Shakespeare's Punctuation as Rhetorical Stage Direction

John M. Sullivan
Riverside Community College

In *Playing Shakespeare: An Actor's Guide*, Royal Shakespearean Company Director John Barton states that "actors who were new to Shakespeare lament that they could find nothing written which would assist them directly in handling his text and particularly his verse."[1] Such assistance has increasingly resulted in the addition of stage directions to Shakespeare's plays. Stanley Wells, noted Shakespeare scholar and Emeritis Professor of Shakespeare Studies at the University of Birmingham, observed that "ever since Shakespeare's plays were first submitted to the editorial process it has been accepted that the editor of a critical edition has a responsibility to amplify the directions of [Shakespeare's] original texts."[2] The emphasis on direction comes from attempts to address the concerns of actors, directors, and scholars who seek to interpret Shakespeare's works. However, the schism between theater and literature forms here as actors and directors seek to discover a clearer understanding of the characters through performance, in which, according to South Bank University Senior Lecturer Margaret Jane Kidnie, "performance is . . . a liberating space of infinite creative potential," while scholars have developed an approach "that is restricted or constrained—inappropriately—by the scholarly impulse toward fixity."[3]

Fixity, in the guise of stage directions, places artificiality into the text that can constrain the character by reducing dialogic performance to recitation, which is what happens in the 1983 BBC performance of *Coriolanus*.[4] The opening scene is supposed to center on the First and Second Citizens rallying the citizens of Rome to eliminate Caius Martius, so emotion and excitement should permeate the dialogue and stage; however, the BBC performance focuses more on the language than on the context, and the actors' movements, which are minimal at best, seem secondary, leaving the performance flat and emotionally impoverished. Such

belaboring of a scene wracked with emotional dialogue, but left emotionless by a static interpretation, demonstrates how stage directions can intrude upon the performance of the play.

Shakespeare's plays were drafts of dialogue presented to actors who had to filter the words through their "mind's eye," but who were more concerned with performance. Leslie Thomson states that "the plays were written to be rehearsed and then performed," so the modern scholarly approach of adding, moving, or changing stage directions creates distractions.[5] These directions can be so pedantic that little room is given to the actor to actually perform; the performance becomes much more a reading of the writer or director than the discovery and development of a character. Thus, instead of looking at dialogue and the accompanying directions as universally married, John Barton asserts that the actor needs to determine "whether [a given statement] helps, stimulates and releases an actor at a particular rehearsal" to discover the emotion and movement of the character within the space of the stage and context of the play; the directions "must reach and help the actors with whom [the playwright is] working."[6]

As Thomson notes, "The particulars of staging were developed during that process [of rehearsal and performance] and rarely survive in written form."[7] Barton echoes this process, advising that "the best guide to an actor who wants to play in Shakespeare comes . . . from Shakespeare himself, who was an actor."[8] Adding stage directions to Shakespeare's texts, as has been practiced since they were first published, introduces an invasive voice into the performance and understanding of the text. In fact, additions are unnecessary; directions already exist in the form of punctuation, which serves a rhetorical purpose that would have been apparent to Shakespeare and his fellow actors.

Punctuation on the Shakespearean stage had a radically different intent than it does in modern drama and writing. While drama and writing continue to be intrinsically linked, language rules are a more recent construct that have redefined punctuation as primarily grammatical marks; yet in sixteenth-century English, punctuation served a rhetorical purpose rather than the grammatical function ascribed to it today. Anthony Graham-White observes that punctuation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was rhetorical, not grammatical: "The greatest disservice done by substituting grammatical for rhetorical punctuation is . . . to the tone of the drama and the performers' relationship to the audience."[9] When the plays are read grammatically, according to G. Blakemore Evans, they "make frequent use of the semicolon

and period 'at the risk of continual damage to the movement and frequently to the meaning of the lines'."[10] However, reading punctuation rhetorically "can be suggestive about thought and character."[11] Walter Ong, in "Historical Backgrounds of Elizabethan and Jacobean Punctuation Theory," states that early grammarians "never refer to the position of a punctuation mark in terms of grammatical structure. For the most part, they are content to indicate where a *distinctio* [punctuation mark] may [occur] (not where it must or must not) occur."[12]

Early grammarians, such as Donatus in the fourth century, Sergius and Cledonius in the fifth century, Alanus de Insulis and Hugh of St. Victors in the twelfth century, interpreted punctuation as types of pauses associated with breathing, and their works carried on a tradition that would last until the mid-nineteenth century, when literature replaced rhetoric and grammatical punctuation replaced rhetorical punctuation.[13] Ong continues: "[Punctuation] is thought of as marking off sections of speech into the traditional oratorical units," and these carried a "sense value" serving "primarily the purpose that breath marks serve today in a musical score, the three marks allowing respectively three breath pauses of varying lengths."[14] This sense value is broken into three specific marks:

> The marks of punctuation are invariably of three kinds: (1) the *distinctio* or *positura* proper, corresponding analogously to our present period; (2) the *media distinctio* (*media positura*, *mora*, *submedia distinctio*), sometimes analogous to our semicolon, sometimes to our colon, sometimes to our comma, and representing an intermediate pause between that of the *distinctio* proper and that of (3) the *subdistinctio*, which is for the most part analogous to our comma. These three marks are written respectively above the line (*ad summam litteram* or *ad caput litterae*), somewhat above the line (*ad medium litteram*), and on the line (*ad imam litteram*).[15]

Using punctuation rhetorically to mark breathing pauses underscored what Ong calls the "demands of oral reading or of declamation" and made punctuation marks much more practical in the sense that their intentionality underscored and/or emphasized the spoken word rather than the written.[16] This deliberateness of punctuation was then a way of developing the argument presented by an actor through the dialogue.

Within the performance, then, the director and actors should consider the rhetorical nature of not just the language, but also the punctuation in Shakespeare's plays. Such care is intrinsic for actors, especially if the director provides them with more latitude,

as did director Bob Anderson in the Utah Shakespearean Festival's (USF) 2007 production of *Twelfth Night*. According to Ryan Schabach, who portrayed Sebastian, Anderson allowed the actors more liberty to interpret the actions and less overt directorial guidance compared with prescriptive directors who specify, "Take two steps to the left, say this, then two more steps and say that."[17]

The ability to let the dialogue guide the actor provides a "caesura moment": when the energy builds on stage, each line "is like lifting a ball or balloon," with each successive line keeping the balloon aloft on the breath of the actors as the balloon, the lines, moves from actor to actor so that they "never let it drop." Schabach says that this movement goes back to his own education in which he was told, "There is no such thing as acting, just reacting as the actors respond to actions preceding the lines." In fact, all of Shakespeare's plays start *in medias res*, so the motivations of the characters are reactions to the pre-text that actors and scholars are not necessarily privy to. Punctuation, then, "provides this link from the mark to breathing to acting/reacting," and perpetuates the cycle as the actors see punctuation marks as cues that signal breathing cues that indicate movement that is a collective response to what has occurred and been said.[18]

Like the grammarians of the Middle Ages, Elizabethan grammarians focused primarily on punctuation in relation to breathing and, within performance, with a specific sense of "building up to the plateau."[19] "Each comma," says Schabach, "is a road sign layering in a specific idea." This rhetorical use of punctuation has its roots in Greek and Latin, and during the Early Modern period, beginning with the invention of the printing press, the purposes of punctuation were being studied and written about more extensively. According to San Jose State University Professor Thayer Watkins, "William Caxton (1474), the first printer of books in English, used three punctuation marks: the stroke (/) for marking word groups, the colon (:) for marking distinct syntactic pauses, and the period (.) for marking the ends of sentences *and* brief pauses."[20] According to Watkins, the comma later replaced the stroke; then sometime in the sixteenth century, the semi-colon was introduced as a pause mark between the comma and colon.

Later in that century, Richard Mulcaster (1582), George Puttenham (1589), and then Thomas Heywood in (1612) defined the primary marks of punctuation—the comma, colon, and period—as they related to breathing. According to Mulcaster, the comma, colon, and period "helps to our breathing, & the distinct vtterance of our speche . . . & therefor com here in note, bycause

theie ar creaturs to the pen."[21] In the *Arte of English Poesie*, Puttenham connects the "figures that be *Rhetoricall*," which includes punctuation, with sense and sensuousness, stating that

> if our presupposall be true, that the Poet is of all other the most auncient Orator, as he that by good & pleasant perswasions first reduced the wilde and beastly people into publicke societies and ciuilitie of life, insinuating vnto them vnder fictions with sweete and coloured speeches, many wholesome lessons and doctrines, then no doubt there is nothing so fitte for him, as to be furnished with all the figures that be *Rhetoricall*, and such as do most beautifie language with eloquence & sententiousnes. Therfore since we haue already allowed to our maker his *auricular* figures, and also his *sensable*, by which all the words and clauses of his meeters are made as well tunable to the eare, as stirring to the minde, we are now by order to bestow vpon him those other figures which may execute both offices, and all at once to beautifie and geue sence and sententiousnes to the whole language at large.[22]

Artistic excellence is, according to Puttenham and his contemporaries, dependent on the rhetorical flourish of the "auricular figures," which places the emphasis, as Ong noted, on the spoken rather than written word.

Puttenham addresses aural punctuation later in his work as he defines the purposes and rhetorical uses of various patterns of speech (e.g., allegory, metaphor, hyperbole, epiphonemes), including in these patterns of speech the punctuation marks—the comma:

> We vse sometimes to proceede all by single words, without any close or coupling sauing that a little pause or comma is geuen to euery word. This figure for pleasure may be called in our vulgar the cutted comma, for that there cannot be a shorter diuision then at euery words end;[23]

the colon:

> Ye haue another figure which we may call the figure of euen, because it goeth by clauses of egall quantitie, and not very long, but yet not so short as the cutted comma: and they geue good grace to a dittie, but specially to a prose;[24]

the period:

> Ye haue another maner of speach drawen out at length and going all after one tenure and with an imperfit sence till you come to the last word or verse which concludes the whole premisses with a perfit sence & full periode, the Greeks call it *Irmus*;[25]

and the exclamation point:

> The figure of exclamation, I call him [*the outcrie*] because it vtters our minde by all such words as do shew any extreme passion, whether it be by way of exclamation or crying out, admiration or wondering, imprecation or cursing, obtestation or taking God and the world to witnes, or any such like as declare an impotent affection."[26]

Puttenham's inclusion of punctuation marks as rhetorical markers, which he then categorizes as patterns of speech, reinforces the assertion that punctuation serves less a grammatical function and more a rhetorical speech marker.

Ben Jonson noted later in the seventeenth century that "a comma is a mean breathing, when the word serveth indifferently, both to the parts of the sentence going before, and following after," and included the semicolon, which he defined as "a distinction of an imperfect sentence, wherein with somewhat a longer breath, the following sentence is included."[27] While a comma indicates a breathing pause, it also places emphasis on the idea immediately prior to and after the pause—this emphasis seems to be the sole purpose of the comma. The pauses allow for breathing and emphasis without the specific tonal change that a semi-colon seems to indicate, or the movement that a colon generally signals. All of the rhetorical grammarians treat the period as the end mark of a perfect (complete) sentence which, as Mulcaster states, "in reading warneth us to rest there and to help our breath at full."[28]

Simon Daines in 1640 connects this sense of breathing with the classical musical references; he wrote, "I remember my singing Master taught me to keep time, by telling from 1 to 4, according to the nature of the time which I was to keep, and . . . the same course I have used to my pupils in their reading, to inure them to the distinction of their pauses."[29] Like keeping time in a musical composition, punctuation marks can, therefore, establish a correlation between "the verse, poetry, and musicality" within the lines by reinforcing the breathing/movement aspect in dramatizing the performance.[30]

Graham-White illustrates this correlation in his analysis of the 1575 drama, *Grammer Gurton's Needle*; he argues that the punctuation in the opening speech, "that at first glance seems to mark the lines rather mechanically [,actually] hints to the actor that he handle them mock-heroically, and if the actor does so, then he conveys more vividly than can the words alone Diccon's sense of mocking superiority and the simple-mindedness of the family."[31]

This emphasis on the rhetorical nature of punctuation allows for an interpretation different from that of a modern grammatical reading by emphasizing the tone and associated actions that would occur as the actor blocks the dialogue.

> *Diccon:*
> Many a myle have I walked, divers and sundry waies
> And many a good mans house have I bin at in my daies
> Many a gossips cup in my tyme have I tasted
> And many a broche and spyt, have I both turned and basted
> Many a peece of bacon have I had out of thir balkes
> In ronnyng over the countrey, with long and were walkes,
> Yet came my foote never, within those doore cheekes,
> To seeke flesh or fysh, Garlyke, Onyons or Leekes,
> That ever I saw a sorte, in such a plyght
> As here within this house appereth to my syght,
> There is howlynge and scowlyng, all cast in a dumpe,
> With whewling and pewling, as though they had lost a trump
> Syghing and sobbing, they weepe and they wayle
> I marvell in my mynd, what the devill they ayle
> The olde Trot syts groning, with alas and alas,
> And Tib wringes her hands, and takes on in worse case
> With poore Cocke theyr boye, they be dryven in such fyts
> I feare mee the folkes be not well in theyr wyts,
> Aske them what they ayle, or who brought them in this staye?
> They aunswer not at all, but alacke and welaway
> When I saw it booted not, out a doores I hyed me
> And caught a slyp of bacon, when I saw that none spyed mee,
> Which I intend not far hence, unles my purpose fayle
> Shall serve for a shoinghorne to draw on two pots of ale.[32]

Rather than marking grammatical structures, the punctuation, to use Graham-White's term, abets the words, "inviting the actor playing the play-acting Diccon to indulge in mild mock-heroics" through the play lines' "sense of toing-and-froing" which balances "one half of the line against the other."[33] Using punctuation in conjunction with the language creates a rhetorical rather than a grammatical structure because the commas indicate short breaths between mocking statements that reinforce the compare/contrast argument as each successive image builds upon the last to the climax, the punch-line of the last line. The meter and rhyme work in conjunction with the punctuation, introducing breathing pauses between the images so that the lines build, as Schabach observes, to the heightened level of the punch line and the period at the end.

Given Shakespeare's education as well as his exposure to the stage and playwriting business of the Elizabethan age, we can deduce that he viewed punctuation in a rhetorical sense which, as

Graham-White noted, would enable the actor to use punctuation as blocking indicators. Gary Taylor, in the introduction to the Oxford *Textual Companion*, states that "the written text of any such [theatrical] manuscript thus depended upon an unwritten para-text which always accompanied it; an invisible life-support system of stage directions, which Shakespeare could either expect his first readers (the professional actors) to supply, or which those first readers would expect Shakespeare himself to supply orally."[34] Taylor's view is echoed by Shakespearean actors like David Suchet, who notes that in the Elizabethan theater "the author often instructed the actors" because they "had no director in our sense."[35] The rapidity with which Shakespeare crafted and then put into production his works could be used to further support the perception that stage directions were more the product of oral interaction than written notes, as University of California, Irvine, Drama Professor Robert Weimann relates: "Approaching theater as a multilayered entity . . . , semioticians such as Marco de Marinis have attempted to transcend the structuralist framework, which operates solely within the boundaries of the text."[36] Within the boundaries of the framework, the dramatist is restrained by a fixed set of references, which are sometimes couched in moralistic terms of good and bad or right and wrong.

Shakespeare, however, being educated in the rhetorical modes and somewhat restrained by time, would have more likely relied on his company of actors to interpret what Weimann calls the "'referential function' implicating a symbolic use of signs that aim at imparting information," while at the same time allowing for "the 'performant function' that the actor in the theater shares with clowns, dancers, and athletes in the circus, the ballet, and the sports arena."[37] As a member of his own company, Shakespeare could omit overt stage directions and instead rely on breathing cues of varying lengths to block his plays as he wrote, and thereby signal movement, either vocal or physical, in the drama through the use of meter and punctuation. While we don't know how Shakespeare drafted because we don't have those drafts, we can infer that, like most writers who have drafted a work by hand, those drafts must have eventually included shorthand notes and annotations, so the lack of overt directions can be compensated for by this invisible system of stage directions in the guise of punctuation.

The primary punctuation marks that dominate Shakespeare's works—the comma, semi-colon, colon, period, and exclamation point—are indicators, not dictators, of stage directions. In addition to these, Shakespeare frequently used parenthesis and dashes, which

Puttenham and his contemporaries generally defined as indicators of asides. Together, they provide the blocking signals that the actors would need. For example, *The Merchant of Venice* begins with Antonio talking with Salarino and Salario:

> *Antonio*
> In sooth, I know not why I am so sad:
> It wearies me; you say it wearies you;
> But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
> What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,
> I am to learn;
> And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,
> That I have much ado to know myself.[38]

Antonio's hopelessness is clearly implied by the text, but on the stage, the actor should consider the pauses and blocking indicated through the punctuation—not so much as defined lengths of pauses, but as breathing and movement indicators that are reflective of the hesitancy Antonio is feeling. When he says, "I know not why I am so sad:" the colon indicates a brief stop, longer than the breath pauses of the commas in line three. The colon indicates a change from questioning to the worrying and emotional fatigue of line two. The semi-colon between the first and second clauses of line two conveys a shorter pause than the colon, but longer than the comma. It also implies another tone shift from addressing his state of mind to addressing Salarino.

Yet such verbal inflections and shifts would be monotonous on stage if not accompanied by movement that underscored the feelings being conveyed. Shakespeare's use of the comma, semi-colon, and colon imply growing stages of frustration that literally immobilize Antonio's stage presence. Line one's introspection conveys a stance that is both emotionally and physically downcast. The audience can visualize Antonio looking at the ground like people do when they are unhappy; it is almost like a child looking down and kicking the ground in frustration. Such action underscores the emotion of the moment. The colon at the end of the statement indicates not just a tonal change, but a physical one. There is motion as Antonio moves, looks up, and changes his tone to one of hopelessness: "It wearies me." The actor could be shaking his head, slumping his shoulders, and dropping his voice in order to underscore the character's feelings. In addition, the sharpness of the "t" sound, which is the only one in the sentence, reinforces the dropping sound of the line. The subsequent semi-colon signals another tonal change that represents Antonio's growing awareness of the other characters on stage. With the second semi-colon—

"It wearies me; you say it wearies you;"—the shift is more subtle, underscoring the difference in pause lengths between the semi-colon and the longer pause of the colon; but at this point, Antonio should be looking up, so further body movement may or may not occur. This change from speaking introspectively to speaking about and to others is significant; he is suddenly addressing Salarino and looking at him: "You say it wearies you." The sense of disbelief intoned here conveys both the current emotions Antonio feels, while giving the audience a reference to the preceding conversation that is implied as having taken place prior to the play's start. After all, the actors and audience are entering the play somewhere *in medias res*, with events and conversations having already transpired; Antonio's assertion, not question, that Salarino had said Antonio's sadness wearied him implies that Salarino has already said that he has had enough.

Together, the punctuation informs the actors of the way the lines could be blocked and delivered, with the semi-colon after "me" indicating one change in tone and possibly facial expression, and the semi-colon following "you" indicating another shift, one from disbelief in line one to incredulousness in line two: "But how I caught it, found it, or came by it, / What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born, / I am to learn;"—ending with a semi-colon. The actor playing Antonio could deliver these lines sarcastically, reflecting combativeness; or he could deliver them bitterly, as if he felt betrayed by Salarino's comment; or he could return to the hopelessness of the first line. Either way, the semi-colon can be understood as telling the actor to consider the way the lines are delivered. This sentiment is reflective of comments made by Shakespearean actor Mike Gwilym, who says, "We have to come to terms with the fact that a character is not just what he says but how he says it"; thus, we can and should interpret punctuation as a signal to the actor that Shakespeare wants him or her to consider the way the words are said and imply the tone that reinforces the dialogue.[39]

Furthermore, the relationship between what is said and how it is said is underscored by the meter of the line, which works in conjunction with the punctuation. Shakespeare frequently used meter to place stress on syllables that are followed by punctuation. For example, in *Coriolanus*, Menenius says, "You talke of Pride."[40] In modern stagings, as Schabach notes, emphasis is frequently placed on the pronoun *you*, as in "YOU talke of pride"; however, Shakespeare's use of the anapest places the emphasis on the word *pride*, the ongoing theme of the play, not on the pronoun.[41] This

emphatic stress on pride highlights the hypocrisy of the Tribunes whose accusations against Coriolanus's pride are turned back rhetorically upon them when Menenius puts the stress on the word, so rather than using prescriptive stage directions to indicate tonal stress and movement, the meter and punctuation together provide the stage direction.[42]

The first sixteen lines of act 1 are a back and forth dialogue between the First and Second Citizens and the plebeians, in which the punctuation provides cues to the blocking. In the BBC production, the actors simply occupy the space and mull around almost casually, but the dialogue implies something far more serious and potentially sinister—the elimination/assassination of a public figure. The dialogue is rhetorical, a matter of persuasion through question and answer, with the lines ending in stressed feet and either periods or question marks. When the First Citizen says, "Before we proceed any further, heare me speake." (1.1.1), the last three words are an anapest (unstressed, unstressed, stressed) that emphasizes the word "speake." The period accentuates the need to pause after the stress, thus leaving the word suspended in the air, in essence, allowing, as Schabach points out, for the balloon to remain aloft as the crowd settles, moves into position, and/or the actor portraying First Citizen changes position, or all three.

Generally, periods signify a greater stop and more movement on stage than the semi-colon or colon, so the longer breath provides the actors with time that on stage would or should be filled with action of some kind. With the word "speake" left in the air, the crowd then picks it up and repeats it in line two: "Speake, Speake." Like the anapest, each "speake" is emphasized, with first a brief pause signaled by the comma, and then the period at the end, which would give the First Citizen more time to position himself and to visually convey his consideration of the attitude of the crowd. His subsequent question—"You are all resolu'd rather to dy then to famish?" (1.1.3-4)—is weighty, implying that the First Citizen spends the time between "heare me speake" and "you are all resolu'd" contemplating the implications of what he is about to ask. As the audience later learns, the First and Second Citizens have already decided that Martius needs to be disgraced in some way, so the dramatic pauses following the periods and question marks, combined with inflammatory rhetoric, are meant to heighten the emotional state of the crowd, to, in essence, manipulate and rally them into a mob by making them resolute. The metrical nature of the lines furthers the fury by placing emphasis on the stressed syllables of the anapests; thus, instead of emphasizing "you," the

stress is placed on "all," "rather," "dy," and "famish," leaving the end punctuation marking not just the question, but also the rhetorical weight of the argument.

This pattern of making a statement or asking a question that ends in a stressed syllable, then pausing for the crowd to consider, respond, and wait, allows the First Citizen to reel in the crowd and build to his speech in lines 14 through 23:

> *First Citizen:*
> We are accounted poore Citizens, the Patricians
> good: what Authority surfets one, would releeue
> vs. If they would yeelde vs but the superfluitie while it
> were wholsome, wee might guesse they releeued vs
> humanely: But they thinke we are too deere, the leannesse
> that afflicts vs, the obiect of our misery, is as an inuentory
> to particularize their abundance, our sufferance is a
> gaine to them. Let vs reuenge this with our Pikes, ere
> we become Rakes. For the Gods know, I speake this in
> hunger for Bread, not in thirst for Reuenge. (1.1.14-23)

This brief speech contains two colons and four periods. To simply read the speech as one would a paragraph would eliminate the pausing that the First Citizen uses to give his audience time to think. The first two clauses ("We are accounted poore Citizens, the Patricians good:") are statements that Elizabethan audiences would relate to and consider carefully along with the citizens on stage. The relationship of the rulers to the working classes was custodial, so the stresses on the anapestic feet in "accounted poore Citizens" and "the Patricians good:" sets up the conflict between the Citizens and the Patricians and underscores the implied rhetorical contradiction between the groups. In addition, the use of the colon gives the citizens and audience time to think, albeit briefly, about the statement; essentially, they are talking about treason. The colon provides the pauses needed for the citizens to think initially about their subordinate relationship with the senate, but because the colon is a shorter pause than the period, the implication is that the pause should not be too long because the First and Second Citizens could lose control of the mob they are inciting.

The blocking provided by the colon also implies that the actor needs to move around, changing his stance, his posture, and adopting the conspiratorial tone that the next sentence implies: "what Authority surfets one, would releeue vs." This statement, whether conspiratorial or cautionary, leaves the citizens to thinkabout the actions they are advocating. The actor could use the moment of silence to look into the eyes of the citizens—or

the audience, if the actor wanted to bring the audience into the play as if they were members of the citizenry. The "If" of the next line sounds abrupt, and it would break the silence initiated by the previous sentence, drawing the citizens' attention to the conditional statement of the next sentence ("If they would yeelde vs but the superfluitie while it / were wholsome, wee might guesse they releeued vs humanely:"). The colon again gives time for brief consideration of the statement and movement by the actor playing First Citizen to a firmer stand indicating his own surety of the cause, and because the punctuation is a colon, the actor can move assuredly to the exception statement in line 18 that justifies the citizens' actions.

The statement lays out the individual accusations against the rulers, and each stressed foot and accompanying comma emphasizes each accusation, building to the conclusion that "our sufferance is a gaine to them." The final statement is a straightforward conclusion, not a shout or rallying cry. The period conveys to the actor the need to deliver the line as a statement of fact, an inescapable conclusion to the accusations and previous statements. The stresses of the meter place further emphasis on the most important words, while the punctuation gives the actor the cue to pause and let the accusations and conclusion sink in, at the same time allowing the actor to build up to the next statement: "Let vs reuenge this with our Pikes, ere we become Rakes." The period after "Rakes" allows the enraged mob to ponder revenge, and stresses in the metaphor create an agrarian mental image that would appeal rhetorically to the plebeians as well as to the audience.

The final sentence lays out the qualifying justification, that his words are the result of hunger, famine, and starvation, not allegedly a thirst for revenge or treason. The period again implies the need for a contemplative pause before the Second Citizen returns to the original call to action: "Would you proceede especially against Caius Martius" (1.1.27). That the sentence begins with the interrogative "would" is betrayed by the period at the end; this period reveals that the line is not a question, but a statement. The citizens' response—"Against him first:" (1.1.29)—could be delivered after a moment of deliberation, as called for since the period of the previous line represents a long pause. The nodding of heads, raising of arms, and accompanying shouts of agreement are provided time with the colon as an indicator. The blocking implied by the punctuation continues throughout the scene, and while the text has only minor directions, the coaching that Shakespeare would have given the actors, the rhetoric of the lines,

x and the use of meter and punctuation imply that physical action would be taking place because the natural response that the Elizabethan stage sought to attain demanded a physical response that represented the emotional welling perpetuated by the First and Second Citizens.

The cueing that occurs in act 1 continues in act 2, scene 1, when Menenius and the Tribunes discuss Martius's standing with the citizens. Likewise here, the periods imply thought and response taking place, and while overly long pauses could drag out the scene, the periods don't indicate just verbal pauses, but facial expressions, body language, and movement along the stage. Lines 1 through 12 could be performed while the actors walk onto and then move towards center stage. The discussion indicates a casual action, not the angst of the first scene of the play; rather, the actors are engaged in a calm, knowledgeable discussion. That they would slowly walk onto the stage discussing the current turmoil and thinking about the implications of each other's statements is underscored by the punctuation's implied directions. This dialogue continues until a directional change occurs with the colon in line 20, which would seem to indicate that Menenius stops and turns to face the Tribunes when he says, "This is strange now: Do you two know, how / you are censured heere in the City, I mean of vs a'th' right / hand File, do you?" (1.2.20-22). The colon also represents a change in Menenius from engaging in casual conversation to being increasingly critical and eventually treating the Tribunes as fools. The same shifting occurs a few lines later in line 27:

> *Menenius:*
> Why 'tis no great matter: for a very little theefe
> of Occasion, will rob you of a great deale of Patience:
> Giue your dispositions the reines, and bee angry at your
> pleasures (at the least) if you take it as a pleasure to you, in
> being so: you blame *Martius* for being proud. (1.2.27-31)

Menenius dismisses a comment off-handedly with, "Why 'tis no great matter," and then philosophizes that "for a very little theefe of Occasion, will rob you of a great deale of Patience." The colons following "matter" and "patience" indicate changes in tone from dismissive to philosophical to serious, and then, with the colon following "so" in line 31, to accusatory. The anapests in "you blame Martius for being proud" highlight "Martius" and "proud" as if they are two distinct problems, and the period with its ensuing long pause makes the statement seem like Menenius's words are a final pronouncement.

This tonal switching occurs again in Menenius's comments in lines 33 to 39 in which the colon of line 35 implies a switch from sarcastic and accusatory to condescending:

> *Menenius:*
> I know you can doe very little alone, for your
> helpes are many, or else your actions would growe wondrous
> single: your abilities are to Infant-like, for dooing
> much alone. You talke of Pride: Oh, that you could turn
> your eyes toward the Napes of your neckes, and make
> but an Interiour suruey of your good selues. Oh that you
> could. (2.1.33-39)

The sarcasm of the first two lines seems directed right at the faces of the Tribunes, while the condescending tone of "your abilities are to Infant-like, for doing much alone" indicates the actor turning away from the Tribunes as he mocks their motives. The period ending the line could then give time for the Tribunes to at least feign insult, or to start to walk away, or for Menenius to start walking away before he stops and, returning to the accusatory tone, continues, "You talke of Pride:"—the colon indicating that the actor turns back to face the Tribunes and finishes the sentence. The final sentence could then be seen, literally, as a dismissive comment after an awkward silence.

Act 4, scene 5, Coriolanus's defection and revelation to Aufidus, is also laced with punctuation that implies blocking for tonal changes and movements that accompany the action of the scene. These directions also help convey the pride that is at the core of Coriolanus's character.

> *Coriolanus:*
> My name is *Caius Martius*, who hath done
> To thee particularly, and to all the Volces
> Great hurt and Mischiefe: thereto witnesse may
> My Surname *Coriolanus*. The painfull Seruice,
> The extreme Dangers, and the droppes of Blood
> Shed for my thanklesse Country, are requitted:
> But with that Surname, a good memorie
> And witnesse of the Malice and Displeasure
> Which thou should'st beare me, only that name remains.
> (4.5.69-77)

The colons and periods in the first section of this speech should indicate to the actor a need for pauses that will allow the audience on the stage to acknowledge his greatness, which does not happen, and so he carries on. As he continues, he becomes increasingly bitter and angry at both the Romans for exiling him and the Volcians

for not acknowledging his feats. His pauses progressively are moments when he seeks sympathy or affirmation; the periods and colons, indicators to the actor to stop, look, listen, and then continue.

> *Coriolanus:*
> The Cruelty and Enuy of the people,
> Permitted by our dastard Nobles, who
> Haue all forsooke me, hath deuour'd the rest:
> And suffer'd me by th' voyce of Slaues to be
> Hoop'd out of Rome. Now this extremity,
> Hath brought me to thy Harth, not out of Hope
> (Mistake me not) to saue my life: for if
> I had fear'd death, of all the Men i'th' World
> I would haue voided thee. But in meere spight
> To be full quit of those my Banishers,
> Stand I before thee heere: Then if thou hast
> A heart of wreake in thee, that wilt reuenge
> Thine owne particular wrongs, and stop those maimes
> Of shame seene through thy Country, speed thee straight
> And make my misery serue thy turne: So vse it,
> That my reuengefull Seruices may proue
> As Benefits to thee. (4.1.78-94)

At the period following "thee," Coriolanus shifts from seeking something emotional from the Volcians to addressing Aufidius more directly and committing himself to the Volcian's cause and the destruction of Rome. As he does so, the movements become more humble despite the pride-filled attitude.

> *Coriolanus:*
> For I will fight
> Against my Cankred Countrey, with the Spleene
> Of all the vnder Fiends. But if so be,
> Thou dar'st not this, and that to proue more Fortunes
> Th'art tyr'd, then in a word, I also am
> Longer to liue most wearie: and present
> My throat to thee, and to thy Ancient Malice:
> Which not to cut, would shew thee but a Foole,
> Since I haue euer followed thee with hate,
> Drawne Tunnes of Blood out of thy Countries brest,
> And cannot liue but to thy shame, vnlesse
> It be to do thee seruice. (4.5.94-105)

An actor could block this latter part of the scene by kneeling and supplicating himself to Aufidius, which is how the Utah Shakespearean Festival production chose to stage it; he could offer Aufidius the hilt of his own sword to demonstrate the overly dramatic ends to which he will go to redeem the insult to his hubris.

However the actor, director, or playwright chooses to play the scene, the stresses and punctuation underscore and remind the actor to include movement and tonal changes to augment the dialogue.

Dialogue is by its very nature emotional—expressing overt feelings, sub-conscious thoughts, and conflicting mind-sets—because, according to Robert Weimann, it embraces "divergent registers of space, discourse, poetics, and epistemology," at one time expressing Aristotelian dynamics, while at the same time filling the stage with chaos.[43] Weimann notes Shakespeare scholar James C. Bulman's statement that "the physical and emotive force of acting . . . resists inscription," particularly in the rigidity of stage directions.[44] Rather, Weimann asserts, "The performed play thrives on the mutual engagement of text and bodies. The scene of their interaction, the engagement itself, is a site of fluidity,"[45] which allows for not just emotional flux, but the chaos that is natural to the stage and vital to the engagement between actor and audience. Placing the emphasis on language, rather than on the fluidity of the performance, melds the writing with the performance, yet writing and performing are two distinctly different acts which, according to University of Manchester Professor Terry Eagleton "are not commensurable formations to be laid out alongside one another."[46]

The distinction between the words created by the playwright and the performance by the actor represents an adaptation that is not "an impermeable boundary line" but an "entanglement of word and action in the theater [that] is unthinkable without the dramatic text itself offering a dimension of both play and production," Weimann continues.[47] In "The London Stage in the 1580s," John Astington echoes Weimann and suggests that, "in the absence of . . . authorially fixed playtexts, it seems likely that 'one of the simplest and most portable elements of performance, that of the individual actor giving a taste of his quality' or 'his skill in various veins,' was prominent in bridging the gap 'between recorded stage directions and performance.'[48] Still, editors find it necessary to attempt codifying Shakespeare's drafts by standardizing, modernizing, and conventionalizing them, even though, as Barton stipulates, "the kinds of things that concern an actor in the rehearsal room are not normally written down"[49] and editorial revisions eliminate rhetorical stage directions that already exist in the plays. If, as Thomson suggests, "the specialist [the scholar, director, or actor] often studies the play for relationships between what was said and done in an original performance," then examination of the earliest texts must also include punctuation.[50]

Subsequent changes to punctuation, through standardization and modernizing, eliminate the cues already existing in the text and deny the actor and scholar insight into not just the playwright's intentions, but also important rhetorical indicators for the performance. This has been the situation as editors and literary movements have sought to emphasize the readability of the text over the performative nature of the text. Such attempts at fixing the language and, whether intentionally or not, the performance, have been the result of the perception that Shakespeare's texts were vulnerable to the mutability of the Elizabethan stage.[51] This mutability introduced chaotic variables that editors have sought to control through the addition of stage directions. The result has been a distracting insertion of what Schabach terms "subjective directions" that actually limit the readers' interpretations because "some people cannot break free of this conceptual control." Hence, the inclination to augment, change, or insert material into Shakespeare's works, rather than helping, actually diminishes the artistry of the works and thereby their performative and literary integrity and value.

Notes

1. John Barton, *Playing Shakespeare: An Actor's Guide* (New York: Anchor, 2001), xiv. Barton's text is a series of roundtable discussions with notable actors, such as David Suchet, Patrick Stewart, Ian McKellen, Judy Dench, and Mike Gwilym.

2. Quoted in Margaret Jane Kidnie, "Text, Performance, and the Editors: Staging Shakespeare's Drama," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 457, http://www.proquest.org (accessed 17 July 2007). Kidnie cites Well's statement from Antony Hammond's, "Encounters of the Third Kind in Stage-Directions in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama," *Studies in Philology* 89 (1992): 86.

3. Kidnie, "Text, Performance, and the Editors," 458.

4. *The Complete Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare: The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, DVD, directed by Elijah Moshinsky (1984; New York: Ambrose Video Publishing, 2000).

5. Leslie Thomson, "Broken Brackets and 'Mended Texts: Stage Directions in the *Oxford Shakespeare*," *Renaissance Drama* 19 (1988): 175.

6. Barton, *Playing Shakespeare*, xvi.

7. Thomson, "Broken Brackets," 180.

8. Barton, *Playing Shakespeare,* 3.

9. Anthony Graham-White, "Elizabethan Punctuation and the Actor: *Gammer Gurton's Needle* as a Case Study," *Theatre Journal* 34, no. 1 (March 1982): 101, http://www.jstor.org.

10. G. Blakemore Evans, ed., "Shakespeare's Text," in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Publishers, 1974), 39-40; quoted in Graham-White, 98.

11. Graham-White, "Elizabethan Punctuation and the Actor," 102.

12. Walter J. Ong, "Historical Backgrounds of Elizabethan and Jacobean Punctuation Theory," *PMLA* 52, no. 2 (June 1944): 351, http://www.jstor.org.

13. Ibid., 351-52.

14. Ibid., 351. For an in-depth analysis of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century changes in the study of rhetoric, particularly Alexander Bain's "prescriptive" position on what he calls an explicit structure that "can be described, measured, and emulated for instruction purposes," see Mike Duncan, "Whatever Happened to the Paragraph?" *College English* 69, no. 5 (May 2007): 470-495, particularly 471. Much of Bain's work solidified the teaching of punctuation as grammatical markers rather than rhetorical; see Alexander Bain, *English Composition and Rhetoric* (New York: Appleton, 1866) and (Delmar, NY: Scholar, 1871, reprinted in 1996); *On Teaching English* (New York: Appleton, 1901); and *The Senses and the Intellect*, (London: Parker, 1855).

15. Ong, "Historical Backgrounds," 353.

16. Ibid., 350.

17. Ryan Schabach. Interview. *Utah Shakespeare Festival*, 20 August 2007.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Thayer Watkins, *History of the Punctuation of the English Language*, http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/punctuation.htm (accessed 26 September 2007).

21. Richard Mulcaster, *Mulcaster's Elementarie*, ed. E. T. Campagnac, Tudor and Stuart Library (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 167; quoted in Ong, "Historical Backgrounds," 355.

22. George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, (1569), Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library. http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/PutPoes.html (accessed 13 September 2007), 163.

23. Ibid., 3:178.

24. Ibid., 3:178.

25. Ibid., 3:146.

26. Ibid., 3:177.

27. Ben Jonson, *The Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. F. Cunningham after W. Gifford (London: Bickers and Son, 1875), ix, 316; quoted in Ong, "Historical Backgrounds," 357.

28. *Mulcaster's Elementarie,* quoted in Ong, "Historical Backgrounds," 355.

29. Simon Daines, *Orthoepia Anglicana*, heraus Von M. Rosler und R. Brotanek, Neudrucke Fruhneuenglischer Grammatiken 3 (Halle a. S.: Max Niemeyer, 1908), 71; quoted in Ong, "Historical Backgrounds," 357.

30. Schabach, Interview.

31. Graham-White, "Elizabethan Punctuation," 103.

32. William Stevenson*, Gammer gurtons Nedle; A Ryght Pithy, Pleasaunt and merie Comedie* (1575), Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library, http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng.

33. Graham-White, "Elizabethan Punctuation," 103.

34. Gary Taylor, introduction to *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, with John Jowett and William Montgomery (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 2; quoted in Kidnie, "Text, Performance, and Editors," 461.

35. Actor David Suchet, quoted in Barton, *Playing Shakespeare*, 11.

36. Robert Weimann, "Playing with a Difference: Revisiting 'Pen' and 'Voice' in Shakespeare's Theater," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 424, http://www.proquest.org (accessed 17 July 2007).

37. Ibid., 424-25.

38. William Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice (1623 First Folio Edition)*, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library, http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/ MobMerc.html (accessed 8 May 2007), 1.1.1-7.

39. Actor Mike Gwilym, quoted in Barton, *Playing Shakespeare*, 15.

40. William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus (1623 First Folio Edition)*, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library. http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/MobCori.html (accessed 8 May 2007), 2.1.25. All subsequent line references are to this edition.

41. Schabach, Interview.

42. Ibid.

43. Weimann, "Playing with a Difference," 415-16.

44. James C. Bulman, *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance* (London: New Left Books, 1976), 64-66; quoted in Weimann, "Playing with a Difference," 417.

45. Weinmann, "Playing with a Difference," 420.

46. Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: New Left Books, 1976), 64-66; quoted in Weimann, "Playing with Difference," 420.

47. Weimann, "Playing with a Difference," 420.

48. John H. Astington, "The London Stage in the 1580s," *The Elizabethan Theatre* 11 (1990): 1-18, esp 13; quoted in Weimann, "Playing with Difference," 426.

49. Barton, *Playing Shakespeare*, xv.

50. Thomson, "Broken Brackets," 181.

51. Weimann, "Playing with a Difference," 415.