortion. It shifts from comedy to something more like, to borrow Quince's mis-formulated term, 'tragical mirth', and the sophisticated members of the original audience would have understood this as challenging the structure of signification that the inevitable momentum of the marriage comedy would otherwise appear to enable.

The most overt manifestation of this shift is the interlude itself. Even though the artisans provide the story of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' an absurd realisation, the narrative nonetheless serves to remind the audience that lovers' confusions may not always end happily – they can, especially when the lovers are Athenians, also be the stuff of tragedy. This does more than simply provide parody of the main action; in highlighting the *Dream*'s explication and apparent ideological resolution as generically determined, the play's abstract and artificial construction is emphasised. This has the effect of underlining the distinction between the conditions by which the play's comedy operates and those conditions which are in effect in the world beyond the stage. For even though the artisans' 'tragic' performance also unfolds according to the conventional generic prescriptions, in its presentation of death, and a despair that goes unalleviated, the interlude can be said to make reference to some of the grimmer circumstances that enfold human experience beyond the stage, and which the form of comedy necessarily ignores.

This marking of the *Dream*'s form as artificial and distinct – and in this way limited – is reiterated in Puck's first epilogue. Initially, the comedy appears to mark its closure in formulaic terms: Theseus, as is appropriate to his rank, is awarded the lines that precede the Athenian aristocrats' exit, and his words promise these lovers 'nightly revels and new jollity' (5.1.356). But rather than the play ending there, Puck returns to the stage and provides an epilogue that underlines the palace's peace yet, simultaneously, places it at a distinct remove. The play's happy resolution is marked as abbreviated, being presented as having application only to the fictional figures of the stage. As Puck's cataloguing of the

[5] *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 137.
[6] "(Peter) Quince: Love Potions, Carpenter's Coigns and Athenian Weddings," pp. 39-49.

night terrors that lie beyond the palace walls and beyond the peace of comedy makes clear, the play's movement to conclusion indicates the resumption of a set of harsher conditions for the theatre audience: the world to which they must return is pictured as one in which 'the hungry lion roars,/ And the wolf behowls the moon' (5.1.357-358).

Later, Puck's final epilogue repeats and develops this marking off of the play-world further still. Here he asks the audience to consider the performance 'but a dream' (5.1.406) – relegating the play's art to that of the peripheral, supplementary, and insubstantial. But, clearly, Puck's formulation is disingenuous; it does not suggest to the audience the poverty of art's illusion, nor even for that matter illusion's forfeiture. Rather the epilogue once more outlines the theatrical space as distinct from and operating outside the conditions that determine the world of its audience. For at the same time that Puck asks the spectators to consider the play an airy nothing, the speech itself works to extend and complicate the play's structures of performance. While the direct address of the audience points to the renouncing of theatrical illusion, the figure delivering the speech still continues to assert his stage identity. Furthermore, it is an identity which maintains the dissimulations of persona that characterise the role ('as I am an honest Puck' (5.1.417), 'Else the Puck a liar call' (5.1.421)), and which, as we see in the final line's switching from 'Puck' to 'Robin' (5.1.424), continues to play on the ambiguities which that identity has accumulated. Puck's final epilogue then not only points us to the separation of the play world from that of the world of the audience but reveals this distinction as brought about by an investment in the paradoxes that art's elements of dissimulation and illusion allow.

Another ironically reflexive announcement of the play's aesthetic workings has occurred earlier – spoken by the playwright, Quince. Where Puck's lines pass off the experience of Shakespeare's play as but a dream, Quince's pair of prologues have claimed the interlude as the aesthetic realisation of a profound insight into the true conditions of existence. The first provides: 'The actors are at hand; and by their show/ You shall know all that you are like to know' (5.1.116-117), and the second has: 'But wonder on, till truth make all things plain' (5.1.127). The aesthetic announcements voiced by Puck and Quince are ironically overemphatic and contrasting statements of art's meaning. Yet at the same time, they work together to underline the play's aesthetic explication. They point to the conditions by which the *Dream* works – and serve to announce its achievement; the play's signification is compassed within the illusory dream terms of its theatrical realisation, yet within the limits that this form prescribes the play enjoys a sovereign freedom of revelation.

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If we understand the artisans' visit to the palace as indicating a form of marital benediction, then the fairy blessing itself would operate as another of the play's iterated and transmogrified doubles. This would be further underlined if – as is at least a possibility – the actors who performed the artisans doubled as fairies. And this role doubling would further contextualise the significance the audience might give the fairy charm – for it would relate its magic and blessing to the fundamental fact of theatrical illusion. Even without the

role doubling, the effect of the two groups' conceptual doubling would mean that the fairy blessing would be immediately understood as coloured by the elements of disfiguration that the audience has just remarked in the interlude.

This is picked up on immediately. Oberon begins his speech with a remark that reminds the audience that these fairies are night-bound creatures: 'Now, until the break of day,/ Through this house each fairy stray' (5.1.387-388). That this constraint is not unimportant is made clear when the Fairy King again references this supernatural restriction in the injunction with which he concludes his words of benediction: 'Trip away; make no stay;/ Meet me all by break of day' (5.1.408-409). These lines point the spectators back to Puck's earlier underlining of this fairy constraint and to his seemingly inadvertent association of the fairies with a set of sinister creatures subject to the same limitation:

> My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
> For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
> And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger;
> At whose approach, ghosts wandering here and there
> Troop home to churchyards. Damned spirits all,
> That in crossways and floods have burial,
> Already to their wormy beds are gone,
> For fear lest day should look their shames upon;
> They willfully themselves exil'd from light
> And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night. (3.2.377-387)

In contemporary folklore fairies were portrayed as equivocal and occasionally even malefic creatures, and this means that the Elizabethan audience could not have ignored the implication that Puck's lines suggest. That Oberon's words work to recall such an association at the point of benediction serves to undermine both the integrity of the fairies and the salutary complexion of the blessing to be rendered.

Another echo marks the Fairy King's speech of magical dedication, one more precise and far more urgent. Oberon's words point back to another charm heard earlier in the play (and the beneficiary in this case is similarly a-bed), First Fairy's lullaby to Titania. The song is formulated according to the peculiar and ambiguous schema preferred by the fairies, configuring itself as it does through the invocation of the very terrors it would exclude:

> You spotted snakes with double tongue,
> Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
> Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong...
> Weaving spiders, come not here;
> Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence!
> Beetles black, approach not near;
> Worm nor snail, do no offence. (2.2.9 – 22)

It is an arrangement that Oberon's blessing of nuptial issue also observes:

> And the blots of Nature's hand
> Shall not in their issue stand;
> Never mole, hare lip, nor scar,
> Nor mark prodigious, such as are
> Despised in nativity,
> Shall upon their children be. (5.1.395-400)

In the instance of the First Fairy's lullaby, of course, events unfold in such a way that the magical protection offered is radically contravened. The moment the song is done Oberon enters and avenges himself by bewitching the sleeping queen, and the consequences of his action extend far beyond the mild terrors the fairy charm conjured, concluding instead in the monstrous and unnatural. Recalling the egregiously subverted charm at the point of Oberon's blessing of the bridal beds would surely have suggested that the Fairy King's magic may be subject to a similar unravelling.

These various ambiguities serve to engender the audience's sceptical attention and direct it to the figures of the blessing's recipients. The lines which detail Theseus and Hippolyta's future fortune appear, however, in themselves, unclouded by the polysemy that marks the rest of the speech:

> And the issue there create
> Ever shall be fortunate.
> So shall all the couples three
> Ever in true loving be. (5.1.391-394)

These promises, though, come at the end of a play already filled with infidelities and broken oaths, and they will be followed by an ambiguously ringing reference that develops the connection to First Fairy's lullaby. The 'field-dew consecrate' with which the fairies will bless each chamber (5.1.401-403) links itself back to Puck's description of the monster in Titania's 'consecrated bower' (3.2.5-6), referencing again her magically engineered humiliation. In such a context – of deception, humiliation, and unnatural desire – the promises of fortunate issue and lasting love that configure the blessing would have surely prompted the audience to recall the alternative and darker history that classical myth provides to the blessing's recipients.

According to myth, the amorous pursuits of Theseus do not find their conclusion in his marriage to Hippolyta – rather, the episode of their matrimony ends in a bloody and tragic debauch. According to most re-tellings, while their union is still intact, Theseus and Hippolyta are blessed with an issue that does for some time indeed appear fortunate, the handsome and chaste Hippolytus. Yet, Theseus becomes enamored of Phaedra, and he kills Hippolyta. Theseus goes on to marry Phaedra, but she in turn falls wildly in love with her step-son. Hippolytus rejects Phaedra's advances, and in revenge she tells Theseus that Hippolytus raped her. An enraged Theseus takes his son's life.

Recalling the tragic outcome myth gives to the story of Theseus and Hippolyta greatly complicates the relationship between the *Dream*'s Duke and Duchess and the play-world they inhabit. It also complicates the play-world's relationship to the myths and genre it makes use of – while at the same time extending the claims that the play seems to make for the operation of its art. We have already seen that Puck's epilogues indicate the distinct set of conditions that determine the world beyond the theatre and underline the resumption of their terms once the 'dream' of the play is concluded. This arrangement points up the illusory nature of the play and indicates that its narrative and the figures it has presented are confined to and given no extension beyond their dramatic performance. Yet, as we can see here, the fairy blessing appears to operate at the play-world level to suggest the tragic fate that consumes the mythological figures which these stage presences are configured according to. This arrangement would seem to point – paradoxically – to a continuation of the existence of these stage presences, and – ironically – locate this continuation in the tragic dimensions of what Theseus has dismissed as 'antique fables'. The irony would be given full explication in that the *Dream*, after making great comic play with the equivocal relationship between the play's Theseus and Hippolyta and their mythological counters eventually suggests for the play-figures an independent existence that not only escapes the confines of their current fictional realisation but reconfigures them according to their tragic mythological fate.

Understanding the conclusion in this way would mean seeing the art of the *Dream* as having it both ways at once. And rather than this contradicting Puck's remarking of the play-world as artificial and finite, it actually points to how the *Dream* plays out the same gambit with artistic illusion that it has Puck frame when he performs his epilogues. For as we noted earlier, Puck's speeches operate to foreground the play's own structures of illusion, yet – at the same time – they refuse to forfeit the effects that these structures might derive. And this is precisely the arrangement that the interpretation above cedes to the *Dream*: the play claims for itself an independent, yet wholly contrived, world. And it does not follow that tragedy has no part in such an arrangement. For the reading would seem to suggest that the fairy blessing is no more capable of preventing the explication of death and disaster for its mythological play figures than the 'dream' of art (as in Puck's formulation) is able to alter the conditions of existence that determine the lives of its spectators, and to which – as we recall Puck first epilogue indicates – they must return.

However, in light of the approach that I have proposed throughout this article, there is a diametrically opposed way of understanding the consequences we might attach to the fairy blessing. This reading would also work according to a self-reflexive comic irony and too suggest the limitations that the work is subject to, only it would instead place its emphasis on the absolute and transformative power that its art is capable of realising within the limits of this form. Rather than the sceptical formulation given to Puck, this reading would understand the blessing of art more in line with Quince's claims – as absolute and overwhelming. While the final act's invocations of the tragic fate that myth accords to the play's principal pair is asserted, the audience might instead understand this as another

instance of the *Dream*'s comical mythological revisions. Taken in this way, the drama suggests that contrary to the narrative of the myths that it has made such play with throughout, and in contrast to the darker elements and scepticism that it has entertained, the *Dream*'s Theseus and Hippolyta will indeed be blessed: their issue shall be fortunate, and that they shall 'Ever true in loving be' (5.1.394). It would complete a final refutation of the identities of these roles (a dis-figuring, if you will), and a final renunciation of the tragic conditions of myth – vouching the play's most absolute assertion of its comedic structures of design over the material of its realisation. Like the first reading, it points to the formal limitations of its art, yet while doing so asserts the profound, transformative powers that this aesthetic strategy allows within these limits. And I would suggest that it would completely miss the mood and structure of this constantly shifting and myriad drama if we felt compelled to choose one reading over the other.

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This approach then understands the self-aware art object as flaunting the paradoxes of its own nature. The *Dream*'s realisation is emphatically marked as being managed through illusion and unreality. And it is these false terms that serve to distinguish the artwork from the world beyond the stage, and to underline the play-world's freedom from the conditions that determine the reality of its audience. When the 'true' things of the world are translated into Shakespeare's theatrical space, they are reconstructed in terms that are immediately dissimulating. The relationship that such an artwork takes to the world then is one of displacement; it makes no truth claims about the world, but simply references the things of the world to effect a series of explorations which – as penetrating and profound as they may be – will invariably be both disruptive and polysemic.

One might imagine that, formulated in this way, the play (and we could, I would argue, say 'plays' – as the aesthetic strategies that I have highlighted in this text are present across the canon, irrespective of genre, irrespective of early- or late-) can be understood as an autonomous art object, and that as a consequence of this autonomy, it is capable of refuting the type of ideological appropriation that the historical-materialist critics which I mentioned in the introduction see art as determined by. And perhaps in the formalist, limited and discrete space that I have attempted to demonstrate the play as operating in (that is to say, taking the play almost completely on its own terms), it may manage this aesthetic chastity. Obviously however, as these historical-materialist critics would assert, *outside* of this aesthetic self-circuit, neither a sovereign nor even a discrete relationship to ideology is possible. Moreover, it could be the case that an art such as Shakespeare's – an art that realises itself through a complex and ambiguous multiplicity – may all the better facilitate its own ideological conscription.

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Political Shakespeare and the critical movement that it went a long way to developing can be understood as in great part enacting Raymond Williams' concept of dialectical

materialism, a specifically Marxist mode of engagement with literature and culture. As Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield set out in the preface to *Political Shakespeare*, the collection 'registers its commitment to the transformation of a social order that exploits people on grounds of race, gender and class'.[7] The book was published in 1994, and it is worth pointing out that in the same year Michael Portillo, the Chief secretary of the Treasury, and then-darling of the political right, quoted a redacted version of Ulysses' speech on degree and reason from *Troilus and Cresside* at the Conservative party conference, passing it off as a high cultural alibi for what were some of the most extreme social policies modern Britain had seen.[8] A few years earlier, Nigel Lawson, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, used the same speech to defend the economic policy of the Thatcher government.[9] I am of course not alone in thinking that this represents an absurd understanding of Ulysses' lines, one that appears – willfully, or otherwise – ignorant of the context that the play offers them. For *Troillus and Cresside* is surely a play of high camp and arch nihilism; a work in which no position is held with conviction, but where instead we are presented with a static moral debate which seems to call into question not only the presumptions of the debaters but the whole means of rational discourse itself. This is an interpretation, of course, that derives from my own critical partialities, reflecting the same kind of approach and engagement by which I just explored the *Dream*. Cultural materialists would no doubt analyze the play in another mode altogether – yet, one imagines, its explication would still offer a challenge to the play's conscription by the radical right. Yet the mere fact of this huge disparity in more or less contemporaneous readings of Shakespeare – readings that find in the plays ample confirmation of their own critical, cultural and ideological prejudices – would seem to force a rather banal conclusion. It may be the case that an art of prodigious breadth, complexity and multiplicity may – through its sheer aesthetic sophistication – reveal itself as compatible and complicit with any surgent of power.

[7] Preface to *Politic Political Shakespeare: New essays in Cultural Materialism*, pp. vii-viii, p. viii.

[8] Portillo utilised the speech to argue that 'order in society depends upon a series of relationships of respect and duty from top to bottom', and to condemn a 'New British Disease: the self-destructive sickness of national cynicism' ("The Right hails Portillo as next Prime Minister." *Independent*, 16 January 1994).

[9] *The View from No. 11: Memoirs of a Tory Radical* (Bantam, 1992), p. 6.

Green Plots, Hawthorn Brakes and an Ass's Nole: Imaginative Translation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

'Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated' (3.1.103)[1]

The third act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* opens with the reappearance of the artisans. This group of workers have gathered in the forest outside Athens to rehearse the play they hope to perform at the wedding celebration of Theseus and Hippolyta. We might imagine that these would-be-actors, led by Peter Quince, the group's playwright and – to give him an anachronistic but not unsuitable title – director, enter bearing some bundled theatrical props, and perhaps, in readiness for their rehearsal, are already when they come in kitted out with one or two items. At their first appearance in 1.2 these artisans almost certainly carried the tools of their respective trades (something that has been pointed out by Helen Cooper – 'How else' she asks, 'would the audience know Quince is a carpenter?'[2]), and a nice parallel would be had if in their return to the stage, these artisans-turned-actors had swapped their tradesman's tools for theatrical props.[3] The arrangement would accord well with the game of ironic transformation that the play works throughout and would make immediately apparent the self-reflexive potential offered by the rehearsal. For the group's inept attempts at drama will inevitably point back to the skillful performance of the professional actors that play these artisans, and, correspondingly, the somewhat farcically sketched Peter Quince would be recognised as a parodic counter of the *Dream*'s own playwright.[4]

Such metatheatrical intent is given exuberant and emphatic announcement in the scene's first few seconds. Quince, gesturing before and behind him, declares, 'This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring house' (3.1.3-4). It is a deliberately conspicuous piece of scene-setting that makes ironic play with the relationship that existed between actor's exposition and fictional locale in the early modern theatre. Present-day audiences are more familiar with a stage in which setting is realised through scenography, and where fictional locale is independent of, and precedes, the entering actor(s). In early modern theatre, however, actor precedes fictional locale, with the latter actually deriving

[1] All quotations from the plays come from *The Norton Shakespeare*, 3rd edition, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Suzanne Gossett, Katharine Eisaman Maus, Gordon McMullan (W. W. Norton, 2016).
[2] *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (The Arden Shakespeare, 2010), p. 214.
[3] These artisans do, in their fictional world, have ready access to theatrical props. Their Interlude makes use of a range of such items, all of which they managed to collect in haste between acts 4 and 5.
[4] That Shakespeare, an active actor at the Globe, fulfilled the part of Quince is an intriguing thought. It is given discussion in A. B. Taylor's "Peter Quince, the other Playwright in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" *Shakespeare Survey 56*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 55-66.

from the former.[5] Locale is established by the actor (when, that is, it needs to be established) by means of an exposition – usually within a few lines of entering. Before this happens the stage remains – not wholly to be sure, but more or less – untransformed; that is to say, the actual conditions of the stage are at this point most prominent. Once the actor has detailed his fictional surroundings these actual features recede somewhat and the audience commits to a certain re-imagining of the space.

Quince's line exploits the audience's process of re-imagining rather neatly. The 'green plot' that he asks his group of aspiring actors to reconceive as a stage is of course the actual wooden stage on which the *Dream* itself is being performed. Similarly, when Quince's re-designates the 'hawthorn brake' as the actors' tiring house (that is the house for attiring – what we would refer to as the dressing room), he indicates one of the doors at the stage rear which leads to the theatre's actual tiring house. But Quince's line is more than simply a witty reversal. It indicates how the business of stage representation is predicated on the audience's act of, what I have elected to call, imaginative translation. The term refers to the ability to perceive the stage action at one and the same time as both illusory and real – 'seeing' simultaneously an Athenian forest and an Elizabethan stage. Imagination translates the actuality of the stage into something other, but, and this is vital, translation remains an active process, a negotiation between different yet simultaneous planes which the spectator throughout maintains an awareness of. The skilful playwright may of course, and depending on the extent of his skill, influence the degree to which the spectator ignores or remarks this awareness, but this awareness, throughout, remains in place. The joke produced by Quince's announcement is dependent on the existence of such a simultaneity of perception; without it there either would be no joke (as with a wholly credulous audience which would attend only to a fictional forest), or the joke would be rather lifeless (as with an entirely alienated audience which would attend only to the actual stage conditions).

The term 'imaginative translation', as most readers will no doubt have noted, takes its cue from the forest action itself; the scene's extended and self-aware exploration of the nature of theatrical representation climaxes with Bottom being magically 'translated'. My reading of the scene will demonstrate how metatheatrical strategies operate to continually shift representational value, and the analysis encourages me to an original conceptualisation of how the episode of the weaver's transformation was originally realised. By giving close attention to the shifting representational registers that characterises the episode Shakespeare's strategies of metatheatrical representation will be elucidated, and their success demonstrated as dependent on an audience whose perception is sufficiently supple as to presume, in the same instance, a green plot a stage, and a stage a green plot. Such a view of metatheatrical representation, one that understands it as a processual working with and against stage illusion, is quite far from being a critical given, and some of the most influential voices in Shakespeare criticism conceive of the representations of metatheatre as operating in distinctly different fashion. By providing

[5] *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, pp. 96-97.

these contrasting positions discussion, my own perspective on metatheatrical representation will be clarified and the validity of my argument better demonstrated. We must then pause in our analysis of the forest rehearsal and turn to a consideration of these views.

In the essay, "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing" which appears in his 2017 collection, *Shakespeare's Workplace*, Andrew Gurr makes a claim for how representation unfolded in the plays of Shakespeare as well as in other early modern works of drama. He sets out his stall in the opening paragraph:

> Acting at the new Globe in broad daylight shows what an anachronism the modern tradition of stage realism is on such a stage … The original staging at the Globe was more openly unrealistic than modern conditioning can admit … One of the fitter words for the early concept of acting might be anti-realism … We talk now about the danger on stage of breaking the illusion. Setting up any kind of illusion was a concept the Elizabethans were extremely wary of.[6]

The last point is extended a few pages later when it is suggested that the early modern theatre audience was alienated from the emotions of the actors in a way that Gurr sees as bearing similarity to Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, whereby 'the obviousness of the pretence could save the participants from the fear of being really deceived'.[7] For Gurr, this anti-illusionistic staging is determined by the performance conditions and dramatic conventions of early modern theatre. He argues that the daylight and the almost bare stage, together with soliloquys, asides, and the speaking of verse are features that inevitably work against the production of artistic illusion, and so produce an 'anti-realist' art. As schematised in Gurr's essay, illusion is no more than a peripheral effect, its impact limited by an overarching sense of estrangement – this being early modern theatre's common and proper mode.[8]

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[6] Cambridge University Press, p. 145.

[7] "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", p. 158.

[8] Gurr's position on this matter is not always staked out in such unilateral terms. In other works he seems to find accommodation for the claims that illusion makes on the early modern stage, and the manner in which he describes the operations of theatrical representation in the period are not so completely removed from the conception for which I argue here (and readers who are familiar with Gurr's work – as anyone who is interested in early modern theatre should be – will have remarked the extent to which my own perspective, which though in this instance contests some aspects of Gurr's thinking, is nonetheless very much influenced by this scholar's ground-breaking research). And even in "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing" there are moments when Gurr seems to display a more flexible attitude towards illusion than his opening salvo might indicate. On page 158, for example, he writes, 'Much of the drama of this period can be seen as fluctuating nervously between the extremes of realism and estrangement' – although, it must be said, this is quickly recontextualised by the sentence that follows (of which I have already quoted in part): **'**Like the alienation of audience from the emotions of the actors in Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, the obviousness of the pretence could save the participants from the fear of being really deceived'.

Brecht himself saw Elizabethan drama, and the drama of Shakespeare in particular, as anticipating his *Verfremdungseffekt*. As Margot Heineman writes in "How Brecht read Shakespeare", some of the most brilliant pages of Brecht's *Messingkauf Dialogues* are devoted to how Shakespeare realises 'a theatre full of alienation effects'.[9] "How Brecht read Shakespeare" was the concluding number in *Political Shakespeare*, the 1985 Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield edited collection that introduced cultural materialism to the works of Shakespeare, and Heinemann's essay served to underline the extent that the approaches taken by these scholars to Jacobethan drama was indebted to Brecht's thought. Heinemann's understanding of the position and value given to illusion in Shakespeare's theatre is very similar to that of Gurr's. She remarks that the conditions by which Shakespeare's plays were realised, 'with daylight performances, boys playing girls and so on', meant that 'illusion was impossible'.[10] Whether Brecht himself maintained such an unequivocal understanding of the plays' relationship to illusion is debatable, but certainly he saw Shakespeare's metatheatre as offering a representational structure that avoided what he considered to be the failings that the naturalistically-realised dramatic productions of his own time were subject to.

Though Gurr and Brecht understand the estrangement effected by (what we can term) techniques of metatheatre as unfolding in a similar manner, they diverge in their assessment of what follows from this. As we have seen, Gurr takes metatheatre's most urgent application as indicating the duplicity inherent in artistic representation, and – in remarking illusion's unreality – defusing its allurements. Brecht, however, sees the device's dismissal of verisimilitude as working to force the spectators into a confrontation with the 'real' conditions of their ideological conscription. One of the first theorists of cultural materialism, Jonathan Dollimore, in his adoption of 'critical perspective deriving from Brecht',[11] makes clear the effects that a self-reflexive theatre (what Brecht termed 'epic theatre') could be expected to produce:

> One effect of this is that epic theatre 'incessantly derives a lively and productive consciousness from the fact that it is theatre'. Another effect is what Brecht called estrangement (*Verfremdungseffeckt*) whereby the 'obvious' is made in a certain sense incomprehensible but only in order that it be made the easier to comprehend – that is, it is properly understood for the first time. To defamiliarize the 'obvious' … is a crucial step towards ideological demystification.[12]

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[9] The quotation occurs in "How Brecht Read Shakespeare" in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester University Press, 1985, pp. 202-230), p. 208, and is derived from the discussion in Bertolt Brecht's *Messingkauf Dialogues* found on pp. 57-64 in *Brecht on Theatre*: *The Development of an Aesthetic*. Edited and translated by John Willett, Hill and Wang, 1966.

[10] "How Brecht Read Shakespeare", p. 208.

[11] *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 63.

[12] *Radical Tragedy*, p. 64; the quotation that begins 'incessantly derives …' comes from Walter Benjamin's *Understanding* Brecht (Verso, 2003).

We can see that regardless of whether Gurr and Brecht, together with the cultural materialists that make use of the German playwright's approach, see the effects of estrangement as pointing back to a disenchanted stage or out onto an ideological uncovered reality, each perspective nonetheless understands metatheatre as serving to negate the audience's engagement with drama's representations. In order to properly contest this dismissal of the audience's imaginative involvement in illusion, it is useful to get a fuller sense of the relationship these thinkers take to theatrical illusion, and their understanding of how the conditions of the early modern theatre might constrain its effects.

We might begin by remarking that it is crucial for both Gurr and Brecht that representation in Shakespeare's theatre is thought of as contrasting with 'the modern tradition of stage realism' and, particularly, the fiction of verisimilitude that it figures.[13] Gurr, as we have seen, characterises the representational mode of early modern drama as 'anti-realism', while Brecht prefers to term it 'naïve surrealism'.[14] But both descriptions are of course anachronistic; unlike Gurr and Brecht, Shakespeare and his contemporaries had no 'modern tradition of stage realism' either to react against or attempt to over go. Similarly, Gurr's argument (and as we have seen, Heinemann makes the same argument on behalf of Brecht) that the theatrical conventions that were in place in the early modern period entail that its drama must necessarily forgo illusion is not in itself convincing. Most art forms, when broken down in the manner Gurr breaks down early modern theatre, exhibit practices that would seem to preclude any imaginative engagement with their fictions. The form of film, which more than any other medium appears devoted to an incarnational realism, is ensconced in conventions that would, when looked at in terms of their immediate effects, seem to suggest the impossibility of the medium doing other than highlighting the unreality of its representations: action unfolds before an observing but unobserved eye; cuts and edits cause viewpoint to jump about and these same devices facilitate instantaneous leaps across broad swathes of space and time. On a cinema screen a human face might measure forty feet. Yet imagination seems prepared to collude with the illusions arranged by any set of formal conventions from the moment it has learned their pattern. No more so than with any other form or medium should the conventions of early modern theatre be thought of as predisposing it to an aesthetic estrangement. 'Estrangement' is simply an effect these conventions make available. The quotation marks here are important, for the spectators are never fully estranged – even if they are not seduced by the drama's illusions, they remain engaged in the broader play-experience. Which is to say that the Brechtian 'estrangement-effect' is confined to its own rhetoricality. The theatre-goers register their 'estrangement' and – somewhat ironically – this forms part

[13] In the context of this discussion of 'realism' and 'realistic' it needs remarking that Brecht used these terms in rather idiosyncratic fashion. By supplying them with a conceptualisation contrary to their common use, he claimed the terms as descriptors for his own work, as well as Shakespeare's (see "How Brecht Read Shakespeare", p. 228 n 8). The understanding of realism as verisimilitude, as the dramatic corollary of the rational and sensual experience of the world's appearances and life's unfolding, was dismissed by Brecht as an ideological misrepresentation of reality, and hence, unrealistic. 'Realistic theatre' as Brecht conceives it 'does not reproduce conditions; rather, it discloses, it uncovers them' (*Understanding Brecht,* p. 100; also see *Brecht on Theatre* passim, but especially p. 277).

[14] Quoted in "How Brecht Read Shakespeare", p. 209.

of their experience of the (metatheatrical) play. 'Estrangement' is simply a stylistic effect early modern theatrical conventions make available, and as such the dexterous Jacobethan playwright is free to make the most of the possibilities offered by, on the one hand, the remarking of the actual mechanics of artistic representation and, on the other, the appeal that artistic illusion makes to the human imagination and which Gurr and Brecht, at their most unilateral, refuse to recognise.

Early modern drama's representation then occurs as a processual effect which is in part dependent on an imaginative engagement with stage illusion – and I would argue that even cultural materialist criticism which seeks to demonstrate the distancing effect, would, almost in spite of itself, seem to further reveal the nature of this process. For the 'estrangement effect, [the] invitation to engage critically' that it posits is predicated on the recognition that the work effects – to borrow a handful of terms familiar to cultural materialism – *dislocation, discontinuity, demystification*, and *disengagement*. And these effects of disjuncture can only be brought about by an initial relationship with the work that is, to some extent or other, *located, continuous, mystified* and *engaged* – which is to say, a relationship that can only be had through an imaginative engagement in illusion. Neither should we imagine that the estrangement effect, once experienced, maintains itself. Otherwise – and this is patently absurd – a single instance of aesthetic dislocation would be sufficient. If we are to accept the kind of critical engagement that Dollimore outlines, then it must be thought of as dependent on a process that is ongoing and cumulative, and which is charged by a perspective that shifts back and forth between enchantment and disenchantment, between illusion and the distancing effect – and that this shifting never involves the complete surrender to any single modality. We might return to Dollimore, picking up a couple of pages after we last left him, and so to a reading by which he illustrates his critical perspective, and which reveals the extent to which the claims of illusion inform the effects of metatheatre, even in a Brechtian-derived critical analysis.

Discussing Bosola's mistaken killing of Antonio in John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*, Dollimore writes:

> … the episode is not intrinsically implausible: the play makes it clear that it is night and that Antonio and Bosola are in darkness (the servant exits at line 42 to fetch a lanthorn) – and so on … from a Brechtian perspective, what is most relevant is the incongruity between Bosola's measured meditation and the sudden disruption of the moment – one sharpened by the actual or implied transition from darkness to light (the servant returns with the lanthorn- 5.4.48). One effect of that incongruity is to check the expected climax: in fact, the episode is a kind of anti-climax: both revenge and poetic justice are anticipated but suddenly denied through the disclosure that it is Antonio not Ferdinand who lies dying. Checked expectations, not enthrallment or empathy …[15]

[15] *Radical Tragedy*, p. 66.

If as this passage argues the scene provokes an estranged reflection, then at the same time it makes apparent the degree to which this perspective (whether we think of it as belonging to Dollimore or to the audience that he imagines) is engendered through the preliminary operations of illusion; in order that an anti-climax is effected, the movement by which 'revenge and poetic justice are anticipated' must have its own momentum. We see that plausibility – rightly a species of illusion-making – plays its part in creating the effect. And, of course, the outcome that Bosola's scheme delivers can only be felt as incongruous when a preceding illusion of – or at the least, an expectation of – congruity has been established. And it is only an audience that is engaged with the stage fictions whose experience of the scene will be *'sharpened'* by a dramatic change in the lighting effects (– and regardless of whether this change is illusory or actual). Dollimore writes that the scene produces '[c]hecked expectations, not enthrallment or empathy', but, of course, expectations can only be checked if the audience is originally engaged (and if instead of 'engaged' I had written 'enthralled' that would, I feel, be a fair description of what some portion of the spectators must be feeling, and – I think this is even more precise – a fair description of what each spectator must be feeling in some part).[16]

Any estrangement that results from a representation that shifts between registers in this way can be neither exclusive nor unequivocal. It is relative and momentary; dependent on, and commingled with – via an ongoing process – the claims of illusion. And it follows that rather than the audience member's critical attention being directed to the world outside of the staged illusions – and so uncovering the ideological dissonance of that reality – the claims of dramatic illusion ensure that the audience member's attention is drawn back to the business of theatrical representation.

Now we might return to the artisans that we left to their forest rehearsal five or so theoretical pages back. Selected for discussion due to its acutely metatheatrical character, the forest episode offers exemplification of the claims that I have here made and allows their exploration to be extended. In so doing, it also serves to remark the inappropriacy of an interpretation that would inevitably understand the scene as producing an estranged and critically reflected political insight. Granted, it is not outside all possibility that one of cultural materialism's many talented critics might manage to wring from the episode a demystified position of ideological elucidation. But then one would be compelled to respond that the scene's metatheatrical strategies are concerned primarily with the nature of theatrical representation – and not so as to undermine illusion's appeal, but, as I will demonstrate, to elaborate and intensify it.

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[16] Where most cultural materialists usually either overlook or choose to ignore this issue, Dollimore's analysis might be understood as implying that illusion's claims are indeed part of the *Verfremdungseffekt*. But even so, it seems he understands (at least at this point in his career) these claims as being immediately recognised by the audience as mere claims, and producing minimal imaginative engagement.

Quince's scene-setting has provided these conditions flagrant marking, and as the artisans' rehearsal progresses they are provided a further exploration, subtler and more complex. Bottom, playing the part of Pyramus, is instructed by Quince that after speaking his opening lines, he is to 'enter into that brake' (3.1.63) – that is, to enter the tiring house (Shakespeare's lexical choice must be thought deliberate here: refraining from using something like 'go behind', which would have foregrounded the fictional forest locale, in preference for the literally descriptive 'enter into') – and await his cue.[17] In the decidedly self-aware terms of the Elizabethan stage, providing a stage figure a brief and explicit trip to the tiring house, especially when so marked up, creates the prospect that the figure is likely to re-emerge in altered state – a prospect that is underlined by Bottom's cue words, 'never tire', teasing such a dressing up. It is an expectation that Shakespeare strings out by having the artisans muddle the signal for Bottom's re-entrance. In the confusion of their rehearsal Bottom's cue words, 'never tire', are spoken three times, and this suggests a piece of comic stage blocking by which a flummoxed Bottom twice over (in untranslated state) emerges from and then retreats back into the 'brake' (that is, enters and exits the stage), before making his final and fantastically transformed entrance.[18]

Bottom's first return to the stage comes as Flute, in the part of Thisbe, speaks the cue but continues on, running the separate sections of Thisbe's dialogue together and delivering them as a single speech (3.1.80-84). Quince's exasperated response points out the mechanics of the confusion: 'Why, you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus: you speak all your part at once, cues and all' (3.1.85-87). It is important to briefly unpack this moment as it seems to tell us something noteworthy about the Elizabethan audience's relationship to drama: the joke reflects the playwright's understanding that at least a good portion of his audience would have been intimate with the specific ins and outs of dramatic practice. Flute's confusion stems from the fact that actors in the early modern theatre were not given the full text of the play in which they were to perform. Providing each performer with a hand-written copy of the entire play-text would be unnecessarily time-consuming as well as costly – and, of course, the more copies of a play in circulation the greater the likelihood that a rival company or printer would come in possession of one. Instead, the actors were each supplied with their own 'part' – the term (as well as indicating the character in the play) referred to the written paper, usually made into a roll, on which

[17] Later, when Puck recounts the events of the forest rehearsal to Oberon, he is given a description that revisits the earlier mingling of conceptual and physical locales: he tells the fairy king how Bottom 'Forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake' (3.2.15). The line plays on the multiple indications that 'scene' can take in the immediate context. Beyond signifying the area and act of the play-world rehearsal, for early modern auditors 'scene' would also refer to 'the front or forepart of a Theatre or Stage, or the partition between the Players Vestry, and the Stage' (Thomas Boult *Glossographia, or, a Dictionary* (1656), sig. 2M5r-v). Puck's words then underline Bottom's departure from the area of the '*frons scenae*', as well as the fact that the weaver has exited through the 'scene' – the wall formed at the back of the stage through which players entered and exited. See Tiffany Stern's "'This Wide and Universal Theatre': The Theatre as Prop in Shakespeare's Metadrama" in *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, edited by Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern (The Arden Shakespeare, 2014), pp. 11-32, pp. 23-24.

[18] Paul Menzer imagines the business of Bottom's reentry as unfolding in a very similar way in "The Weaver's *Dream*-Mnemonic Scripts and Memorial Texts" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Critical Guide*, edited by Regina Buccola (Continuum, 2010), pp. 93-111), p. 100.

the lines for the part were transcribed. It is these rolls that Quince distributes in the first act when he says, 'here are your parts' (1.2.81-82). Beyond the lines the actor was to deliver, the roll provided no information about the role; neither was any of the surrounding dialogue given aside from a one- to three-word cue which preceded each speech. The actor memorised his part, cues and all – only unlike the confused Flute, he waited for another actor to speak the cue before he came in with his own lines.[19] The joke of Flute's amateurish mistake – speaking his part all 'at once, cues and all' – can only be shared by an audience that has a rather specialised knowledge of the processes of dramatic production, familiar with how the part was written up, and how it incorporated its cues. And, we should note, it would follow that for an audience so acquainted the shifting representational value the play gives to the aspects of illusion and actuality would be all the more conspicuous.

Quince then goes on to call to Bottom, 'Pyramus enter: your cue is past; it is, "never tire"' (3.1.87-88), and in this way prompts the weaver's second entrance. Flute, however, responding to Quince's reprimand, has begun his part over, and Bottom, so that he might correctly come in on cue, again exits. His next entrance comes quickly on the heels of the last, and the brief time the role is off-stage intensifies the effect created by the comic rule of three. When the punchline does finally arrive it is as absurd as it is unexpected: Bottom reappears wearing an ass-head. In terror, the artisans flee into the forest – that is they careen in and out of the doors at the stage rear (a comic callback that reproduces, visually, the translational seesaw of Quince's opening declaration).[20]

It is important to note that in so far as Bottom's metamorphosis needs to be effected quickly, the transformation that the stage prop presents cannot be anything like a visually realistic transformation. And the play text itself announces the manner of the transformation's practical management: when later reporting the event to Oberon, Puck explains, 'An ass's nole I fixed on his head' (3.2.17). Similarly, the prosaic manner by which the play physically renders Bottom's eventual return to human form is indicated by the Fairy King's unvarnished instruction to Puck: 'take off this head' (4.1.78).

It is not without pertinence to here repeat the interesting surmise that Cooper makes as to the artistic genesis of Bottom's transformation.[21] She draws attention to the one other early modern performance that we are aware of in which an actor disguised himself with an ass-nole: *Balaam and the Ass,* from the Chester cycle. The ass is a speaking part, and –

[19] See the discussion of parts and cues in Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern's *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford University Press, 2007), especially the Introduction.

[20] The stage directions in the Arden third series of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (edited by Sukanta Chaudhuri (The Arden, Shakespeare, 2017)) helpfully make this stage action explicit. In fact, throughout this edition stage directions are excellently realised (something I discuss in my review of the edition in *Archiv* vol. 255, no. 1, 2018), combining a reading that remains alert to textual cues with a genuine imaginative investment in original performance possibilities. It is the approach I attempt to realise in the current text, and it is encouraging to see such a critical methodology finding its way into play editions.

[21] "A note on Bottom and the Ass" in *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (The Arden Shakespeare, 2010), pp. 218-220.

in an intriguing foreshadowing of Bottom's exclusive experience of the fairies – it is the only stage figure that is able to see the drama's angel. The late 16th century suppression of the cycle plays would have rendered the property of the ass-head superfluous, and we might imagine that the cash-strapped Capper's guild who had performed the pageant (their financial difficulties are attested to by the need for the government to provide the trade financial support around this time) would be looking to sell the rather elaborate property. Cooper introduces the possibility that the Queen's Men, in one of their visits to Chester (we know, thanks to Andrew Gurr's research, that the company were there in October-November 1589, 1580, and 1591[22]) purchased the property from the guild. Soon after, the Queen's Men were to run into difficulties of their own: the closure of the London theatres in 1592-3 impacted them significantly, and by the mid-nineties the company was no more. Shakespeare's troupe, the Chamberlain's Men, took over some of their playbooks, and this prompts Cooper to ask, 'might they have taken over the ass-head too, giving the cue to Shakespeare to work it into a play?'[23] The supposition is intriguing for all sorts of reasons, most of which are beyond the scope of this text, but it does encourage me to an observation that I will advance once I have finished discussing the business of Bottom's transformation.

Stuart Sillars has also given attention to the nature of this stage property, and his comments can be thought of as complementing Cooper's conjecture. Sillars remarks that it is likely that the ass-head used in the original performances is of similar type to that which would have been worn by the 'hobby horse' figure that featured in the mummers' plays and pageants (and though the popularity of these guild performances had declined, even in Shakespeare's time they remained a familiar tradition). That the artisans, 'played in Shakespeare's theatre to represent figures of exactly the kind who would perform in the mummers' plays', flee when confronted with a figure whose appearance would have been absolutely familiar to them only adds further to the metatheatric and comic absurdity of the passage.[24]

Reconceiving the stage action in light of Sillars' observation intensifies the complexity and comedy of the scene's representational strategies. It also encourages me towards a certain speculation as to how the business of Bottom's reappearance might have functioned. So that the reader is best placed to entertain what I propose I would ask her to bear in mind a circumstance which distinguishes the original audience's particular experience of the *Dream* from our own. Where present-day readers or audience members will almost invariably come to the *Dream* with some foreknowledge of Bottom's magical transformation, this is not something that would have been shared by the first audiences, or even, one must think, by large portions of the audiences that came to the 'sundry' performances of the play that were given in the years that followed.[25] And before beginning

[22] *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 214-215; see also p. 279.
[23] *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, pp. 219-220.
[24] *Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.184-185.
[25] The title-page of the 1600 quarto announces that the play 'hath beene sundry times publickely acted, by the Right honourable, the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants'.

to outline my imaginative reconstruction of the scene I would also like to remind the reader that I have earlier supplied the artisans of my speculation with an array of props, and to state that in keeping with the characterisation lent to these figures, it would be only natural that these props be thought of as those that the Elizabethan audience associated with the mummers' pageants.

With these points in place, let us now turn back to the emergence of the transformed Bottom. It seems to me we must imagine that the original audience is permitted a few moments of theatrical grace in which to enjoy the outrageous spectacle of the metamorphosised Bottom before his fellow artisans are allowed to notice him and offer their terrified reaction. And this would mean that rather than the audience immediately understanding the weaver's transformation as being brought about by Puck's magic it is just as likely that in these first moments the spectators would have assumed they were watching a piece of guild rehearsal drollery: assumed, that is, *that Bottom had thought to give his fellows a laugh by reentering with one of the group's stock props on his head*. This may not immediately strike the reader as a point of great importance, but I ask her to bear with me, as I will shortly demonstrate that it would prove highly significant in regard to the scene's already complex exploration of artistic self-reflexivity.

The line that cues Pyramus' entrance also hints at such an arrangement. It is Thisbe's description of Pyramus, and given in full it is 'As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire'. Though Quince's 'Pyramus and Thisbe' draws – often rather closely – on Ovid's retelling of the story, there is no similar line in the original. The content of the simile that Shakespeare has allowed his carpenter-playwright to come up with must then be thought deliberate, and we see that it ironically anticipates the equine nature of Bottom's metamorphosis, while the homophone that the line ends with works, as already suggested, to point up that this 'translation' is effected by a simple piece of tiring house business. For the Elizabethan auditors these two aspects would have folded back on each other, since, as well as denoting the actor's change of costume, another sense of 'tire' was 'headdress' or 'raiment'. We might turn, for example, to Cleopatra's description of her frolics with Antony (where the term is also used to reference a play of transformation that crosses categories): 'and next morn,/ Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed,/ Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst/ I wore his sword Philippan'.[26] The audience could be forgiven for imagining that were there an ass-nole prop to hand in the *Dream*'s fictional forest, the ambiguities in the cue line, 'As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire', might be thought sufficient to inspire a character like Bottom to improvise a visual pun for his fellows' amusement: re-emerging from the brake to figure a comic reversal of Thisbe's words: Pyramus is not a true horse, but a tired (that is 'an attired') one.

Understanding the audience as guided towards an interpretation which initially conceives of the spectacle of the ass-headed Bottom as representing the weaver's tomfoolery with a prop that he had to hand rather than evincing his supernatural translation

[26] *Antony and Cleopatra*, 2.5.20-23.

extends and intensifies the various metatheatric complexities that the scene has so far instituted. And just as importantly, the arrangement is perfectly feasible. In that the prop of the ass-head is a familiar mummers' item it fits right alongside the other props that I suggest the artisans have brought to the stage. In such a context, it is likely that when the audience first see the translated Bottom emerge they would have originally understood the ass-head as enjoying the same representational value as the artisans' other items: which, to reiterate my point, is to say that in the *Dream's* fictional world this ass-head would have been perceived as just another of the artisans' props. That no audience member saw the ass-head being carried on stage with the other props would not detract from this understanding: the alacrity and unexpectedness of Bottom's transformation does not really allow the spectator time to reflect on this; the audience only needs to entertain the idea of the ass-head-as-artisan-prop for a few moments. And there is after all no reason for the original audience to automatically see the ass-headed Bottom as indicating that the weaver has been magically transformed. The play itself does nothing to so direct such expectations: the marvelous translation that Puck works on Bottom is not in any way foreshadowed in the words that the sprite speaks when he comes across the artisans.[27]

If the Elizabethan audience's experience of this scene unfolded in the manner in which I have outlined, the effects it arranges would be quite striking. At the same time, these effects would serve to climax the scene's self-reflexive commentary: the audience members, having initially taken the explicitly quotidian ass-head for what it is – a familiar prop, and one incapable of producing a 'realistic' illusion – are then directed to reconceive of it as instantiating a marvelous transmutation. In this way, the comic framework instituted by Quince's opening declaration is again revisited, making explicit the audience's imaginative translation of the actual performance conditions into the illusions of the play's fictions. And it is again in lines given to Quince that Bottom's altered state is registered as an effect that is supernatural rather than mundane: 'O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted!' (3.1.93). And a few lines after this, Quince will re-render Snout's equivocal 'thou art changed! What do I see on thee?' (3.1.103) (equivocal, since the second sentence still carries the suggestion that the head is no more than a hastily assumed prop) as 'Thou art translated' (3.1.105), and so indicate a more marvellous transformation. This arrangement points back once more to Quince's earlier scene-setting declaration, and to its foregrounding of the dramatic technique whereby dialogue determines play-world reality. And as occurred then, the dramatic technique is sent up at the same time it is successfully executed: the spectators, having had the banal actuality of the ass-head-as-prop made apparent to them, are persuaded to re-register it as evincing a fantastical metamorphosis. This seems to me a quite brilliant move – for Quince's permutation of Snout's line not only remarks the fantastic nature of Bottom's reappearance but ties together the magical transformation worked by fairy magic with that of the transformation worked by the audience's imagination. And the fact that Snout's description was supplied with the playwright's (let us make the most of the ambiguity of the referent) correction underlines

[27] Puck's words merely indicate the possibility that he might engage in some kind of mischief: 'I'll be an auditor – / An actor too perhaps, if I see cause' (3.1.67-68).

that at the same time the audience members surrender to their investment in the illusion of Bottom's metamorphosis they are too made aware of the imaginative act of translation by which this is accomplished.

If we return to Cooper's conjecture that the ass-head used was a prop inherited from the Cycle plays, then we are encouraged to see an analogous relationship between the play-world action – whereby, to repeat myself, what might initially be assumed as a banal guild property is reregistered as instancing magical metamorphosis – and the playwright's creative appropriation and redeployment of a prop from an older and, in terms of sophistication, rather remote dramatic tradition. As a Cycle play property, the ass-head would have previously facilitated a rather antiquated dramatic representation that was stylised and particularised, more emblematic than it was illusory, and while Shakespeare offers an episode that initially locates the prop in just such a dated representational context, he transforms the ass-head into an elaborate device whose representational status is realised through a complex exchange between enchantment and estrangement that is only made possible by cutting edge experiments in the metatheatre of the 1590s.

The episode's comic and complex metatheatrical unfolding is given one final twist. The circumstances of the Elizabethan stage would dictate that the scene arrange itself so that any 'props' that the artisans brought onto the stage also left the stage with them. This would mean that when the group flee the transformed Bottom they do so bearing – and also, most probably, still wearing – these 'props'. It is not unlikely in fact that the scene presents two further masks alongside the one given to Bottom: at their first meet Quince has told Flute that he shall play Thisbe in a mask (1.2.41), and Snug may already be sporting the Lion's mask (Bottom's comment regarding the matter earlier in the scene, that 'half his face must be seen through the lion's neck' (3.1.31-32) need not necessarily indicate a future arrangement, it could represent the weaver making a readjustment to the mask at the same time as speaking the line). This spectacle offers a further parodic reflection on the processes of imaginative translation by which the audience negotiate the levels of representative theatricality: Bottom's magical metamorphosis is realised by a crude guildsman's prop, while the artisans that flee from this spectacle, as we have said, in and out of the doors at the stage rear, though kitted out from the same group of props, take on no new fictional identity, remaining instead dramatically untransformed.

Even if the reader is reluctant to wholly accept my argument as to the audience's experience of Bottom's transformation, the analysis of the scene as a whole nonetheless demonstrates that, in contrast to the theories of metatheatre proposed by Gurr and Brecht, together with the cultural materialist thinkers the latter influenced, Shakespeare's metatheatre does not operate through a dismissal of illusion, nor does it facilitate a unilateral estrangement. As we have seen, the audience's attention can be directed to the absolute artifice of the form's construction, and at the same time still be seduced by its illusions. This simply depends on the extent that these conventions are either marked up or ignored, as well as on which

aspects of the performance such metatheatric attention is directed to. There exists, if you like, a gradated register of representation. At one extreme you have the fictional play-world conceived of as absolutely real, and at the other, an understanding of everything on the stage as actual, and never as other. Art – as long as it is art – does not have access to either of these extremes of course, but as the scene in the *Dream* demonstrates, between these ends, there remains an enormous ranging representational register which the skilful artist can play on, and to which the alert and imaginative audience attends.

The *Dream*'s representations then must be thought of as rendered through the tension of economies that metatheatre affords: the synchronic and overlapping claims of the visual and verbal, of the actual and imagined. As well as functioning as a reflection on the processes of dramatic representation, the rehearsal scene also acts to point up the processes by which the spectators themselves negotiate the stage's representations. And we see that despite self-reflexively directing the audience members' attention to the intricate layering by which these representations are realised, the play still demands that, simultaneous with an appreciation of this, these audience members never forfeit their imaginative engagement in the stage fictions presented. For underlying the scene's brilliant unpacking of the business of theatrical representation is the fact of an involvement in the illusion of the forest rehearsal. Real comedy is only realised when both of these elements are present, and their contrasts exploited. If the audience does not admit an imaginative engagement in the illusory – if it does not recognise the fumblings of Flute and Bottom, or the limitations of Quince – then the humour is attenuated and loses a dimension of its humanity. What I have argued as being the scene's most brilliantly realised piece of meta-commentary – the comparison of Bottom's fantastical metamorphosis with the imaginative translation that Shakespeare's audience makes – is only made available if, consciously or not, the tiring room is presumed a brake, if Bottom is ceded the illusion of agency, and if a transformation that is impossible and absurd is conceived.

Rather then than seeing metatheatre as engendering an estrangement that either abandons the play-structures for a remote position of ideological insight, as it does in the formulations of Brecht and the cultural materialists that follow him, or which would evacuate illusion from the stage, as Gurr would have it, it seems more profitable to think of metatheatre as facilitating a *withdrawal into form* – a withdrawal through which it might best exploit the duality of the structures that early modern theatre makes available, and the multifarious effects these structures afford. It is an arrangement that's predicated on the audience's engagement in a continual process of imaginative translation – a ceaseless movement through modalities of illusion and disillusion. And one which, in this ceaseless movement, remains always encompassed within the sense of art's duality. As such, the representation the plays offer never rests in a position that is final, exclusive or unilateral, but is instead always myriad, simultaneous and unfolding.

Dissimulation and the Dover Cliff: Metatheatrical Representation in *King Lear*

Deception and the early modern theatre

It is difficult to exaggerate the extent that the manifold and manifest hazards of deception impressed themselves on the early modern mind. Puritan sermonisers ensured that their flock never forgot how demons might reshape themselves in seductive counterfeit, that the chimeras of witch-craft were a constant peril, and that mankind itself was in the midst of 'such delusions in which men's senses are and may be corrupted by satanical operation'.[1] Alongside these supernatural dissimulations existed more quotidian deceits, and these were provided extensive illustration in the publications of the day, energetically devoted as they were to detailing a variety of sharp practices and recapitulating the seemingly perennial entrapment of the gullible. These imprints ranged from the enormously popular cony-catching pamphlets to longer accounts of more spectacular deception, such as Reginald Scot's sceptical enquiry, *Discoverie of Witchcraft* [2] or, in a slightly different vein, John Gee's highly popular anti-Jesuit tract, *The Foot out of the Snare*.[3] Scot's book, for example, contains, together with its investigation into the root causes behind what were portrayed as supernatural manifestations, a section which details the ruses of legerdemain and reveals how certain magical tricks were accomplished – thought to be the first material of this kind published.[4] *The Foot out of the Snare* offers a more animated, though somewhat less reliable exposé that recounts various elaborate deceptions devised by Catholic priests to convert unsuspecting Protestants. A particularly colourful example finds its way into the appendix that Gee later attached, *New Shreds of the Old snare, including the apparitions of two new female ghosts*.[5] It describes a hallucinatory show that the priests devised whereby, thanks to some theatrical lighting and women dressed as ghosts, their gulls were deceived into believing that they were in the presence of souls returned from Purgatory.

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[1] William Perkins, *A Discourse on the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (Puritan Publications, 2012 [1608]), p. 45.
[2] London: William Brome, 1584.
[3] London: Robert Mylbourne, 1624. The book ran through four editions in the year of its publication.
[4] And if as it continues to explore the age's fascination with deception *Discoverie of Witchcraft* also serves to indicate a burgeoning investigative rationalism, the reactions that the publication produced demonstrate that Scot's sceptical position was not widely held. The book was immediately controversial and was condemned by no less an authority than James VI of Scotland as 'damnable', and tradition has it that all copies were burned at his 1603 ascension. Whether that 'tradition' is wholly trustworthy or not (see, for example, Philip C. Almond's "King James I and the burning of Reginald Scot's *The discoverie of witchcraft*: The invention of a tradition" (*Notes and Queries*, vol. 56, no. 2, November 2009, pp. 209-213), we do know that refutations of Scot's position continued to be published for almost a century afterwards.
[5] The original title in full is: *Nevv shreds of the old snare. Containing the apparitions of two new female ghosts. The copies of diuers letters of late intercourse concerning Romish affaires. Speciall indulgences purchased at Rome, granted to diuers English gentle-beleeuing Catholiques for their ready money. A catalogue of English nunnes of the late transportations within these two or three years,*

That the elements of drama might lend themselves to diabolical application would not be something most Jacobeans needed convincing of. In the ceaseless war that the Puritans waged on lies and illusion the epitome of dissimulation and deceit was, unquestionably, the theatre. Stephen Gosson's *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* makes the position clear: 'In Stage Playes for a boy to put one the attire, the gesture, the passions of a woman; for a meane person to take upon him the title of a Prince with counterfeit porte, and traine, is by outwarde signes to shewe them selves otherwise then they are, and so within the compasse of a lye'.[6]

Such is the climate of deception Andrew Gurr sketches out in his essay, "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing",[7] and which, as the title indicates, he sees as operating to determine the representational mode of early modern theatrical performance. He takes diatribes like Gosson's as evincing 'a real fear of illusion, and a revulsion against the deliberate dishonesty it was based on',[8] and he sees the dissimulation of theatrical representation as something that 'angered and terrified many Elizabethans'.[9] According to Gurr, such levels of Tudor anxiety required that the early modern theatre police the effects of deception that its illusions might produce. He asserts that the performance conditions and dramatic conventions that operated in the theatre of Shakespeare and his contemporaries – he lists the daylight, the almost bare stage, together with soliloquys, asides, and the speaking of verse – lend themselves to an 'openly unrealistic' staging.[10] By metatheatrically highlighting the means by which theatrical representation was realised this 'fear of playing' was displaced: **'**Like the alienation of audience from the emotions of the actors in Brecht's Verfremdungseffekt, the obviousness of the pretense could save the participants from the fear of being really deceived'.[11]

There is much to recommend Gurr's argument, yet I would like to offer a reading of the beginning of *King Lear* 4.6, what critics almost invariably refer to as 'the Dover cliff scene', so as to counter some points of his thesis and to extend others. The false description by which Edgar deceives his father into thinking he is standing at the edge of a precipitous drop represents an arrangement that would seem at first glance to confirm Gurr's sense that Shakespeare's audience viewed theatrical illusion with an anxious scepticism and appreciated a metatheatric arrangement that revealed such rhetorical gambits as Edgar's for the fictions they were. However, I have chosen the scene in part because it has instigated a series of competing critical perspectives by which we might explore and expand upon Gurr's conceptualisation of metatheatre. In fact, for one of these critical perspectives, the question of metatheatre in *Lear* is moot. Critics taking this line see *Lear* as something that is to be read rather than performed, as a work that makes an appeal to an inward eye of the

[6] London: Thomas Gosson, 1582, sig, E5r.
[7] From *Neo-Historicism*, edited by Robin Headlam Wells, Glenn Burgess and Rowland Wymer (Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp 91-110). It is reprinted in Gurr's 2017 essay collection, *Shakespeare's Workplace: Essays on Shakespearean Theatre* (Cambridge University Press), pp. 145-166.
[8] "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", p. 91.
[9] "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", p.92.
[10] "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", p. 91.
[11] "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", p. 103.

imagination rather than Gurr's outward eye of disenchantment. A third critical grouping that we will consider responds directly to the cliff-top description and, despite the deception that its speaker is at the narrative level playing out, sees it as a brilliantly realised exemplar of language's power to re-realise the world. This is a view that is further encouraged by the account's marking itself up as an *ekphrasis*, as well as the by fact that the speech's representational technique is borrowed from the technology of pictorial perspective – a combination of classical and contemporary devices that would seem to make for an emphatically realised mimesis. By contrasting these positions with my own reading of the scene something like a critical triangulation may be effected, and the insights offered by these earlier efforts redeployed. My analysis will demonstrate that the scene's effects are reliant on their being given stage realisation, and that the dissimulation of metatheatre is intrinsic to the episode's success. It will be shown that Edgar's speech operates as a parody of mimetic illusion, and that the scene serves to call into question the processes of artistic representation themselves. Yet metatheatre in *Lear* is not confined as it is in Gurr's formulation, to effects of estrangement; even while its operational mode remains that of dissimulation it shows itself as nonetheless capable of stirring the audience's imagination and realising powerful effects.

Returning for the moment to Gurr's text, we can observe that even the supporting historical material that he assembles would itself seem to point up that the dissimulations of theatrical representation were not confined to effects that oscillated between the production of anxiety and alienation. At one point in his essay, Gurr observes how William Perkins, in a sermon in which the Puritan theologian denounced illusion, 'actually used the standard term of praise for good acting as lifelike when he spoke of the Devil impersonating Samuel to deceive Saul. He "did it so lively and cunningly, as well in forme of bodie, as in attire and voice, that Saul thought verily it was the prophet"'.[12] Perkins remarks this so as to underline the association of acting with deceit, and the quotation is redeployed by Gurr to point back to his assertion that theatrical deceit necessarily triggers a metatheatrically engineered estrangement. Yet Perkins' statement must surely also be thought of as attesting to the effect of an emerging acting style, termed 'personation', that was capable of seducing its audience with powerfully convincing imitations of something like the actual behavior of real people.[13] If this would seem to demonstrate that the theatre's attitude to illusion was

[12] "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", p. 92. The quotation comes from William Perkins, *The Works of that famous and worthie minister of Christ, in the universitie of Cambridge, M. W. Perkins* (Cambridge: John Legatt, 1603), p. 120.

[13] A performance development that Gurr elsewhere acknowledges and which he discusses insightfully. For example, in *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642* (Cambridge University Press, 1992) he writes, 'In the sixteenth century the term "acting" was originally used to describe the "action" of the orator, his art of gesture. What the common stages offered was "playing" … what the players were presenting on stage by the beginning of the [seventeenth] century was distinctive enough to require a whole new term to describe it. This term, the noun "personation," is suggestive of a relatively new art of individual characterisation, an art distinct from the orator's display of passions or the academic actor's portrayal of the character-types … The first use of the term "presentation" is recorded … in 1599-1600, at the end of the great decade in which Alleyn and Burbage made their reputations. it is probably not stretching plausibility too far to suggest that the term was called into being by the same developments – in the kinds of parts given the actors to play and their own skill in their parts – that made two great tragedians succeed the extemporising clowns on the

not exclusively one of estrangement, it also points to an audience whose relationship to dissimulation cannot be wholly configured in terms of anxiety. In the same way, it seems sensible to see the enormous appetite for accounts of trickery and deceit of all kinds in less unilateral terms than Gurr does; not as indicating a preoccupation which reveals only an apprehension of the power of deception, but as also pointing to the compelling fascination that the processes and effects of dissimulation had for the age.

Early on in his argument, Gurr makes space for a rather different voice, one that is rather useful for this article's current purposes in the contrast that it takes, in terms of both viewpoint and expression, to the previously quoted early modern commentators. The voice belongs to John Harington, courtier and 'saucy godson' to Elizabeth I,[14] writing in his *Treatise on Playe*. The 1597 work places deceit in the broader context of Tudor recreation and remarks the degree to which the everyday Elizabethan life was itself embedded in dissimulation. The following passage provides this extended illustration:

> Wee goe brave in apparel that wee may be taken for better men then wee bee; we use much bumbastings and quiltings to seeme better formed, better showlderd, smaller wasted, and fuller thyght, then wee are; wee barbe and shave ofte, to seem yownger than wee are; we use perfumes both inward and outward to seeme sweter then wee be; corkt shooes to seeme taller then wee bee; wee use cowrtuows salutations to seem kinder then wee be; lowly obaysances to seeme humbler then we bee; and somtyme grave and godly communication to seem wiser or devowter then wee bee.

The paragraph concludes by advising: *'Labour to bee as you would bee thought'*,[15] a distinctive sentiment which while on the one hand serves, as Gurr notes, as 'an immaculately puritan-like precept which neatly defused the charge that any such pretence was inherently devilish',[16] could also be thought as underlining the extent to which pretence conditions the relationship between representation and identity. Extrapolating, we might imagine another attitude as present in the period; one which is both circumspect of illusion and fascinated by it, compelled by illusion and compelled to act through it. And we would be remiss should we fail to remark that Harington's text demonstrates that ironic self-reflection is a mode that appears particularly suited to an exploration of such an attitude.

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pinnacle of theatrical fame. By 1600 characterisation was the chief requisite of the successful player' (pp. 99-100). And even in the essay here under discussion Gurr says, 'Much of the drama of this period can be seen as fluctuating nervously between the extremes of realism and estrangement' – although this is immediately followed up by the already quoted comparison to Brecht's 'defamiliarisation effect': **'**Like the alienation of audience from the emotions of the actors in Brecht's Verfremdungseffekt, the obviousness of the pretence could save the participants from the fear of being really deceived' (p. 103).

[14] Harington signs himself as such in at the end of a poem he wrote for the queen, and which – in a gesture that attests to wholly theatrical nature of Elizabethan court – he reports he deposited 'behinde her cushion at [his] departing from her presence' (Quoted in Tom Standage, *Writing on the Wall: Social Media – The first 2,000 years* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2013), p. 79).

[15] See *The Letters and Epigrams of Sir John Harington*, edited by Norman Egbert McClure (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1930), pp. 41-42.

[16] "Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing", p.93.

The *Lear* scene, as we will see, reveals a similar inclination and sensibility. Unfolding in serioludic fashion, the episode works to demonstrate how metatheatre works to frame stage illusion through the coordination of explicit dissimulation on the one hand and the audience's imaginative investment on the other.

Dissimulations of role, stage and exposition

Scene 4.6 of *King* Lear offers an acute and markedly self-reflexive exploration of theatrical representation. We need to reiterate, however, that for some scholars the business of stage representation in *Lear* is a concern that never arises. There is a critical tradition which argues that *Lear* is better read than staged, with a number of prominent commentators even going so far as to claim that the play is essentially unperformable. The view was first advanced by Charles Lamb in 1811 and persists to this day.[17] Perhaps though it is A. C. Bradley in his 1904 *Shakespearean Tragedy*[18] who has made the case most forcefully, and whose views are most pertinent for the current discussion. Bradley insists that the play must be experienced by a solitary reader who enters fully into the fiction's illusions. Only in this way can *Lear* be experienced in 'its proper world of imagination',[19] conveying to the reader 'in the manner proper to poetry, the wider or universal significance of the spectacle presented to the inward eye'.[20] When the play is staged, the fact that performance operates 'in obedience to the tyranny of the eye' means 'the poetic atmosphere is dissipated'. Similarly, the theatre's inability to realistically reproduce the world in which the play's action takes place engenders a 'conflict between imagination and sense'.[21]

Yet confining *Lear* to the inward eye in the manner Bradley recommends has the effect of flattening the play's concern with the nature of representation – and, specifically, with a form of representation that unfolds itself through the dissimulations that early modern theatrical performance makes available. Beginning in the feigned performances of the opening act by which the sisters Goneril and Regan, and then immediately after, Edmund, deceive their respective fathers, dissimulation drives the action of *Lear*. And throughout the play, from the commentary that Cordelia supplies to her sisters'

[17] In his 1811 essay "On the tragedies of Shakespeare, considered to their fitness for stage representation" Lamb argued that when presented on stage, the figure of Lear was inevitably diminished, and only the solitary experience of reading fostered an empathic identification with the King. For Lamb, 'Lear is essentially impossible to be represented on a stage' (the essay is excerpted in Jonathan Bate, *The Romantics on Shakespeare* (Penguin, 1992), pp. 111-127; the quotation is from p. 123). One of the most popular works on Shakespeare of the past two decades, Harold Bloom's *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (Riverhead Books, 1999), also concludes that stagings of *Lear* are best avoided (p. 476).
[18] 1904, reprint Penguin, 1991.
[19] *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 232.
[20] *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 247.
[21] *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 247.

performances in the drama's very first moments, the dissembling of these play-world villains is tied to the dissimulations of theatrical representation.[22]

Nowhere in the play is this correlation more accented than in the absurd fabrications of 4.6, what we might perhaps best call the pseudo-Dover cliff scene. The passage involves the blinded Gloucester and his loyal son, Edgar, with the latter playing the part of mad Tom, a disguise that has taken in his father. The suicidal Gloucester has asked 'Tom' to take him to Dover cliff so that he might throw himself off, an intention that Edgar aims to overturn in, it must be said, unusual fashion. After having his father imagine they are making a steep climb, Edgar comes to a stop before what he leads his father to believe is the cliff edge, at which point Edgar provides an animated description of the vertiginous drop he would have his father think is before him. Yet – as the audience understand – this is all a deception; Edgar has in fact deposited his father on what in the play-world must be a plain.

Even such a cursory recounting cannot help but point to how the fictional constructs of Edgar's invention – the fashioning of the illusions of role and location – parallel the fictional constructs by which Shakespeare's play too realises itself. The 'conflict between imagination and sense' which Bradley took as dissipating the play's power is in fact what here drives the scene. And this is an aspect that would have been emphasised by the performance of the episode on a stage wholly (or almost wholly) devoid of scenery, and further underlined by the extent to which Edgar's performance is suffused with a sense of its own theatrical constitution.

That the scene plays on the theatricality and the dislocation of representation is apparent from the first.[23] For as soon as Edgar enters the stage the audience cannot help but be struck by the alteration in his appearance. When last seen he was – and we must imagine that the effect was somewhat striking – presented as filthy and half-naked, with

[22] Asides given to Cordelia throughout her sisters' declarations serve to point up their falsity, and at 1.1.222-223 she makes her criticism explicit in a statement that remarks the performances of the sisters at the same time as it takes in the actors that perform these parts: 'If for I want that glib and oily art/ To speak and purpose not'. The use of 'oily' is particularly suggestive, for it would also reference the 'paint' by which the male actors affected their transformation into stage females – and as Andrea Stevens reminds us, 'early modern defenders and detractors of the stage alike imagined paint as embodying the essence of theatricality' ("Cosmetic Transformations" (*Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, edited by Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern (Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 94-117), p. 95). It is also pertinent here to reiterate Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter's point that it is unlikely that stage make-up of the period would produce – or was, for that matter, intended to produce – a naturalistic effect (*Masks and Masking in Medieval and Early Tudor England* (Routledge, 2016), p. 317). It is quite in keeping with the strategies of the play – which themselves might be characterised as duplicitous – that as the roles are allowed to indicate one level of theatrical dissimulation, the play itself remarks a further level: for at the same time as Cordelia's words point to the boy-actors who perform the parts of her sisters, the lines cannot help but demonstrate that Cordelia's role is of course too realised in precisely the same terms.

[23] This paragraph and the next two make use of my article "Terrible Steep Hills and Flat Stages: Dissimulation, Illusion and Metatheatre in *King Lear"* (forthcoming).

nothing more than a holey blanket tied about his loins,[24] but now, though he remains in the impersonation of Tom, he is cut in the figure of a stage-gentleman. He is decked out in the Old Man's 'best 'parel' (4.1.50), and carries, though we know not where he obtained it, a staff.[25] Correspondingly, his speech has abandoned the crazed locutions that previously defined his incarnation of Tom, and, appropriate to what is his new apparent status, he is given blank verse to speak. For the original audience the last switch would have been particularly dislocative, for it would mean that the instantiation given to Tom is now realised according to a different rhetorical register: it is performed through a contrasting vocal delivery and an altered lexis of gestures – and, it follows, it must also be thought of as accessing a different modality of signification.[26] The shift is underlined by Gloucester: 'Methinks thy voice is altered, and thou speak'st/ In better phrase and matter than thou didst', to which Edgar is given a reply heavy with dramatic and metatheatric ironies: 'You're much deceived. In nothing am I changed/ But in my garments' (4.6.7-10).[27] The assertion is not one that would have struck the early modern spectators as wholly convincing; role-doubling was common in the theatre of the day, and the audience would have been habituated to the semiotic convention whereby the off-stage assumption of a new stage costume corresponded to the taking up of a different part. While then the opening exchange points to the local artifice of Edgar's dissimulation it cannot help but at the same time point back to the larger artifice of theatrical representation itself.

The dissimulations that mark role also mark stage, as the scene's opening exchange immediately makes clear:

GLOUCESTER	When shall I come to th' top of that same hill?
EDGAR	You do climb up it now. Look how we labor.
GLOUCESTER	Methinks the ground is even.
EDGAR	Horrible steep. (4.6.1-3)

Contrary to the arguments of some commentators that would imagine the play-world terrain otherwise,[28] let us underline here that the stage action guarantees that 'the ground

[24] When first adopting the Tom guise, Edgar provides the following account: 'My face I'll grime with filth,/ Blanket my loins, elf all my hair in knots,/ And with presented nakedness outface/ The winds and persecutions of the sky' (2.3.9-12). Later the Fool's comment confirms his state of dishabille: Lear, wondering if Edgar's apparent impoverished condition is also due to the rapacious attentions of a set of daughters, asks him '– Couldst thou save nothing? Wouldst thou give 'em all?', and the Fool interjects 'Nay, he reserved a blanket, else we had been all shamed' (3.4.60-62). Further to this, I think it makes sense to assume that the henydias which Lear earlier applied to the homeless wretches out in the storm, 'Your looped and windowed raggedness' (3.4.32) (coming as it does directly before 'Tom's' first entrance) operates as a proleptic description of the state of Tom's blanket.

[25] A staff is required for Edgar's later fight with Oswald.

[26] See John Meaghre's discussion on the performance of blank verse on the early modern stage in *Shakespeare's Shakespeare: How the Plays Were Made* (Continuum, 1997), pp. 171-172.

[27] All quotations from the works of Shakespeare are taken from *The Norton Shakespeare*, 3rd edition, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Suzanne Gossett, Katharine Eisaman Maus and Gordon McMullan (W. W. Norton, 2016), this version being the Folio with Additions from the Quarto.

[28] See for example, Jenn Stephenson's "Spatial Ambiguity and the Early Modern/Postmodern in *King Lear*" (*Drama and the Postmodern*, edited by Daniel K. Jernigan (Cambria Press, 2008)), pp. 23-44.

is even'. Since taking on the part of Tom, Edgar has invested a peculiar amount of energy in a theatrical and convoluted deception of his father, and this means that the audience is hesitant in understanding any of Edgar's propositions as indicating a play-world truth. So even if Edgar enters feigning ascent, it is Gloucester's walking upright across the flat stage that confirms for the audience the topos of the scene's setting.[29]

As a piece of stage business, the contrasting of Edgar's 'Horrible steep' with the roles' progress over a flat stage is a simple maneuver of theatrical juxtaposition. Yet it illustrates the complex manner by which Shakespeare makes use of the discrepancy between drama's conjured illusions and the physical qualities of the performance space to in fact seduce the audience into a further engagement with these illusions. We might describe the type of metatheatrical re-description here enacted as confined to the adjectival; which is to say that highlighting the flatness of the Globe stage in the manner that the scene does does not undo the play-world in which Edgar and his father move, but instead works to determine the imaginary landscape's character. Even Jacobean theatre-goers as estranged from the concept of illusion as Gurr would have them could not help but project this feature back onto a fictional play-world setting – any more than they could, in the previous act, have avoided picturing Lear pelted by a 'pitiless storm' (3.4.30).

This arrangement plays on the theatrical convention demanded by the almost bare Jacobean stage, whereby in a scene's opening moments a narrated description works to establish a particular locale. Here, the conventional representational priorities are reversed; the expository account is marked as false while the actual stage conditions guarantee the nature of the play-world. Such a metatheatric juxtaposition undoubtedly influences the manner by which the audience approaches Edgar's later pseudo-cliff-top description – an expository apostrophe that is addressed to the empty air. And this demonstration of the falsity of the narrative account is immediately repeated, when in his next line Edgar asks Gloucester, 'Hark, do you hear the sea?'. The absence of the cued theatrical effect would surely be given underlining by the actor who performed Gloucester modelling the particular and pathetic intensity that would characterise the gesture of a blind man straining after a sound that does not arrive. The more perceptive among the Globe's attendees would have noted that the scene itself plays out a similar deception on its spectators. In fact, the deceit performed on the audience has the greater temerity; not reliant on devices of the visual and verbal, its effect is conjured by vacancy. Where Edgar persuades (or perhaps half-persuades) Gloucester into thinking they are close to the sea by telling his father he fails to hear the surf due to his imperfect senses, the audience, encouraged to laugh at Gloucester's nescience, is convinced that Edgar has led his father elsewhere through the absence of a below-stage sound effect.

[29] The previously noted article "Terrible Steep Hills and Flat Stages: Dissimulation, Illusion and Metatheatre in *King Lear*" goes into greater detail in challenging the opinion of scholars who argue that the play-world location remains ambiguous and undefined until Edgar admits his ruse in an aside at 4.6.35-36.

'Dover is to be realized, not simply to be imagined'

Having established the mood of dissimulation which marks out the scene, we can now turn to the pseudo-cliff-top description itself. Edgar provides his father the following picture of the 'scene':

> Come on, sir.
> Here's the place. Stand still. How fearful
> And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!
> The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
> Show scarce so gross as beetles. Halfway down
> Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!
> Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
> The fishermen, that walk upon the beach
> Appear like mice, and yond tall anchoring bark
> Diminished to her cock; her cock a buoy
> Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge,
> That on the unnumbered idle pebbles chafes,
> Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
> Let my brain turn, and the deficient sight
> Topple down headlong. (4.6.11-25)

In the play-world of *Lear*, Edgar intends this to be a convincing word-painting of the prospect presented at the verge of Dover cliff, and the speech has too sufficed to convince a number of critics. Roland Mushat Frye understands it as a pioneering verbal incarnation of the scientific principles of painterly perspective: 'Prior to Shakespeare, we cannot find a written description of such precise linear perspective as Edgar evokes … In those lines, Shakespeare systematically designed the illusion of receding space, carefully selecting words to express a consistent geometrical reduction in the size of objects seen at a distance'.[30] Jonathan Goldberg's deconstructionist account of the speech, though it is not unaware of the ambiguities of illusion-making in Edgar's words, understands the series of images as 'dividing the space into mathematical segments' and realising an 'exactitude of visual placement [that] is remarkable'. He finds in the description 'the power of images … pushed to its limits. Dover is to be realized, not simply to be imagined'.[31] Jan Kott, while also alert to the play of paradox in the scene, nonetheless approaches the speech with a similar enthusiasm, making the claim that 'no other Shakespearian landscape is so exact,

[30] "Ways of Seeing in Shakespearean Drama and Elizabethan Painting" (*Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 3, Autumn 1980, pp. 323-342), p. 341.
[31] "Dover Cliff and the Conditions of Representation: *King Lear* 4:6 in Perspective" (*Shakespeare's Hand* (University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 132-148), pp. 137-138.

precise and clear as this one'.[32] While one might wonder if any of these assessments would be capable of sustaining itself in the context of a close reading (something that will be returned to later) this trio of comments point to a more fundamental problem in critical response to this speech. As William H. Matchett observes, the scene is routinely referred to as the Dover cliff scene, even though this is 'precisely where Edgar has not taken his father'.[33] This critical solecism underlines the fact that while the description is highlighted as being – even at the play-world level – a rhetorical fabrication it still has the power to convince the imaginations of its auditors. And as the scene underlines, the 'false' landscape of Edgar's account is realised in exactly the same way as are any of the 'true' play-world landscapes. This cultivated duality is something that Joel Altman remarks, when he characterises Edgar's pseudo description as 'a tour de force of Shakespearean theatricality … [that calls] attention to itself as a linguistic feat while at the same time seducing the listener from admirer to rapt believer'.[34]

Before proceeding to offer the speech analysis, two last points must be made so as to properly introduce it. The first concerns the staging. That the audience understand Edgar's deception as maintained, and so that the play's gambits of representation are not dispersed in a banal effect of contradiction, it is important that Edgar's pseudo-cliff-top description is, as Stanley Wells' gloss underlines, '*not* spoken close to the edge of the stage'.[35] The second point concerns a particular aspect of the Jacobean theatrical experience and so – and this is so obvious that it is sometimes overlooked – represented the structures of reception according to which Shakespeare designed his drama. Writing about the audience reaction to one of his plays, the Elizabethan poet and author, Michael Drayton notes the frequent interruptions for applause: 'Showts and Claps at ev'ry little pawse, / When the proud Round on ev'ry side hath rung'.[36] Theatre-goers would, it seems, clap something as brief even as an individual joke: William Fennor writes that 'The stinkards oft will hisse without a cause / And for a baudy jeast will give applause'.[37] Where, for the most part, present-day theatre-goers, whose relationship to the play is still very much framed according the conventions of a Stanislavskian-derived realism (and this frame remains in place, referentially, even when these conventions are 'renounced'), imagine a play-world-narrative which is smoothly consistent, coherent and all of a piece, the early modern audience it seems would have understood the play's unfolding as conducted through a series of stage presentations that were (to a degree) separate and self-contained. And the point would seem especially pertinent in the current instance where a speech has gone to some effort to mark out its own theatricality. Whether or not we imagine the

[32] *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary* (Methuen, 1967), p. 113. Kott describes the scene as a 'pantomime' (p. 114) and goes on to remark that it 'shows the paradox of pure theatre' (p. 146).
[33] "Some Dramatic Techniques in *King Lear*" (*Shakespeare: The Theatrical Dimension*, edited by Philip C. McGuire and David A. Samuelson (AMS Press, 1979), pp. 185-208), p. 206 n 6.
[34] "Ekphrasis" (*Early Modern Theatricality*, edited by Harry S. Truman (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 270-290), p. 287.
[35] *The History of King Lear* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 231.
[36] *Idea,* Sonnet 47 (*The Works of Michael Drayton*, edited by J. William Hebel (Blackwell, 1961)), 2.334.
[37] Cited in Andrew Gurr's *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 275.

performance of Edgar's speech as likely to receive applause, the convention nonetheless underlines the inclination of Shakespeare's audience to view such passages as something of a set-piece, marked off to an extent from the narrative's progressive unfolding, and in this way signifying in a somewhat independent fashion.

Highlighted in this way the speech would have self-reflexively signaled itself as a rhetorical performance, and one which the educated humanists in the audience would have recognised as an exercise in *ekphrasis*. As the various instructional treatises on rhetoric of Shakespeare's day make clear, *ekphrasis* refers to a rhetorical description, written or performed, that is infused with what the Greeks term *enargeia*, and thereby forms in the imagination of its readers or listeners pictures of sufficient verisimilitude and vividness as to rival actuality itself. Edgar's speech, however, must have struck the Globe audience as a peculiar instance of the form – for the description seems, in fact, to be constructed in *opposition* to the precepts that classical training laid down for the successful realisation of ekphrastic *enargeia*. Contrasting the passage with Quintilian's battle-scene description, the canonical exemplar of *enargeia*, is revealing:

> … flames pouring from house and temple, and hear the crash of falling roofs and one confused clamour blent of many cries: we shall behold some in doubt whither to fly, others clinging to their nearest and dearest in one last embrace, while the wailing of women and children and the laments of old men that the cruelty of fate should have spared them to see that day will strike upon our ears. Then will come the pillage of treasure sacred and profane, the hurrying to and fro of the plunderers as they carry off their booty or return to seek for more, the prisoners driven each before his own inhuman captor, the mother struggling to keep her child, and the victors fighting over the richest of the spoil.[38]

According to Quintilian, in order for *enargeia* to be realised, it must be 'presented in the most realistic manner'[39] and, as his battle-scene *ekphrasis* demonstrates, this quality of verisimilitude needs be based on precision of detail, or, rhetorically speaking, *circumstantiae*. *Enargeia*'s power, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus observes, 'arises out of [this] grasp of circumstantial detail'.[40] Writing in the century after Quintilian, the sophist Lucian of Samosata underlines the part that a dedication to factual reporting plays in the successfully produced *enargeia*. The rhetor must 'give a fine arrangement to events and illuminate them as vividly as possible' so that (and here he repeats antiquity's favourite formulation for *enargeia*'s efficacy) 'a man who has heard him thinks hereafter that he is actually seeing what is being described'.[41]

Invariably it seems, critics who remark the ekphrastic mode of Edgar's cliff-top description understand its success according to these classical prescriptions. Jenn

[38] *Institutio Oratoria*. Translated by H. E. Butler (Harvard University Press, 1920-2), 8.3.67-69.
[39] *Insitutio Oratoria*, 6.2.30.
[40] Quoted in Leonard Barkan's *Mute Poetry, Speaking Pictures* (Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 7.
[41] Lucian, *Herodotos in Works*, vol. 6. Translated by K. Kilburn (Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 51, 29.

Stephenson's response to the speech remarks by implication its ekphrastic nature, as well as the realisation of its *enargeia*: 'a powerful expository word picture … vividly described'.[42] Similarly, Kott and Frye's understanding of Edgar's *ekphrasis* as an account that is 'exact, precise and clear' as well as 'systematically designed' would seem to suggest that the speech conforms rather scrupulously with these classical prescriptions of *circumstantiae*, while Goldberg's comment that 'Dover is to be realized, not simply to be imagined' understands the speech as realising the transfiguration suggested by *enargeia*'s perennial formulation. A more thorough analysis, however, might argue that these are the very features that the description turns upside-down. It might also be claimed that an audience more familiar with the specific demands of ekphrastic procedure, as a number of the Globe's attendees undoubtedly would have been, might have better remarked this, and in so doing recognised this reversal as a deliberate parodic game playing.

Dissimulation of word and image

Let us then examine Edgar's *ekphrasis*. The description begins by plunging immediately down to the 'midway' air, where crows and choughs 'Show scarce so gross as beetles'. It is the scaling down that this suggests, going from bird to beetle, which prompts Frye and Goldberg to see the description as exemplifying Albertian perspective whereby diminution determines distance. But Edgar's comparison is formulated in a way that invites confusion; Richard Meek writes 'Presumably we are being asked to imagine birds that are *as small as* beetles, but do we not also imagine beetles themselves? In other words, are we being asked to imagine *not* being able to see the birds Edgar describes?'[43] The same representational inversion holds for Edgar's description of the fishermen walking on the beech which are no sooner pictured than the auditor is asked to re-imagine them 'like mice'.

Far from being 'exact, precise and clear' these descriptions appear deliberately confounding, with the manner of expression seeming to get in its own way. The account's figurative language eludes a mental picturing, producing only an imagistic disorientation. Where the auditor expects the simile's anticipated vehicle to deliver illumination, it offers instead an aberrant juxtaposition. The vehicle, in terms of its form, offers no visual continuity with the tenor;[44] the shapes of birds seen at a distance offer no correspondence to the shape of beetles, any more than men seen from a height take a similar visual form to that of mice. More radically, the value-relationship that simile observes between described object and its figural representation would itself seem dislocated. Tenor and vehicle appear to be invested with a similar category of presence, and each vies with the other. In this verbal and imaginative confusion no particular feature of Edgar's pseudo description is

[42] "Spatial Ambiguity and the Early Modern/Postmodern in *King Lear*", pp. 32-35.
[43] *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare* (Routledge, 2016), p. 125.
[44] It seems preferable to adopt for the simile the terms by which I. A. Richards defines the two elements of the metaphor in his *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Galaxy Books, 1965), as opposed to the more unwieldly, and perhaps less familiar, *primum comparandum* and *secundum comparatum.*

capable of maintaining its form or identity but is instead subject to a deviant re-mapping by which its representation is obscured or even absented.

In this way the speech structures an ironic game-play of representation, one that echoes the scene's previous metatheatric realisation of locale through the artistic gambit of an absence that marks itself up. As Richard Fly comments, it is impossible to 'forget that the entirety of Edgar's speech is finally an artful structuring of nothing because a felt absence permeates the whole elaborate deception'.[45] Even when in the speech's concluding lines the description shifts from the visual to the aural this impulse to erasure is continued: 'The murmuring surge/ That on the unnumbered idle pebbles chafes/ Cannot be heard, it's so high'. A grammatically self-cancelling joke, as the extended noun phrase that makes up the subject is annulled by a flat predicate.

Yet the ironic play of the speech takes in more than simply the language of ekphrastic description. It offers, I would argue, a parody of perspectival representation itself, and this seems most clearly marked up in the crude and confusing description of the samphire gatherer who 'seems no bigger than his head'. The introduction of linear perspective in the painting of the Renaissance supplied to pictorial descriptions of space a mimetic fidelity previously unimaginable, and other early modern media were compelled to recognise and react to the enormous impact of this breakthrough technology. Earlier in his career, in the poem, *Rape of Lucrece*, Shakespeare had made reference to pictorial devices of spatial depiction and located these so as to explore the relationship they took to literary representation. It is instructive to return to this previous example, for although the painting that the poem describes is not realised according to single point perspective, the account foreshadows an approach to aspects of perspectival description that the later pseudo-cliff-top scene picks up, most prominently the overlapping of forms crudely remarked in the description of the samphire gatherer. Rather fittingly, the inter-medial appropriation occurs in an episode that concerns the play of truth and falsehood in painterly and poetic representation: Lucrece's contemplation of the 'skilful painting made for Priam's Troy' (1367):

> For much imaginary work was there:
> Conceit deceitful, so compact, so kind,
> That for Achilles' image stood his spear,
> Gripped in an armèd hand; himself behind
> Was left unseen, save to the eye of mind:
> A hand, a foot, a face, a leg, a head,
> Stood for the whole to be imaginèd. (1422-1428)

Stuart Sillars notes the striking way in which the stanza converts 'the painter's skill in perspective to the poet's skill in rhetoric', pointing out that 'Shakespeare's contemporary readers trained in the arts of rhetoric would have recognised the use of Achilles' spear as

[45] Richard Fly, *Shakespeare's Mediated World* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), p. 95.

representative of his whole body as a metonymic substitution, and the list of body parts in the penultimate line as a synecdochic catalogue'[46] This transmediation is self-reflexive and not wholly unironic, and in framing the conceptual encounter the stanza points to the paragonal rivalry between the different media, at the same time as it registers the distinct set of operations by which painterly and rhetorical representation unfold. More acutely, Shakespeare marks his own particular expression as differentiated from the mimetic fidelity that perspectival representation promises. Rather than an exclusive concentration on a convincing imitation, Shakespeare's depictions provide a self-reflexive interrogation of artistic depiction itself.

The descriptive method by which the representation of Achilles is realized is, ostensibly, repeated in Edgar's account of the samphire gatherer. Yet by placing the perspectival depiction found in *Lucrece* next to that found in *Lear*'s pseudo-cliff-top scene the precise and graceful handling of the former underlines the parodic tone of rhetorical and representational mismanagement that distinguishes the latter. The poem's language evinces precision and subtle complexity, the phrasing is measured and balanced, and the account unfolds via a graceful and intelligent aural progression. The devices of rhetoric mimic the techniques of perspectival representation, yet, quite brilliantly, the imitation serves to demonstrate the power and unique expression that can be won through language. By comparison, Edgar's depiction of the samphire collector, 'Methinks he seems no bigger than his head', cannot help but strike us as laughably unpolished figuring of perspectival overlapping. Here, not only is there is no attempt by the language of description to match the sophistication of the painter's technique but the rhetoric fails to realize even a coherent description. The ostensibly naïve fumbling of descriptors, the mis-mapping of relational elements, bears some commonality with the exasperated attempt of Robin Starveling when in the role of Moonshine to capture the distinctions that abide between 'reality' and representation: 'All that I have to say is to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon; I, the man I' th' moon; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush, and this dog, my dog' (*A Midsummer Night's Dream,* 5.1.247-9). And of course, there is a nice irony in that having conscripted the devices of painterly perspective so as to realize a description of a profound drop, Edgar remarks an effect that does not serve to create a sense of distance but merely determines the angle that the viewer takes to the object.

The mawkish rhetorical mismanagement of Edgar's description then hardly seems to equate with a reading like Goldberg's which sees this series of images as a creating a precise and lucid word painting that appears to have 'realized' the dream of ekphrastic presence. Better, surely, to take Edgar's bizarre descriptions as evincing a deliberately deployed rhetorical inadequacy, and to see that an arrangement which in *Lucrece* framed the paragonal rivalry between the visual and rhetorical arts according to an ironic sophistication has in Edgar's speech been swapped out for a crassly formulated (though, of course, not unsophisticated) parody of perspectival representation itself.

[46] Stuart Sillars, *Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 87.

With this understanding in place we can return to Frye's reading of the speech, 'Shakespeare systematically designed the illusion of receding space, carefully selecting words to express a consistent geometrical reduction in the size of objects seen at a distance', and contrast it with the image which concludes the description: 'yond tall anchoring bark,/ Diminished to her cock, her cock, a buoy/ Almost too small for sight'.[47] Once again, the phrasing of Edgar's pseudo description seems clumsy rather than 'careful', and meaning is once more entangled. Moreover, any attention to the lines which extends beyond the cursory cannot fail to note that the apparent dwindling progression of scale that is presented as characterising the image sequence is a mere semblance. Rather than a perspectival reduction, the description registers a procession of absurd transmogrification. Unpacked, Edgar's confusing formulation suggests that the experience of seeing the anchored bark, its cockboat and buoy from such a height would re-render the three vessels, absurdly, as cockboat and buoy. It is a transformation that undoes the spectacle of immense perspectival distance that the speech would ostensibly conjure. For it not only begs the question of how Edgar would be capable of interpreting the cockboat he perceives as a bark, but, most ironically of all, the re-description also implies that any (imaginary) body standing on the (imagined) precipice would only register the (imagined) sight as a cockboat and buoy, and such a mistaken identification would mean that this observer would understand – according to the laws of perspective – the distance to the vessel as being *less* than it was.

We can see then that while the bark description represents the speech's most concentrated and dramatic sequence of diminution, in no way does the image undergo, to return to Frye's quotation, 'a consistent … reduction in the size of objects seen at a distance'. Neither is this a 'systematically designed […] illusion of receding space'. In spatial terms, the effect is not recessive but successive – each mentioned object sits on the same visual plane (the sea's surface), and the series of images moves *across* this plane – one mapped onto the next. Moreover, the fact that each image undergoes a reduction in scale is far less striking than the peculiar transformation that the description enacts. Where in the earlier accounts of crows, choughs and fishermen tenor and vehicle were arranged in a discrepant juxtaposition, the description of the bark can be said to work in the opposite manner. It follows the model of the samphire gatherer with the reported object being transformed, rather awkwardly, into something with which it has a close relational familiarity (the bark becomes a synecdochal cock, and the samphire collector, metonymically, his own head). The effect remains similarly discordant, however: both strategies work against the imaginative reproduction of the scene. That Shakespeare is capable of subverting the mimetic prescriptions of both rhetorical and perspectival description through two wholly contrasting means seems a deliberate demonstration of the breadth of his parodic virtuosity.

Where the speech's ekphrastic frame promises a clear and vivid description, it delivers instead an account that is incoherent. Rather than the imagined precipice being 'painted with all the colours of rhetoric' the objects of its account are either obscured or

[47] The term 'cock' refers to a cockboat, a small boat used to tender to a larger vessel.

erased entirely, or else subject to aberrant transformations – figurative and literal mis-mappings that subvert any attempt at their imaginative reproduction. The word picture offered, though it marks up its borrowing of painting's perspectival representation, misuses the devices and techniques of its adopted method, and undoes any visualisation of the terrible drop it ostensibly sets out to describe. The deliberate ineffectiveness of the speech's description is marked up self-reflexively by the final reference to the imagined spectacle: Edgar terms it a 'deficient sight'. While in the play-world in which Edgar is attempting to convince his father of the drop before him 'deficient' would take the meaning of 'sufficient to derange he mind', it would be the more common sense of the word as indicating a lack that would have reverberated around the theatre. In this way the phrase works a three-fold irony; it is directed at Gloucester, as well as the audience, neither of which see the sight, but it also points back to the description itself, which has signally failed to render the representation it promised.

Signally failed to render the representation it promised, yes – but this is of course intended, and it is very far from saying that the speech is without power. For Edgar's description is, as commentators time and again attest, compellingly effective. And it may be an attempt to account for the power of the speech which has persuaded critics such as Stephenson, Frye and Goldberg to take it, as it were, at its word. To see the speech's ekphrastic form and its apparent appropriation of the method of painterly perspective as supplying both ancient and modern authentication of the description's representational agenda – and from here, to make the mistake of crediting to it a mimetic fidelity and realisation that it in no way possesses. For as has been made clear, the utilisation of *ekphrasis* and perspectival representation is parodic, and, as will be demonstrated, the powerful effect that the speech generates occurs not through mimesis, but rather in its teeth.

In its application of parody the speech still makes happy use of the conceptual space which its references to mimetic tradition afford. Edgar's lines exploit the fact that together with the call to imaginative engagement that any early modern scenic description enacts, the exercise of *ekphrasis* brings with it as standard an appeal to wonder.[48] At the same time, the speech makes the most of the fascination that the new perspectival technology undoubtedly commanded. As such, the speech asks for a performance that must, at one and the same time, be powerful and subtle – and this once more points back to the virtuosity of the actor for whom the part was written. He must balance the tasks of captivating the audience while still remarking the speech's parodic unfolding. An arrangement of this kind calls for a similarly sophisticated spectator. One that shares with the theatregoer that Gurr posits an acute sensitivity to the deceptive nature of illusion, but, who, rather than anxiously seeking to constrain the effects of this deception, is happy to submit to its seductions. As Catherine Belsey has noted, a comprehensive sense of the appeal of early modern ekphrasis

[48] As Diana Shaffer notes in "Ekphrasis and the Rhetoric of Viewing in Philostratus's Imaginary Museum" (*Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 31, no. 4, 1998, pp. 303-316), p. 310. Stuart Sillars, remarking a sense often given to *energeia*, writes of 'the state of intense awareness, approaching an ecstatic mood, resulting from the immediacy of the perceived object' (*Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination*, p. 28).

is only possible if we acknowledge 'the element of wonder implied by such terms as deceive and counterfeit', and the degree to which the audience's 'eagerness to be beguiled anticipates Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief"'.[49]

With such an audience and performer, instead of metatheatre being limited to a policing of the disquieting implications of Edgar's deception it may here function to effect the illusion of the prospect's dizzying vacuity. It is a rather daring arrangement; that the same device which serves to send up mimetic strategies of representation can at the same time lend Edgar's invented scene a convincing immediacy. We might return to Richard Fly's comment which appears, whether intentionally or not, to remark this point: 'We never forget that the entirety of Edgar's speech is finally an artful structuring of nothing because a felt absence permeates the whole elaborate deception'. Despite announcing its artifice, the speech nonetheless creates a 'felt absence' that folds back and lends to the imagined cliff-top prospect an appropriate emptiness.

This 'felt absence' is underlined by the use the episode makes of the bare stage. As noted earlier, Edgar's speech makes play with the theatrical convention whereby a speaker's scenic description secured a play-world location. This means that the effect of Edgar's deception is not so much to undermine the specific illusion of the prospect's drop but rather to point to the illusory nature of theatrical representation itself – to point physically and directly to the actual emptiness of the stage. Yet even as the audience members recognise the falsity of the play-world description and the broader dissimulation of the conventions of theatrical representation they cannot help but conceptualise the description in the same manner as they would any 'genuine' play-world scene. Only here, this imagined picture is not taken as constituting the play-world, but as merely having existence in the consciousness of Gloucester. But 'the consciousness of Gloucester' is of course, in the context of the early modern, a rather fraught phrase. The first performance of *Lear* would have been given a good half century before we get anything like an articulated and accepted concept of selfhood. And while the audiences of the early 17th century would have encountered a theatre that was happy to make sometime use of these burgeoning impulses, early modern drama showed little inclination to give them a presentation that was consistent and unequivocal. The two roles in our scene have been provided a highly theatrical realisation and there is little to suggest that they are to be imagined as possessed of a psychologically coherent interiority, of a 'within which passeth show' (*Hamlet* 1.2.85).[50] The precipitous drop that the audience is enjoined to conceive finds no sticking place in the drama; it cannot be located on the stage proper, nor in the play-world, nor in the non-existent consciousness of the make-believe Gloucester. Ironically, the non-existent prospect only has existence in the minds of the audience, the same audience who find humour in a fictional character apparently being taken in by such a description. Conceptualised, but never located, the audience's image of the prospect must

[49] "Invocation of the Visual Image: Ekphrasis in 'Lucrece' and Beyond" (*Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 63, no. 2, 2012, pp. 175-198), p. 189.
[50] Version: Second Quarto with additions from the Folio.

be thought of as somewhat ontologically restless, as flickering between presence and void; a rather contradictory representation that also has about it something like a 'felt absence'.

It is a conceptual arrangement that is intended to confuse the mind, and it is not incidental that Edgar's descriptive set piece is bookended on either side by an underlining of the description's dizzying effect. The speech is introduced with 'How fearful/ And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!' and Edgar breaks off his account by declaring, 'I'll look no more,/ Let my brain turn, and the deficient sight/ Topple down headlong'.[51] And re-encountering 'deficient sight' reminds us how the speech works contrary to attempts to visualise it, and creates instead a sense of disorientation. Once more, this would seem to suggest a deliberate display of ironic virtuosity. Demonstrating that while the speech forgoes a visual mimesis, it might nonetheless reproduce the discombobulating effects that often accompany the contemplation of a terrible drop. As already pointed out, Edgar's account has a giddy relationship to its own interpretation, inviting misreading and misunderstanding. Images are not quite able to contain the language of their own formulation, and the description threatens, as Meek notes, 'to expose the workings of its own similes and metaphors'.[52] Represented objects undo themselves via discrepant transformations, or through taking a description that collapses in on itself. In our mind's eye the objects of the account can only be realised with a fleeting focus. This semantic and imagistic muddling produces something rather like a vertiginous reflex – and it is not without a certain ironic pertinence that when the most mimetic of all media, film, attempts to replicate just such a sensation, it employs a technique that is somewhat akin: the distantly viewed object moves in and out of focus, no sooner identified than it becomes a blurred other.

Let us now return to the points by which this reading has contested the critical positions of Bradley, Gurr, and what we might call the mimetic interpreters, and see if something like a triangulation of their ideas might yield a fuller understanding of how metatheatric representation works on Shakespeare's stage. And 'on Shakespeare's stage' is, as I have demonstrated, an element that cannot be ignored if we are to fully appreciate the scene's effects. Experiencing *Lear* in the manner Bradley recommends, that is, as unfolding within the solitary reader's imagination, is to re-realise the action in a world that is conceived as autonomous and whose objects are unequivocal. This approach fails to accommodate the representational axis on which the pseudo-Dover-cliff scene depends: the fact that what Gloucester assumes is a verge and what the play action presents as a plain is simultaneously the stage. It is only by experiencing the play in its performative dimension, what Bradley denigrates as in 'obedience to the tyranny of the eye', that the effects which the scene's multiple and layered deceptions play out can be properly remarked. In fact, it is not unfair

[51] The last phrase is elliptical. It can be paraphrased as 'otherwise I will become dizzy and my confused vision cause me to fall headlong down the cliff'.
[52] *Narrating the Visual*, p. 125.

to argue that the exclusive experience of the 'inward eye' is the very thing the scene is sending up; it is the blinded Gloucester who is presented as experiencing the cliff top according to Bradley's prescription, and it is Gloucester, after all, who is completely deceived. But to parody is not to dismiss, and if the scene appears to revel in remarking its own deceptions, we must remember too that deception is predicated on an original enchantment. The effects of the scene – those belonging to its fictions, as well those belonging to the undoing of its fictions – are dependent on the illusions that the inward eye projects onto the bare stage and onto the costumed actors. Rather then than determining the play's representations absolutely and unconditionally the audience's imaginative effort to illusion operates as an element in a representational dialectic, and it is due to this arrangement that the audience is able to negotiate the vying claims of the fictional and actual. Where Bradley advocates for the reading of *Lear* so as to elide the 'conflict between imagination and sense', it seems that it is precisely this conflict that the play's strategies of representation are most intent on exploiting.

Bradley's 'inward eye' can be considered a species of mimesis, and as with all mimesis it seeks a representational realisation that would subsume the artistic medium itself. We see the same impulse clearly in *ekphrasis*, the rhetorical genre most explicitly concerned to enact the mimetic dream,[53] and Goldberg's assessment of Edgar's speech – in so far as it misreads form for content – reiterates *enargiea*'s desire for a transfiguration into the actual: 'the power of images … pushed to its limits … Dover is to be realized, not simply to be imagined'. And while a number of artistic media are so disposed that in approaching the impossible dream of mimesis they seem to realise the greatest possibilities of their particular form, the early modern theatre cannot be numbered among them. The nature of this theatre does not allow the medium to retreat in the manner that traditionally realised mimesis demands; the actuality of the performance space and the apparatus by which it constructs its representations remain an insistent presence. This representational contradictoriness is something that the pseudo-Dover-cliff scene exploits repeatedly, generating its metatheatric effects through ironically superimposing the practices of mimesis on a medium that cannot help but assert a recalcitrant actuality.

As such, it is not incidental that Edgar's false description appropriates the lexis of pictorial perspective. The imitation theory has always found in painting its paradigmatic avatars, and perspectival representation seemed to have brought the dream of mimetic presence closer than ever before. Leonardo da Vinci provided the new technology its ideal formulation: 'Perspective is nothing else than the seeing of an object behind a sheet of glass'.[54] As simple a statement as this is, it marks something like an artistic consummation, pointing to a profound correlation between the art work and the world: the medium is made transparent, and the viewer experiences a direct and unfiltered representation of the real. It is a realisation of mimesis which claims to have wholly dispensed with what post-

[53] In *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (John Hopkins University Press, 1992), Murray Krieger comments that *ekphrasis* 'seems to have been created expressly for mimetic purposes' (p. 18).
[54] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci,* vol. 2, edited by Edward MacCurdy (Jonathan Cape, 1938), p. 369.

structuralists would call rhetoricality.[55] But such a formulation is, as any good post-structuralist will tell you, untenable; perspectival representation has, just like every other form of expression, its own rhetoricality. It is not a limpid and immediate re-realisation of the real, but an accumulation of effectually realised techniques. Perspectival representation is a particular interpretation wholly dependent on the means that the medium makes available, the techniques in place at that time, as well as on a way of thinking about the world, art and representation that reflects the particular historical-cultural juncture. And, of course, even the asserted agenda of mimesis is itself something like a posturing. Artistic representation never really seeks to sacrifice itself into the actual; what the representations of mimesis unfold is not a *genuine* attempt at a re-realisation of the real, but *the rhetoric of* 'an attempt at the re-realisation of the real'. That this is not an understanding owing wholly to the recent investigations of the post structuralists is something that Shakespeare's parodic *ut pictura poesis* makes apparent. There, language undoes itself and the business of representation gets in the way of its own realisation. Rather than the medium disappearing, it is foregrounded and its deceptions highlighted. Classical and modern prescriptions of mimesis are provided modelling, but only so that their claims might be parodied and unraveled. Yet though these metatheatric features work to undermine the visual reimagining of Edgar's description – and just as is the case with the use made of the illusion-making 'inward eye' – the scene still manages to access the dizzying sense of vacuity that a successful mimetic representation would convey.

These observations require that we expand upon Gurr's formulation of metatheatre. As has been noted, while the analysis of the scene has demonstrated that, as Gurr argued, dissimulation and the associated practice of metatheatre play an integral role in the representations of the early modern theatre, the idea that the dissimulation of theatrical illusion produces such anxiety that the strategies of metatheatre must devote themselves to its government does not, as has been seen, hold up. Deception is in fact reveled in, and it must be thought as triggering the scene's artistic energies. And rather than being limited to instancing disenchant or distance, metatheatre is allowed to extend itself so as to conscript and redeploy the effects that illusion would otherwise generate. This is an effect that is reliant on the audience's access to the transforming vision of an imaginative inner eye, and the particular relationship that the early modern theatre was compelled to take up towards the mimetic tradition. We might note that in arguing for a fuller conceptualisation of metatheatre we have been pushed towards a discussion of the nature of artistic representation, and it seems in the space remaining to us we are obliged to sketch – but only ever so briefly – a theory of metatheatric representation on the early modern stage. To

[55] The reader most probably does not require a definition of 'rhetoricality' – and an attempt to cover its application in contemporary theory would take us well beyond the extent of a footnote – but should a reminder be required, the preliminary definition provided by the philosopher with claims to be the first post-structuralist will suffice to re-introduce the term: he tells us that we call 'a style "rhetorical" when we observe a conscious application of artistic means of speaking' (Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nietzsche's 'Lecture Notes on Rhetoric': A Translation". Translated by Carole Blair, *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1983, pp. 94-129, p. 107). And the term can be seen as offering a broad application when we recognise that all artistic practice occurs as the result of a conscious decision, and that it takes place through the particular language that each specific medium makes available.

do this we might turn to a theory of audience engagement that few writers on metatheatre appear prepared to make use of – though, as we saw a few pages back, Belsey made astute use of it.

Many of those thinkers that have employed Samuel Taylor Coleridge's notion of 'a willing suspension of disbelief' have often done so without affording the concept anything like the subtlety with which it was originally framed. Though it is often taken as championing a form of romantic-mimetic surrender, it in fact theorises a far more self-reflexive and cooler relationship to illusion.[56] Happily for our purposes, the concept is encapsulated in a discussion of stage illusion: treating of a painted forest scenery, Coleridge remarks that

> Stage presentations are to produce a sort of temporary half-faith, by which the spectator encourages in himself and supports by a voluntary contribution on his own part, because he knows that it is at all times in his power to see the thing as it really is …The true stage-illusion in this and in all other things consists – not in the mind's judging it to be a forest, but, in its remission of the judgement that it is not a forest.[57]

This formulation adds a new dimension to our discussion of deception: illusion is experienced via a deliberate and ongoing process by which the audience elects to be deceived. From this it follows that illusion does not take us in in the way mimesis pretends that it does. And this is something that Coleridge implies when he contrasts the experience of the painted forest scenery to a landscape painting by Claude, observing that when it comes to the picture 'it is a condition of all genuine delight that we should not be deceived'. Yet these contrasting effects of artistic deception themselves occur within a broader understanding of the nature of artistic deception: when introducing these paired examples, Coleridge comments, 'though, in the full sense of the word, we are no more deceived by the one than by the other'.[58] The remark suggests that even when the spectator has entered into the illusion (which she does deliberately and consciously), she does not give herself up to it but retains a simultaneous sense of the degree to which the illusion might be

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[56] A rather striking example of how far discussions of the concept tend to overlook the terms of Coleridge's initial formulation can be found in the aesthetic philosopher Kendall Walton's article "Fearing Fictions" (*The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 75, no. 1, January 1978, pp. 5-27). There, Walton confronts the 'traditional ideas that the normal or desired attitude toward fiction involves a "suspension of disbelief"' (and though, as we see, Walton supplies the term with quotation marks, his discussion, rather peculiarly one feels, makes no reference to Coleridge). Walton asserts that it makes for an unfortunate phrase and says that it suggests people see fictions as fact. Having so interpreted the concept he goes on to offer it what he presumes is correction: 'Our disbelief is "suspended" only in the sense that it is, in some way set aside or ignored'. Itself something of an unfortunate phrase, marrying condescension to what anyone who was familiar with Coleridge's formulation would have recognised as redundancy. Had Walton made himself familiar with the term's original outlines he would have saved himself the bother of going on to model the alternate theory of artistic reception that he presents in counter (p. 7-8). The model is in itself a rather neat little thing, only it suffers from the fact that it has already been elucidated, and with far greater subtlety and extent, in - with an irony that the reader of the current text has undoubtedly anticipated – the paragraphs by which Coleridge originally introduced into aesthetic philosophy the notion of 'a willing suspension of disbelief'.

[57] *Coleridge's Essays and Lectures on Shakespeare and Some Other Old Poets and Dramatists* (J. M. Dent and Sons, E. P. Dutton, 1914), p. 28.

[58] *Coleridge's Essays and Lectures on Shakespeare and Some Other Old Poets and Dramatists*, p. 28.

considered convincing *as an illusion*. And we might extrapolate from this a similar framework operating in the reception of metatheatrical effects; that in encountering metatheatre's apparent breaking of illusion, it is not so much that illusion is broken, rather it is that the spectator is directed to an appreciation of *the technique* of metatheatre's 'breaking' of illusion.

Following from these remarks we might suggest that the modes of artistic representation, ranging from the most 'convincing' illusions, born of mimesis and the audience's inward projection at one extreme, to the 'alienation' and 'distancing' of Gurr's conception of metatheatre at the other, are encompassed within the deception that the audience consciously and voluntarily enters into when it engages with art's fictions. According to such a conceptualisation, their effects take, as marked up in the previous sentences, quotation marks. Each representational register is understood rhetorically. The audience is not convinced by the plain that Edgar leads his father across and which the inward eye cannot help but project on the stage, any more than it is convinced by the sense of dizzying vacuity that the mimetic imagination conjures. But also, the audience is not either, 'in the full sense of the word', convinced by metatheatre's disenchantment. Gurr, it seems, is wrong to imagine that metatheatre completely undermines stage representation through marking up illusion's deceptions. It is less unilateral an effect; the audience member's attention is brought back to her remission of the judgement that she is engaged in imaginative illusions, but she does not go on to cease her engagement with these illusions. The assumption that she would simply indicates another version of the dream that art might sublate into the actual; where mimesis would vaporise the artwork through realising the actuality of the representation, metatheatre would perform the same trick through realising the actuality of the medium. The absolute claims that metatheatre advances, like all absolute claims of representation, are only meant to be advanced, never realised. Rather than enacting a disenchantment, the 'deception' of metatheatre unfolds according to the larger and less equivocal deception by which art itself is realised and by which it is experienced. And no matter how much this art may remark its own counterfeit nature, it is also dependent on the fact that its counterfeits are, as Belsey reminded us, beguiling.

‘Mocked with art’: Contradiction and Affect in *The Winter’s Tale*’s ‘Statue’ Scene

The manner in which Shakespeare’s drama unfolds compels us to posit an early modern audience which possessed, as Stuart Sillars wrote in 2013, the ability ‘both to be moved by the fiction of representation and to be fully aware of its falsity’.[1] It is a perspective that William E. Gruber, expressed in even more emphatic terms back in 1985. Gruber writes that in contrast to their present-day equivalents, Tudor and Stuart theatregoers would ‘not only tolerate visible contradictions’ between the actual conditions of the theatre and the fictions there being played out, but that they clearly ‘consider[ed] them to be the affective basis of spectating’.[2] This, though, is not an uncontentious critical notion. More commonly, the contradictions that abide between the literal and figurative, and which of course enjoy a rather pronounced presence in the early modern theatre, are taken as having the potential to disrupt, fatally even, the audience’s engagement with the drama’s fictional world. It is an understanding that informs both the poetics of mimesis (and the play-world focused approaches that derive from it) – which in its most absolute realisation assumes that the successful representation can only be brought off by an illusion of such verisimilitude that the spectator loses all sense of the depiction’s means and manner – as well as traditional conceptualisations of metatheatre – wherein any self-reflexive marking of drama’s artifice is taken as sabotaging the audience’s imaginative investment in play-world fictions.[3]

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[1] “‘You lie, you are not he’: Identity, Rhetoric and Convention in Shakespeare’s Art of Lying” (*Shakespeare and the Art of Lying*, edited by Shormishtha Panja (Orient BlackSwan, 2013), pp. 14-36), p. 25.

[2] “The Actor in the Script: Affective Strategies in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*” (*Comparative Drama*, vol. 19, 1985, pp. 30-48), p. 34. Gruber is discussing specifically the contradictions between actor and role, but his observation must be thought to take in the broader terms of the literal and figurative.

[3] The idea that Shakespeare’s metatheatre is for the most part constrained to alienate the audience from the play-world’s illusory appeal can be thought of as first properly theorised by Bertolt Brecht. The German playwright saw Shakespeare’s drama as anticipating his own model of ‘a theatre of estrangement’ (see Margot Heinemann’s useful summary “How Brecht read Shakespeare” in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, (Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 202-230). It is a view that has had, and continues to have, an enormous influence on some of the most important theorisations of Shakespearean metatheatre. Its impact is already marked in Maynard Mack’s work from the 60s (see, for example, “Engagement and Detachment in Shakespeare’s Plays” (*Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama in Honour of Hardin Craig*, edited by Richard Hosley (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 275-296)); it informs the work of James L. Calderwood in the 70s and 80s (*Shakespearean Metadrama* (University of Minnesota Press, 1971), *Metadrama in Shakespeare’s Henriad* (University of California Press, 1979), *To Be and Not to Be: Negation and Metadrama in Hamlet* (Columbia University Press, 1983)); it has had a decisive impact on the investigations into theatricality undertaken by new historicists and cultural materialists, as well as on the work of researchers investigating the plays’ original performance conditions; and the estrangement model remains prevalent in many present-day discussions of metatheatre. For example, one of our best readers of early modern drama, Andrew Gurr, argued in his 2017 collection, *Shakespeare’s Workplace: Essays on Shakespearean Theatre* (Cambridge University Press), that Shakespeare’s self-reflexive representations operate to divorce the audience from an investment in the play-world illusion so that ‘[l]ike the alienation of audience from the emotions of the actors in Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt*, the obviousness of the [performance’s] pretense could save the participants from … being really deceived’ (p. 158).

So that the perspective modelled by the words of Gruber and Sillars might be explored, and, hopefully, elucidated and extended, this article presents a reading of one of the most affective scenes in all of drama: the reanimation of Hermione's statue in the final scene of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. Following on from the statements by Sillars and Gruber, I argue that the episode's profound impact is realised in great part through the scene's representational tension, and that the most affecting moments are derived from the playwright's pressing the form's contradictions to their most acute point. The second half of the article pursues this further, allowing me to underline the audacity of such a strategy. I demonstrate how Shakespeare marks up for the audience the parts played by the duplicitous and banal in the statue's performance, an arrangement that risks at the same time as it engenders the scene's sublime effects.

The episode is familiar to us: Paulina presents to the royal court of Leontes a 'statue' of Hermione, the Queen that the drama has led both play-world figures and the audience in Shakespeare's theatre to believe had died 16 fictional years previous. The action reaches its climax when the 'statue' finally moves, and it is revealed that, contrary both to reason and to narrative cohesion, the Queen has escaped death, and opted to stage her resurrection through an impersonation of her own sculpted likeness. Despite the outrageous arrangement by which Hermione is restored, the sequence is – as productions time and again attest (and we are obliged to imagine the original performances as similarly brought off) – one of the most startling and intensely moving episodes in all of drama.[4] Oftentimes theatregoers invoke the miraculous in their attempt to describe its effect, and it is not unusual for their responses to suggest that what has been witnessed is art's transposition into the actual. This sense is vividly conveyed in a review of Helen Faucit's 1848 performance of Hermione's revival taken from *The Glasgow Herald*:

> The graceful figure … rivetted every eye when the curtain was withdrawn. So complete was the illusion, so still the figure, so sightless the eyeballs, that you seemed insensibly to forget it was a living being who stood before you; and when amidst the melody of music, she turned her head towards the king, the whole house started as if struck by an electric shock, or as if they had seen the dead rise.[5]

While this account captures well the scene's affective power it seems to suggest that the 'visible contradictions' that Gruber remarked have been wholly subjugated. Those watching 'insensibly … forget' the work's literal dimension, and illusion realises something like a mimetic apotheosis. And this is an interpretation of the scene that a

[4] G. Wilson Knight in *The Sovereign Flower* (Methuen, 1958) writes: 'Eventually the resurrection of Hermione must be considered the most strikingly conceived and profoundly penetrating moment in English literature' (p. 240).

[5] 14 March 1848. The theatre critic for *The Glasgow Citizen* recounts a remarkably similar effect: 'We really do not know what to say in order to speak worthily of the statue scene … It was the most entrancing thing we ever remember to have seen, – actually suspending the blood, and taking the breath away. It was something supernatural almost' (April 1948) Both reviews are quoted in *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale. 6th Ed. 1898*, edited by Samuel Burdett Hemingway, Hyder Edward Rollins, Matthias Adam Shaaber (J. B. Lippincott Company, 1898).

number of the play's most astute readers have adopted. These critics, taking up the dichotomy that the play introduces in the debate between Perdita and Polixenes in 4.3, see the transposition of the 'statue' into the living Hermione as enacting the familiar Renaissance counterpoising of art and nature, and take it as ceding victory to the latter. Jean Hagstrum's remarks serve to outline this perspective: 'Shakespeare has reversed the situation that usually prevails in the art epigram. Art has not defeated nature; nature has defeated art'.[6] This 'nature', however, has nothing of the prosaic about it, as Howard Felperin makes apparent in a commentary even more forthright than Hagstrum's. For Felperin, Hermione's transformation 'is all the more miraculous in its effect than anything art in the usual sense could produce for being life itself … Art is repudiated even as life is asserted', and he concludes that '[f]or a few rarefied moments the creative and recreative power of the imagination is literally made flesh … and the impossible comes true'.[7] Even Leonard Barkan, a critic exceptionally alert to the shifting valences that characterise Shakespeare's exploration of the relationship between art and actuality, follows suit, describing Hermione's initial movements as the moment 'that the central dream of all *ekphrasis* can finally be realized, that is, that the work of art is so real it could *almost* come to life. Theatre removes the *almost*'.[8]

Unquestionably, the recognition of the scene's captivating effects is crucial to any full assessment of the play – yet the perspective reflected in the comments above fails to properly account for the fabricated nature of drama, and in doing so neglects a dimension of self-reflexivity that the dramatist took great care to cultivate. Our experience of the play is attenuated if, enthralled as we are by the stage action, we do not simultaneously attend to the fact that the reanimated Hermione is not 'life itself', that the figure whose first movements in that final scene creates such an awesome effect is not, in actuality, the wronged Queen of Sicilia, but is, in fact, an aesthetic construction. As Philip Edwards points out, the scene is, at the levels of both play-world and actuality, a 'brilliant double-cross'. Contesting the critical notion that 'it is not a triumph of art that Leontes is beholding, but Hermione herself' Edwards responds that '[i]t is in that "Hermione herself" that the mockery lies, for Hermione is a boy-actor pretending to be Hermione pretending to be a statue'.[9] The transformation of art into life that the action stages remains, inevitably, a

[6] *The Sister Arts* (Chicago University Press, 1958), pp. 87-88.
[7] "Our Carver's Excellence: *The Winter's Tale*" (*The Winter's Tale: Critical Essays*, edited by Maurice Hunt (Routledge, 1995), pp. 220-242), pp. 238, 242.
[8] "Making Pictures Speak: Renaissance Art, Elizabethan Literature, Modern Scholarship" (*RenQ*, vol. 48, no. 2, Summer 1995, pp. 326-351), p. 343. This section of my article is indebted to Richard Meek's survey of the critical responses that the scene has generated in *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare* (Routledge, 2016), pp. 172-180.
[9] "'Seeing is believing': Action and Narration in *The Old Wives Tale* and *The Winter's Tale*" (*Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: Essays in Comparison*, edited by E. A. J. Honigmann (Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 79-93), pp. 92-93 n 12. I would prefer if Edwards' formulation used 'male actor' rather than 'boy actor' – recent research suggests that female parts were not exclusively fulfilled by boy actors (see for example, Brett Gamboa's *Shakespeare's Double Plays: Dramatic Economy on the Early Modern Stage* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 12-13, 75, 177). The demands of the Hermione part may be thought to exceed the capabilities of a boy actor, and this could mean that in the original performances the role was fulfilled by a young man.

staging, an episode that is itself framed within theatrical art's doubled and paradoxical form.

The scene's concerns with art, representation, actuality, and wonder bring us, as anticipated in Barkan's remark, to the figure of *ekphrasis*. The term warrants a brief unpacking, its denotation 'surrounded by a haze, as much present [in antiquity] as generated by subsequent discussion'.[10] Today *ekphrasis* is most commonly thought of as a poetical description of a visual artwork. Classicism defined it differently however, and the early modern humanist would have understood *ekphrasis* as a description applicable to an extremely broad range of subject material (the list of topics the various manuals of rhetorical instruction recommend is catholic, and artworks obtain no special status – in fact, more often than not they are absent), the salient feature of which was its *enargeia*, that is, the wondrous quality of bringing 'the subject matter vividly before the eyes'.[11] The *practice* of *ekphrasis*, however, would have ensured that the early modern scholar also thought of the term in the modern sense. In both early- and late-Renaissance, the most exalted exemplifications of the genre were both classical descriptions of artistic representations (respectively, Homer's account of the elaborate imagery of the shield of Achilles, and Virgil's description of the depictions on the shield of Aeneas), and when Catherine Belsey describes *ekphrasis* as 'a favourite device of the period' she is using the term in its modern denotation.[12] Even in antiquity, the self-reflexive potential of applying *ekphrasis* to art objects was recognised and repeatedly seized on by a number of sophists.[13]

As Richard Meek observes, *The Winter's Tale* represents 'arguably Shakespeare's most provocative treatment of the figure of ekphrasis' – a statement which takes in both the classical and modern senses of the term.[14] A remarkably large number of the play's key events are never staged, but only represented in the form of vivid description, while the 'statue' of Hermione is first introduced with an ekphrastic description that underlines its incredible lifelikeness. But of course, when Meek writes 'provocative' he is thinking mainly of the *ekphrasis* of the 'statue' scene itself; of the staged presentation of what is

[10] Stuart Sillars, *Shakespeare and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 28. The 'subsequent discussion' is reflected in in a number of fascinating texts, see for example, Murray Krieger's *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (The John Hopkins University Press, 1992), James A. W. Heffernan's *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), W. J. T. Mitchell's *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), John Hollander's "The Poetics of Ekphrasis" (*Word and Image*, vol. 4, 1988, pp. 209-219).

[11] A phrase, that as Ruth Webb remarks the various versions of the *Progymnasmata* – despite their being separated by up to almost four centuries – repeat over, with almost no variation ("Ekphrasis ancient and modern: The invention of a genre", *Word and Image*, vol. 15, 1999, pp. 7-18, p. 11).

[12] "The Rape of Lucrece" (*Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Poetry*, edited by Patrick Cheney (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 90-107), p. 100.

[13] For example, Philostratus' *Imagines* (third century CE), which gives itself out as providing description of over 60 works in a Neapolitan picture-gallery, and which was explicitly defined as 'certain ekphrasis of works of painting' by his purported grandson, Philostratus the Younger, in the proem to the second book. In the same or next century, Callistratus produced an imitation of the *Imagines* entitled *Ekphraseis*, which consisted of 14 essays describing stone and bronze statues.

[14] *Narrating the Visual*, p. 26.

initially introduced as a sculpture realised by 'Julio Romano', an artist whose work offers such a degree of verisimilitude that it 'would beguile nature of her custom' (5.2.97).[15] It is a tag in which we hear again the dream of actualisation that informs all mimetic representation, and which, as Barkan's earlier comment indicates, *ekphrasis* makes explicit.

Yet there is another side to *ekphrasis*; for however insistently this apparent impulse to the actual is advanced, *ekphrasis* can too be thought of as something of a deliberate misdirection. It is a set-piece, and as such marks itself up as an artistic representation that is, at essence, confined to the rhetorical. Discussing the figure's nature, Meek has written of how *ekphrasis* 'crystallises something of the paradoxical nature, even duplicity' of artistic representation, and elsewhere he goes as far as to describe it as 'a sophisticated con trick'.[16] *Ekphrasis* then seems to pull in two ways at once, and the title of Murray Krieger's excellent study of the figure captures precisely this inherent contrariety: *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign.*[17]

Understood in this way, it becomes clear that the possibilities generated by *ekphrasis* fit well with an art like Shakespeare's, intimately concerned as it is with the representational possibilities afforded by the exchange between illusion and artifice. This exchange is of course foregrounded and intensified, provocatively so, in Hermione's 'statue'. For rather than being confined to rhetorical illusion, as in the traditional ekphrastic mode, here *ekphrasis* is figured forth. The dream of actual presence is, it seems, realised – yet simultaneous with this, the arrangement cannot help but point up that this 'actual presence' is, at bottom, simply another layer of artistic dissimulation – an actor performing a part composed by a playwright.

This points us towards something which the reading of the 'statue' scene will explore: that the strategies by which Shakespeare makes use of the dissimulations and contradictory unfolding of early modern theatrical representation bear a certain commonality with – to return to Meek's words – the con trick. And this is a correspondence which the play seems to self-reflexively highlight through the figure of the scam-artist, Autolycus, with a number of critics happy to identify the play's fraudster with Shakespeare himself.[18] Autolycus is, like his creator, a virtuoso in the creation of fantastical deceptions,

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[15] Giulio Romano was, of course, one of most famous artists of the Renaissance; he helped to define the mannerist style and was seen by his contemporaries as the principal heir to Raphael. The spelling of his first name as 'Julio' reflects that found in the folio, a form which most subsequent editors have stuck to. The different spellings prove rather convenient for the critic who needs to distinguish between the actual artist and his fictional counterpart. All references to *The Winter's Tale* are taken from *The Norton Shakespeare*, 3rd edition, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Suzanne Gossett, Katharine Eisaman Maus, Gordon McMullan (W. W. Norton, 2016).

[16] *Narrating* the *Visual*, pp. 6, 178. In the first quotation Meek is referring to literary description specifically rather than artistic representation in general. However, as the discussion throughout his book makes apparent, Meek understands the arrangement he remarks as also taking in representation on stage and in the visual arts.

[17] The John Hopkins University Press, 1992.

[18] For example, Mary L. Livingstone's "The Natural Art of *The Winter's Tale*" (*Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 30, 1969, pp. 340-355), especially p. 346; Philip Edwards' "'Seeing is believing': Action and Narration in *The Old Wives Tale* and *The Winter's Tale*", especially p. 92; Stephen Orgel's introduction to the 1996 Oxford Shakespeare edition of the play, especially p. 52.

and in the manipulation of his audience's credence. Moreover, playwright and play-world part both share a brazen yet gamesome confidence in the powers of their artistry, both being willing to risk the success of their dissimulations by pressing them to ever more outlandish extremes – as well as through foregrounding the very means by which these deceptions are brought off. Yet as will be demonstrated, it is this sophist-like gambit which makes possible the scene's revelatory power.

The 'statue' scene

We should here at the outset underline an aspect of Shakespeare's stagecraft which, being as it is so often taken for granted, is not always made explicit. Shakespeare's plays, as Jean E. Howard observes,

> give every evidence that he thought a great deal about audiences: their potential recalcitrance and suggestibility, the techniques by which the dramatist wins or forfeits control over them, the potential abuses and benefits of such control … he also created scripts that reveal his constant concern with guiding the perceptions and responses of those who watched his dramas.[19]

In the current instance where I imply that the closing scene of *The Winter's Tale* deploys the contrary aspects of early modern drama's form to facilitate something along the lines of a confidence scam the manner in which Shakespeare guides audience perceptions and responses must be thought of as of particular interest. And to get some sense of how this is engineered we should remark at the outset that Shakespeare' spectators go into the scene somewhat wrong-footed. For the apparent narrative climax which the audience members were anticipating, the spectacle of royal reunion between King Leontes, his thought-to-be-lost daughter, Perdita, and his estranged friend, King Polixenes, has been denied them and they have had to make do instead with a second-hand and somewhat farcical report of the scene.[20] And the play would have only further compounded the audience's sense of consternation, by having, at this point when the climax of the narrative's main action, however unsatisfying a form it may have taken, seems done, one of the gentlemen introduce into proceedings some peculiar business about a statue of the Queen, a part which the audience had assumed the play had long since disposed of.

The unveiling of Hermione's 'statue' would have only underlined the singularity of the scene's action. As the dialogue makes apparent Paulina reveals the 'statue' by drawing

[19] Jean E. Howard, *Shakespeare's Art of Orchestration: Stage Technique and Audience Response* (University of Illinois Press, 1984), p. 8.

[20] A point made by various critical voices, but perhaps Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch captures the mood most colourfully: 'Are we not baulked? In proportion as we have paid tribute to the art of the story by letting our interest be intrigued, our emotion excited, are we not cheated when Shakespeare lets us down with this reported tale?' (*Notes on Shakespeare's Workmanship* (Holt, 1917), p. 266).

a curtain (a stage direction that modern editions supply, and which lines 5.3.18-20 make explicit), and this would seem to indicate that Hermione has been concealed in the stage's discovery space. Such a blocking arrangement is highly unusual (it seems that only once before had a play in the commercial English theatre made such a use of the discovery space[21]), and we must imagine, histrionically realised as Paulina's uncurtaining surely was, its effect would have been notable.

Almost immediately, however, in a dramatic strategy that, as I will show runs through the scene, this powerful effect is undercut, or at the least, reconfigured. Here, the moment of spectacle is juxtaposed incongruously with what could be understood as the crude connotations implicit in Leontes' initial exclamation: 'Her natural posture!' (5.3.23). Certainly, the utterance serves to capture Leontes' startled wonder, and the line can too be thought of as picking out the contrapuntal theme of representation's ekphrastic impulse to the actual through what has been presented as a work of Julio Romano. Moreover, Romano's reputation for an art that rivals the actual is something with which any Jacobean readers of the first edition of Georgio Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* (1550) would have been familiar, and the eulogistic introduction that the Third Gentleman provides to the statue of Hermione with its claim that its creator 'could put breath into his work' seems to deliberately reference it. As Vasari records, the second epitaph inscribed on Romano's tomb read: 'Jupiter saw sculpted and painted bodies breathe and the homes of mortals made equal to those in heaven through the skill of Giulio Romano. Thus angered he summoned a council of all the gods, and he removed that man from the earth, lest he be exposed, conquered, or equalled by an earth-born man'.[22] Yet Gurr remarks another connotation, pointing out that the expression probably makes reference to an actual work that for a number of Jacobeans the name 'Julio Romano' would have immediately conjured: the illustrations made by the play's real-world counterpart in the most notorious erotic book of the sixteenth century, *Arentino's Postures*.[23] The innuendo – and the stage blocking may

[21] Bart van Es points out that the unconventional arrangement is almost certainly borrowed from John Fletcher's tragicomedy, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, first performed – we think – in 1608 by the Children of the Blackfriars (that is, probably two or three years before *The Winter's* Tale), but later added to the Kingsmen's repertoire. In the final act of Fletcher's play, a curtain is drawn to reveal a carefully orchestrated spectacle which restores two figures that the stage characters and audience had presumed to be dead. The arrangement undoubtedly impressed Shakespeare, for he makes use of it not only here in *The Winter's Tale*, but again soon after in *The Tempest*, when 'Prospero discovers Ferdinand and Miranda playing at chess' (5.1.171 sd) (*Shakespeare in Company* (Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 272-274).

[22] The epitaph was dropped from subsequent editions. The passage can be found in *Le Vite de' piu eccellenti pittori scultori ed architettori,* edited by G. Milanesi (Firenze G. C. Sansoni, 1878-85), p. 557, and the translation provided here appears in Leonard Barkan's "'Living Sculptures': Ovid, Michelangelo, and *The Winter's Tale*" (*ELH*, vol. 48, no. 4, Winter 1981, pp. 639-667), p. 656.

[23] "New Directions: Sources and Creativity in *The Tempest*" (*The Tempest: A Critical Reader*, edited by Alden T. Vaughn and Virginia Mason Vaughn (Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 93-114), p. 98. Gurr sees the inclusion of the reference as sustaining what he argues is the teasing relationship the play takes up to Ben Jonson. Gurr observes that Jonson flaunted his familiarity with the scandalous work, 'most likely alluding to what Shakespeare, for one, knew was his personal copy. References to it appear in both *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*, two of the plays he wrote for Shakespeare's company' (p. 98).

have chosen to play it up – is that the pose the 'statue' models is compatible, hypothetically at least, with the King and Queen's preferred coital arrangement.

But of course, what would have been immediately obvious, and perhaps most discomposing of all, was that what the unveiling revealed as stood on a platform was not, in actual terms, a statue, but a male actor. What would not have been clear though is whether the male actor is impersonating a statue of Hermione – that is assuming the role of a theatrical prop – or if he is impersonating the Hermione role impersonating the statue. This latter possibility is especially bewildering – for the narrative has indicated to the audience, quite unambiguously, that Hermione has died. The audience has watched as Leontes was led out to see her corpse, and, in what would seem unassailable dramatic proof, Antigonus has been granted a vision of the 'dead' Queen. As Ernest Schanzer notes, '[t]here is no precedent in Elizabethan drama for the spirit of a living person appearing to others either in dream or waking'.[24] And while an audience familiar with Shakespeare's artistic strategies may have noted that the playwright's recent romances were not at all times as forthright as his earlier work, they would still have expected the play to unfold according to what Schanzer calls Shakespeare's 'habitual practice', which 'in contrast to that of many other playwrights … had been to put the audience in full possession of all relevant knowledge, so that, even on a first viewing, the dramatic irony that derives from the characters' lack of this knowledge is immediately felt'.[25]

Playing against this sense of the improbability of Hermione's resurrection though, and doing so powerfully, is the patent fact that this 'statue' is performed by the Hermione actor. And this arrangement would only encourage the expectation fostered by Renaissance tradition that any statue presented in literature or performance might very well come to life.[26] Yet at the same time, any restoration that would reverse Hermione's fate means that the audience has been lied to – and, correspondingly, this means that any promise of restoration which is held out cannot itself be trusted.[27] The matter is finely poised; one strand of the play's illusion – stage representation – seems to validate the 'statue' as being the resurrected Hermione, while another strand – the narrative representation – tells the audience that this cannot be. And inevitably, the contradictions that this juxtaposition effects will point the audience back to an awareness of the fictitious nature of both representations. Yet the playwright has deliberately cultivated these vying impulses, and, masterfully, he directs them. The intense spectacle of the scene's fiction demands focus,

[24] Introduction, *The Winter's Tale (The New Penguin Shakespeare)* (*Penguin*, 1973), p. 15.
[25] *The Winter's Tale*, p.15.
[26] As Wilson F. Engel III notes, '[t]he statue that comes to life to take part in dramatic action was a stock, sensational device in Renaissance English drama with roots in classical, non-dramatic sources'. Alongside the statue of Hermione, he lists a number of other examples: 'the Brazen Head in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, by Robert Greene, the statue of Pompey and the dreamed statue of Caesar in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, the statue of Fortune in Jonson's *Sejanus, His Fall*' ("Sculpture and the Art of Memory in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama" (*Modern language* Studies, vol. 10, no. 2, Spring 1980, pp. 3-9), p. 3). The trope was also popular in masques: in Thomas Campion's *The Lord's Masque* (1613) eight women, turned into statues by Jove, are reanimated, and the first antimasque in Francis Beaumont's *Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn* (also 1613) has four statues come to life and dance.
[27] As Stephen Orgel puts it in his introduction to the Oxford edition: 'if Leontes is being deceived by Paulina about the reality of death, so we are being deceived by Shakespeare' (p. 36).

and this means that the audience members are not permitted the opportunity to properly reflect on this contestation between a belief in play-world illusion and its repudiation, but can only map the experience of this tension back onto the narrative. And, it follows, that it is there, within the narrative, that the audience seeks its satisfaction. Here it seems, Brechtian notions of metatheatre are anticipated and superseded. Estrangement is only the initial stage in this metatheatrical strategy; for this estrangement is realised in tandem with, and countered by, the compelling power of the play's illusion. Moreover, the tension of this arrangement is projected back onto the play-world, re-investing its fictions with greater dramatic immediacy.

This tension must not be allowed to resolve itself either one way or the other, else it disappears. So when the play highlights that the Hermione figure seems to show the signs of aging that one would expect to find if this was indeed the living Queen, this revelational momentum must be offered some kind of inhibition. Once more, and again rather audaciously, it takes the form of an inappropriate comic check. For once the effect of the double entendre of Leontes' initial expression has been dispersed by the king's subsequent expressions of an overwhelming wonder, the passage tacks back again, and Leontes remarks, 'But yet, Paulina,/ Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing/ so agèd as this seems' (5.3.27-29). These words contrast sharply with the idealised hyperbole of the king's memorialisation of his Queen at the start of the act – and depending on how Polixenes – the man Leontes had previously thought his love-rival – delivers his next line, 'O, not by much', the sexist humour of Hermione's literal objectification might be repeated and extended.

Despite this comic interjection, these wrinkles would nonetheless seem to provide a natural sign confirming that this truly is the Queen – that, somehow, at the narrative level, Hermione avoided the death we were told befell her 16 stage-years previous. But of course, this confirmation provided by the visual evidence of her aging – in a play, which as has been noted, constantly raises doubts about the nature of visual evidence – is born of, and only leads the audience back to, the illusions of the stage. For – returning to the ekphrastic paradigm remarked in Krieger's study – this *natural sign* is clearly an artificial illusion. It is what the Jacobeans would have called 'paint', that is, stage make up. And for this stage paint to be effective (that it conveys the impression of the part having aged, and that this apparent aging is visible to even the most distant spectators), it would need to be exaggerated, and, one imagines, more stylised than realistic. As Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter note, it is unlikely that stage cosmetics of the period would produce – or were even intended to produce – a naturalistic effect.[28]

Additionally, being that as 'early modern defenders and detractors of the stage alike imagined paint as embodying the essence of theatricality'[29] it would seem that at the same time the stage make up realises the representational indication of Hermione having aged

[28] *Masks and Masking in Medieval and Early Tudor England* (Routledge, 2016), p. 317.
[29] Andrea Stevens "Cosmetic Transformations" (*Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, edited by Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern (The Arden Shakespeare, 2014), pp. 94-117), p. 95.

16 years, it must simultaneously signal a metatheatrical remarking of the play-as-aesthetic-construction, underlining that 'the aged Hermione' exists only as a dissimulation rendered by a made-up actor. Paulina's lines twice draw metatheatrical attention to the figure's painted aspect, as she dissuades first Perdita and then Leontes from attempting to kiss the 'statue':

> Oh, patience!
> The statue is but newly fixed, the colour's
> Not dry. (5.3.46-48)
>
> Good my lord, forbear.
> The ruddiness upon her lip is wet;
> You'll mar it if you kiss it, stain your own
> With oily painting. (5.3.80-83)

At the same time, the painted nature of the wrinkles would also signal the larger aesthetic construction of the play itself, pointing the audience back to the (let us underline it – probably not wholly convincing) cosmetic transformation by which all the stage presences from the play's first half have been made to look older, including, of course, the two Kings that give Hermione appraisal.

But as we have noted, this pointing up its own artifice does not undermine the scene's emotional hold. It seems, in fact, that in so far as these movements model a struggle, the audience is encouraged to strive with ever more urgency after belief, to invest all the more in the possibility of a living Hermione. This impetus to faith is pursued throughout the language of the final act, and at the brink of Hermione's restoration, this impulse is made most explicit: Paulina announces, 'It is required/ You do awake your faith' (5.3.94-5). Though, ostensibly, directed at Leontes and the court audience, it is the theatre audience who Paulina charges, and whose belief is being spurred on.[30] Paulina goes on to provide the – one imagines, occasionally unruly – Jacobean spectators further instruction: 'Then all stand still', and King Leontes speaks a royal injunction that commands their attention at the same time as it promises their compliance: 'No foot shall stir' (5.3.98).

Coming at this point of pitched suspense, these imperatives work to reposition the audience; they open up the stage and assign the spectators a play-world role. They are changed from theatre audience to royal subjects; no longer spectators, but witnesses.[31] It is

[30] As Patricia Southard Gourlay observes 'Paulina herself is both magician and stage-manager, an arranger of dramatic effect, totally in control of her spectacle' ("'O my most sacred lady' – Female Metaphor in *The Winter's Tale*" (*The Winter's Tale: Critical Essays*, pp. 258-279), p. 275).

[31] A reading of the audience reaction that would chime with the theatre experience of yet another Scottish reviewer fortunate enough to witness Faucit's Hermione: 'The spectator became an actor in the scene, and all "Held their breath for a time" (*The Scotchman* (Edinburgh, 3 March 1847)). In his discussion of the scene, Michael O'Connell argues that the viewers 'become complicit in the worship of the statue and thus agents in whatever it is that brings about the statue's incarnation into full theatrical life. If the scene for the moment fully associates theatricality with idolatry,

as though in ceding this particularly realised role to the audience, the thin but sophisticated divide that separates Jacobean stage and audience is momentarily withdrawn. Having dallied with older literary forms throughout, it seems as if *The Winter's Tale*, for these few vital and hypnotic moments, shirks off a century's worth of dramatic tradition and, for the space of three or four breaths, relocates its action and its audience within the atmosphere of the spiritually loaded dramas of the recent medieval past.[32] I am referring of course to the mystery plays, dramas which, rather than taking a knowing attitude to the dissimulation of dramatic performance as the Jacobethan theatre was, at one level, almost compelled to do, unfolded through a modality that was more akin to that of religious reenactment. This was drama in which, as Anne Righter puts it, 'illusion had power over reality', and in which, '[w]hile the performance lasted, audience and actors shared the same ritual world'.[33] Or, perhaps rather than my claiming that the play has relocated its action within this tradition it might be more precise to say it makes a deliberate facsimile of it; that is, to remark the sequence as an appropriation of the arrangement of the earlier form – as the borrowing of an effect.

Still Hermione does not move just yet. For – quite strikingly – the apparent miracle of her return to life is not cued by this call for faith, but by a reformulation of Paulina's sacred imprecation that stresses once more the context of theatrical performance. The earlier, 'It is required you do awake your faith' is transposed into 'Music, awake her; strike!' (5.3.98). And this moment of aural surprise would have paired itself with an intellectual jolt. For in whatever way it was realised, this music could not help but have marked itself out as bringing to a climax what a number of the audience would have viewed uneasily as a series of recognisably Catholic gestures enacting a repeated challenge of Protestant proscription. To begin with, as Julia Reinhard Lupton has pointed out, the scene's occurrence in a 'chapel' allows it to reproduce Catholicism's iconography of idolatry.[34] Walter Lim offers further examples: 'there is the reference to Julio Romano, whose name cannot be extricated from the contaminating context of papal politics; and then, of course, there are the pervasive images evocative of Marian iconography'.[35] One of

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Shakespeare does not counter, but embraces the charge' (*The Idolatrous Eye: Iconoclasm and Theatre in Early-Modern England* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 141).

[32] Though he uses different examples and remarks different effects, Daryll Grantley also sees *The Winter's Tale* as making use of the mystery play tradition. In "*The Winter's Tale* and Early Religious Drama" (*Comparative Drama* vol. 20, no. 1, Spring 1986, pp. 17-37) he argues that 'Leontes in his rage recalls one of the most dramatically striking of the characters in scriptural drama: Herod', and goes on to compare Hermione's trial scene to the representation of the trial of Christ in the Cycle plays (pp. 29, 31). Other critics have noted that Shakespeare's latter plays can be seen as making use of this older and distinctly religious form. We see it, for example, in Colin Still's study of *The Tempest*, to which he gives the title, *Shakespeare's Mystery Play* (Folcroft Library Editions, 1921), and in the introduction to the 1963 Arden edition of *Pericles* F. D. Hoeniger argues for the play's structural features as being derived from the Saint's Play.

[33] *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (Penguin Shakespeare Library, 1967), pp. 15, 21.

[34] *Afterlives of the Saints: Hagiography, Typology, and Renaissance Literature* (Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 175-218, especially p. 217.

[35] "Knowledge and Belief in *The Winter's Tale*" (*Tudor and Stuart Drama*, special issue of *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 41, no. 2, Spring 2001, pp. 317-334), p. 319. And as an addendum to Lim's comment on

the most resonant of these images being when Perdita kneels before the 'statue' of her mother, only, as Lim observes, 'to find herself beset by the Protestant awareness that such an act of adulation is akin to superstition'[36]: 'And give me leave,/ And do not say 'tis superstition, that/ I kneel, and then implore her blessing' (5.3.42-44).

A word, however, needs to be said about the scene's setting.[37] Following the stage directions supplied in modern editions of *The Winter's Tale* (no such indications found their way into the folios) most commentators have been content to understand the play's final scene as, from the first, occurring in 'a chapel'. However, Shakespeare's original audience would have experienced the scene very differently. The failure to recognise this represents an oversight, and it has meant that one of the scene's most startling and original theatrical shifts has escaped critical attention. Let us remind the reader that the almost complete lack of scenery on the early modern stage meant that when a scene required a specific location, dialogue was constrained to indicate it. Naturally, it was expedient that this was done early on in the scene. Turning to the opening exchanges of *The Winter's Tale*'s final scene we see that while in the sixth line Paulina remarks the action as occurring in her 'poor house' there is nothing that might indicate to a Jacobean audience that the events are taking place in a chapel. In fact, 10 lines in, Leontes makes a comment to Paulina which might suggest a rather different setting:

> Your gallery
> Have we passed through, not without much content
> In many singularities, but we saw not
> That which my daughter came to look upon,
> The statue of her mother. (5.3.10-14).

Granted, the present perfect construction of 'Have we pass'd through' could be understood by some audience members to indicate that the King and his entourage have left the gallery and entered a new room. But other audience members would surely be likely to take Leontes words as indicating that the stage figures are still in Paulina's gallery. A sense that would be reinforced by there being no alternate setting remarked in the scene's early exchanges, and also by the fact that a 'gallery' is precisely the location one would expect to encounter a statue.

The ambiguity is deliberately and rather cunningly cultivated, and even for audience members who understood Leontes' lines as remarking that the figures had subsequently entered a separate space, the sense that the action occurs in a 'chapel' would still be wholly absent. Shakespeare allows these conceptualisations of the setting to persist right up until line 86, at which point the play-world locale is made explicit. Leaving the marking of setting so extraordinarily late and fashioning the scene in such a way that some members

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Romano, as the already quoted epitaph that Vasari assigns to Romano demonstrates the notion that a work of art was capable of offending divinity was not exclusive to Protestant thought.

[36] "Knowledge and Belief in *The Winter's Tale*", p. 320.

[37] The remarks on the scene's 'chapel' setting are derived from my article, "'Quit presently the chapel'; A note on setting in the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*" (*Notes and Queries*, vol 67, no. 2, June 2020).

of the audience (those who had imagined the play events as occurring in a gallery) would be forced into an abrupt reconceptualisation of the setting makes for a rather arresting arrangement. The timing too is striking – with the disclosure being embedded in the passage in which Paulina offers a miraculous reanimation:

> Either forbear,
> Quit presently the chapel, or resolve you
> For more amazement. If you can behold it,
> I'll make the statue move indeed, descend,
> And take you by the hand (5.3.85-89).

The newly remarked setting underwrites the divine dimensions of Paulina's promise, and in this way accumulates to itself an acute significance.[38] That the existence of the chapel is relayed to the audience members almost as if in passing, in the manner of a piece of background information, would have made the information all the more startling. In contrast to readings which take the presence of the chapel as apparent throughout and so picture the audience experiencing the scene's implications of Catholic idolatry unfolding as a series of separate instances, it seems that these affronts to Protestant interdict only become fully apparent retrospectively, at the point when Paulina's speaks the word, 'chapel' – and I would add, that in so far as they become apparent all at once, their impact is all the more intense.[39]

The revelation that the statue has been all along in a chapel is an arrangement that would have been particularly invidious to Protestant sensibility. It would have meant that the audience, without fully grasping it at the time, had been offered a representation that flouted the contemporary proscription on imagery in places of worship, whereby church statues – at least those which had escaped the zeal of Reformist destruction – were covered over. It would also mean that Paulina's melodramatic revelation of the statue, occurring as it did through a curtained unveiling, would have served as a rather shocking up-ending of contemporary interdict. Yet, of greater significance would be the sudden realisation that the audience members had witnessed a stage re-enactment of Catholic image worship, and a re-enactment which, in the powerful emotional appeal it realised, they had unknowingly urged on. Perhaps most troubling of all, this worshiped statue seems to be on the verge of the kind of miraculous transformation to which the Catholic church's statues, at least in the previous generation, were notoriously prone[40] – and which Protestants took great pains to

[38] The imaginative transposing of gallery to chapel, that is, the reconceptualisation of a secular space as a holy one, might encourage the critics who see Hermione's recovery as a miraculous realisation that repudiates the claims of art. But this would be to ignore the explicit dissimulation by which this transformation of setting has been brought about, and which itself points back to the play as being realised through an art that is intensely focused on its own artifice.

[39] As my "'Quit presently the chapel'; A note on setting in the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*" demonstrates, the impact derived from the locale being realised in this way is something the playwright deliberately cultivated. In the previous scene, when the statue is first introduced, Shakespeare goes to some dialogical lengths so as to avoid giving out its specific location.

[40] The exposé of the false miracles devised by Catholic priests was a favourite topic in Protestant discussion – and oftentimes this concerned itself with moving church statues. See, for example, the various discourses of the period devoted to denouncing the Rood of Grace in Boxley Abbey as a mechanised hoax.

demonstrate were – and this is not without significance when it comes to Hermione's return to life – elaborate and sinful hoaxes. And nor is the play satisfied to leave it there.

With Paulina's holy exhortation having already provided the mandate for Hermione's reanimation, the subsequent demand for music – an arrangement that is, which effectively frames 'music' as constituting the final and crucial element in Hermione's enlivening – would seem a rather brazen inversion of the Protestant prohibition of instrumentation in places of worship. And of course, the music that inspired Hermione's resuscitation would be far removed from the sacred sound typical of churches prior to the reformation. It would be realised instead through a distinctly secular aural pattern – 'that lascivious, amorous, effeminate, voluptuous music' which William Prynne encountered only at the theatre.[41] Some commentators, encouraged by a conventional reading of the 'statue' scene which sees the movement to revelation as a swelling concord, will find it natural to imagine this music as taking the form of a restrained and harmonic theme, most likely realised through the theatre's string and wind instruments. This is certainly feasible, but we should not dismiss the possibility that a more galvanising sound accompanies Hermione's first movements, something which might more closely echo the cadences of Paulina's commentary, marked as it is by 'brisk stirring trumpet sentences'[42] and frequent and abrupt breaks (this later sense is underlined by the punctuation in the first folio: Paulina's command is printed as 'Musick; awake her: Strike:/ 'Tis time: descend: be Stone no more: approach:' (3.306-307)). A strident sound would create disjuncture, but at the same time the effect would innervate, as well as serving to underline the epochal fracture that this reanimation instantiates. And having made the most of this momentary discord, once again, the scene zags back the other way, as Paulina delivers a speech of such poetic and evocative power that – for a few instants at least – any impulses to discord must be overwhelmed; contrariety, having brought the scene to is pitch, is, momentarily, suspended:

> 'Tis time. Descend. Be stone no more. Approach,
> Strike all that look upon with marvel. Come,
> I'll fill your grave up. Stir. Nay, come away.
> Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him
> Dear life redeems you. (5.3.99-103)

And, incredibly and outrageously, Hermione steps down onto the stage.

[41] *Histriomastix* (London: Michael Sparke, 1632), p. 274.

[42] Harley Granville Barker, "Preface to *The Winter's Tale*" (*The Winter's Tale: Critical Essays*, pp. 76-81), p. 79. Earlier, when she decides to take on the part of the scolding voice of moral consciousness, Paulina makes explicit the trumpeting tones that she has adopted: 'I'll take 't upon me:/ If I prove honey-mouth'd, let my tongue blister,/ And never to my red-look'd anger be/ The trumpet anymore' (2.2.32-35).

Motion and magic

At the same time then that the play's spectators experience the wonder of miraculous resurrection and the dream of *ekphrasis*' representational ideality, a parallel metatheatrical movement marks up the artifice of artistic illusion. As has been demonstrated, the playwright skillfully exploits this representational duality, and this means that while the sequence's representational claims are ironised and even sometimes temporarily undermined, the play's climactic effects are nonetheless lent intensification. While the scene can, on the one hand be thought of as an extended exploration of artistic representation's inherent dissimulation, it can simultaneously be considered an exemplar of the overwhelming effects that illusion is capable of. Key to the success of this operation is the sense of 'the paradoxical nature, even duplicity' of Shakespeare's dramatic representation. In the context of this discussion there are two further effects generated in the scene which deserve remarking. Their analysis will underline the extent to which the play presses its original audience to associate its most profoundly moving illusions with the aspects of banal simulation and empty trickery.

The first of these aspects concerns the acted impersonation of the unmoving statue. Whenever an actor is forced to represent immobility on the stage, and its most common application is, of course, not to statues, but to corpses, some part of the audience's attention is invariably drawn to how successful the impersonation is. As the actor Peter Ustinov notes, 'When presented with a corpse, we check for breathing', an observation which Jenn Stephenson expounds as '[d]eath is always meta-theatrical'.[43] Stephenson goes on to state that this attention 'unbalance[s] the typical duality of aesthetic experience' forming a 'second-order metatheatre which comments on theatrical perception by showing breakdowns of that perception'.[44] It is an effect that we see Shakespeare frequently play off in his treatment of stage corpses,[45] and it is a strategy he makes use of in his handling of the statue impersonation in *The Winter's Tale.*

Here, the audience's focus on the rather exacting task given to the Hermione-actor is echoed and intensified by the inspection that the onstage-audience gives to what it presumes is a statue. And this is accentuated by a further demand that Shakespeare places on the impersonation – for as the text makes apparent, the actor must conduct his imitation

[43] Taken from Jenn Stephenson's "Singular impressions: Meta-theatre on Renaissance celebrities and corpses" (*Studies in Theatre and Performance,* vol. 27, no. 2, 2007, pp. 137-153), p. 147.
[44] "Singular impressions: Meta-theatre on Renaissance celebrities and corpses", p. 138.
[45] Gamboa provides an excellent example of the intricacies of Shakespeare's metatheatric strategies in his extended analysis of Othello's suffocation of Desdemona, which begins by remarking that the initial attack 'will always leave the actor breathing – and the spectators watching her breathe – while giving us cause to believe that the character has died. Spectators fluently harmonise the actor's life and the character's death. But when Othello finds her living, we learn that the reality we perceived (of a living actor) was, in fact, a component of the fiction. So, in the moment at which Othello finds life – 'Not dead? Not yet quite dead?' – we learn that we have more misjudged the state of the drama than he, while mistaking our own capacity to keep fiction separate from truth. Shakespeare anticipates how spectators will perceive and process stage deaths, then uses our understanding against us. We trust convention by setting truth aside for a fictional reality, only to learn that truth was necessary for correctly interpreting fictional events.' This analysis is followed by an equally perceptive reading of the acute presence of the live actor in Cordelia's death scene in *King Lear*. *Shakespeare's Double Plays*, pp. 36-38.

with eyes open (5.3.67). Deliberately, the playwright has tasked his actor – at the same time as he has marked up that his performance of immobility warrants scrutiny – with an impossible demand; it being inconceivable that any actor would be capable of holding an unblinking, motionless gaze for over a hundred lines.

The actor has already maintained the pose for a couple of minutes – meaning that some audience members would almost certainly have remarked some involuntary movements of his eyes – when Leontes and Polixenes close in on the 'statue' so as to give it closer survey:

> LEONTES: See, my lord,
> Would you not deem it breathed, and that those veins
> Did verily bear blood?
>
> POLIXENES: Masterly done:
> The very life seems warm upon her lip. (5.3.63-66)

The Kings' appraisal of the verisimilitude of the 'statue' cannot help but indicate the actual manner of its realisation. But this 'actual' brings us back to the claims of the critics who see in the sequence life's victory over art, and reminds us also of the limitations of this view. Leontes' words, like so many things in this scene, make use of ekphrastic convention to ironically foreground the inherent contrarieties of artistic representation. They point beneath the impersonation of marble to remark the flesh-and-blood Hermione within – yet this is to remark, at one and the same time, the flesh-and blood Jacobean actor on whose skills the successful impression of marble-like immobility is predicated. It is a design which serves to redouble the scene's tension, as each representational mode is dependent on the success of the imitation. For at the play-world level, if, as the audience cannot help but suspect, this is the recovered Hermione, then it seems vital that the Queen should maintain the illusion that she is a statue, so that Paulina might direct the action to its orchestrated conclusion. Parallel to this, and unfolding according to Stephenson's concept of 'second-order metatheatre', it is too vital that the actor should not fail in his impression of immobility, and that he maintains the illusion that Hermione maintains the illusion that she is a statue, so that Shakespeare might direct the action to its orchestrated conclusion. Shakespeare, one cannot help but note, has placed a great deal of weight on, and directed a great part of the audience's attention to, what is not only an impossible performance, but one, in that a great part of the audience's focus is directed to the business of an actor's ability to forgo blinking, risks transposing sublime illusion into a trifling and banal actuality.

And, in line with the Autolycus-like sensibility that pervades the play – which is prepared to gamble that the con-trick of its fictions can sustain themselves even as it outrageously advertises the constructed nature of their deceptions – *The Winter's Tale* ups the tension one notch further. Continuing his inspection, Leontes is given an observation that teases the failure of the impression: 'The fixure of her eye has motion in't/ As we are mocked with art' (5.3.67-68). This line could of course be understood simply as a

continuance of the Kings' preceding comments, with the stock formula by which *ekphrasis* complements the art-work – that its illusions could be taken for reality itself – and so working to underline once more the structural irony built into the scene. But the remark certainly also carries with it the suggestion that Leontes feels he has glimpsed just the sort of involuntary movement which the audience members have themselves been monitoring the 'statue' for (and the folio's 'fixure', meaning 'fixed position' – which editors usually emend to 'fixture' – would further underline this), the very movement that would seem to threaten the schemes of Hermione and Paulina as well as those of the playwright.

Leontes' line implies that he subjects the eyes of the 'statue' to a close inspection. It is a deeply ironic moment, and one that places representation under an intense strain. Originally given out as a wondrous artwork exemplifying *ekphrasis*' empirical idealism – of manifesting a rhetorical presence that rivals the real – the 'statue' has been reconfigured according to a different mimetic arrangement. It now presents itself, most prominently in the audience's mind, as the acted impersonation of a sculpture. And rather than enacting the mimetic ideal and so securing the link between representation and reality, this acted impersonation instead becomes the lynchpin by which the impossible ending of this already incredible romance will be effected. Moreover, though the tension of the scene means that the scrutiny that Leontes gives to the gaze of the 'statue' must be thought a dramatically fraught moment, surely the King's inspection is also somewhat ludicrous. And made perhaps more so by the fact that the actor playing Hermione must at this particular point expend an extra effort so as not to blink or to allow his gaze to shift – so that when the spectators examine him for the signs of movement that Leontes seemed to have remarked they, along with the King, find none. A charged moment certainly, but one which cannot help but point up the essentially mundane and unsuccessful instantiation of mimesis that this 'statue' manifests – merely the actor's unrealisable imitation of absolute immobility. Yet it is a dissimulation which the audience itself must not only go along with but is one in which they are forced to partake. For, in their engagement with the sequence, the play's spectators must be thought of as urging on the success of a mimetic impersonation which has underlined itself as a deception at both fictional and metafictional levels, and one which they are acutely aware offers an imitation that cannot do other than fail.

The inevitability of the actor's failure to pass himself off as a statue, or even to pass off Hermione's impersonation of a statue as convincing provides perhaps the scene's most intense marking of the banality and counterfeit nature of its construction – yet I would argue that for the Jacobean audience these effects would have made themselves apparent not just in relation to the performance of immobility, but also in the broader presentation which configures the sequence. Let us return to the moment when Paulina draws back the curtain to reveal the 'statue', a gesture that asks for melodramatic realisation. As already noted, such a curtained unveiling would have been a rare sight on the early modern stage. However, most Jacobeans, especially those that had wandered through the Liberties to

watch the play in the Globe, would have been familiar with such a device, making up as it did a part of the performative repertoire of contemporary 'jugglers' – that is, early modern street magicians. As their continued use in present-day performances of magic attests, curtains represent for the illusionist a rather effective contrivance. They temporarily conceal the acts of trickery by which the apparently extramundane is brought about, and the promise of their unveiling infuses the performance with a more urgent suspense and drama. For the early modern juggler performing in a public space, curtains would also ensure that the initial setting up of the trick went unobserved (something that the particular jugglers' trick that I will shortly discuss must make recourse to).

We should not, however, think of the designation 'jugglers' as being restricted to magical entertainers; as J. A. Shea writes, the term took in 'what were considered their cultural and professional forerunners—gypsies, witches, minstrels and joculators'. As such, 'juggling'

> came to indicate a diverse set of social and religious practices, many of which were branded morally dubious or unlawful. The activities most frequently compared to juggling were Catholic miracles and language, confederate trickery, spiritual magic and witchcraft, illicit sexual behaviour, and, finally, stage-playing.[46]

And since these activities are, as has been seen, the very themes that the 'statue' sequence plays off, we might imagine that the Jacobean spectator would need little encouragement in associating Paulina's presentation with the practices of street illusion. Nor would this move have been unnatural; as Philip Butterworth documents, renowned companies like Admiral's and Lord Strange's Men gave space to jugglers' performances of legerdemain and tumbling as late as 1588 and 1589.[47] That Shakespeare was at this mature point in his art prepared to make use of the means as well as the effects realised by contemporary magic performances would seem borne out by the enigmatic stage direction from *The Tempest*: *'Thunder and lightning. Enter Ariel, like a harpy, claps his wings upon the table, and with a quaint device the banquet vanishes'* (3.3.52 sd).[48]

Together with the curtain, the small platform-type construction on which the 'statue' stands may also have served to recall jugglers' practice (it is more likely that the 'statue' stands on a platform than a pedestal since, as indicated in Paulina's commanding the revived Queen to 'descend' (5.3.99), the stage action requires this stand to have a set of steps), and this again would recall the temporary platforms on which jugglers would perform. This allowed the juggler to be viewed by a larger audience, and the platform could also serve to facilitate the staged illusions. Joseph Strutt notes that a number of early modern authors 'speak of "juggling upon the boards" which clearly indicates the use of a

[46] *The Juggler in Shakespeare: Con-Artistry, Illusionism, and Popular Magic in Three Plays* (PhD thesis (University of Montreal, 2010)), p. i.
[47] *Magic on the Early English Stage* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 33 (and further evidence is offered on p. 216, n 48).
[48] From the Arden: Third series (2000).

stage or temporary platform',[49] and he points back to a couplet from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The House of Fame* to show that this had long been common practice for jugglers in England: 'Ther saugh I Colle tregetour/ Upon a table of sicamour' (II, 1277-1278).[50]

Insight into these performances of illusion can be provided by Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* of 1584,[51] a sceptical text which argues that belief in witchcraft and magic is rejected by both reason and religion. The book contains a section bringing to light the workings of magic tricks, thought to be the first published material of this type.[52] One of the famous illusions that Scot exposes was the 'Decollation of John the Baptist' (see figure 1).[53] Looking at the trick we can see that certain parallels to the business of Hermione's 'statue' present themselves. The most manifest is that the 'Decollation' also utilises the human body as the site for magic, and that it too subjects it to a miraculous resurrection. In material terms, the 'Decollation' also makes use of a platform, as well as a curtained unveiling (we know this since the performers must be concealed when taking up their positions), and we can add that tricks like these would certainly have benefitted from taking place in an alcove-type area similar to the discovery space in which Hermione's 'statue' is located (a semi-enclosed space has a number of advantages: it would be much less complicated to keep the initial setting up of the trick under wraps; in terms of its performance, it is a much simpler business to make an illusion appear credible when it can only be viewed from one side, and the arrangement would too make it easier to direct spectators' attention as well as managing the onlookers in such a way that the overly-curious are prevented from getting too close). This 'Decollation' too makes apparent that, as with the 'statue' scene, early modern street magic was likely to make use of religious contexts for subject matter and theme.

If we turn back to Paulina's presentation of the sequence, a performance that serves to build an immense sense of occasion, and which skilfully choregraphs audience interest and attention, we can observe that its rhetorical strategies are remarkably similar to those we find used in illusionists' performances today. It does not seem outlandish to presume their Jacobean forerunners worked a similar line, and that, for Shakespeare's original audiences, Paulina's presentation would have brought to mind her counterparts on the Liberties. Her repeated – and disingenuous – offers to draw the curtain so as to remove the spectacle from view conform to the magician's teasing out their audience's suspense: we see that Leontes stops her from drawing the curtain at 5.3.59, only for Paulina to threaten to do so again nine lines later: 'I'll draw the curtain'. Fourteen lines after that she will again feign that she is ready to end the display, 'Shall I draw the curtain?'. And like the practised

[49] *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* (Methuen, 1801), p. 170.
[50] *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, vol. 3, edited by Walter W. Skeat (Oxford University Press, 1899), p. 38. 'Tregetour' is a Middle English term for 'juggler'.
[51] London: William Brome.
[52] Other works followed suit, however, attesting to the age's interest in magical illusion and the means of its dissimulation. For example, Samuel Rid's *The Art of Iugling or Legerdemaine* (London: T Bushell and Samuel Rand, 1612), which covers much the same area as Scot's supplement, was printed right around the time of the first performances of *The Winter's Tale*.
[53] *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, p. 293.

illusionist, Paulina stirs audience anticipation with the promise of wonders to come: 'I am sorry, sir, I have thus far stirred you, but I could afflict you farther' (5.3.74-75). Finally, as the climax is approached, being the masterful entertainer she is, she makes out that this outcome is predicated on the audience's faith, as well as its silence ('It is required' she tells her onlookers, 'You do awake your faith. Then all stand still').

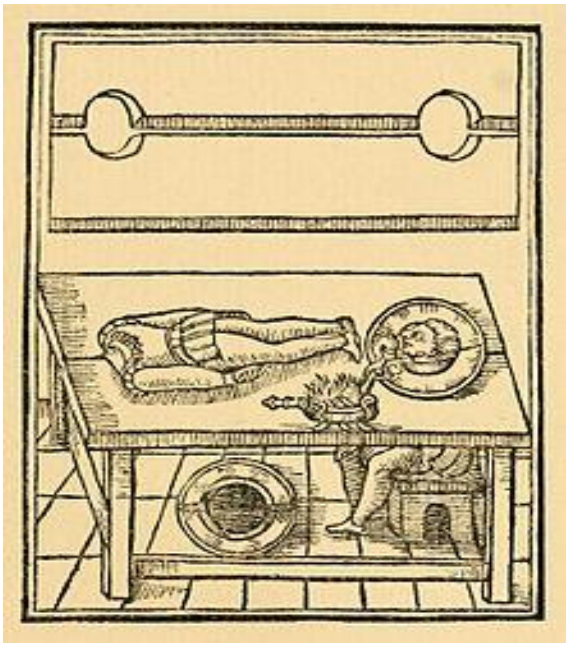

Figure 1: *The decollation of John the Baptist* from Reginald Scott's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft.*

While, as we have noted, the religious connotations of Paulina's vocabulary would underwrite the sequence's impulse to the epiphanic, the stagey and histrionic aspects of her performance would also serve to bring out the fact that Paulina's presentational pitch shares commonalities with that of the juggler's. The juggler's language was similarly inflated and similarly derived, with these performers couching their dissimulated miracles in a lexis which borrowed from Catholic ritual. Conjurors in Scot's book employ an aggrandised speech that apes religious discourse,[54] and so as to create a sense of the arcane, jugglers would pepper their speech with corruptions of Latin terms that were often borrowed from the Catholic mass. For example, in his *Discourse Against Transubstantiation* from 1685, the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Tillotson, remarked that the conjuror's staple, 'hocus pocus', probably represented a corruption of *hoc est corpus*, and while the idea is contested, it nonetheless demonstrates a sense of how the juggler's language formed itself and was

[54] See, for example, *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, pp. 308, 322.

understood as operating.[55] Finally, we might note that the era's debate on lawful and unlawful magic[56] – a discussion that the contemporary jugglers' oral presentation would inevitably have had to take account of – also finds its way into Perdita's speeches: directly following her call to faith, Paulina includes it as part of another typical juggler's gambit: 'On! Those that think it is unlawful business/ I am about, let them depart' (5.3.96-97).

Deliberately then it seems that Shakespeare links the miraculous restoration of the narrative and the wondrous effects of the play's dramatic illusions with the patter and performances of his neighbours on the Liberties – the more or less debunked conjurers, whose tricks most of the public understood as dealing not in miracles but in deception. That the playwright also draws attention to the Hermione-actor's dissimulation of immobility intensifies this sense, as the arrangement compels the spectators – much as it would do if they were watching a magic trick – to scrutinise the verisimilitude of the performer's illusion. And in that the magic trick has almost no content beyond its double-dealing, it could be understood as the ultimate marker for the dissimulation of representation. Northrop Frye seems to imply something of this sort in a passage linking the stagecraft by which the Queen is revived to the manner in which Autolycus earlier fleeced his marks:

> All the attention is absorbed in Hermione as she begins to move while music plays; and we are reminded of Autolycus and of his role as a kind of rascally Orpheus at the sheep shearing festival: 'My clown…would not stir his pettitoes till he had both tune and words; which so drew the rest of the herd to me that all their senses stuck in their ears…No hearing, no feeling, but my sir's song, and admiring the nothing of it' [4.4.595-603].[57]

The suggestion of course is that just as Autolycus uses this opportunity to cut the purses of his stupefied audience, the playwright does something similar to the rapt theatregoers witnessing Hermione's recovery. For while they might react 'as if they had seen the dead rise', this miracle is clearly a dissimulation – what Shakespeare's spectators, all their senses stuck, admire is only the 'nothing' of an artful con.

However, as this text has repeatedly demonstrated, the play's pointing up of artistic illusion as a dissimulated 'nothing' does not function to enact estrangement – it certainly does not follow, for example, that since Frye is capable of remarking such a structuring he is left unstirred by Hermione's reanimation. The self-reflexive association of the scene with the deceptions of the magic trick and the counterfeiting of acted impersonation can further our understanding of how this seemingly contradictory position is maintained. In magic performances of the type that Hermione's restoration references, the spectators must – at least if the performance is to be enjoyed – willingly take up a false position. While the magician's spectators understand that the illusions they witness are the result of a shrewd deception, it is not the ingenuity of this ruse that is enjoyed as much as it is the apparent,

[55] Quoted in John S. Hammett's *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Kregel Academic, 2019), p. 320 n 95.
[56] The space given over to this discussion in Scot's *Discoverie* offers a good indication of the seriousness of the issue.
[57] "Recognition in *The Winter's Tale*" (*The Winter's Tale: Critical Essays*, pp. 106-118), p. 116.

though fraudulent, suspension of the laws of reality. The illustration depicting the 'Decollation' allows a reader to admire the inventiveness by which the illusion was brought about, but this is a very different experience from what a spectator, even when she knows that the 'magic' is merely a deception of some kind, would undergo watching the performance. In the latter instance, the spectator makes available an imaginative space in which this 'magic' might be experienced as something awesome, while at the same time recognising this 'magic' as essentially false. As with the spectator of the magic trick, the audience of *The Winter's Tale* must be thought complicit in its own emotional arousal. In its desire to experience the intensity of Hermione's restoration the audience must cede a miraculous dimension to that which it cannot help but recognise as nothing more than a trick. Rather then than conforming to the romantic-mimetic prescriptions of audience experience that crystallise in the concept of a 'willing suspension of disbelief' (and in this crystallisation ignores the rather brilliant subtleties according to which Samuel Taylor Coleridge originally framed the notion), the art of *The Winter's Tale* points to an audience experience that could more accurately be described as a 'dissimulation of belief'.

The 'statue' scene indicates that the business of representation is an impure process. Both the impulse to illusion and the impulse to illusion's undoing are it seems at all times present in the representational process, and the dissimulated terms through which the spectators commit to these contradictory modalities means that neither one establishes itself according to the absolute terms of its formulation. Just as the audience cannot give itself wholly over to the claims of illusion and, in doing, take them for actuality, it is equally impossible that metatheatre's self-reflexivity serves to wholly estrange the audience from the effects of these illusions. The actor's impersonation of the 'statue' foregrounds and intensifies these tensions. His performance of immobility represents a stage illusion that the spectators are compelled to scrutinise for signs of mimetic failure, signs which they cannot help but note. Yet even though the illusion cannot succeed in convincing the spectators, they must nonetheless urge on its success, must half-pretend that they did not remark the actor's movements nor recognise that the 'statue' was already a figure of flesh and blood.

The audience is encouraged, and encourages itself, to see in the episode the awesome transformation that *ekphrasis* proposes: that representation might become real, that art might re-realise itself as life. Yet at the same time as the scene invokes the profundities that mimetic effect gathers, it offers such a representational poetics burlesque. The impossible task of immobility ceded to the Hermione actor is doomed to failure, and a failure which reiterates the very transformation that mimesis idealises – the going from illusion to the actual – in ridiculous terms. But neither does the episode function as metatheatrical estrangement. For if the estrangement model of metatheatre also posits a shift from illusion to the real it most often understands this as a rupture that brings about a bracing and reinvigorated return to the immediate. But the episode of the blinking Hermione actor would seem to reveal little more than the banality of its own arrangement. And of course, as the scene itself underlines, both of these apparent representational

reversions to the actual are themselves brought about by an act of counterfeiting which highlights itself as drawing on the base dissimulations of the jugglers' trick.

This last point underlines that Hermione's reanimation is only the presentation of a transformation into the real. The falsity of art sustains itself in the face of its own promise of the actual; the aesthetic construction of Hermione is not transposed into life when the figure descends the platform, nor are actor, platform and wooden stage recovered and reincorporated into a wholly disabused reality. Neither impulse escapes the confines of its artistic realisation; the representation remains an aesthetic event. For while spectators do not react to artistic illusion as if it were real neither do they, when that illusion is deflated by metatheatrical strategy, assume the artwork forfeit. In the case of the former, as has been often remarked, no spectator rushes the stage to attend the wounds of a fallen protagonist. And in the case of the latter – though this is far less often acknowledged – when metatheatre allows the stage performer to step beyond the play-world and address the audience directly – in, for example, an epilogue – no-one takes this as an invitation to strike up a conversation with the actor. Illusion, even when it apparently actualises itself, as in the case with Hermione's reanimation, does not make itself over into 'life itself', nor does metatheatre, even when it remarks the actual configuration of these illusions, step wholly outside them. The absolute positions which both mimesis and the estrangement model of metatheatre announce can never be realised; the audience supplies to each modality only the dissimulation of belief. The apparent impulse to subvert artistic representation, by either outgoing or undoing it, is simply a rhetorical strategy; not to be realised, it is framed only for the effects it makes available.

This brings us back once more to a key feature of Shakespearean representation. Though it undoes the mimetic claim that illusion might realise the vividness of the actual, it does not alienate the audience from the power of these illusions. The 'statue' scene is so arranged that the audience must recognise the miraculous Hermione as an essentially fallacious presence, a construction born of playwright and male actor, and one in which aspects of the counterfeit and banal figure prominently. Yet the simultaneity that the audience's 'dissimulation of belief' allows for means that the potent effects that the mimetic model makes possible are too available. One modality need not, as the poetics of estrangement and mimesis like to assert, neutralise the effects of the other. In fact, as we have seen, if this arrangement is handled with the flair and virtuosity of an Autolycus, the tension of the form's contradictions serves to make for an art that is all the more urgent, and capable even of revelatory effects.

‘Exit [Chuckling]’: Exposition, Role and Dissimulation in *The Winter’s Tale*

The opening of Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* has been subject to a certain neglect; directors find so little of value in the play’s first scene that it is often cut in production, while critics mostly overlook it altogether[1] (a prime example of this appears in Louis L. Martz’s *From Renaissance to Baroque: Essays on literature and Art* where his discussion of ‘the opening of the play’ refers to act one, scene two[2]). The exchange between the Bohemian courtier, Archidamus and his Sicilian counterpart, Camillo can be read as an uneventful and rather conventional exposition. And the fact that the narrative content that the exposition rehearses is found repeated later in the play would seem to provide further encouragement to those who are disposed to ignore it. But the playwright did, after all, include it, and if we are not to assume that the theatrical perspicuity of his interpreters wholly outgoes his own, then it is perhaps useful to revise our notions of how the scene is realised.

I will argue that an interpretation which does away with the idea that the courtiers’ exchange is meant to be played straight allows the scene to function in a completely different manner, one which integrates it into the game of theatrical dissimulation that the rest of *The Winter’s Tale* plays out. Consequently, the focus of this article shifts back and forth, moving between a close reading of the opening scene and the broader impulses of the play’s narrative. I demonstrate that the scene operates to determine the relationship that the audience is to take towards the play’s extended use of exposition and report, and, more importantly still, towards the drama’s dynamic economy of actor and role. I explore how part-doubling would have extended this arrangement, and conclude by showing that a comprehensive understanding of the reunions and revivals of the play’s last act can only be had by a reading that properly accounts for the aesthetic strategies of this opening exchange.

1

In the early modern theatre the play’s setting (dramatic, temporal and geographic) has to be made clear early on, and most usually occurs through an exposition that takes place in the opening scene. And while certain narrative choices that the playwright might indulge together with the scenic constraints that the almost bare Jacobean stage imposes mean that the play will inevitably make recourse to exposition at various times throughout a given

[1] A discussion had in Wilbur Sanders’ *The Winter’s Tale (Critical Introduction to Shakespeare)* (Prentice Hall/ Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1987), p. 4.
[2] University of Missouri Press, 1991, p. 135.

performance, it is in the drama's opening moments that the use of the device is most urgent. Here, the play is obliged to render the action's broader background, as well as fulfil the awkward business of providing the subsequent play-action a certain narrative bedding – something which nearly always occurs through a 'retelling' of the events that the audience is to conceive of as preceding the drama's opening. But the purpose of the exposition is not limited to clarifying setting and narrative circumstance; another effect is to secure the terms by which the audience is to imagine the play-world as constituted. That is, the content of the exposition, together with the manner of its realisation operate to establish a slightly more reflexive mode of representation by which broad markers like genre are instituted, and finer modalities such as representational register (by which I mean the manner and intensity according to which the illusions of the play-world and its parts are conceptualised) are marked up.

That a play is obliged to juggle these demands in the first few minutes of the drama's action when, for the audience, the sense of the actuality of the theatre is at its most insistent and play-world illusion least convincing means that the exposition will almost inevitably draw attention to itself. Alongside this we should also remember that the early modern theatre audience would have for the most part been made up of savvy and discerning spectators, familiar with theatrical convention and alert to the uses to which it might be put – and this would mean that the exposition would invariably be recognised for what it was. Muriel Bradbrook remarks the difficulties that the exposition poses for the early modern playwright, and argues that '[e]xpository soliloquy is usually preferable to expository dialogue … The use of dialogue implies an attempt to hide the exposition, to make it naturalistic, and if the disguise is not efficient there is a definite sense of failure',[3] and for Bradbrook the opening scenes of *As You Like It*, and *Hamlet* exemplify such failure. Whether or not he shared Bradbrook's assessment of the earlier plays' first scenes, the Shakespeare of the romances seems to have approached the opening scene's exposition with a sense of the difficulties the device presented. Yet having remarked this, we need to remember that in the case of this particular playwright the issues of theatrical form seem to, time and again, inspire his most ingenious efforts.[4] The opening of *The Winter's Tale* foregrounds the problems of the device by conducting its exposition in what Bradbrook sees as its most regrettable format, yet, as I will demonstrate, the exchange still successfully establishes a naturalistic register. And this is all the more noteworthy for the scene's unfolding in what is essentially a parodic mode – one which operates to underline the very falsity of theatrical representation itself.

[3] *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.109.

[4] A note on language: Oftentimes in this article, I refer to the achievements of the playwright in terms that valorise. Such formulations are, for most present-day criticism, beyond the pale. And this is undoubtedly, for the most part, a positive development – we require no more texts that simply rehearse the great and the good. But such language is pertinent to the current article, dealing as it does with a metatheatrical arrangement that is not only masterfully realised, but which also, and this is what is crucial, exuberantly points back to the artistic virtuosity of this arrangement. To fail to acknowledge this quality would be more than churlish, it would mean producing a critical reading that ignored a central aspect of the work's effect and signification.

Preferring to see *The Winter's Tale* 1.1 as working in these terms not only means that the opening will be understood as foreshadowing as well as generating the strategies of representational game-play that occur throughout the play, but it also has the happy effect of eradicating a canonical anomaly, as the scene now aligns with the burlesqued marking up of the exposition device that we find in the openings of each of the other late romances. *Pericles* begins with a resurrected Gower performing an antiquated chorus; the recap that Prospero provides in *The Tempest* (occurring in 1.2 after a playfully rendered take on the stereotypical romance opening of shipwreck), though making use of Bradbrook's preferred solution, the expository soliloquy, is so tedious that Marina nearly dozes off listening to it, while the exposition in *Cymbeline* is facilitated by a Second Gentleman whose series of lead-in questions make the scene's dramatic function comically explicit. The catechism is funny enough to warrant revisiting:

> But what's the matter?...
> None but the King?…
> And why so?...
> What's his name and birth?...
> But pray you tell me,
> Is she sole child to th' King?...
> How long is this ago? (1.1.3-61)[5]

The opening of *The Winter's Tale* will too present an expository exchange between two gentlemen, yet as we will see the realisation given to the device in this instance offers something more complex than *Cymbeline*'s straightforward parodic reversal. So that we might best appreciate this it is useful to remind ourselves of the somewhat duplicitous relationship that the play as a whole takes to its own representations and to the expectations of its audience.

2

As a great deal of recent criticism has made clear, *The Winter's Tale* is a play that gives extended exploration to the relationship between different modes of representation and carries out this investigation in a manner that is inescapably self-aware and ironic. The effect is to call into question the nature and signification of artistic representation. According to Walter Lim, play events are marked by an 'epistemological (un)certainty',[6] and Peter Platt in his assessment goes even further, stating that 'epistemological mastery can never fully be achieved in this play'.[7] This particular relationship to meaning is

[5] All references to Shakespeare's plays are taken from *The Norton Shakespeare*, 3rd edition, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Suzanne Gossett, Katharine Eisaman Maus and Gordon McMullan (W. W. Norton, 2016).
[6] 'Knowledge and Belief in *The Winter's Tale*' (*Tudor and Stuart Drama*, special issue of *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 41, no. 2, Spring 2001, pp. 317-334), p. 323.
[7] *Reason Diminished: Shakespeare and the Marvelous* (University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 154.

reflected in the particularities of the play's realisation. Howard Felperin is just one critic who has noted the extent to which the play is reliant on 'the evidence of things not seen', as well as remarking the ambiguous realisation often provided to this evidence.[8] Of course, an extended exposition is expected in the opening scene, but as the play progresses its audience must have been somewhat baffled by just how many of what are the narrative's central events go un-staged and are presented only as verbal description: Cleomenes and Dion's meeting with the oracle; Antigonus' vision of (the presumed-to-be-dead) Hermione; Antigonus' mauling at the hands of the bear; and, most significantly, what the audience had anticipated as providing the play's climactic spectacle, the reunion of Leontes with his (also presumed-dead) daughter, Perdita, and the 'brother' king he wronged, Polixenes. And throughout, the drama marks up how this manifest use of report undermines itself along with the expectations of the play's audience. Often the expositions point out the inadequacy of verbal description (for example, in the Third Gentleman's attempt to convey the ineffable nature of the royal reunion he witnessed: 'Then have you lost a sight which was to be seen, cannot be spoken of … I never heard of such another encounter, which lames report to follow it, and undoes description to do it' (5.2.40-55)), or they mark up the improbability of what they report (the Second Gentleman introduces the Third Gentleman's account with: 'This news which is called true is so like an old tale that the verity of it is in strong suspicion' (5.2.26-27)). At other points the device is itself provided outlandish parody, as when the personification of Time takes to the stage to expound the 16 year-gap between the play's tragic and comedic halves.

The unravelling of the capacity of description to provide a sufficient account is not, however, limited to metatheatric effects alone – it drives the dramatic action as well. It is, after all, 'the evidence of things unseen' working together with the deceptions of the imagination that triggers Leontes' awful outburst of monomaniacal jealously over what he apprehends to be an affair between his Queen and Polixenes. Representation confounds in both its dramatic and metadramatic incarnations, and in this confusion they overlap, something that Richard Meek observes:

> the play ... repeatedly confounds our attempts to draw a distinction between dream and reality, role and actor, art and theatre. The more we reflect on the play's status as a work of art, and attempt to separate what is real from what is fictional within the play, the more entangled we become in its mimetic complexity.[9]

Verbal description is, as we have seen, marked up as dubious, yet as the quotation from Meek implies, the observable phenomena that are speaker and stage action are not to be considered any more trustworthy. This is made manifest in the work's (wholly unanticipated) climax proper, what critics almost invariably refer to as 'the statue scene'

[8] "'Tongue-tied, our queen?': The Deconstruction of Presence in *The Winter's Tale*" (Howard Felperin, *The Uses of the Canon: Elizabethan literature and Contemporary Theory* (Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 35-55), p. 38. Felperin is here making use of a quotation taken from *Hebrews* 11:1 (King James Version).

[9] *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare* (Routledge, 2016), p. 155. It seems to me that Meek's uses 'mimetic' here as a synonym of 'representational' in general, and not to suggest the particular representational discourse associated with classical mimesis.

(and since the scene contains no statue, the nomination realises a mismatch between descriptor and object that is for this play rather apt), and which offers what is perhaps the most audacious staging in the entire canon. Here Paulina presents the statue of Hermione, only for it soon after to be revealed as being the actual living Queen, the self-same Hermione who the awe-struck court audience – together with the theatre audience (similarly, one imagines, awe-struck) – had been led to believe had perished 16 years previous. The play's spectators cannot help but be confounded by this turn of events. They have even heard Antigonus relate his encounter with the Queen's ghost, and, as Ernest Schanzer notes, '[t]here is no precedent in Elizabethan drama for the spirit of a living person appearing to others either in dream or waking'.[10] The arrangement flagrantly violates the contract between art and audience that serves to coordinate the relationship between representation and reception - and as interested as the play is in the contract between audience and stage representation, it shows (probably to a greater extent than any other Shakespeare play) little inclination to honour it.[11] For even if, as performances of the play time and again demonstrate, Hermione's return is a startling and profoundly moving moment, attentive audience members would find it difficult to avoid a sense of what Philip Edwards terms, 'Shakespeare's keenness to impress [upon his spectators that they] have been cheated'.[12]

Attending to the play's acts of rhetorical and representational dissimulation has encouraged a number of responses that see the deceptions of the pedlar and con-artist, Autolycus, as reflecting the aesthetic strategies of the play, with critics such as Philip Edwards, Mary L. Livingstone and Stephen Orgel going so far as to identify Autolycus

[10] *The Winter's Tale* (Penguin, 1973), p. 15.

[11] The violation would have been even more startling for the more literary members of the audience. The play's main plot is taken from Robert Greene's *Pandosto* of 1588, and – up until the last act – Shakespeare has demonstrated a remarkable fidelity to his source, diverging from the earlier work only in minor detail. *Pandosto* was enormously popular (it was reprinted four times before Shakespeare wrote *The Winter's* Tale – in 1592, 1595, and 1607 – and at least fourteen subsequent editions are published before the end of the seventeenth century). We must assume that a number of the audience members would have known it, and so would have been all the more caught out by the outrageous resurrection that Shakespeare appends to his retelling. And while an audience familiar with Shakespeare's artistic strategies may have noted that the playwright's recent romances were structured somewhat more equivocally than his other work, they would still have expected the play to unfold according to what Schanzer calls Shakespeare's 'habitual practice', which 'in contrast to that of many other playwrights … had been to put the audience in full possession of all relevant knowledge, so that, even on a first viewing, the dramatic irony that derives from the characters' lack of this knowledge is immediately felt' (*The Winter's Tale* (Penguin, 1973), p. 15).

[12] "'Seeing is believing': Action and Narration in *The Old Wives Tale* and *The Winter's Tale*" (*Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: Essays in Comparison*, edited by E. A. J. Honigmann (Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 79-93), p. 91.

with Shakespeare himself.[13] This is a formulation that certainly has its uses,[14] and we might note how at his very first appearance the figure of Autolycus operates to remark the representative conditions by which the play is realised, and to align his own duplicities with the dissimulations of Shakespeare's dramatic art. Almost immediately, the pedlar picks up on the play's predilection for rendering unseen events through verbal retelling by detailing the story of his own violent assault and robbery. However, this merely gives full articulation to what has already been demonstrated as the precarious relationship between exposition and event, for his account is of course nothing more than a fabrication, designed with the sole intention of duping the guileless Clown. A virtuoso in his field, Autolycus is even able to invert the apparent truth of his appearance, managing to pass off his rags (which for the theatre audience function as a semiotic convention that confirms him as a vagabond) as proof of gentlemanly status. And not wholly unlike the playwright that Edwards imagines, Autolycus cannot resist embroidering, quite gratuitously, the deception he plays out on his hapless mark – naming himself for his own assailant.[15]

We should remember that Autolycus is himself too an artist – he is both a composer and performer of ballads, and his artistry must be thought of as extending to take in the sales pitch with which he supplies these efforts. Like so much of the play in which he operates, the success of his ballads hinges on how the brilliance of his performance might inspire his audience's faith in 'things unseen'. Also, as we have noted, he shares with his creator an absolute yet distinctly playful confidence in the powers of his own artistry. Moreover – and this, for any critical line that would propose a correspondence between the pedlar and his creator, seems to me key – he will happily risk his success by foregrounding the absurdity of his dissimulations. Autolycus is a creator of impossible tales, and these

[13] Richard Meek draws attention to these scholars in a brief but useful survey of this critical position in his *Narrating the Visual* (pp. 161-162). Livingstone writes 'Seeing [Autolycus'] guises deceive simpler folk should make us question how art, either his or *The Winter's* Tale's, works on us: perhaps the pockets of both audiences are picked' ("The Natural Art of *The Winter's Tale*" (*Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 30, 1969, pp. 340-355), p. 346). In '"Seeing is believing"', Edwards mentions the 'self-images of the artist in the last plays' and remarks that 'Beside the heroic image of the brooding careworn Prospero, we have the anti-heroic image of Autolycus, the man who depends for his living on his protean resourcefulness and the gullibility of the public' (p. 92). Orgel, in his introduction to the 1996 Oxford Shakespeare edition of the play, says that Autolycus 'is the figure in this play closest to the playwright' and the critic underlines the pedlar's penchant for 'continually reveal[ing] his disguises, tricks and plots to us' (p. 52).

[14] Identifying Shakespeare with his pedlar strikes me as rather insightful, though I would prefer to understand Autolycus as not pointing to the play's writer as much as pointing to the play's written and performed structures.

[15] We might assume that in the original performances, the part of Autolycus enjoyed a certain prominence. The one contemporary account we have of the play, from the astrologer Simon Forman, gives great attention to his role, and the nature of the description suggests it was vividly realised: 'Remember also the rogue that came in all tattered like colt pixie, and how he feigned him sick and to have been robbed of all that he had and how he cozened the poor man of all his money, and after came to the sheep-shearer with a pedlar's pack and there cozened them again of all their money. And how he changed apparel with the king of Bohemia his son, and then how he turned courtier, etc. Beware of trusting feigned beggars or fawning fellows' (from *Bocke of Plaies and Notes therof per formans for Common Pollicie* (Bodleian Library, Ashmole MS 208, fol 200-207), 202r. The modernised text is from *The Winter's Tale*, edited by Stephen Orgel (Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 233). There is not space in this survey of the play's use of exposition, role and dissimulation to remark the particular relationship the figure of Autolycus takes towards these features, but I have elsewhere written about the part-doubling that seems to pertain to the role – see "References to the doubling of Autolycus and the bear in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*" (*Notes and Queries*, vol. 66, no. 3, September 2019, pp. 454-457).

operate within an aesthetic structure that is itself composed of impossible tales – a comparison that the play itself invites in the last act when it describes the Leontes-Perdita-Polixenes reunion scene as being of 'Such a deal of wonder … that ballad-makers cannot be able to express it' (5.2.22-23). And as outlandish as Autolycus' ballads are – such as the woman who pays the price for her sexual continence by being transformed into a fish – surely they are only slightly more outlandish than an improbable reunion between father, thought-perished daughter, and estranged 'brother', or – even more fantastically – the sudden resurrection of a Queen 16 years dead. So while the audience members are invited to laugh at the gulls who fall for Autolycus' preposterous stories, they are at the same time being pointed in the direction of their own susceptibility to artistic deception. And that strikes me as a rather apt point on which to return to the artful exchange that opens the play.

3

Having perhaps tried the reader's patience with a necessary yet rather extended introduction, I must now risk exacerbating it by saying that, in narrative terms, no case can be made that recommends *The Winter's Tale* 1.1 as effective exposition. For essentially, this gilded and extended exchange serves no genuine expository purpose. As opposed to, say, the complex account provided by *Cymbeline*'s convoluted opening, the initial exchange in *The Winter's Tale*, though spread over 40 lines, conveys nothing more than the fact that Polixenes, King of Bohemia, has enjoyed the hospitality of his boyhood friend Leontes, King of Sicilia, and to indicate the existence of the young Sicilian prince, Mamillius. Dramatically speaking, almost none of this really requires exposition. And as the next scene unfolds it becomes apparent that even the imparting of these crumbs of information is superfluous – immediately reiterated as they are in the first exchanges of 1.2. The opening then seems to enact a turning inside-out of the familiar application given to the exposition where, conventionally, its aim is to lay the foundations of the drama's narrative structure while – as in formulations such as Bradbrook's – minimising the effects of artifice that the device advertises. Here, making no proper contribution to the narrative, the exposition seems to be included to no other end than to mark up its own contrivance.

With this in mind we might turn to Wilbur Sanders' perceptive reading of the play's first scene and pursue the rather interesting interpretive possibilities which it opens up. The exchange between the two courtiers, Camillo and Archidamus, concerning the hospitality that Polixenes' court has enjoyed in Sicilia is interpreted as a contestation in courtly hyperbole, which having rapidly escalated to impossible heights, dissolves into a shared laughter. At the close of the scene, the pair 'have returned (with some relief) to the real world. The easy accord, obstructed throughout their conversation by a contention in complimentary exaggeration, arrives effortlessly now as they confess to an artificial inflation of sentiment, and agree to abandon it'.[16] The 'relief' Sanders credits to the

[16] *The Winter's Tale (Critical Introduction to Shakespeare)*, p. 6.

courtiers is underlined by an earlier comment he makes: 'hyperbole, once you're entangled in it, is a net of fine meshes'.[17] While this is a comment that is undoubtedly pertinent to the dramatic unfolding of the play as a whole, I think the opening scene is better understood if Sanders' reading is slightly amended so as to forgo the suggestion of an underlying unease. The tone of the courtiers' exchange does not appear to bear out such a sense; far from being entangled in their own hyperbolised expression, their back-and-forth can be seen as evincing a playful agility, suggesting the speakers are relishing their verbal sparring. Further, the kind of mood that Sanders suggests would seem at odds with the manner by which, when the discussion turns to the superlative qualities of the young prince, Mamillius, Archidamas, preferring to eschew another round of rhetorical one-upmanship, supplies the contestation a sceptically humorous deflation:

> CAMILLO They that went on crutches ere he was born desire yet their life to see him a man.
> ARCHIDAMUS Would they else be content to die?

Camillo immediately takes up the new turn, and Archidamus – still half in his assumed character – puts the business to bed:

> CAMILLO Yes – if there were no other excuse why they should desire to live.
> ARCHIDAMUS [*po-faced, suggests Sanders (6)*] If the king had no son, they would desire to live on crutches till he had one. (1.1.34-40)

And in a further rather neat emendation, Saunders has it that they go off chuckling (6).

The most coherent reading of this 'contention in complimentary exaggeration' would then be one in which these Castiglione courtiers, having recognised the escalating note in the opening stages of their exchange, elected to continue their trading of cordialities according to an ironic gameplay of exaggeration. The courtiers' dialogue then should not be thought of, in the manner Saunders sees it, as enacting the entanglements of hyperbole, but as *acting* them. Their interaction foregrounds one of the elements that will drive the destructive energies of the narrative, and which threatens in the very next scene to bring about a royal tragedy – only here, tellingly, it is realised by the stage-parts as a self-conscious ironic farce that might be played with impunity.[18]

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[17] *The Winter's Tale (Critical Introduction to Shakespeare)*, p. 5.

[18] Hyperbole runs though the play, of course, informing its brightest as well as its darkest moments – and I think we are guilty of a critical oversight if we do not remark the extent to which the figure underwrites the effects of the final scene. The important contribution made by hyperbole is noted by John K. Hale in "The Maturing of Romance in *The Winter's Tale*" (*Parergon* vol. 3, 1985, pp. 147-162), and the article captures well the manner in which the play puts the device to use. Rather than an explicit and extended satirising of hyperbole (as elsewhere we see Berowne, Benedick and Rosalind engage in), most often in *The Winter's Tale* hyperbole is allowed to explode itself (p. 149). Describing Florizel's adoration of Perdita at the sheep-shearing festival Hale writes, 'It convinces us, not because Shakespeare backs off from hyperbole as immature or tones it down from "braggardism", but by making it more extreme; we

Having the opening scene frame the lure of hyperbole in this way also underlines the fact that Leontes' later accusations of Hermione are figmental; that the King is led astray by a sweep of inflated emotions and is intoxicated by the power and dread connotations of his own expression (something that Leontes is even represented as recognising, as indicated in the knotty self-scrutiny that begins with the lines, 'Affection, thy intention stabs the centre,/ Thou dost make possible things not so held,/ Communicat'st with dreams …' (1.2.138-140)). Closely related to this – and too foreshadowed by the ironic feigning of Camillo and Archidamus – is the unavoidable sense that Leontes, even in the delirious heights of his rage, is caught up in a role which he has somehow elected to play. Again, this is something that the King's own lines remark. Almost immediately after Hermione and Polixenes' exit he notes: 'I/ Play too, but so disgraced a part, whose issue/ Will hiss me to my grave' (1.2.186-188). And as the speech continues, this metatheatric focus pulls back, and pans out, shifting from the fictional Leontes' imagined cuckolding to take in the members of Shakespeare's audience and the very real cuckolding that, at Leontes' reckoning, takes in something like a couple hundred spectators:

> And many a man there is, even at this present,
> Now, while I speak this, holds his wife by th'arm,
> That little thinks she has been sluiced in's absence,
> And his pond fish'd by his next neighbour, by
> Sir Smile, his neighbour …
> Should all despair
> That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind
> Would hang themselves. (1.2.191-198)

Leontes' projecting of the fate he has imagined for himself back onto the audience is at once a cause for laughter, yet it must also have unsettled the audience as art intrudes into life with a troubling immediacy. Joan Hartwig lucidly maps the manner in which the positions of knowledge and power which usually mark the audience's relationship to dramatic characters are realigned by Leontes' poisonous charge:

> Leontes moves from a character in the play, involved in the reality of his own situation, to a perspective like the audience's, from which he surveys his role in the play, to a point beyond the audience, from which he can show them what they themselves are doing. This is an immense leap in points of view, and the dramatic effects it produces are complex. As the man in the audience turns to look at the woman he holds by the arm, he realizes simultaneously that the situation is improbable but that it is altogether possible in human terms. In recognizing how possible Leontes' position as cuckold is, the audience forgets for the moment that his position as cuckold is the result of his infected fancy. There is just enough truth

experience what the hyperbole describes so fully that we forget it is hyperbole in the contemplation of its object. It is a romance version of sublimity as Longinus describes it, not answering scepticism but sweeping it aside' (p. 150).

in his generalization for the audience to see that underneath his variously harsh and tyrannical attitudes, there exists (at least at given moments) a cool and rational perception of everyday realities.[19]

The first scene realises a similar metadramatic reorganisation of the relationship between the stage figures, the play-world that these figures are understood as inhabiting, and the watching audience. Thanks to the absurd inflation of the courtiers' civilities, the scene quickly marks itself out as comic, yet the spectators' initial failure to appreciate that Archidamus and Camillo are play-acting would have meant that the spectators misconstrue the arrangement of the comic scene: until Archidamus' change of tack, the audience would have been laughing at the courtiers rather than with them. For the early modern auditor the humorously quaint and overdone decorum of the courtiers' conversation would have soon made itself apparent. And the dialogue in lines 8-10 is clearly intended to highlight this: Camillo interrupts Archidamus' already slightly contrived 'For indeed-' with a somewhat archaic 'Beseech you-', only for the latter to begin over with a spuriously solemn 'Verily…' (1.1.8-10)). For those audience members who had not up until this point grasped the comic tone of the exchange, the manner in which Archidamus tops this ricochet of rapidly escalating pomposity would it seems have brought the point home. As Anne Barton notes, 'Shakespeare often treats that group of … still uncommon English words derived from the Latin veritas – "verily", "verity", "verify", "veritable" – as mildly comic and affected'.[20]

Signaling in this way, the dialogue frames audience expectations that for the remainder of the scene (to borrow a phrase from Biron in *Love's Labour's Lost*) 'the style shall give us cause to climb in the merriness' (1.1.195-196). The finely tuned ear of the educated early modern auditor, familiar as it was with the concept of 'plainesse' as championed by arbiters of modern rhetorical taste such as Thomas Wilson and Roger Ascham, could not but have registered the comic failure of form in the courtiers' extravagant contrivances, and many among them would have found humour in the exchange's replaying of the kind of euphuistic excesses that marked so many of literary efforts of the previous generation. Even modern audiences, denied the rhetorical training of their Renaissance predecessors, find comedy in the overblown language of passages like: 'that they have seemed to be together, though absent; shook hands as over a vast; and embraced as it were from the ends of opposed winds. The heavens continue their loves!' (1.1.25-27). Remarking the absurdity of this type of language would have confirmed the

[19] "The Tragicomic Perspective of *The Winter's Tale*" (*ELH*, vol. 37, no. 1, March 1970, pp. 12-36), p. 15.
[20] *Essays, Mainly Shakespearian*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 192. That this is the case here is confirmed in the next scene. When Polixenes answers Hermione's request to put off his departure with 'I may not, verily', the Queen explodes at the absurd term: 'Verily?/ You put me off with limber vows' (1.2.45-47) (where 'limber' means 'weak'), and then launches on a 12 line skit poking fun at the effete Polixenes' 'dread "verily"' (1.2.55). He has no answer for her humour, and, despite only a moment before swearing that it was out of the question, he consents to stay on. We should also note that this discursive preciousness is also present in Polixenes' previous speech to Leontes, when right on the heels of a 'Very sooth' he is given Camillo's 'Beseech you' to repeat (1.2.17, 19).

audience's initial sense of their own sophistication and their distance from the play-world, as well as their original assumption that these stage roles conformed to the stock figure of the self-regarding courtier. Though such stylised and flat representations would have been recognised by 1611[21] as being somewhat outdated, they would not have been thought inappropriate for a play that billed itself as a 'Tale', and in this way the audience would have been encouraged to locate these figures in a play-world reality configured along similarly crude representational lines.

Yet with the *volta* performed by Archidamus' 'Would they else be content to die?', the rug (which some spectators may already have sensed was, once or twice, being tugged) is pulled from under the audience. What were assumed to be stock figures are revealed as being the ironically performed constructions of a pair of naturalistically framed courtiers. Courtiers that the audience must now conceive of as possessed of a sceptical intelligence and a deft wit, as capable of launching on an improvised parody, of negotiating the shifting tonalities of such an exchange, and also sufficiently sophisticated to presume their interlocutor similarly gifted. Suddenly, the audience members find themselves watching a quite different play; not only must they revise their understanding of the exchange they have just witnessed, but, correspondingly, they must also reconceive the generic parameters of this play-world according to a far more complex theatrical mode than they had originally allowed.

This reassessment enacts what might be termed a shift to the real. In finding humour in the overwrought language of the scene, the audience had originally assumed themselves in possession of a discernment denied to the speakers. However, in that these courtiers are presented as having merely been play-acting all along, the correlation between audience and stage representation is reworked. The discriminating perspective that allowed the audience to remark some of literature's clichéd forms, and which the audience assumed was exclusively theirs is presented as shared by the courtiers. In fact, having been taken in by the personas that they acted out, the play's spectators are forced to admit that these courtiers shared an unspoken understanding which in terms of ironic sophistication initially outwent their own. The effect of this is that Archidamus and Camillo are accorded a more emphatic presence. They are, in short, made more real.

Yet in keeping with the perverse sensibility which informs the play's aesthetic construction, having effectively established this naturalism, *The Winter's Tale* soon after disrupts it. The sophistication that marks Archidamus and Camillo extends only so far as to take in the Leontes and Hermione that banter urbanely with Polixenes at the beginning of the next act. After that, the outdated and crude representational techniques that the courtiers' exchange parodied become one of the preferred modes by which *The Winter's Tale* will re-realise its roles and through which it will remark the conditions of its play-world reality. This rather remarkable shift in tone occurs with the startling explosion of

[21] We know the first performances were not later than 1611; in his diary, Simon Foreman records seeing the play at the Globe on 15 May that year.

Leontes' jealousy. The ready-made motives that the play's source, *Pandosto,* provides for its king's accusations are jettisoned, and rather than representing Leontes' suspicions as being a natural response to experienced events, his jealousy comes from out of the blue, from a psychological nowhere. It is, in Howard Felperin's words, 'the kind of heaven-sent, or rather hell-sent, madness with which Até, Tisiphone, and Envy conventionally afflict the protagonists of the dramatic romances of three decades earlier'.[22] And similarly, once she becomes an Innocent Slandered, the idiosyncratic and lively intelligence Hermione demonstrated in her playful exchange with Polixenes recedes, and her figure takes on something of the statuesque schematic rendered by personification.[23]

The refined naturalism that the play's opening few minutes so effectively realise then is shown to be simply a modality which the play is free to suspend and revisit when and how it chooses. And after these first minutes, this naturalism has only occasional application, returning to superimpose itself on play's representational layerings so as to lend to certain key moments an emotional heightening. The remainder of the action of the drama's first half becomes, by contrast, progressively more outlandish, culminating in a hectic accumulation of the romance's typically fantastical elements. And when, after a narrative interim of 16 years, the second half of the play begins, it does so with an exposition scene (a structural arrangement that folds back to reference the courtiers' opening exchange) which remarks how far from the particulars of the first scene's realisation the play has travelled: this exposition is delivered in a to-audience address by the ludicrous and archaic personification of Time.

Related to the use that *The Winter's Tale* makes of such rudimentary and old-fashioned devices is its play with stock characters. Once more, this is given marking up in the courtiers' opening exchange, and, in a similar arrangement to that just discussed, this re-utilisation upends the advances of this scene. The kind of conventional dramatic characters that the courtiers played as cliché, and which they highlighted as products of theatrical dissimulation are exactly the types of role that, as the drama progresses, the audience will watch the play's stage figures time and again assume – only here, the ironic distance that indicated a sophisticated agency on the part of the courtiers seems entirely absent. Leontes' role-playing has already been noted, but it extends beyond taking the part of the 'cuckold' to Hermione's 'wronged woman'. As Hartwig points out, Leontes forms a dramatically diametric relationship with Paulina, and in the intercourse between the pair, they each enact a number of theatrical stereotypes, most prominent among them being (in

[22] "Our Carver's Excellence: *The Winter's Tale*" (Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Romance* (Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 211-245), p. 223.

[23] While Felperin is prepared to cede to the role of Hermione 'a psychic life and past' he insists strongly on the extent the figure functions to personify a long line of virtues. And he argues that in her speech of 3.2.26-34 this is 'something to which she actually draws our attention'. To better make his point, when quoting the lines he elects to follow the folio and capitalise the Queen's terms – meaning that 3.2.28-30 reads, 'I doubt not then but Innocence shall make/ False Accusation blush, and Tyranny/ Tremble at Patience' – but as Felperin notes, 'a Jacobean audience would have recognized them immediately as the personifications of an older dramatic tradition' ("Our Carver's Excellence: *The Winter's Tale*", pp. 216-217).

the first half) Leontes' 'tyrant' to Paulina's 'shrew', and (in the second) Leontes' humble 'penitent' to Paulina's 'confessor'.[24] And, as we have earlier noted in the case of Leontes' assumption of the jealous 'cuckold', the play repeatedly chooses to highlight this role-playing as representing a course of action that the character is aware of, or even as something knowingly decided upon. Paulina belongs to the latter category; on being informed of the premature birth of Hermione's baby girl Paulina announces her self-conscious assumption of the role of 'shrew', 'the "scolding tongue" of moral conscience':[25]

> I dare be sworn.
> These dangerous, unsafe lunes i' th' King, beshrew them.
> He must be told on't, and he shall. The office
> Becomes a woman best. I'll take't upon me.
> If I prove honey-mouthed, let my tongue blister,
> And never to my red-looked anger be
> The trumpet any more. (2.2.30-36) [26]

But it is not left entirely to the individual roles themselves to mark up this repeated assumption of stock character. The dramatic action too gives it a cartoony highlighting in the sheep shearing scene of 4.4. The shift effected by the play's switch to pastoral – a form that by the early 1600s would automatically mark up its artifice and fictionality[27] – underlines how the scene (the second longest that Shakespeare ever wrote) functions as a highly theatricalised set-piece – Righter even goes as far as to describe it as 'a kind of play within the play'.[28] As the action unfolds it soon becomes apparent that almost every character present is playing at being some other part (and sometimes more than one). For example, in the paired interlocutors that conduct the scene's extended and ironically conventional debate on the relative merits of art and nature: Polixenes, already made up to appear 16 years older than the Polixenes of the play's first half, makes himself appear older still by adopting a white beard (as made clear at 4.4.395). This so he might, (in a distinct reversal of the meek character he demonstrated in the first two acts) play Tyrant King in confronting Perdita (a role that was itself of course performed by a boy actor), a queen-to-

[24] "The Tragicomic Perspective of *The Winter's Tale*", p. 13.
[25] "The Tragicomic Perspective of *The Winter's Tale*", p. 13. The 'scolding tongue' is an epitaph twice given to the 'shrew', Katherina, in *The Taming of the Shrew* (1.2.98, 251).
[26] J. H. P. Pafford's note to this passage in the 1965 Arden edition demonstrates that even Paulina's tongue plays a role: 'The "trumpet" was the man who preceded the herald who was usually dressed in red and often bore an angry message' (The Arden Shakespeare, p. 42, n 34-35).
[27] Certainly, the early modern period produces various 'straight' pastorals, but oftentimes these become appropriated and re-rendered in a multifarious sequence of serioludic imitation. Even poetical brilliance failed to ensure that a work would escape such parodying; see for example, the numerous responses written to Christopher Marlowe's *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*: Sir Walter Raleigh's coining of *The Nymph's Reply*, John Donne's *The Bait,* and the distorted iteration that Shakespeare gives to the lines in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 3.1. And Marlowe himself, provides the poem burlesque in *The Jew of Malta* 4.3. This pattern suggests that even in the apparently 'straight' works of the early modern period the relationship that a form takes to its content and signification is neither fixed nor absolute.
[28] *Essays Mainly Shakespearian*, p. 177.

be who believes herself to be a farmer's daughter who is here playing at being a queen – arms filled with flowers, and, as Righter notes, most probably wearing a crown in the fashion of the Whitsun Queen.[29]

But if the sense of 'real' conjured by the courtiers' exchange in 1.1 is soon after cast aside, even within the confines of that first scene this 'real' must still be understood as cutting both ways. For while it essays the substance of the courtiers and the verisimilitude of the world they inhabit it also indicates the actuality of the theatre. When Archidamus steps out of the character he has up until that point played, the audience must wonder for a moment who, exactly, he is. In humorously shucking off a persona and leaving a make-believe world to collapse, his play-acting cannot help but point back to the courtiers' own fictional and performative realisation; the audience is made aware of the actors behind each of the parts. Granted, the play-world is soon after resuscitated, and reconstituted on terms that could be said to be more convincing than those by which it was originally conceived (even if this is only to last for the space of a few minutes). But once this moment of powerful confusion has been had, the ambiguities of performed identity can never wholly be put out of the minds of the spectators. And these ambiguities will be given further exploration when these same two actors return to the stage to take on other play-world identities.

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The device of having Archidamus and Camillo act out the parts of stereotypical stage courtiers marks up theatrical identity as something that is not only performative but shifting and variant. This would have been further underlined by the fact that the actors that performed Camillo and Archidamus would almost certainly have doubled other roles.[30] In the early modern theatre the assumption of role never wholly occluded the performer, and when doubling was in effect, the actor himself would remain a prominent presence across the different roles he played. This would be particularly so in the case of the actors who

[29] *Essays Mainly Shakespearian*, p. 177.

[30] As pioneering works from the sixties like D. M. Bevington's *From 'Mankind' to Marlowe* (Harvard University Press, 1968) and W. A. Ringler's article "The Number of Actors in Shakespeare's Early Plays" (*The Seventeenth Century Stage*, edited by G. E. Bentley (University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 111–133) established, doubling was a common recourse in the theatre of the period, and we can be sure that Shakespeare's plays made use of the device. It seems me that we can be equally certain that Shakespeare, intimately concerned as he was with the manner in which his chosen art form negotiated the business of its own realisation, would explore the creative possibilities offered by such a resource. This is something that a number of recent studies have investigated. Brett Gamboa's *Shakespeare's Double Plays* (Cambridge University Press, 2018) combines a careful analysis and re-evaluation of the evidence for doubling in Shakespeare's plays with imaginative yet measured speculation. This work can be supplemented by John Palfrey and Tiffany Stern's excellent survey of acting in the period in *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford University Press, 2007) (see chapters 1-3) which demonstrates not only the manner in which performances of the period exploited the device, but also explores how audiences conceived of the relationship between the separate roles as well as the relationship these roles took to the actor that performed them.

took on Camillo and Archidamus. The opening scene's game of dissimulation already implicates the actors as being impersonators of different dramatic types, and the audience – having been taking in by the actors' performance once already – will give these same actors keen attention when they return to the stage in other parts.

Camillo is a relatively large part, and the actor most probably took on only one other role – almost certainly that of Paulina's ill-fated husband, Antigonus (a claim that I will explain shortly). Archidamus, on the other hand, makes no further contribution after the opening scene, and this may point to the role being performed by an actor more used to taking on bit parts. Brett Gamboa's speculative casting chart for the play gives the actor who plays Archidamus four more roles (Jailer, Mariner, Servant (4.4), Messenger (5.1)),[31] and the audience members may have found humour in a distribution of this kind. Such a design would mean that the spectators could not, at each of these subsequent re-appearances, help but remark the presence of the same actor beneath each of these (briefly sketched) play-world figures, an arrangement that would make comic contrast with the trick that this actor pulled off in the opening scene, whereby the audience initially failed to recognise the sophistication of Archidamus' feigned construction.

My own feeling is that there exists a conceptual correspondence between the roles of Archidamus and the Third gentleman – the speaker who in 5.2 will complete the account of the never-staged reunion scene – and giving both parts to the same actor would highlight this nicely. This would mean that having opened the play, in what turned out to be a bit part, it now appears that this same actor, in another bit part, is, with his account of the royal reconciliation, apparently closing out the narrative. And the emphatic theatricality that marked the delivery of the exposition in 1.1, is matched – outdone, even – by the quite preposterous stage business of 5.2. In this latter scene the account of the unseen reunion is rendered through a sequence of installments that are delivered by a set of serially arriving gentlemen. The account unfolds according to the rule of three, one of Shakespeare's favourite comic devices, and the already absurd punchline of having a third speaker arrive on stage to complete the exposition is made even more ludicrous if the audience were to recognise him as the same actor who, in the very first scene, demonstrated that neither actor nor exposition was to be trusted. And while the language of the first two gentlemen is somewhat grandiose, the Third Gentleman has a turn of phrase that even more closely resembles the tumid contrivances of Archidamus and Camillo's mock-language: 'One of the prettiest touches of all, and that which angled for mine eyes – caught the water though not the fish …' (5.2.76-76). There would also be a perverse symmetry at work in having the same actor top and tail the play action (that is at least, what at this point the audience have been led to believe represents the tail-end of the play action) with expositions that (deliberately) do not quite work. This actor opened the play with what was essentially a pseudo-exposition, and one that in practical terms – since, as has been noted, all the pertinent background information that it imparts is repeated almost immediately in the next scene – is not needed. Returning to complete the description that replaces the anticipated

[31] *Shakespeare's Double Plays*, p. 270.

spectacle of the narrative climax, he offers an exposition that – in that it replaces the spectacle of what has been signalled as the drama's climax – is not wanted.

The audience members must be uncertain as to what kind of investment they are expected to make in the scene. Not only has the playwright elected, rather peculiarly it must seem, to forgo staging the play's emotional reunion, but here at the (assumed) finale he has chosen to underline the ambivalent status accorded throughout the play to 'the evidence of things unseen' by rendering the account of the reunion according to a risible theatricality. The presence of the actor who had fulfilled the role of the mock-expositor Archidamus would only make the audience members more sceptical as to the investment they can give to such a report, reminding them that the play, in its very first moments, had operated to dupe them. Yet the same arrangement might also suggest to them that this presentation of the play's 'final scene' may too be some kind of trick, and that the play does in have fact more surprises for them – that the play will, like it did in the first scene, seem to offer them something poorly realised, only to reverse their assumptions and then pull out a coup de théâtre. Which, with the 'statue' scene, is precisely what happens.

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As we can see, doubling picks up on and extends the open deception of 'role' that the first scene played out, and I would in fact argue that the success of the play's spectacular resolution can be considered as in large part reliant on these features. It is doubling that ensures that the emotional fulfillment that the final scene offers is properly replete – and is, at the same time, possessed of an audacious comic brilliance. Without it, the fantastic resolution of the 'statue' scene is clouded, and the manner of its realisation is less artful than the rest of the play has led the audience to expect. And, happily for our purposes, it is through the discussion of the play's climax that we will come in round-about way to the matter of the doubling of our second courtier from 1.1, Camillo.

For if the effects that doubling makes possible are not recognised then the narrative climax provides only the recovery of Hermione and Perdita, and no matter how miraculous this climax might be felt to be, the terrible loss of Leontes' son, Mamillius, must still be thought of as hanging over the scene.[32] It could even be said that the awful injustice of Mamillius' death is in fact accentuated by Hermione's return – something implied in Robert Grams Hunter's remark that Shakespeare could just have easily had 'the renowned Julio Romano create a mother-son group'.[33] As Grams Hunter points out, the loss of Mamillius is something which most critics fail to properly accommodate into their readings of the play's resolution, choosing either to ignore the young Prince's death (G. Wilson

[32] The discussion of the theatrical correspondence between Mamillius and Perdita that occurs over the next three pages is taken in part from the more extended exploration I give to this relationship in my article "'This seeming lady and her brother': Further remarks on the doubling of Perdita with Mamillius in *The Winter's Tale*" (*Notes and Queries*, vol 67, no. 2, June 2020).

[33]"Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness: *The Winter's Tale*" (*The Winter's Tale: Critical* essays, edited by Maurice Hunt (Routledge, 1995), pp. 156-181), p. 171.

Knight writes of the final act that though 'Paulina reminds us that her husband is gone; and we may remember Mamillius … the subsidiary persons are no longer, as persons, important'[34]), or to dismiss it as lacking importance ('The loss of [Leontes'] son is more than made up for by the recovery of his wife and … daughter,' as Paul N. Siegel tallies it[35]). Yet if Mamillius is 'no longer important' then why does the play remind the audience of this loss near the beginning of the final act – seeming, in fact, to go out of its way to do so, and to do so forcefully? Paulina reintroduces his figure after hearing of the arrival of Polixenes' son, Florizel:

> Had our prince,
> Jewel of children, seen this hour, he had paired
> Well with this lord; there was not full a month
> Between their births. (5.1.115-118)

Significantly, it is, as Grams Hunter observes, the only occasion where Leontes calls for a halt to Paulina's purgatorial torments.[36] And I would add that in contrast to interpretations like Siegel's, the effect of the loss of Mamillius on the King is presented as being so profound that we must think that even with the miraculous restoration of his Queen Leontes would still be subject to a grief capable of overwhelming his very sense:

> Prithee, no more; cease. Thou know'st
> He dies to me again when talked of. Sure,
> When I shall see this gentleman, thy speeches
> Will bring me to consider that which may
> Unfurnish me of reason. (5.2.118-122)

In a passage that remarks the peculiarity of Mamillius' fate, and the particular connection this role has with Perdita, Helen Cooper suggests the role-doubling that a number of recent critics[37] have felt that the structure of the play asks for:

> That loss of Perdita in the play becomes crucial to the play primarily because of her brother's death. He is unusual in romance, as in a tragicomedy, for being irremediably dead – there is no symbolic return for him in the plot, as there is for Hermione – but the theatre may have offered a way round that, too. It is possible, perhaps likely, that the same boy actor played both siblings. That Mamillius does, in the most literal sense, return in the person of his sister.[38]

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[34] *The Crown of Life* (Methuen, 1947), p. 126.
[35] "Leontes, a Jealous Tyrant" (*Review of English Studies,* 1, n.s., October 1950, pp. 302-307), p. 306.
[36] "Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness: *The Winter's Tale*", p. 170.
[37] See for example, Lynn Enterline (*Shakespeare's Schoolroom* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p. 151), Richard Proudfoot ("Verbal Reminiscence and the Two-Part Structure of *The Winter's Tale*", (*The Winter's Tale: Critical essays*, edited by Maurice Hunt (Routledge, 1995), pp. 280-297), p. 288), Margaret Fleming Pearson (*All in War with Time: Studies in Shakespeare's Romances* (University of California Press, 1994), p. 50).
[38] *The English Romance in Time* (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 336.

Gamboa underlines the appeal of such an arrangement:

> …no alternative can equal the value of doubling Mamillius and Perdita, a choice that so well complements the play's miraculous conclusion that *not* employing it seems actively to thwart the play's objectives and to deprive the audience of the full-throated redemption and reunion that the structure and genre facilitate.[39]

Since the first scene, the play has emphasised that its stage figures must be thought of as being realised through dissimulation and configured as multiple. As such, the stage part, which in the early modern theatre is already equivocal is made even more so, and the other aspects that configure role – the actor, and the other play-world parts that are performed by that same actor – enjoy a greater presence than they would normally. In this way, when Perdita (if we allow the part as played by the same actor that earlier performed the young Prince) is reintroduced in the final act, in a scene which reunites the grieving parent with the presumed-dead child, and in a context that has foregrounded the memory of the lost Prince, the presence of Mamillius is conjured in a manner that is more immediate than the rather abstract reference that doubling is usually constrained to make.[40]

At the same time then that Paulina's incessant lamentations serve as shrewish castigations to the conscience of the King, they also fulfill a structural purpose. By repeatedly underlining the loss of Hermione, the Queen's spectacular restoration is made all the more powerful. Yet as we see, Paulina's jeremiad is not confined to Hermione – in fact her speeches in 5.1. reiterate each of the losses of play's first half, and in this way prepare the ground for the incredible return of each of these figures (whether that revival is in dramatic or metadramatic mode). As well then as marking up the theatrically recovered presence of Mamillius, Paulina's litany of loss too takes in Perdita. Since, though, the audience is prepared for the Princess's reunion with Leontes she needs only a brief mention. Discussing Leontes' remarrying and getting an heir, Paulina says:

> For has not the divine Apollo said –
> Is't not the tenor of his oracle? –
> That King Leontes shall not have an heir
> Till his lost child be found? (5.1.37-40)

But there is – although its occurrence takes place in a wholly different theatrical register – one more loss in the play's first half, and as Paulina's speech continues, it too is indicated:

> Which that it shall,
> Is all as monstrous to our human reason
> As my Antigonus to break his grave

[39] *Shakespeare's Double Plays*, p. 94.

[40] There are points in the scene at which it may be thought that in this meeting between Leontes and Perdita the latter's doubling of Mamillius is being brought to the audience's attention. See my previously mentioned "'This Seeming Lady and Her Brother': Further remarks on the doubling of Perdita with Mamillius in *The Winter's Tale*".

And come again to me, who, on my life,
Did perish with the infant. (5.1.40-44)[41]

The manner in which this is shoe-horned in must draw attention to itself, and the awkwardness of the mention is only further underlined by Paulina choosing, peculiarly, to attest to her husband's demise with a perfectly gratuitous oath. Yet as the audience is aware, the 'lost child' is about to be recovered, and, if the doubling arrangement which has been suggested for Mamillius also takes in Paulina's husband, then the dramatic irony is extended further: Antigonus too is allowed to return, as the actor who fulfilled his part is, in the role of Camillo, about to present himself at court.

Antigonus' death, though, is, in terms of rank and realisation, distinct from the play's other losses. Hermione, Mamillius and Perdita complete Leontes' royal circle, and their losses were configured with a sense of drama and tragedy (or at least potential tragedy). Antigonus' death occurred in an altogether more fantastic key, representing the hinge-point by which the play switches from tragedy to comedy. The stage direction is as familiar as it is outrageous: 'Exit, pursued by a bear' (3.3.57 sd), and the marvellously muddled commentary that the Clown provides to Antigonus' grisly end a few lines later is a comic tour de force that can raise gales of dark laughter.

It might be thought that the profound movement of the play's last scene, one of art's most striking enactments of the universal human hope that the lost might be recovered, is dependent on maintaining an artistic mood that cannot properly accommodate a figure dispatched in so colourful and outrageous a manner. And, as the scene unfolds, it does indeed appear that the playwright has dispensed with pursuing further any metatheatrical arrangement that will reunite Paulina with her Antigonus. Though the actor is present in the role of Camillo, all Paulina's energies are concentrated on the presentation of Hermione's 'statue', and nothing passes between Paulina and Camillo that indicates any sort of connection. Most of the audience, of course, caught up in the dramatic presentation of the 'statue' would have quite forgotten that Paulina had rather awkwardly insinuated Antigonus into her inventory of loss. And those who remembered would almost certainly not have been disappointed with an arrangement that suggested the playwright was content to sacrifice this relatively minor business so as to better realise the revelatory mood that Hermione's 'statue' undoubtedly conjured.

The dizzying finale of Hermione's fantastic return crowns and integrates the play's unexpected royal reunions; the Queen steps down from the pedestal and delivers a blessing on her daughter's head, marking out her own revival as predicated on the mysterious recovery of her child. In dramatic terms, the only thing required at this point, as the playwright is fully aware, is a rather urgent wrapping up. To finish things, while the play's spectators are still stunned by wonder, and before they recover themselves sufficiently to

[41] There is another reminder of Antigonus in the next scene's description of the royal reunion: 'But, oh, the noble combat that twixt joy and sorrow was fought in Paulina: she had one eye declined for the loss of her husband, another elevated that the oracle was fulfilled' (5.2.69-71). The physically absurd and cartoon-like description being provided by the already much-discussed Third Gentleman.

recognise the narrative impossibility (or, more precisely perhaps, the narrative fraudulence) of what they have just witnessed. A minor but masterful piece of theatrical misdirection facilitates this. Hermione, in the one brief speech she is here given, asks a series of questions as to how Perdita's return came about, and this serves to point the audience's attention away from the dubious restoration of the Queen herself, and onto a recovery, which though fantastical, has been provided proper explanation. Paulina has throughout 5.3 played the part of director, guiding the responses of the audiences of both Leontes' court and Shakespeare's Globe, and now her curt rebuff of Hermione's inquiries, 'There's time enough for that', works to forestall audience queries in both the Sicilian court and the London theatre. Then, with the same feel for dramatic effect that she has displayed throughout this scene, and so that the sense of revelation that has been realised should not be dissipated, she instructs everybody on stage to make a sharp exit: 'Go together,/ You precious winners all. Your exultation/ Partake to every one' (5.3.130-132).

Brilliantly realised a piece of stagecraft as this is though, it is insufficiently brilliant for Shakespeare. Despite having demonstrated that he is capable of effecting a dramatic arrangement that gives his audience no real opportunity to register the outrageous artistic deception that has just been practiced on it, and in this way bringing his stage figures to the point of their final exit with the scene's miraculous mood wholly preserved, Shakespeare – in the manner of his play-world counter, Autolycus – will push his luck further. And just as it was with the pedlar, the test of the playwright's virtuosity will be that his invention sustains itself at the same time as it flaunts the outlandishness of its deceptions. With such an arrangement, nothing needs to be sacrificed; the sublime can rub shoulders with the comic, and the playwright, like Autolycus, can have things all ways at once: underlining the dissimulation of his own art, yet at the same time, still making the most of its effects. So rather than simply having Leontes affirm Paulina's call to exit and leading everyone off Shakespeare has the scene go on for another 23 lines, providing an exchange between this pair in which the various contrivances of the play are, in somewhat frantic fashion, remarked over. And it is worth observing in passing that productions which opt to cut the play's opening scene, often cut out most of this exchange too – demonstrating how often the play is given a conceptualisation which means that its ironic attitude towards its own construction is neither appreciated nor accommodated.

Leontes has barely begun in on his response to Paulina, when he interrupts himself to remark the artistic double-dealing which has afforded the play its powerful final effects (more than remark in fact: he offers a new narrative detail that further strains the plausibility of the resolution): 'Thou hast found mine, / But how is to be questioned, for I saw her,/ As I thought, dead' (5.3.138-141). And a few lines later, after repeating Paulina's instruction to exit ('Let's from this place.'(5.3.146)) he checks himself so that he might fulfil – in so hurried a manner that it cannot help but mark itself up – his narrative obligations: he makes a final lightning-quick apology that in 14 words takes in the wrongs he did to both Hermione and Polixenes, and then in equally rapid terms, so that the Queen is updated as to how the plot resolutions have served to take in her daughter, he introduces Hermione to her 'son-in-law', Florizel.

Leontes' last lines – preceded by yet another call for everyone to get off stage – are even more explicit. They highlight the lack of narrative explanation for the resolution, and, in the phrase 'answer his part performed', underline for the last time how these effects have been afforded through the efforts of the playwright and his players:

> Good Paulina,
> Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely
> Each one demand and answer his part
> Performed in this wide gap of time since first
> We were dissevered. (5.3.151-155)

After which there is only time for Leontes to once more reiterate the dramatic need of a sharp exit – making it four mentions in all: 'Hastily lead away' – before, he finally has everybody go off.

Leontes' various unpacking of the play's theatricality and illusion, though, is too stagecraft of the first order, with the dramatist continuing to control and direct his audience's response. For even as the play points back to the artifice and absurdity by which it has coordinated its effects, it does not undo their power. Leontes' scattergun cataloguing of the drama's contrivances (and Leontes' call that they away 'Hastily' so as to 'leisurely' unpack things elsewhere suggests that the King's closing speech, while undoubtedly characterised by regal flair and fiat, has some pace to it) means that the audience members are given no opportunity to dwell on the particularities by which the play has taken them in, but merely to register that the playwright has pulled off this trick in virtuoso fashion; it is an arrangement that produces delight rather than disillusion.

There is in these final lines between Paulina and her King one more metatheatrical gambit that gets played out, and it is the most outrageous and enjoyable of them all. It occurs early on in the exchange and it brings us back to our courtier of the first act, and double of Antigonus, Camillo. Any figures that were, in fulfilment of Paulina's first call to exit, set to march off are immediately checked in their movements. Shakespeare has Paulina begin over again her lamentations, only now it is the wretched state of her own lonely widowhood that she bemoans. It is a switch which however it is performed must, to some extent, seem strained – an arrangement that serves to remind the audience that Antigonus is, metatheatrically at least, present:

> Go together,
> You precious winners all. Your exultation
> Partake to every one. I, an old turtle,
> Will wing me to some withered bough, and there
> My mate, that's never to be found again,
> Lament till I am lost. (5.3.130-135)

Leontes amends this in outrageously implausible fashion: there and then he contracts a marriage between Paulina and Camillo. And since nothing in the play has prepared the audience for such an eventuality, the King supplies the motivation for this

peremptory resolution with an absurd and absurdly brief (only seven words) parenthetical expository aside: '(For him, I partly know his minde)'.[42] The whole episode is delightfully improbable, a quality that Gamboa suggests explains 'the laughter and joy it routinely sparks in audiences, who experience by it something that seems perfectly in tune with other magical transformations that turn the play into a full-blown romance'.[43] A full-blown romance, whose profundity is edged out with the comic, and in which even Antigonus might in metatheatric manner escape the bear's belly.

At the same time then that the fantastic conclusion of *The Winter's Tale* marks one of art's most moving realisations of the profound human hope that lingers behind every loss, it is also a striking demonstration of artistic deception. Remarkably, neither aspect overwhelms the other. The rather brilliant metatheatrical reversal which the first scene pulled off means that the drama has from its very first instances insisted on the false conditions upon which its effects are predicated. The opening exchange empties out the elements of exposition and role, and the scene seems to point to nothing beyond the artistry of its own contrivance. Yet, with a wonderful irony, it is through the *contrivances* of exposition and of role that the play's final effects are had. Sicilia's Prince, Princess and Queen each make a return that is miraculous – and which at once marks up the dissimulations by which this miraculous effect is brought about. Mamillius returns to the stage, conjured through the configured impossibilities of role; Perdita is recovered through the self-aware unfolding of romance formula, and the awesome reappearance of a living Hermione is accounted for in an explanation that is incomplete and, properly speaking, incredible. The coda attached to this fantastical scene of royal restitution pursues this strategy. It offers a series of comic expositions that make for a wilfully over-wrought re-rehearsal of the play's various improbabilities, and the breakneck pace at which these are delivered intensifies the parodic mood. The most charming of these can be thought the contracting of the marriage of one of our original courtiers, Camillo, to Paulina, an arrangement that highlights the duplicities that role and exposition afford, yet, at the same time remarks the delight which these duplicities might derive.

We might remember how at the end of the first scene, Camillo together with Archidamus wandered off (according to Sander's perceptive emendation) chuckling. But we might ask who exactly is chuckling, and at what precisely? The opening scene's coup de théâtre initiated the structures by which the audience would conceive of stage presences. They are experienced by the audience as myriad, ambivalent and artificial. Each stage

[42] Parenthetical in the folios at least, which prints it in this way: '(For him, I partly know his minde)' (3356). While it might be objected that such punctuation is dated, it seems to me rather apt in highlighting what I feel to be the phrase's camp knowingness. The use of a self-aware and ironic exposition is not infrequent in the plays, and I think that making use of the folios' preference for supplying these moments parenthetical punctuation remarks this rather nicely. For example, see the parenthetical aside stuck in the middle of Theseus's solemn declaration of the punishment that awaits a recalcitrant Hermia: 'Or else the Law of Athens yeelds you vp/ (Which by no meanes we may extenuate)/ To death, or to a vow of single life' (128-130), a line that asks for a similarly ironic delivery (the play's plot, after all, being resolved by Theseus offering, in – once again – briskly-realised form, a fourth act mitigation of these unmitigable conditions).

[43] *Shakespeare's Double Plays*, p. 94.

presence indicates beyond its part to the actor that performs it, and, further, to the other parts that this same actor fulfils. And each stage presence points back further, indicating the enterprise of the performance and the playwright who has fashioned it, and at the same time remarking the duplicity inherent throughout such a structure of representation. So while at one level the courtiers' chuckling will be seen as the result of their ironic game of rhetorical one-upmanship, the spectators, who had almost certainly been rather ingeniously taken in by the courtiers' impersonations, must wonder if on some other level it is not their own earlier obtuseness that motivates the chuckling on the stage – if this mirth does not belong also to the actors, and through them, the playwright, and derive from their pleasure in the effect that they have so skilfully engineered.

The arrangement can be thought revisited in the play's wondrous climax. Hermione's return, if it is not to be a ridiculous misfire, requires an enchanted audience. The Queen's first movements are only experienced as miraculous if the audience imaginatively colludes in the sense of their impossibility. The scene could rightly be considered the most moving moment in the entire canon. Yet at the same time, it may be the most outrageous. No sooner is this awesome recovery effected than the playwright and his company – Autolycuses all of them – point back to the incredible means by which this artistic con-trick has been accomplished. Of course, this 'reveal' is too a virtuoso performance, it draws attention to the absurdities of both the fictional and theatrical arrangements, yet is performed with such wit, flair and pace, that rather than undermining the miraculous mood, it serves instead to round it with humour and delight. It is an extremely high-risk strategy, and the arrangement derives much of its brilliance from the way that it manages to sustain itself in the face of the imminent collapse that the gambit threatens. Even the highly skilled performers of the Kingsmen can only pull it off for the briefest interval, and after 24 lines, they exit. They leave behind them an audience that they have repeatedly outfoxed, who they have taken in with the most profound of artistic illusions and the most mundane of deceptions, an audience to whom they have revealed the very mechanics by which their duplicities have been practiced – but only to further revel in these dissimulated effects. And it is an audience that we must imagine remains subject to these effects, that remains astounded. We could be forgiven were we to imagine too that, as these performers exit, a chuckle escaped one or two of them.

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