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The Wooden O Symposium is a cross-disciplinary conference that explores Medieval and Renaissance studies through the text and performance of Shakespeare's plays. Scholars from many disciplines present papers that offer insights into the era of William Shakespeare.

The symposium is conducted the first week of August in Cedar City, Utah, and coincides with the Utah Shakespearean Festival's summer season. Three plays from Shakespeare's canon are performed each summer in the Adams Memorial Shakespearean Theatre, a unique performance space modeled after the Globe Theatre, Shakespeare's own "Wooden O."

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Shakespeare and His Actors: An Essay on Clowns, Fools, Tragedians, and Women, and the Men and Boys Who Played Them

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Much has been written about the possible roles each actor played in specific productions for the Lord Chamberlain's/King's Men between 1594 and 1616—Shakespeare's time with the company—since T. W. Baldwin's 1927 book *The Organization and Personnel of the Shakespearean Company.*[1] Since that time, Nungezer's *Dictionary of Actors* and Bentley's *Jacobean and Caroline Stage* were published, along with other more recent studies.[2] While most studies tend to be conservative in their speculations, the latest book on the subject, David Grote's *The Best Actors in the World: Shakespeare and His Acting Company*, while an attempt to recreate the history of the Lord Chamberlain's/King's Men in Shakespeare's time, is wildly speculative entertainment, but not a serious work of reference.[3] His approach presents sheer guesswork about the roles specific actors played, as if such guesswork were obvious fact. Rather than speculate excessively about the actors and parts they played, the focus of this essay is to speculate on Shakespeare the artist, on the plays he wrote, and on the overall effect of the numerous actors, boys and men, in his company and the parts they were capable of playing. For the purposes of this essay, I identified seven distinct roles and the actors likely to play them.

Role 1: Boys Playing Young Women. Despite the performance of Gwyneth Paltrow as Juliet in *Shakespeare in Love*, The Lord Chamberlain's Men were all males. There were some sixteen actors, five or six of whom were boys who played the female parts.[4] Certainly, each adult actor and boy actor had certain talents along with physical features unique to that actor. We know that there was a tall fair boy and a short dark-haired boy from references in various texts describing the pair.[5] It seems likely that this gifted pair played the roles of Helena and Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's*

Dream, the roles of Portia and Nerissa in *The Merchant of Venice*, Beatrice and Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Rosaline and Celia in *As You Like It*, and possibly Ophelia and Gertrude in *Hamlet*.[6] Certainly, young apprentice boys played the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The presumption is that having this talented pair of physically distinct boy actors available allowed Shakespeare to create the great female romantic comedy roles noted above. Would Shakespeare have been able to write the great romantic comedies if he did not have these talents available? But he did, and having this pair of actors empowered Shakespeare the artist to write increasingly complex roles for them.

Role 2: The Clown. The worlds of comedy and history had more than female roles played by boys, of course—and perhaps also by men, as I will discuss later in this paper. In the early days of Elizabethan theatre, the comic functions were mainly given to rustics, clowns, country bumpkins, and servants, and these actors relied mainly on acrobatics, bawdy, slapstick and jigs. The great early master of this kind of comedy was Richard Tarlton. Fuller's *History of the Worthies of England* (1662) gives an account of the recruiting of Tarlton, informal jester to Elizabeth I, that illustrates the informality of the fool or jester discovery process and its connection to the theatre. Fuller writes, "Here he was in the field, keeping his Father's Swine, when a Servant of Robert Earl of Leicester . . . was so highly pleased with his *happy unhappy* answers, that he brought him to Court, where he became the most famous *Jester* to Queen Elizabeth."[7] But from jesting he moved on to his real forte, the stage, becoming the first English "Star." As a famous comic actor, he became the model or inspiration for the antics of Will Kempe of Shakespeare's acting company, the next great comic star of early modern England.

Will Kempe brought to the highest—or perhaps lowest—level the kind of antics developed on stage by Tarlton. Will Kempe was the great clown, singer of obscene songs, and jig master. Kempe was expert at physical comedy, able to make audiences laugh with his grotesque faces, and a great improviser who would engage the audience in conversation, an activity called "gagging" in the theatre. For him Shakespeare wrote the role of Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and in the histories the major role of Falstaff in the first two Henry plays.[8]

But tensions were rising between a performer's theatre and a playwright's theatre. When Shakespeare, as promised, continued the Henry plays, Kempe was written out without a part when

Falstaff is announced as dead in *Henry V*. Kemp angrily left the company to jig across England, firing back insults at Shakespeare or "Shakerags" as Kempe called him.[9] As for Kempe's "gagging," Hamlet, speaking for the playwright, advises the players, "Let those that play the clowns speak no more than is set down for them"(3.2.38-39).[10] So much for Will Kempe and "gagging." Shakespeare had won the battle of the Wills. In a later 1638 play by Richard Brome, *The Antipodes*, a clown is taken to task for gagging with the audience. When he defended his bantering with the audience by appealing to the great comedians of the past, Tarlton and Kempe, he was told those days are long gone: it's a playwright's theatre now and the stage is "purged from barbarism / And brought to the perfection it now shines."[11]

Role 3: The Wise Fool of Comedy. With Kempe gone, a new major actor joined Shakespeare's company, Robert Armin. He was fascinated by fools and jesters and wrote a book entitled *Foole upon Foole.* Armin was a pioneering realist in his study of how fools actually behaved. His stage fools were based on observation of court jesters, or "Wise Fools," at work.

The court jester or "Wise Fool" is a universal phenomenon. He is a fixture in every major court in medieval and Renaissance Europe, in China, India, Japan, Russia, and in native tribes in America and Africa. All of these share a consistency of characteristics: attachment to a particular ruler; physical or mental deformity (real or pretended); concern for the general welfare of the people; and the freedom to alert isolated kings, emperors, sultans—even popes—of their moral failings. This is the kind of reality that shaped Armin's view of fools.[12]

Apparently Armin's views and realistic acting ability did influence Shakespeare's writing. From the time that Armin joined the company, Shakespeare very noticeably began to give his clowns the catechism, or lesson, as a form of jesting. So in *As You Like It*, we don't get the slapstick of Kempe, but instead, Touchstone, the first "Wise Fool" in Shakespeare. He is a court jester who flees the corrupt court—where a truth-teller would not be welcome—with the banished Rosalind and Celia. Two characters, Jaques and the Duke, define exactly the "Wise Fool" in this exchange following Touchstone's catechism on the "Lie Direct":

> *Touchstone:* O, sir, we quarrel in print by the book, as you have books for good manners. I will name you the degrees. The first,the Retort Courteous; the second, the Quip Modest; the third, the Reply Churlish; the fourth, the Reproof Valiant; the

> fifth, the Countercheck Quarrelsome; the sixth, the Lie with Circumstance; the seventh, the Lie Direct. All these you may avoid but the Lie Direct; and you may avoid that too with an If. I knew when seven justices could not take up a quarrel; but when the parties were met themselves, one of them thought but of an If, as: 'If you said so, then I said so.' And they shook hands, and swore brothers. Your If is the only peace-maker; much virtue in If.
>
> *Jaques:* Is not this a rare fellow, my lord?
> He's as good at any thing, and yet a fool.
>
> *Duke:* He uses his folly like a stalking-horse, and under the presentation of that he shoots his wit. (5.4.89-106)

Touchstone the jester is wise, yet plays a fool, and his foolishness protects him from blame as he fires off his wit, especially at the folly of those who take too seriously human failings—someone like Jaques, who gives us the "seven ages" of man, ending with the final act:

> *Jaques:* Last scene of all,
> That ends this strange eventful history,
> Is second childishness and mere oblivion;
> Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing. (2.7.262-65)

This is not the vision of humanity that Touchstone shares. The human condition is a source of laughter, not despair.

In *Twelfth Night*, Robert Armin, who also originated the role of Feste, the next "Wise Fool" created by Shakespeare after Touchstone, catechizes or teaches Olivia, the mistress of a great house, on why she grieves and proves her a fool for doing so:

> *Feste:* Good madonna, why mourn'st thou?
> *Olivia:* Good Fool, for my brother's death.
> *Feste:* I think his soul is in hell, madonna.
> *Olivia:* I know his soul is in heaven, fool.
> *Feste:* The more fool, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul, being in heaven. Take away the fool gentlemen. (1.5.63-69)

Feste's Christian theology is correct so who is the real fool?

Peter Milward, in "Wise Fools in Shakespeare," makes the connection between Christianity and Wise Fools like Touchstone and Feste. Milward demonstrates the Fools' significance by paralleling their speeches to St. Paul's letters to the Corinthians and to the Ephesians. Certainly we can recognize the voice of a

Shakespearean Wise Fool in Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians: "If anyone fancies himself wise, according to the standards of this passing age, he must become *a fool* to gain true wisdom."[13]

In *Reality in a Looking Glass*, a comprehensive historical study of fools and their roles in medieval and modern society, Anton C. Zijderveld describes and classifies the types of traditional medieval fools. Feste, the "Wise Fool" of *Twelfth Night*, belongs to a class of jesters which, according to Zijderveld, "were . . . in full command of their wits. . . . They played at being foolish, often with much wit and ingenuity," as Feste himself proclaims: "I wear not motley in my brain" (1.5.53-54). He is the "allowed fool" who can criticize the folly of the two absolute rulers of the play—Olivia and Orsino, the two unwise fools.[14] Zijderveld comments that the fool "is irreverent in the face of authority and tries his best to undermine the impression management (or spin) that is staged by the powerful."[15] He says of rulers, "The more dictatorial they are, the more they need fools and folly."[16]

But Feste has another role: A corrupter of words who still tells the hard truths, in this case concerning marriage, as in the second of the following exchanges.

> *Viola:* Save thee, friend, and thy music: dost thou live by thy tabour?
> *Feste:* No, sir, I live by the church.
> *Viola:* Art thou a churchman?
> *Feste:* No such matter, sir: I do live by the church; for I do live at my house, and my house doth stand by the church. (3.1.1-7)

And a few lines later:

> *Viola:* Art not thou the Lady Olivia's fool?
> *Feste:* No, indeed, sir; the Lady Olivia has no folly: she will keep no fool, sir, till she be married; . . . I am indeed not her fool, but her corrupter of words. (3.1.31-33)

Shakespeare, a writer who loved playing with language and the pun, can't resist giving this corrupting quality to a "Wise Fool." Note also the standard joke of the husband as the real fool in the household—with a hint of cuckoldry embedded in the foolishness.

Role 4: The Tragedian. By the end of the sixteenth century, tragedy was becoming the dominant dramatic form, and Shakespeare had one of the greatest tragic actors in his company, Richard Burbage.[17] For Burbage Shakespeare wrote *Richard III* and *Hamlet*. Apparently known for his size and weight, Burbage's Hamlet is described as "fat and scant of breath" by Gertude during

the final duel with Laertes (5.2.289). As both Burbage and Shakespeare age, Burbage's roles grow older—from Othello:

> "the young affects in me defunct." (1.3.265-266)

to Macbeth:

> I have lived long enough: my way of life
> Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;
> And that which should accompany old age,
> As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
> I must not look to have. (5.3.22-26)

to the aged, foolish King Lear. Again, Shakespeare is able to write these plays in part because he has a great tragic actor who can effectively deliver these evolving roles.

Role 5: Old Men. Burbage, of course, played the major old men roles noted previously. As for Shakespeare as actor, the critical consensus is that he played old men, probably Adam in *As You Like It* and the ghost in *Hamlet.* Other than that, we have just more speculation and guesswork, including a wild suggestion that Shakespeare played the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* and that he gave the Nurse a limp because he himself walked with a limp. But what seems clear is that he was successful as an actor, since he was an owner-sharer who was mentioned along with Burbage and Kemp as members of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, receiving payments from the royal household in 1595. Besides, playwrights, rather than actors, tended to be paid little and to die young and broke, as did Robert Greene, among others.

Role 6: The Wise Fool of Tragedy. Up to this point in his career, Shakespeare's fools have been in his comedies; but as Shakespeare moves into his tragic period, his "Wise Fools," or jesters, move with him. The first appearance of a "Wise Fool" in a tragedy is Yorick in *Hamlet.* While he had both the excellent wit of a "Wise Fool" and the pranks of a jester, Yorick is long dead and now serves as a *memento mori* in the graveyard scene in act 5 of *Hamlet.* There is speculation that the speech is a description of and tribute to the great jester Richard Tarlton by his successor Robert Armin.[18]

> *Gravedigger:* Here's a skull now. This skull hath lien you i' th' earth three-and-twenty years.
> *Hamlet:* Whose was it?
> *Gravedigger:* A whoreson, mad fellow's it was. Whose do you think it was?
> *Hamlet:* Nay, I know not.
> *Gravedigger:* A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! 'A pour'd a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This

same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the King's jester.

Hamlet: This?

Gravedigger: E'en that.

Hamlet: Let me see. *[Takes the skull.]* Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio. A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times. And now how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kiss'd I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? Quite chap-fall'n? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come. Make her laugh at that. (5.1.172-94)

Yorick in death, through Hamlet, still delivers a harsh rebuff to female vanity, the kind he expresses toward both Gertrude, his mother, and Ophelia.

Shakespeare's perhaps most famous fool is in *King Lear,* a new role for Robert Armin. The unnamed Fool is the harshest critic of Lear and yet his most loyal follower. He can be cruel with the bitter truth, as for example in this exchange:

Fool: Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet fool?

Lear: No, lad; teach me.

Fool: That lord that counsel'd thee
To give away thy land,
Come place him here by me—
Do thou for him stand.
The sweet and bitter fool
Will presently appear;
The one in motley here,
The other found out there.

Lear: Dost thou call me fool, boy?

Fool: All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with.

Earl of Kent: This is not altogether fool, my lord.

Fool: No, faith; lords and great men will not let me. If I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't. And ladies too, they will not let me have all the fool to myself; they'll be snatching. (1.4.135-48)

According to Lear's "Wise Fool," the world is full of real fools snatching the monopoly of foolishness from the professional fool.

And Lear, according to the Fool, is among the worst. But when the storm rages and Lear goes mad, it is the Fool out on the heath with him urging him to go indoors:

> *Fool:* Nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better than this rain-water out o' door. Good nuncle, in, and ask thy daughters blessing! Here's a night pities neither wise men nor fools. (3.2.10-13)

Finally, when Lear tears at his clothes, the Fool urges a reasonable, non-naked response to the storm:

> *Lear:* Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy uncover'd body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow'st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! Here's three on's are sophisticated! Thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here.
>
> *Fool:* Prithee, nuncle, be contented! 'Tis a naughty night to swim in. Now a little fire in a wild field were like an old lecher's heart—a small spark, all the rest on's body cold. Look, here comes a walking fire. (3.4.100-12)

After this scene, and with a bit of stage business like coughing and shivering with fever to suggest that the Fool gets sick, the audience may come to assume that exposure on the heath out of affection for Lear leads to the Fool's presumed death.

It should be noted, however, that there are two versions of the Fool in *King Lear*, the Fool of the earlier quarto version and the Fool of the Folio version of 1623. In "The Fool in Quarto and Folio in *King Lear*," Robert B. Hornback argues that it is necessary to consider the particular theatrical context for the two fools: the early modern English theatre "distinguished between so-called 'natural' and 'artificial' fool types." He goes on to argue that the quarto presents a fool that is bitter, wise, and funny, fitting with the actor Armin, the fad of the years following 1599, while the Folio undercuts these elements to emphasize and evoke pathos, keeping with the change in taste evidenced in the last plays of Shakespeare and the work of his successor John Fletcher.[19] Hornback's assessment leads to unanswered questions about the actor: if not a transformed Armin, who may have played the pathetic Fool of the Folio.

Role 7: Men Playing Adult Women. As Shakespeare moves into the latter phase of his career, perhaps beginning with *Coriolanus*

and *Antony and Cleopatra,* he possibly has one more major actor influencing his art. In his article, "Why Boys for (Wo)Men's Roles? Or Pardon the Delay, 'the Queen was shaving,'" James H. Forse, taking the second half of the article's title from the excuse a Restoration actor gave to Charles II when the king complained that the play had not started when he arrived, disputes the "common scholarly presupposition that major female roles in the age of Shakespeare always were taken by boy actors." He argues instead that these roles were more likely designed for actor-sharers. He also isolates one particular character type—"a woman who, in comic or serious vein, displays some sort of assertiveness or aggressiveness" within the traditional male-oriented Elizabethan society—that extends throughout Shakespeare's career and which Forse sees as an appropriate role for an adult male to play.[20]

Continuing this argument, Marvin Rosenberg in "The Myth of Shakespeare's Squeaking Boy Actor—Or Who Played Cleopatra?" argues that there was at least one adult actor that Shakespeare used for his major female roles, specifically Volumnia in *Coriolanus* and Cleopatra. According to Rosenberg, "By the time the playwright was ready for Cleopatra, the genius of this impersonator promised a match worthy of the character's mystery . . ." He goes on to speculate, "The actor may even have helped suggest it."[21] Thus, at this stage of his career, Shakespeare may have had one more actor influencing his art.

However, there is hardly universal agreement on this point. In response to such speculation, Stanley Wells, in his article "Boys Should Be Girls," reinforces the view that female roles were played by boys, arguing that the company would be wasting resources if adult males were playing the less demanding female parts,[22]—although it is hard to imagine how the roles of Volumnia and Cleopatra could be less demanding.

So from two talented boys, to Will Kempe, to Robert Armin and Richard Burbage, and possibly, if you agree with Forse and Rosenberg, an adult female impersonator able to handle the role of Cleopatra, and other numerous named and unnamed players, Shakespeare shaped and had shaped for him his dramatic art.

A final comment: while Shakespeare's public stage did not have women players, women of various classes were in fact performing in England from the late medieval period to the Restoration. Of course, aristocratic women appeared in court masques and were severely criticized for this activity by the puritans—to the extent of calling them whores, even the Queen—a comment that cost at least one puritan his ears. But aristocratic women were not the

only female actors. Women from all walks of life participated as "players" in entertainments ranging from Corpus Christi cycle plays and Virgin Mary devotions to various pageants and traditional celebrations like May Day.[23] While *Shakespeare in Love* is a biographical fantasy that has a woman performing Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* on the Elizabethan public stage, actual English women were on their own real stages all over England, just not on the public stage in London.

Notes

1. T. W. Baldwin, *The Organization and Personnel of the Shakespearean Company* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1927).

2. Edwin Nungezer, *A Dictionary of Actors and Other Persons Associated with the Public Presentation of Plays in England before 1642* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1929); and Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941).

3. David Grote, *The Best Actors in the World: Shakespeare and His Acting Company* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).

4. Peter Ackroyd, *Shakespeare: The Biography* (New York: Random House, 2005), 224.

5. Acroyd, *Shakespeare*, 225.

6. Ibid.

7. Cited in Beatrice K. Otto, *Fools Are Everywhere: The Court Jester Around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 3.

8. Acroyd, *Shakespeare*, 222.

9. Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 292-93.

10. All references to Shakespeare's plays are to *The Complete Works*, ed. David Bevington, 4th ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992).

11. James Shapiro, *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 42.

12. Otto, *Fools are Everywhere*, 233.

13. Peter Milward, "Wise Fools in Shakespeare," *Christianity and Literature* 33, no. 2 (1984): 21-27.

14. Anton C. Zijderveld, *Reality in a Looking Glass* (London: Routledge Kegan and Paul, 1983), 92.

15. Ibid., 28.

16. Ibid., 30.

17. Acroyd, *Shakespeare*, 150.

18. Shapiro, *A Year in the Life*, 289.

19. Robert B. Hornback, "The Fool in Quarto and Folio in *King Lear*" *English Literary Renaissance* 34, no. 3 (November 2004): 306.

20. James H. Forse, "Why Boys for (Wo)Men's Roles? Or Pardon the Delay, 'The Queen Was Shaving,'" in *Art Imitates Business: Commercial and Political Influences in Elizabethan Theatre* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993), 71, 73.

21. Marvin Rosenberg, "The Myth of Shakespeare's Squeaking Boy Actor—Or Who Played Cleopatra?" *Shakespeare Bulletin* 19, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 5.

22. Stanley Wells, "Boys Should Be Girls," in *Foreign Literature Studies* 1 (2006): 10-15.

23. Pamela Allen Brown and Peter Parolin, eds., *Women Players in England, 1500-1660: Beyond the All-Male Stage* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2005).

Some Show Must Go On: Elizabethan York as a Case Study in the Demise of Locally Based Theatre in Tudor England

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The growing volume of local dramatic records published by the University of Toronto in its on-going *Records of Early English Drama* reveals some interesting patterns relevant to the emergence of the theatre we associate with Shakespeare. Before the religious reformations of Henry VIII and Edward VI, there were but a few "professional" acting companies sponsored by aristocrats, like Shakespeare's Chamberlain's Men. Instead, an extensive and often elaborate theatrical tradition of local religiously based drama flourished throughout England.

By the mid-fourteenth century, community-based performances of religious drama drawn from Bible stories and the lives of saints had become a part of the popular culture of many a town and city in England. The institution of the feast of Corpus Christi (1311) seems to have spurred this phenomenon. The feast of Corpus Christi falls shortly after Pentecost, usually in mid- to late-May, and in earlier times involved elaborate processions of clergy, town officials and guildsmen bearing a consecrated wafer through the streets of the community. Before long, especially in larger municipalities like Lincoln, Wakefield, York, and Coventry, plays performed by the laity based on religious themes began to become part of the celebrations. In other communities, like Chester, the feast of Whitsun (Pentecost) involved similar festivities.[1]

Sources reveal that by the beginning of the fifteenth century, smaller communities had developed their own local performances, dramatizing the lives of their patron saints or Bible stories like the Flood, Abraham and Isaac, or their own versions of a passion play. Many of these community performances were complex and

costly. Records from Exeter, published in *Records of Early English Drama* (*Devon*), for example, list expenses totaling 17 shillings, 10 pence paid for costumes for the Corpus Christi celebrations in Exeter in 1415. That sum of money equaled the cost of 160 chickens or 20 sheep at the time.[2] This expense is just one indication of how much money communities were willing to lay out for their community performances. Other records from counties like Kent, Dorset, Cornwall, and so on, show payments made to guild members in compensation for the time they, or their apprentices, spent in rehearsal, and for the purchase of properties and costumes, like sacks of wheat to create the image of Lot's wife as a pillar of salt, purple satin gowns to costume Jesus, crimson vestments, and gloves and devils' coats. Costume expenses alone for a proposed passion play in New Romney (Kent) for the year 1560 totaled almost £10, more than a year's salary for a parish clerk. Total expenses for that proposed production were almost £50. Even the Easter sepulchers set up in small parishes sometimes involved what we would call "special effects"—machinery that lowered effigies of angels from above to open Jesus' tomb.[3] These performances were not the kind of religious plays performed by children in bathrobes with towels on their heads that we often think of today when a church nativity or passion play is advertised by a local church.

We also must consider the small populations of English cities and towns to appreciate fully the amount of community involvement in these activities. Excluding London, the largest cities in pre-modern England—Norwich, York, and Bristol—possessed only 12,000 to 15,000 inhabitants. Smaller cities like Chester and Lincoln had populations somewhere between 5,000 to 8,000 people. Most other towns had populations ranging from less than 400 to a little over 2,000 people. The population of New Romney, mentioned above, probably was less than 1000,[4] yet its detailed plans for the 1560 Passion play include ten speaking parts, an unspecified number of "tormenters" and "devils," and sixty-two other people assigned various tasks in what we would call "technical" aspects of the production.[5] A conservative estimate of the total number of New Romney inhabitants involved in the play, therefore, would be about eighty to one hundred, numbers equaling eight percent to ten percent of the population who were directly involved in mounting the play. In larger cities like York, Lincoln, and Chester, it is likely that similar percentages of citizens contributed to their play cycles. Their cycle plays lasted over two or three days, and involved the city authorities and most of the

trade and craft guilds combining their efforts and monies to mount the annual productions.[6] In terms of money, time, and effort, then, the tradition of religiously based performances put on by the laity were deeply embedded in the civic and popular culture of the small towns and the larger cities of pre-modern England.

The turmoil begun by Henry VIII's religious reforms and carried on through the reign of his son, Edward VI, disrupted this tradition. Even before Henry VIII's break with Rome, Humanist reformers in England were attempting to purge the church of what they considered superstition, sloth, and excess. Humanists also attacked what they perceived as the traditional church's propensity to wink at superstitious beliefs and impose itself between the laity and the "true" meaning of the Gospels.[7] As Henry's reforms got underway, some bishops called in the traditional playscripts for review and revisions so as to purge them of superstition or what they considered vulgarities. Many were never returned. Aside from the cycle plays of York, Chester, Wakefield and parts of the cycle now called "N Town," the following are the only extant playscripts from pre-Reformation England: *Mary Magdalen*, *Killing of the Children*, *The Conversion of St. Paul*, the Grocers' guild play from Norwich, *Creation and Adam and Eve*, *Abraham and Isaac*, the town of Croxton's *Play of the Sacrament*, Newcastle's *Noah*, the Cornish *Ordinala* (in Cornish), and a few fragments which appear to be actors' parts. By 1537 reformers' attacks upon medieval Catholicism began in earnest. All traditional holidays were abolished, except Christmas, Easter, the Annunciation, and the feasts of Sts. John the Baptist, Michael the Archangel, and George. Formal veneration of the saints was forbidden. Local authorities were ordered to punish citizens who abandoned work on traditional holidays, and some bishops forbade performances of any plays or festivities in churches or churchyards.[8]

In the 1540s the scriptural emphases of Protestant reformers intensified. Veneration of scripture approached sanctification, and some reformers began to believe it was sacrilege for anyone to portray ("counterfeit" was the word often used) God the Father or Christ. A parliamentary act of 1543 specified that "in no plays nor interludes they might make any expositions of Scripture."[9] First-generation Protestant reformers like John Bale used religious plays presenting anti-papal, pro-Protestant messages in the late 1530s.[10] However, when Henry VIII swung back towards a more Catholic stance in the 1540s, these plays were banned.[11] The shifting religious policies of the 1530s and 1540s must have made people

fearful of presenting any kind of religious theme, whether Catholic or Protestant.

The government of Henry's son and successor, Edward VI, was pronouncedly Protestant, as was Edward himself. For example, Spain's ambassador to England noted that Edward played an active role in the plan to bypass his Catholic sister Mary by naming his Protestant cousin Lady Jane Grey as his successor.[12] Edward's government introduced wide-sweeping changes in worship. Parishes were ordered to remove and destroy or sell off all statues, religious images and ornaments, and any other accoutrements that bore "popish" symbols, including "popish" vestments, and the costumes and properties owned by, or stored in, churches that previously had been used in religious plays—in short, to divest themselves of anything that represented the old religious order. Further, the libraries of the monasteries and other religious establishments dissolved by Henry VIII and Edward VI, and those of several parish churches as well, were sold off. Most playscripts used by players in towns and cities now disappeared into private hands never to be seen again. In 1549 penalties were enacted to punish anyone who performed plays that could be construed as criticisms of the new Protestant liturgy and practice. Two years later, in 1551, a proclamation outlawed all players except the King's Players and a small number of troupes under the patronage of Protestant lords, but even the performances and scripts of these "authorized" players needed the prior approval of Edward's Privy Council.[13]

All of these measures, and more, were reinforced by English bishops, their deputies, and royal officials who made frequent parish visitations to ensure local compliance with the mandated reforms.[14] Hence, the religious policies of Henry VIII and Edward VI deprived local, civic-sponsored drama of the holidays on which it could be performed, of the locations for its performance, of the traditionally accepted dramatic content, of the costumes and properties necessary for its performance, and even of the scripts that formed the bases for performances.[15] The parish and civic theatrical activity that had flourished for 200 years all over England disappeared within the six short years (1547-1553) of Edward's reign.

Recent scholarship argues that with the succession of Catholic Mary (1553-1558) most Englishmen returned to the Mass with far more enthusiasm than Elizabethan propaganda would admit,[16] but restoring the ruined and scattered accoutrements of traditional Catholicism was expensive and time-consuming. Churchwardens'

accounts reveal that much had been "scattered abroad," that much had been "spoiled and mangled," and that individuals had to be taken to court to recover the former possessions of some churches. In most parishes, the Protestant renovations carried out under Edward VI's orders necessitated a complete re-renovation of church interiors to restore them to Catholic practice.[17] Given these conditions, attempts to revive traditional parish and city drama were tepid. Only three full-scale attempts at revivals of local drama in smaller communities have come to light during Mary's reign—a St. Thomas à Becket pageant in Canterbury in 1554, Wakefield's *Corpus Christi* plays in 1555, and plans by New Romney to revive its passion play in the years between 1556 and 1560.[18]

With Elizabeth's succession in 1558 and her reversion to the Protestantism of her brother, attempts by smaller localities to revive local drama ceased. For example, despite the large sums spent to revive New Romney's passion play, it never in fact was performed. That is small wonder given the royal proclamation of 15 May 1559 that forbade performances by players

> wherein either matters of religion or of the governance of the estate of the common weal shall be handled or treated, being no meet matters to be written or treated upon, but by men of authority, learning and wisdom, nor to be handled before any audience but of grave and discreet persons.[19]

Larger communities, like Chester, Lincoln, Coventry, and York, attempted to preserve their cycle plays, but by the middle of Elizabeth's reign those cycle plays forever disappeared. Such probably was not the result of the gleeful acceptance throughout England of Elizabethan Protestantism, the "happie time of the gospell," as Matthew Hutton, Dean of York Cathedral, proclaimed his age in 1568 and as traditional historians have asserted.[20] The "popish plays of Chester,"[21] and Lincoln, Wakefield, Coventry, and York were not abandoned willingly; city authorities tried to accommodate their plays to the new "happie time of the gospell."

Whether these attempts to maintain some form of traditional civic pageantry were due to lingering Catholic sympathies or civic pride and prosperity is moot. Performances of the religious lessons in the traditional plays and their potential for local income were entwined. Chester's city fathers noted that the plays augmented the faith of the people and the "prosperity of this City." Accounts from York make it clear that local merchants increased sales, and other inhabitants received rental income for lodging and stables when York's cycle plays were performed.[22] Nonetheless, by the

1560s and 1570s, local authorities, it seems, ultimately became convinced that they needed to tinker with, alter, or revise their old religiously based plays so long dear to their citizenry, civic pride, and "pocketbooks." Elizabeth's government and church would tolerate no drama too closely based on Biblical episodes or seemingly tied to the old religion. Under attack from Elizabeth's government and church, city authorities tried to find ways to preserve their performances and please the queen. York's efforts provide us with an excellent case study of those efforts and the eventual abandonment of those attempts.

After almost two hundred years of annual performances, York's Corpus Christi cycle came to an end in the first half of Elizabeth's reign. Some scholars, like Glynne Wickham and Patrick Collinson,[23] have attributed that end to the problems of organization and financing, and at first glance York's records might lead to such conclusions. Closer scrutiny of York's dramatic records, however, suggests that the civic authorities and the guilds successfully addressed many, if not most, of those problems. But the dramatic records also reveal that its city fathers and guilds were unsuccessful in finding some way to maintain the city's performance traditions and make them conform to Queen Elizabeth's ecclesiastical and governmental injunctions.

York was the largest city in the north of England and the seat of the Archbishop of York, the second most powerful cleric in England. The city also was the seat of the Council of the North, established by Henry VIII to oversee the administration of England's northern counties and protect the border with Scotland. Therefore, although almost two hundred miles from London, York always was under the watchful eyes of ecclesiastical and political authorities at Court. However, York possessed a royal charter of self-governance. The city was governed by an elected lord mayor and three councils (the Aldermen, the Council of the Twenty-four, and the Council of Forty-eight), all dominated by the most powerful trade and craft guilds of the city.[24] Consequently, on occasion the officials of York declined to follow the lead of the central government. For instance, though York accepted the accession of Henry VII in 1485 after the death of Richard III at Bosworth Field, the official memorandum by the mayor and council (23 August 1485) did not brand Richard III a "usurper" as did official Tudor documents. The memorandum lamented, "King Richard, late mercifully reigning upon us, was through great treason . . . piteously slain and murdered, to the great heaviness of this city."[25]

The *Records of Early English Drama* provide many details concerning the production of the cycle plays and other performances sponsored by the city. Existing records date from the late 1300s, and become quite detailed about 1480. York's records are detailed enough that modern scholarship has been able to plot the route taken by the plays and their pageant wagons throughout the city. Those records list expenditures for performances of the Corpus Christi cycle plays, and occasional substitute plays, from 1484 to 1602. The expenses averaged about £142 per year[26]—an amount equal to twenty years labor to an Elizabethan workman.[27] About 51 percent per year was spent on food for the participants. Other expenditures included costs pertaining to the formal processions accompanying Corpus Christi celebrations (a little over 7 percent per year) and for the maintenance and building of pageant wagons (about 11 percent per year). For instance, in 1552, 84 pence was paid for a new pair of new wheels for a pageant wagon.[28]

Also recorded are payments to the pageant masters, rent for a chamber for the mayor to watch the celebrations, and payments to musicians and actors who took part in the performances.[29] Payments to actors averaged 185 pence per year. Musicians averaged 4 to 8 pence.[30] The discrepancy between payments to actors and musicians results from their respective numbers. Four to six musicians were involved in the processions, but scholars believe that the cycle plays required up to three hundred actors, and perhaps triple that number for what we would today call "stagehands."[31] Such numbers suggest that annually almost 7 percent of York's 15,000 citizens were involved directly in the productions of the cycle plays.

The Mercers' pageant accounts offer a glimpse into the lavishness of the individual plays. The Mercers' play was *The Last Judgment*. From the guild's inventory of 1433, and a notation in 1526 listing items received back from that year's pageant master, we find accoutrements for the play included

> a pageant wagon with 4 wheels; hell's mouth; 3 garments for 3 devils, 6 devils' faces in 3 versions [2-faced masks?]; array for 2 evil souls, that is to say 2 shirts, 2 pair hose, 2 masks & 2 wigs; array for 2 good souls, that is to say 2 shirts, 2 pair hose, 2 masks, & 2 wigs; 2 pair angel wings with iron in the ends; 2 trumpets of white [silver] plate; and 3 reds [garments?] and 4 albs for 4 Apostles; 3 diadems with 3 masks for 3 Apostles; 4 diadems with 4 wigs of yellow for 4 Apostles; a cloud & 2 pieces of rainbow of timber; array for God, that is to say a shirt, wounded

> [showing Christ's wounds?], a diadem with a mask, gilded; a great curtain of red damask painted for the back side of the pageant; 2 other lesser curtains for 2 sides of the pageant; 3 other curtains the sides of the pageant; a little curtain 4 squared to hang at the back of God; 3 irons to bear up heaven; 4 finale coterelles [special bolts?] & an iron pin; a frame of iron that God shall sit upon when He shall ascent up to heaven, with 4 ropes at 4 corners; a heaven of iron with a wooden pulley; 2 pieces of red clouds & stars of gold belonging to heaven; 2 pieces of blue clouds painted on both sides; 3 pieces of red clouds with sun beams of gold, 7 stars for the height's of heaven, with a long small border of the same work; 6 great angels holding the passion of God, one of them has a fan of laton [brass banner?] & a cross of iron gilded; 3 smaller angels gilded holding the passion; 9 smaller angels painted red to run about in the heaven; a long small cord to cause the angels run about; 2 short rolls of tree [wooden rollers?] to put forth the pageant.[32]

Given what this list says about the general elaborateness of costumes and properties, it is not surprising that on occasion guilds complained about the cost of the pageants and problems in their performance. A memorandum from 1399 listed complaints from the guilds about the costs of their respective pageants, and also dealt with problems of coordinating the progression of the various Corpus Christi plays as they moved throughout the city.[33]

The city fathers responded with ways to reduce and contain costs to individual guilds, such as requiring smaller guilds that did not participate in the performances to contribute money and personnel to guilds that did. They also granted the guilds' requests that no new pageants be added to the cycle and no new performance spaces be approved. Between 1422 and 1432 the separate plays of the Pinners and Painters (one showing the nailing of Christ to the cross, the other the rearing of the cross) were amalgamated, and so too were separate plays dealing with Christ before Pontius Pilate and Christ's condemnation by Pilate. Those amalgamations sought to simplify the cycle and speed up its progression from performance site to performance site. City authorities set up a system of fines to keep the annual productions moving smoothly. A fine of 80 pence would be levied on any guild whose pageant was not performed. Other fines were established for guilds, and members of guilds, that shirked specific, assigned duties. For example, in 1547 the Tailors' Guild as a whole was fined 40 pence for not carrying torches in the procession scheduled for the day after Corpus Christi, and three men were fined individually for non-

participation.[34] The heaviest fines were levied on guilds whose players arrived late at specified playing sites—thereby delaying the entire sequence of performances. In 1553 the Girdlers' Guild was fined 120 pence because its actors "tarried an whole hour."[35]

Other steps though the years were taken to address problems of costs and personnel in producing the cycle. In the 1540s, a city ordinance empowered the Tailors' Guild to collect money from its audiences. In 1555 the city attempted to supplement the costs of the Sledmen's pageant by ordering those who rented rooms or stable space to visitors to contribute to the Sledmen's pageant. In 1558 when the Painters complained that they had to pay more than the Pinners in mounting their joint pageant, city officials ordered the Pinners to match the contribution of the Painters. Individual guilds also took measures to insure continuance of the plays. In 1555 the Tailors' Guild required that anyone selling more than three yards of cloth in the market place must pay "pageant silver," and in 1577 the Bakers' guild began to require newer members to serve as the guild's pageant master before they could hire a new apprentice.[36]

At first glance these several entries in the records might seem to support Glynne Wickham's assertions about costs and poor organization bringing an end to the York cycle. Yet closer scrutiny shows that the costs of production were more than met by pageant income received from other sources. During the years 1484 to 1602, the annual average of £144.5 taken in from various sources actually exceeded the £142[37] spent on the cycle plays and other performances. And there was collateral income for York's citizens from the performances. For instance, from 1529 to 1531, the church of St. Michael's Spurriergate received twenty pence per year from the rental of the church house during Corpus Christi celebrations.[38] The city ordinance of 1555 ordering those who rented rooms or stables to contribute towards the Sledmen's pageant indicates that individuals profited from the annual performances. Craftsmen, vintners, and victualers surely increased their incomes from visitors who came to town to see the shows. Most problems concerning costs, therefore, seem to have been brought under control. As for Wickham's belief that the performances lacked centralized organization, the various steps taken by city officials and guilds over the years—specifications for performances, fines for non-compliance, ordinances to alleviate costs and personnel problems to the guilds—show that in reality there was a good deal of consistent and centralized oversight.

Throughout the records, however, are examples of the shifting policies of religious reform, from Edward VI to Mary I to Elizabeth I, that created problems the city fathers and the guilds could not overcome. Edward's religious reforms halted virtually all local, dramatic performance activities throughout most of England by 1548.[39] Attempts in York to accommodate Edward's reforms were made in 1548 and 1549, when the city fathers ordered that the Corpus Christi cycle should exclude the plays portraying the "dying of our Lady / assumption of our Lady / and Coronation of our Lady." Those particular plays were struck again in 1549, and in the next year the entire cycle was cancelled, ostensibly due to concerns about plague. Plague again was the official excuse when the cycle was cancelled in 1552.[40]

A year later, in 1553 after Catholic Queen Mary took the throne, the cycle was reinstated with the reintroduction of the Virgin Mary plays. By 1555 not only were the Corpus Christi plays performed "as been before," but also restored were the St. George's Day and Whitsun processions, both abolished under Edward. The expenses for the St. George procession reveal that many of the properties, and probably costumes, had been preserved during the reign of Edward VI. For example, 17 pence was spent repairing the dragon, the image of St. Christopher, and refurbishing the pageant wagon. A total of 305 pence[41] (between fifty to seventy-five days' wages for a worker[42]) was spent to revive the procession. St. George's procession continued annually until the accession of Elizabeth in 1558, after which it disappears from York's records. In 1558 the Corpus Christi plays also were suspended due to "troubles with wars and also contagious sickness."[43] The "troubles" perhaps refer to England's involvement in Phillip II's campaign in France or the campaign against the Scots fought in that year, or both, and also, perhaps, to Queen Mary's lingering illness and the uncertainties that illness portended for the future. As it turned out, Queen Mary died that autumn, and her successor, Elizabeth, reinstituted Edward's Protestant reforms within the first nine months of her reign.

After a lapse of three years, in 1561 the Corpus Christi plays were performed again, but, again, the Virgin Mary plays were removed, an attempt to re-Protestantize the cycle now that Elizabeth was on the throne. Among the entries for 1561 is one stating that since the feast of Corpus Christi was no more, the mayor and aldermen should not be garbed in their official scarlet robes as had been the custom, but in "seemly apparel."[44] It seems the city fathers were trying to suggest that their participation in the pageants and procession was not "official."

Records from 1562 through 1567 reveal that the Corpus Christi cycle continued to be performed,[45] but in 1562 those records also suggest that the city fathers were feeling the pressure of Elizabeth's reforms. In March of 1562 the city fathers ordered that performances of "the stories of the old & new testament or else the Creed play if apon examination it may be played" on St. Barnabas day, 11 June.[46] By divorcing the plays from Corpus Christi Day, perhaps the city fathers hoped to avoid the impression they were celebrating an abolished feast. No performances occurred in 1568, but in 1569 the cycle plays were performed again. However, performances that year were scheduled for the Tuesday of Whitsun week,[47] yet another attempt by the city fathers to divorce York's plays from any association with an abolished feast day. Nonetheless, the rescheduled performances of the plays still fell at about the same time of the year as the now defunct feast of Corpus Christi. Whitsun (Pentecost) falls seven weeks after Easter, and Corpus Christi Day is the first Thursday following the Trinity Sunday, the first Sunday after Pentecost,

Once the city fathers began to be queasy about performing the play cycle, they turned to another play in the city's possession. In 1446 a so-called *Creed Play* had been given to York's Fraternity of Corpus Christi. The sources describe the play as "containing pages of instruction and information about the Christian faith." From 1455 to 1535 the *Creed Play* substituted for the Corpus Christi plays about once every ten years. In 1568 the city fathers decided to revive the *Creed Play*, and brought the playbooks out of storage. Before scheduling any performances, a copy of the script was submitted to Matthew Hutton, Dean of York Cathedral, for his approval and revision.[48] This was his response:

> I have perused the books that your Lordship with your brethren sent me and as I find many things that I much like because of the antiquity, so see I many things, that I can not allow, because they be Disagreeing from the sincerity of the gospel, the which things, if they should either be altogether cancelled, or altered into other matter, the whole drift of the play shuld be altered, and therefore I dare not put my pen unto it, because I want both skill, and leisure, to amend it, though in goodwill I assure you if I were worthy to give your lordship and your right worshipfull brethren counsel: surely mine advise should be, that it should not be plaid for though it was plausible 40 yeares ago, & would now also of the ignorant sort be well liked: yet now in this 'happie time of the gospell,' I know the learned will mislike it and how the state will bear with it I know not.[49]

Not surprisingly, following the receipt of Hutton's letter, plans for the *Creed Play* were cancelled and the playbooks put back in storage. Interestingly, the script was not destroyed despite Dean Hutton's objections to its "inappropriate" theology. It looks as if York's authorities still were hedging their bets about the future of religious reforms even as late as ten years into Elizabeth's reign. However, no copy of the playbook has survived for modern perusal.

A *Pater Noster Play* also occurs sporadically in the York's records throughout the Tudor period. A performance is mentioned in records from 1495. In 1536 it was ordered that the *Pater Noster Play* should be played on the Sunday following St. Lamas' Day (1 August). The next mention of the play appears in 1559 after the accession of Elizabeth, when the Guild of St. Anthony was ordered to produce the play. The costs for the play were met by pageant money the guilds had collected for the now suspended Corpus Christi cycle. York's *Pater Noster Play* was again scheduled for performance in 1572 on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. Though not mentioned in the records, that is the day that used to be Corpus Christi Day. The guilds again were required to hand over their pageant money, and two men from each guild were required to accompany their respective guild's pageants and keep order during the performances. The play was performed at thirteen sites throughout the city, bearing a striking similarity to performances of the now suspended Corpus Christi cycle.[50]

But in that same year a "request" came to the city from Archbishop Grindal for the playbooks of the *Pater Noster Play*. The city sent Grindal a copy of the play as it was performed that year. After a lapse of three years, during which the playbook was not returned nor the *Pater Noster Play* performed, in 1575 city officials sent a delegation to the Archbishop so as to

> require of my Lord Archebishop his grace all such play books as pertaining this city now in his grace's Custody and that his grace will appoint two or three sufficiently learned to correct the same wherein by the law of this Realm they are to be reformed.

Meantime, three playbooks prepared for performance by St. Anthony's Guild were sent back to storage.[51] No record indicates Archbishop Grindal returned any playbooks. No record indicates the *Pater Noster Play* ever again was performed. No copy of that play is extant.

By 1578 the city fathers were displaying open ambivalence about local performance activities in York. That year they ordered

that no interludes or other "devices for assembling of the common people at the common Hall" could occur without the presence or license of the Lord Mayor. The cycle plays were scheduled for performance in 1579, but tentatively, with the provision that the playbooks first be submitted to the Archbishop for corrections or alterations. There is no record that the plays were performed in 1579.[52] It seems obvious that the citizens of York were concerned about the timidity of the authorities regarding the city's traditional performances. The next year (1580) the York's Commons formally petitioned the mayor and councils to schedule performances of the cycle.[53]

Unlike the dogged determination displayed by the city fathers to solve the guildsmen's complaints about costs and organization in the years before the Tudor religious turmoil, and unlike their manipulations in the 1560s and early 1570s to mount the cycle plays or some substitute, now, in 1580, the mayor responded that he "and his bretherin wold consider of their request."[54] Of course the mayor and "his bretherin" must have been aware of the troubles of the mayors of Chester who, despite injunctions from the Archbishop of York, mounted that city's Whitsun cycle plays in 1572 and 1574.

Chester, and its county of Cheshire, comprised a palatine territory possessing privileges, like York's, that made its governance semi-autonomous. Chester, like York, was slow in adapting to the Elizabethan religious settlement. As Jennifer McNabb writes, Chester had "a reputation for recusancy and religious deviance." She notes that as the royal regime attempted to impose standard church practices for marriage, "long after people in other areas of the country discontinued the practices of child marriage and spousals, those living in the northwest persisted in constructing marriage according to standards other than those propagated by the Elizabethan and early Stuart church." She further observes that "Cheshire residents frequently spoke of the rights and privileges of the palatinate as setting them apart from the rest of the country."[55] That independent spirit probably accounts for the staging of Chester's Whitsun cycle in the face of specific prohibitions by the Archbishop of York.

Such defiance did not go unnoticed. The mayor of 1572 was reprimanded harshly, after offering the lame excuse that the Archbishop's injunction had arrived after the performances. In 1574, when Chester's Whitsun plays were performed again—"with such reformation as Mr. Mayor with his advice shall think meet & convenient"—the consequences were swift and severe. Servants

of the President of the Council of the North arrested the then mayor the day he left office, and he was sent to London to answer for allowing the "popish plaies of Chester to be playd."[56] Needless to say, the Chester cycle was never performed again. Nor, after 1580, are there further references to the cycle plays, or any other religiously based plays, in York. In 1592 the city fathers of York forbade the performance of plays in the Common Hall and St. Anthony's Hall. By that time it appears most of the paraphernalia connected to the cycle plays had been sold off or dismantled. In 1594 the green that housed the Merchants' Guild's pageant wagon was sold to an alderman for his personal use.[57]

Still, the city fathers searched for some secular alternative. In 1583 Thomas Grafton, the local schoolmaster, wrote a play for the Midsummer Watch. Details in the records are too scanty to speculate about the content of the play, but it seems to have become a large production by 1585. That year Schoolmaster Grafton presented the city fathers with a bill for expenses totaling 48 pence "for painting about the hearse in the first pageant, a crown for the angell, spangles for his shirt, the mending of the Queen's crown, painting of the child one of the furies bare, with some other trifles." The guilds contributed £6.8 (about 272 days' wages to a laborer) towards the production, sent drummers about town to advertise the show, brought out their pageant wagons, and put on a feast for the city fathers. Performances of the 1585 Midsummer play seem to have followed a route throughout the city strikingly similar to that used by the Corpus Christi cycle.[58] Thus, after 1580 pageant masters continued to be elected, and the guilds contributed money towards Midsummer March just as they had in the past for the *Creed Play*, *Pater Noster Play*, Corpus Christi cycle, and St. George's Day and Whitsun processions. But the non-religious Midsummer Watch, with its play and marching town militia, seems to have become the only "approved" form of local performance in York.

In those same years, traveling troupes of aristocratic-sponsored, "professional" players (like Shakespeare's) began to appear frequently in York, a marked change in the pattern of performance activity in the city. In the ninety years between 1446 and 1536, when local performances for St. George's Day, Whitsun, and Corpus Christi were at their height, only six troupes of visiting players appear in the York records. All were from nearby towns, bringing their own towns' plays for performance in York.[59] After 1536, when Henry VIII's religious reforms began to take effect, no nearby town troupes visited York, but six aristocratic-sponsored troupes played there, including those licensed under King Henry

VIII and his favorite, and former brother-in-law, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk.[60] As Protestant reforms waxed and waned under Edward VI and Mary, no traveling troupes of players performed in York, reflecting the restrictions placed on travel and non-licensed players by each of those regimes.[61]

After Elizabeth's accession in 1558 and up until 1574, six acting troupes traveling under the patronage of aristocrats (including the Queen's Men) played at York.[62] Those were the years, as we have seen, that York's officials strove to accommodate their local dramatic repertory to Elizabeth's religious injunctions. After 1574, when it is clear from York's records that the city fathers were becoming stymied or timid (or both) about mounting local performances, the number of aristocratic-sponsored troupes visiting York mushroomed. From 1574 until the end of Elizabeth's reign, sixty aristocratic-sponsored acting troupes, including the Queen's Men (fourteen times), performed in York. The city's records reveal, on average, two performances per year by traveling "professional" acting companies.[63]

That same pattern is reflected throughout Tudor England. Up into the reign of Henry VIII, before religious reforms began, dramatic activity was centered in local performances. There were comparatively few aristocratic-sponsored acting troupes. In terms of touring activity, that, too, was dominated by performances given by town troupes visiting neighboring towns. For instance, in 1535 the small town of Boxford, Suffolk, toured its play to twenty-two nearby towns, earning enough money to build a new steeple for its church. From the late 1400s until about 1535, the Kentish towns of New Romney, Lydd, and Hythe regularly hosted one another's players every few years. With the beginnings of Henry VIII's religious reforms, most touring by local acting troupes sharply declined, and by the time Elizabeth came to the throne, the on-again, off-again Protestant religious policies had brought virtually all local dramatic activities, except those in cities like York and Chester, to a stand-still.[64]

Yet Elizabeth's accession also brought a new form of dramatic activity for Tudor England, the "professional" acting company bearing the name of a titled peer of the realm. Whether born out of a search for alternative entertainment, aristocratic notions of prestige, or government propaganda and "control," aristocratic acting companies exploded almost as soon as Elizabeth came to the throne. Records to date reveal at least seventy acting companies sponsored by peers and peeresses active during her reign, and fifty-one of those seventy companies (73 percent) had no antecedents in the reigns of her Tudor predecessors.

Most of the Elizabethan aristocratic-sponsored "professional" troupes spent their time and earned their money touring the English towns that no longer offered local drama. We must remember that in Shakespeare's heyday, only two acting companies—the Admiral's and Chamberlain's men—were based in London. The Queen's own acting company is a case in point. In the first five years of Elizabeth's reign, the Queen's Men appear over fifty times in provincial records in counties all over the realm. Like most of the other "licensed" companies of actors, touring was the main activity of the Queen's Men. In dramatic records published to date, Court appearances account for only 7 percent of performances by the Queen's Men. Similarly, famous acting companies—like those of the Earls of Leicester, Sussex, and Pembroke, and Lord Strange—plied their trade mostly in the provinces. And they made good livings, filling the entertainment gap created by the demise of local, religious theatre. Provincial records point to the fact that, per performance, an actor in those touring companies earned more money than the provincial master mason or master carpenter sitting in his audience.[65] Perhaps as a Stratford schoolboy, Shakespeare attended nearby Coventry's cycle plays (which like York's and Chester's limped along into the second quarter of Elizabeth's reign) and was bitten by the "theatre bug," but without the demise of these last vestiges of local, religious drama in Tudor England in the 1570s, it seems unlikely the "professional" theatre in which William Shakespeare thrived would have emerged.

Notes

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2. *Records of Early English Drama: Devon*, ed. John M. Wasson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 17, 360, 382 (henceforth *REED*); *REED: Bristol*, ed. Mark C. Pilkinton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 18.

3. *Malone Society Publication: Records of Plays and Players in Kent, 1450-1642*, ed. Giles E. Dawson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 135, 207-11; Alison Hanham, ed., *Churchwardens' Accounts of Ashburton, 1479-1580* (Torquay: Devonshire Press, 1970), 154; *REED: Dorset, Cornwall*, ed. Rosalind Conklin Hays, C. E. McGee, Sally Joyce, and Evelyn S. Newlyn (1999), 267-68, 471-73; *REED: Devon* 17, 360, 382.

4. Jacqueline Bower, "Kent Towns 1540-1640," in *Early Modern Kent*, ed. Michael Zell (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2000), 146.

5. *Malone Society: Plays and Players in Kent*, 189-202.

6. Wickham, *Medieval Theatre*, 62-99; Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, 2:113-46.

7. Richard Marius, *Thomas More* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 83, 89-90, 286-87.

8. John C. Coldeway, "The Non-cycle Plays and the East Anglian Tradition," in *Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 194-99; Ian Lancashire, *Dramatic Texts and Records of Britain: A Chronological Topography to 1558* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 289; Wickham, *Medieval Theatre*, 206-207.

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21. Quotations are from *REED: Chester*, ed. Lawrence M. Clopper (1979), 111; and *REED: York*, 353. Except for a few places to keep the "color" of the language, quotations from sources are rendered into modern English.

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24. *REED: York*, ix-x.

25. R. Davies, ed., *Extracts from the Municipal Records of the City of York during the Reigns of Edward IV, Edward V and Richard III*, (London: 1843), 217-18.

26. *REED: York*, 135-502.

27. *REED: Bristol*, 129-30.

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29. Ibid., 135-502. For the probable route of the plays see Meg Twycross, "The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 39-42; and an animated web site: http://jerz.setonhill.edu/resources/PSim/index.html.

30. *REED*: *York*, 292-306.

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32. *REED*: *York*, 55-56, 156-57, 160, 241-42.

33. Ibid., 697-98.

34. Ibid., 246-51, 283.

35. Ibid., 291, 312, 697-98; Richard Beadle, "The York Cycle," in *The Cambridge Companion*, 101-104.

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47. Ibid., 354-55.

48. Ibid., 131, 177, 200, 236, 257, 285, 353, 755, 764-71.

49. Ibid., 353.

50. Ibid., 178, 262, 327-78, 365-68.

51. Ibid., 365-68, 377-78.

52. Ibid., 384-85, 390, 393.

53. Ibid., *York*, 393.

54. Ibid.

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56. *REED*: *Chester*, 97, 104, 109.

57. *REED*: *York*, 449, 459.

58. Ibid., 417-23.

59. Ibid., 67, 77, 243.

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"Some Wonder in This Handkerchief": Magic, Early Modern Good Medicine, and Othello's Strange Difference

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Innocent of Othello's irrevocable entrapment by Iago, Desdemona presses for Cassio's restoration to lieutenancy. Othello ignores the subject. Instead, as he demands his handkerchief, he makes a singular comparison between its supposed powers and purity and the embalmed ventricles of the human heart: "The worms were hallowed that did breed the silk, / And it was dyed in mummy, which the skilful / Conserved of maidens' hearts" (3.4.85-87).[1]

The comparison has stirred little notice, though the footnotes in the New Variorum edition of the play quote George Steevens (a friend of Samuel Johnson and a first variorum editor of Shakespeare of 1773) and Alexander Dyce (the editor of a nine-volume Shakespeare of 1857). They respectively gloss "mummy" to mean "the balsamic liquor running from mummies . . . formerly celebrated for its anti-epileptic virtues" and "a preparation for magical purposes, made from dead bodies."[2] The subsequent major modern editions of the play carry analogous, brief notes on "mummy": "embalming fluid";[3] "fluid drained from mummified bodies, supposedly magical";[4] "a preparation made from mummified bodies, thought to have medicinal or magic power";[5] "medicinal or magical preparation drained from mummified bodies"[6]; and "substance from mummified bodies."[7]

The lack of expansiveness in these notes belies their interpretive suggestiveness, particularly if we consider Othello's comparison in the light of epistemological disquiets produced by the religious and medicinal cultures of Shakespeare's moment. On the one hand, far from pronouncing something merely exotic (though ironic if retrospectively viewed), Othello here can be read to advocate his knowledge of magic assimilated from the

Neoplatonic-inflected Christian love that the maternal handkerchief objectifies:

> That handkerchief
> Did an Egyptian to my mother give.
> She was a charmer and could almost read
> The thoughts of people. She told her, while she kept it,
> 'Twould make her amiable and subdue my father
> Entirely to her love. But if she lost it,
> Or made a gift of it, my father's eye
> Should hold her loathèd, and his spirits should hunt
> After new fancies. She, dying, gave it me,
> And bid me, when my fate would have me wived,
> To give it her. I did so; and take heed on 't,
> Make it a darling like your precious eye.
> To lose 't or give 't away were such perdition
> As nothing else could match. (3.4.65-79)

Even more startling still about this comparison is that Othello confers the sacred status on the handkerchief's magic by having colonized the similarly Neoplatonically-informed knowledge of early-modern physiology that Christianized the use of human body as good medicine.

Among critics of *Othello*, Ania Loomba and others have helped us to understand the locus and integrity of Othello's true self in terms of our contemporary binary opposition of Self and Other and illuminated the danger and self-destructiveness inherent in racial boundary-crossing.[8] Today I would like to follow Ania Loomba's exhortation that "Shakespeare's 'others' remind us of our need for expanded conceptual frameworks to analyze Renaissance culture, Shakespearian drama, and their modern-day legacies."[9] Finding magic and medicine to be my congenial "conceptual frameworks," I explore the theory that it is not primarily the much discussed racial exoticism alone that makes Othello, in Roderigo's cynical remark, an "extravagant and wheeling stranger / Of here and everywhere" (1.1.151-52). It is rather in his interiorized epistemology of Christian magic that Shakespeare locates Othello's strange difference.[10]

On the face of it, this radical confluence of knowledge, magic, and medicine admittedly may sound incompatible for Shakespeare to hinge Othello's sudden loss of faith in Desdemona's love and fidelity on the "ocular proof,"[11] causing his transformation from loving husband to divine executioner. Huston Diehl remarks in her article, "Religion and Shakespearean Tragedy," that many critics, in fact, have not wholly granted the handkerchief the evidentiary

proof of that fact; they tend to conclude that the handkerchief is too slight to serve as Othello's self-defining, soul-ruining agency.[12] Their critical reluctance appears warranted since, while Othello insists on the oneness of the handkerchief's material essence with his core epistemological self, Shakespeare challengingly juxtaposes that unity with Desdemona's fatal incredulity ("Is 't possible?" [3.4.80]; "I' faith, is 't true?" [3.4.88]). Yet in pitting Othello's inward certitude of love against Desdemona's innocent skepticism, Shakespeare reveals himself to have been keenly engaged in the diverse anatomies of knowledge animating the early-modern culture that inevitably compelled epistemological questions and crises. From first looking closely at the controversy over worship in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, a new possibility emerges: Shakespeare succeeds in raising Othello's handkerchief to a site of moral rigor to be exercised over the "ocular proof" of Desdemona's "revolt" (3.3.219). By penetratively enfolding into Othello's relentless interrogation of Desdemona, particularly two opposing theories of the ceremony in the Church of England liturgy[13]—one, public and material display of faith, and another, private and invisible exercise of faith—Shakespeare marks one aspect of Othello's strange difference in which optically seeing the stability of a material object of faith constitutes ethically knowing the integrity of its interior essences.[14]

After Protestantism was established as the official state religion, the one theory of worship, which was adopted by the Puritan reformers and became their devotional essence, is that "worship is a purely mental activity to be exercised by a strictly psychological 'attention' to a subjective emotional or spiritual experience."[15] It is a matter of the mind rather than of external artifacts. In the Puritan scheme of things, ceremony must answer to the natural and unfeigned religious needs of inwardness and the self. If a ceremony contains artifice, it serves no good purpose. As William Bradshaw, a Puritan critic, puts it in "A Treatise of Divine Worship (1604)," "Nature only frameth [ceremonies] well, so if it shall appear they proceed from her, and are not forced and wrung from men (*invita minerva*), she putteth into them such a light, that any of ordinary conceit may in the sign see the thing signified."[16] If not, ceremonies are nothing less than human presumptions. This is a view echoed by Puritan theologian William Ames in his "A Fresh Svit against Human Ceremonies in Gods Worship (1633)": "For humane Ceremonies, imposed and observed as parts of Gods worship, must needs be Worship proceeding from mans Will, or will-Worship."[17]

What the Puritans really objected to in the Anglican theory of ceremony is that ceremony is a man-made, unnatural form of worship. Though conceived as an enduring form that gathers up what is experienced in formless fashion, ceremony, to the Puritan thought, is necessarily removed from the immediacy, as well as the urgency, of the worshipping experience. Because ceremony involves objectification and, to a considerable degree, symbolic abstraction of worshipping experiences, there is a distancing from the true experience of religious faith. Instead of being the ordering instrument by which a man knows his relation to God, to others, and to the world, the Anglican liturgical impulse for ceremony is nothing but the remnants of Popish flummery and pagan superstition, impeding the path to true faith. Therefore, the Anglican ceremonial embodiments of worship—including railing the altar in the east end of the chapel, bowing to the altar in the liturgy, many sacred images and relics, such as a number of candlesticks, basins, crosses, crucifixes, handkerchiefs—are artificial falsehoods. The Puritan distrust and rejection of such practices can be heard in Edmund Hickeringill's *Ceremony Monger* in which he scornfully says, "If I were a Papist . . . who believes that God is enthroned in the east . . . , I profess I would bow and cringe . . . and pay my adoration to that point of the compass [the east]; but if men believe that the Holy One who inhabits eternity is also omnipresent, why do not they make correspondent ceremonies of adoration to every point of the compass?"[18]

The Anglican theory of ceremony, in contrast, is carefully conceived by Richard Hooker, who represents the quintessentially Anglican sensibility in his *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. As he sets forth the defense of ceremony, Hooker recognizes the validity of acts of inward, private worship. Against the Puritan critique of Anglican "excesses and impious modes of expressions" of faith in the liturgy, Hooker observes, "For so it is judged, our prayers, our sacraments, our fasts, our times and places of public meeting together for the worship and service of God, our marriages, our burials, our functions, elections, and ordinations ecclesiastical, almost whatsoever we do in the exercise of our religion according to laws for that purpose established, all things are some way or other thought faulty, all things stained with superstition."[19] The controversy at issue for him is ultimately twofold: the idea of law that is validated by its having derived from "natural law," which itself derived from divine law, and the attendant outward forms of that law's powers.[20] He will therefore focus on the public, external rites of the church.

Hooker lived in a ceremonial and emblematic age, which accepted special color, special garb, words, acts, adornment, and pageantry and the like as expressions of mystical understanding and knowledge of all reality, whether the Puritans agreed or not. Further, such affirmations of ceremony, to Hooker, tap into wide human experiences and form a part of the composite of deep English customs, traditions, and a system of civic law. Hooker notes that although the outward matter and form of the essential actions of worship might be carried out quite simply, as the Puritans had insisted, ceremonial minimalism is not enough: "In every grand or main public duty, which God requireth at the hands of his Church, there is, besides that matter and form wherein the essence thereof consisteth, a certain outward fashion whereby the same is in decent sort administered."[21] Faith coupled with actions, Hooker explains, is more forceful. "Thoughtful composition, rather than 'effusions of undigested prayers,' should be the norm."[22] The traditional and hence formal nature of ceremony is in Hooker's mind linked with personal, social, and cosmic order.

His paradigm is essentially Neoplatonic and grounded in the mysticism of the visible physical objects expressing the transcendent reality of true faith. Ceremony, "some visible solemnities," is a solemn event different from a common one and is to be manifested in an appropriate visual specialness. Ceremony thus can educate those who observe ceremony about true faith: "The end which is aimed at in setting downe the outward forme of all religious actions is the edification of the Church. Now men are edified, when either their understanding is taught somewhat whereof in such actions it behoveth all men to consider, or when their harts are moved with any affection suteable thereunto, when their minds are in any sorte stirred up unto that reverence, devotion, attention, and due regard, which in those cases semeth requisite."[23]

Christian-Neoplatonic still, ceremonial actions, joined to words and gestures, can also educate those who watch and hear: "Because therefore unto this purpose not only speech but sundry sensible menes besides have always bene thought necessary, and especially those means which being object to the eye, the liveliest and most the apprehensive sense of all other, have in that respect seemed the fittest to make a deepe and strong impression . . . the very strangeness whereof and difference from that which is common, doth cause popular eyes to observe and to marke the same."[24]

Combining visible form and invisible faith, Hooker justifies ceremony by a visual-epistemological processes of sighting ("object to the eye," "depe and strong impression"), moving ("harts are

moved," "their minds are in any sorte stirred up"), and remembering ("remember carefully," "memory whereof is farre more easie and durable"), all of which finally resulting in instruction ("men are edified," "to what effect such duties serve").[25] Ceremony, in other words, is the idealized form through which "the essence" and "the substance" of God, though inconceivable to man, can be perceived indirectly in the external "matter and forme" via the agency of man's natural and intellectual vision. Though only an embodiment of the essence ("a certain outward fashion"), ceremony can be a highly visualized pattern or outline which informs one of the ultimate visions of the higher or transcendental world emanating from God. Born of a Renaissance man's cognition of reality as hierarchy in which correspondences and analogies relate the physical to the spiritual world, ceremony—"a certain outward fashion . . . in decent sort administered"—imitates ideal and universal truth.[26]

Relocating this Reformation contest over ceremony to literary terms in her study of literary self-consciousness and its ethos of seventeenth-century English prose, Joan Webber sums up the fundamental difference between the Puritan and Anglican epistemologies centered on the material as an authorizing agency of one's mystical and integral being: The Anglican quest for knowledge was achieved through idealism, by being "meditative, anti-historical," imaginative, and "symbolic"; the Puritans, on the other hand, reached knowledge by being forever earth-bound, empirical, "active, time-bound," social, linear, and logical.[27]

While pivoting on secular themes—erotic desire, marital love and fidelity, sexual jealousy, female virtues, and so forth—Othello's implacable necessity of the "ocular proof" in the epigraphic scene encapsulates the provocative question concerning this connection between seeing and knowing, between understanding visible objects emblematically in the material world and acquiring confident knowledge from those objects. As Shakespeare coalesces Othello's gesture and the tableaux of the handkerchief into these contemporary theological debates about how one knows the validity of one's faith in the invisible God without any visible, material evidence of Him, he deftly converts Othello's pagan roots and difference embedded in the maternal legacy into the Christianized evidence of a sacral magic of love and fidelity, counter to Puritans' religious rhetoric against the materiality of faith. Namely, Shakespeare grounds its legitimacy in the Anglican materialist epistemology so that Othello can turn society's accusation of his strange difference ("Against all rules of nature" according to Brabantio, Iago, Roderigo [1.3.119]) into monumentalizing it by

his epistemic alliance ("my perfect soul," "Of my whole course of love" [1.2.36, 1.3.106]) with many lay Christians who validated and sustained their faith by the mysticism of the magical powers of protection, healing, and salvation that the objecthood of the material was believed to confer. For Othello, this dense epistemological network of magical difference was first confirmed when "she had eyes and chose me" (3.3.220). That is, Desdemona saw his outward person of difference but *knew* his core being ("heaven had made her such a man" [1.3.189]). But Othello's triumphant difference also prompts a potentially subversive turn because Desdemona's inability to produce the handkerchief here, like Puritan skepticism of artifacts, has the effect of evacuating his interior essences and thus unfixing his core epistemological self, while signaling, in Othello's eye, the implicit rejection of his magic and, in turn her rejection of his strange difference.

Considered in this way, the logical movement of Othello's mystical knowing must compel his subsequent action to a forbidding end because Shakespeare inscribes yet another mark of difference on Othello by ascribing its genesis to another related idea of magic that the contemporary good medicine embodied. Magic's broad philosophical affinity to and practices of medicine are investigated by Walter Pagel who has examined the derivation and development of early-modern medicine in Europe and its experimental exploration of nature and humanity. Pagel defends his methodology that measures a scientist or medical man of the past against the intellectual background of his own time, however incongruous it would seem today. On this premise, throughout his *Religion and Neoplatonism in Renaissance Medicine*, Pagel finds the linkages between magicians ("religious scientists") and physicians during the seventeenth century[28] in order to argue his larger thesis that certain aspects of sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century medicine are indeed a fusion of religion, Gnosticism, and Neoplatonism, a distinct feature of this genesis of difference being its attempt to reconcile Hellenistic philosophy with Christian doctrine during the Renaissance.[29]

Richard Sugg, for instance, follows Paget's intellectual premise in his *Murder after Death: Literature and Anatomy in Early-Modern England*. His is a study that demonstrates that magic—the ethical corollary of medicine—finds its distinct form in Renaissance England in the notion of good medicine, which was believed and practiced during the mid-Elizabethan era through the outbreak of civil war, when anatomy especially was a topic of fascination and autopsies were a spectators' theatre.[30] Rather than regard such

preoccupations as purely macabre, Sugg considers them to be a profoundly epistemological discourse on religion and science and traces their literary implications. Sugg finds that it was thought good medicine to take a dose of mummified human corpse (the dried, often powered flesh of embalmed Egyptian corpses).[31] It was also good medicine to use substances derived from recently-dead bodies, or parts extracted from corpses, including fat and fresh blood, along with muscular flesh, carefully treated and dried before use. The use of a human skull, as well as "usnea," a kind of moss which grew on skulls some time after death, was also accepted as good medicine; both blood and powdered or distilled skull were found effective to cure epilepsy.[32] Various authorities held that mummy was good, particularly to treat haemorrhage or bruising. "Mummy and associated treatment feature[ed] most heavily in the literature of the revolutionary period, with references clustering before the Restoration."[33]

In its actual applications, then, Pagel's words reinforce Sugg's argument on good medicine: "true medicine is the gift of God" and "the secrets of nature, to which the true divine medicine leads, represent the development ('explicatio') of God and therefore accomplish what is known as 'ars magica.' Magic, in this sense, is the highest, the most perfect and the richest knowledge of 'philosophia naturalis.'"[34] Like Pagel, Sugg presents the contemporary view that "philosophical insight and metaphysical views were not always detrimental to scientific work and discovery"[35] and links good medicine's relation to magic as dependent not on the powers of "science" alone, but on "the interaction of the things corporeal and spiritual"[36] in medical biology. Indeed, behind various ostensibly macabre medicinal uses of human remains, there existed the contemporaries' profoundly sacral way of knowing the interior body as the source of the anatomical repository of the soul, since "[man] consists of a divine spirit, an astral body and an elemental body."[37] Hence, Sugg speculates that good medicine was a spiritual consumption of the life-force in the body. Drawing his evidence on the literary and medical language of sermons, plays, and sonnets,[38] Sugg argues that such corpse medicine was by no means on the fringe, nor was it thought to be superstitious magic, but a way of knowing "intriguing clues pointing the way to salvation."[39] As such, it was accepted and practiced by such luminaries as Queen Elizabeth's surgeon John Banister; mystic philosopher and physician Robert Fludd; the Puritan Richard Baxter; the proto-scientific philosopher Francis Bacon; the poet and preacher John Donne; and the chemist

Robert Boyle.[40] Specific to Shakespearean connections, two more physicians may be added to this list: John Hall, Shakespeare's future-son-in-law, and Thomas Lodge, whose pastoral novel *Rosalynde* was the source of Shakespeare's *As You Like It.* As David Hoeniger corroborates Sugg's theory, Shakespeare knew and used the wealth of medieval and Renaissance English medicine-lore in other works.[41] As an educated Elizabethan, Shakespeare must have been acculturated to, perhaps even believed in, good medicine. Therefore, it is not surprising that Shakespeare has Othello express his knowledge about the mummy's efficacy in the anatomical rhetoric of good medicine.[42]

Based on the contemporary practice of "the spirit-matter continuum,"[43] Othello's epistemic posture in the epigraphic scene further particularizes his strange knowledge of Christianized physiology where he embeds into the mummy very specific meanings of the human heart, echoing both the contemporary view that "God's writing must be reanimated in the heart" and that of poet and Puritan clergy Henry King who similarly notes that "the immortal soul [was] localized within the heart."[44] William Harvey, the discoverer the of circulation of the blood, also visualizes the heart as the microcosmic copy of a general macrocosmic pattern and principle: "The heart like a prince in a kingdom, in whose hands lie the chief and highest authority, rules over all; it is the original and the foundation from which all power is derived, on which all power depends in the animal body."[45] It is no surprise, then, that the human heart assumes the moral quality in surgeon Edward May's preaching that "the serpent should be found in the *left* ventricle of Pennant' heart," "the most securely defended region of that organ, and arguably so well defended just because the soul, the very seat of life, was situated in that spot,"[46] and purest spirits of the soul themselves were thought to locate in the left ventricle of the heart.[47]

No longer Branbantio's belittled "spells and medicines bought of mountebanks" (1.3.74), the mutually implicated mummy and heart construct Othello's ineluctable moral logic. More implacable still, he further strengthens that logic by investing another powerful knowledge of purity in the handkerchief by claiming that it had been "conserved of maidens' hearts" (3.4.74). This combination of hearts and maidens could not be more antagonistic to Desdemona's skepticism since the state of virginity was believed to be a highly valued moral condition. As it has come down through Christian thought, the central mystical theme of virgins is that virginity is the quintessence of female holiness, sexual purity, and

incorruptible virtue aspiring to an ideal embodied in the Virgin Mary. It is extremely fragile, and a virgin must be guarded with the utmost care. Medieval monastic writers repeatedly express the fear about the virgins in their care, since "a virgin's flesh is an earthen vessel in which gold is stored for testing."[48] In the Middle English *Ancrene Wisse,* virginity is "a treasure in earthen vessels" and "this frail vessel is as fragile as any glass, for one it is broken it may never be mended."[49] Like Othello's handkerchief of exquisite beauty and ineffable worth given as a wedding gift to Desdemona, once lost, its sacred charisma and virtue will never be restored intact. In his *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*, R. Howard Bloch also notes that the idealization of virginity was founded in a belief that its powers enabled women, as well as men, "to triumph over death" through "a clarity of vision," "the purity of virginity," and "incorruptibility."[50]

When Othello empowers the embalmed ventricles of the virgin's heart in this scene, therefore, he intriguingly conjoins two ways of knowing the truth drawn from the epistemology of good medicine: the knowledge that the heart was the great receptacle of affections and other passions[51] and the knowledge that maidens or virgins possessed a remarkably high degree of spiritual purity.[52] Othello's handkerchief, dipped in a virgin mummy's embalming fluid, permits, therefore, a special kind of physical knowing of absolute purity through the contact with the most sacred essence of a human being. For Othello, magic means the knowledge of spiritual physiology, and the handkerchief is its spiritual manifestation. Grounded in Christianized medicine, the handkerchief thus takes on soul-imperiling powers for Othello. In Othello, evil—the ethical corollary of Desdemona's loss of the handkerchief—triggers the onset of cognitive rupture, disabling him from knowing any loyalty, or connection, to any object (the fountain of his knowledge). Thus when he convicts her soul as no longer that of a morally "virgin" wife,[53] he reinforces his strange difference.

In the end, this scene crystallizes a continual and repetitive chain of the magic-medicine-heart epistemology and calls for a more differentiated reading of Othello and Desdemona's eventual tragedy. As Iago incessantly reminds others, class, gender and, most conspicuously, race are inevitably invoked to point out Othello's fundamental difference, even in cosmopolitan Venice. In fact, Othello himself is keenly aware of and articulates the problematics of that difference. The following soliloquy represents Othello's self-consciousness of the vagaries of difference:

> Haply, for I am black
> And have not those soft parts of conversation
> That chamberers have, or for I am declined
> Into the vale of years—yet that's not much—
> She's gone, I am abused, and my relief
> Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage,
> That we can call these delicate creatures ours
> And not their appetites! (3.3.304-11)

The handkerchief, believed to contain his strange magic, is yet another signifier of that difference. But how essentially do these outward signs of difference "denote me truly" as Hamlet says of himself (1.2.86)?[54] Further, what is it that Othello has within "which passes show," to quote Hamlet again (1.2.88)? An expanded understanding of Othello's epistemology based on spiritual physiology and ontology of objects underpinning the handkerchief can determine the root of his strange difference: Othello is a spiritually absolutist Christian whose problem is compounded, not by physical markers alone, but more by the epistemological double bind. By the double bind, I mean two types of knowledge about what a human body is all about: on the one hand, his Christian knowledge of the spirituality and sanctity of the human body (inherent in the handkerchief, uniting its magical and medicinal properties; namely, divine and material worlds); on the other hand, his newly acquired learning of the body as an alien and corruptible entity. Othello betrays the latter in his hasty credulity about Desdemona's "liberal hand!" declaring, "The hearts of old gave hands; / But our new heraldry is ['Hot, hot and moist'] hands not hearts" (3.4.53-54, 45). Because she has lost his handkerchief, according to Othello's epistemic calculus, she changes from a "Bride of Christ" to a "Devil's Gateway."[55] Such drastic undermining of Desdemona's body in turn renders him a stranger to his own heart that is his bodily receptacle of love for her. No longer a man "great of heart" (5.2.423), he finds his own body equally foul and corrupt as his own heart, the "fountain" of his life-force, turning into "a cistern for foul toads / To knot and gender in":

> But there where I have garnered up my heart,
> Where either I must live or bear no life,
> The fountain from the which my current runs
> Or else dries up—to be discarded thence,
> Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads
> To knot and gender in. (4.2.68-72)

Othello's problem thus becomes twofold. His absolutist magical knowledge of love blocks him from reconciling and even

overcoming this double bind crystallized in the jealous "green-eyed monster" leading to epilepsy, while Iago urges its destructive work: "My medicine, work!" (3.3.196; 4.1.54). In the terms of spiritualized good medicine, epilepsy is not only a physical illness, but also a sign of cognitive disturbance.[56] Considered retrospectively, Shakespeare has already hinted at the eventual arrival of Othello's mental block in the opening scenes where Othello denies any knowledge of magic in response to Brabantio's accusation that he, Othello, could never have honestly won Desdemona's hand: "For nature so prepost'rously to err— / Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense— / Sans witchcraft could not" (1.3.75-77).

At the same time, writing at a critical moment of the epistemic shift in the earlier seventeenth century that Michel Foucault writes about,[57] Shakespeare articulates, in Othello's increasing epistemological decay after this scene, his own keen awareness of the fate of Renaissance good medicine as well as the absolutist philosophy of love. As the seventeenth century progressed, "the body [had] now grown too defiantly, purely material to be easily manipulated by religious rhetoric."[58] The failure to pinpoint the precise location of the soul posed a real threat to those who believed in an "anatomically verifiable continuity between body and soul."[59] Like the fate of seventeenth-century good medicine, Othello represents a Christian soul lost in a transition in which increasingly enlightened science and traditional religiosity diverge from and eventually oppose each other because Othello anchors his soul in the magical handkerchief. In this respect, one crucial cause for Desdemona's tragedy stems from her ultimate inability to see beyond the materiality of the handkerchief. Her exclamation, "some wonder in this handkerchief," signals her progressivist incredulity (3.4.118). Her tragedy deepens because she makes this declaration despite her first heart-surrendering, soul-ennobling loving of Othello's inscape when she averred, publicly, "I saw Othello's visage in his mind" (1.3.287), an ironic reversal of her initial reliance on her inner knowing through the denial of Othello's physical appearance.

Thus far, I have presented the position that in *Othello* Shakespeare quietly plants a challenging idea of Christian magic and its epistemological allure in good medicine in order to re-ground a fundamental source of the tragedy. Shakespeare's knowledge of popular medicine-lore and use of Christian-Neoplatonic philosophy has allowed me to refocus the much discussed racial iconography to an inquiry into Othello's strangely

ironic ontology and to locate its suppressed Christian core of being to be the tragic cause.

Even so, Othello in the play's conclusion still raises a delicate question about the integrity of his Christian posture. In the final scene, after savagely killing Desdemona and finally knowing the truth about the handkerchief, he puts himself on trial as if before the Venetian tribunal:

> O, fool, fool, fool!
> . . . . . .
> Like the base Judean, threw a pearl away
> . . . . . .
> Set you down this.
> And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
> Where a malignant and a turbanned Turk
> Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
> I took by th' throat the circumcised dog,
> And smote him, thus. (5.2.382; 5.2.407; 5.2.412-16)

These lines complete his epistemological trajectory—from emotional knowing ("I loved her that she did pity them" [1.3.194]) to spiritual knowing ("It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul" [5.2.1]). It is a passage from one of epistemological certainty to one of dilemma and loss. His visions are now moral fragments; they have none of the proud monumentality of his love's morally perfected beauty in Desdemona. Not only that, they have become alien. Though he has known his soul within the Christian framework of the age, before he stabs himself to death, Othello likens himself to the hated heathen ("the base Judean," "a malignant, and turban'd Turk," and "the circumcised dog"), as if admitting that he is no better than the hated heathen. In fact, he kills himself as if killing the infidel enemy to Venice that he himself has become, exposing his incapacity to hold onto the Christian magical epistemology to the end.

Early in the presentation, I referred to Roderigo cynically dismissing Othello as an "extravagant and wheeling stranger / Of here and everywhere" (1.1.151-52). The irony turns out to be that Roderigo's lines retrospectively haunt Othello's last act because Roderigo has unwittingly prophesized what Othello will have become in the end: a double outsider—an epistemologically displaced being—not only to others but also to himself.[60] To me, that strange difference is finally the core of the tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice.

Notes

1. All quoted lines of the play come from William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, The New Folger Library Shakespeare, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press, 1993).

2. *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: Othello*, ed. Horace Howard Furness (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963), 222. However, Furness in his responding commentary doubts if Steevens' and Dyce's "mummey" refer to Egyptian mummies.

3. *The Complete Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare,* ed. William Allan Neilson and Charles Jarvis Hill (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942), 1120.

4. *The Norton Shakespeare*, Based on the Oxford Edition, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 2143.

5. Shakespeare, *Othello,* 156.

6. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare,* ed. David Bevington (New York: Longman, 1997), 1148.

7. *The Cambridge School Shakespeare: Othello*, ed. Jane Coles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 132.

8. Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 48; Patricia Parker, "Fantasies of 'Race' and 'Gender': Africa, Othello and Bringing to Light" in *Women, Race and Writing in the Early Modern Period,* ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London: Routledge, 1994), 84-110; Jonathan Burton, "'A Most Wily Bird': Leo Africanus, Othello, and the Trafficking in Difference," in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, ed. Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin (London: Routledge, 1998), 43-63, 57, 58.

9. Ania Loomba, "Outsiders in Shakespeare's England," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 163.

10. In some ways, I seem to be participating in the ongoing debates on whether or not Othello is Christian. As Robert H. West once warned about the virtues and dangers of determining Othello's Christianness ("The Christianness of Othello," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15, no. 4 [Autumn 1964]: 333-43), my purpose here is not to argue for that still unsettled point; I rather wish to see him in the contemporary Christian context in order to discover another direction to understand his essential difference. Even so, I was delightfully surprised to notice that Jonathan Earl Peck, the Othello actor of this year's (2008) Utah Shakespearean Festival, was wearing a silver cross; it was very visible on his chest.

11. For the phenomenological approach to the "ocular" proof, refer to James A. Knapp's article, "'Ocular Proof': Archival Revelations and Aesthetic Response," *Poetics Today* 24, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 695-727.

12. Huston, Diehl, "Religion and Shakespearean Tragedy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 94. Though I take a different approach and draw a different conclusion, I agree with Diehl on the crucial importance of Othello's handkerchief.

13. This part of my presentation derives from my study of the ceremony controversy in early seventeenth-century England in my dissertation on John Ford, written at Loyola University Chicago, 1982. I revisited especially its section "Inquiry into the Concept of Ceremony," 10-51.

14. The following materials were consulted in writing the section of my dissertation on the Anglican liturgy, noted in note 13 above: G. J. Cuming, *A History of Anglican Liturgy* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1969); D. E. W. Harison, *Common Prayer in the Church of England* (London: S.P.C.K., 1969); H. R. McAdoo, *The Sprit of Anglicanism: A Survey of Anglican Theological Method in the*

Seventeenth Century (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1965); J. F. New, *Anglican and Puritan: The Basis of Their Opposition, 1558-1964* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1964).

15. Dom G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Dacre Press, 1945), 312.

16. William Bradshaw, "A Treatise of Divine Worship (1604)," quoted in John D. Eusden, *Puritans, Lawyers, and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 74.

17. William Ames, "A Fresh Svit Against Human Ceremonies in Gods Worship (1633)," quoted in Keith L. Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 89.

18. Edmund Hickeringill, *Ceremony Monger (1689)*, quoted in John Brand, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*, vol. 2 (New York: AMS Press, 1848), 319. Though the book came out late—1689—Hickeringill is quoted by Brand as summing-up the Puritan sentiment.

19. Book 5, chapter 4, section 3 of Richard Hooker, *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. W. S. Hill, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977). From here on, Hooker is cited in numerals by book, chapter, and section.

20. Ibid., 1.1.3.

21. Ibid., 1.1.273.

22. Egil Grislis, "Richard Hooker and Mysticism," *Anglican Theological Review* 87, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 253.

23. Hooker, 4.1.3.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 4.1.2.

27. Joan Webber, *The Eloquent "I": Style and Self in Seventeenth-Century Prose* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 7, 8, 256.

28. Walter Pagel, *Religion and Neoplatonism in Renaissance Medicine* (London, Variorum Reprints, 1985), 2:100, 2:113-14, 2:116, 2:216-18, 3:31, 5:274, 6:156.

29. Ibid., 6:125-26, 6:128, 6:131, 6:150, 6:163-64.

30. For a good visual understanding of how anatomy and dissection of the human body were conducted after Henry VIII licensed The Company of Barber Surgeons, see the frontispiece painting wherein John Banister is delivering an anatomical lecture at the Barber-Surgeons' Hall, ca. 1580. University of Glasgow Homepage, http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk//anatomy/banister.html, accessed_21 June 2008.

31. Richard Sugg, *Murder after Death: Literature and Anatomy in Early-Modern England* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), 40-49.

32. Ibid., 42-43.

33. Ibid., 44.

34. Pagel, *Religion and Neoplatonism*, 2:216.

35. Pagel, "'The Vindication of 'Rubbish,'" *Milldesex Hospital Journal* 45 (1945): 42-45.

36. Pagel, *Religion and Neoplatonism*, 3:22.

37. Ibid., 6:153.

38. For various references to Shakespeare's works, see also F. David Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1992).

39. Sugg, *Murder After Death*, 96.

40. Ibid., 40-41.

41. See notes 8 and 18 above.

42. Sugg, *Murder After Death*, 43-44. Also refer to David Hoeniger's *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1992).

43. Sugg, *Murder After Death*, 92-93.

44. Robert A. Erickson, *The Language of the Heart, 1600-1750* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), xvii-xvii, quoted in Sugg, 97.

45. William Harvey, *The Circulation of the Blood (1628)*, quoted in Pagel, 6:6.

46. Edward May, *A Most Certaine and True Relation of a Strange Monster or Serpent Found in the Left Ventricle of the Heart of John Pennant (1639)*, quoted in Sugg, 97.

47. My claim based on Sugg, 97-98.

48. Quoted in Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 29.

49. *Ancrene Wisse*, quoted in Newman, 29.

50. R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 237, 241.

51. Erickson, *The Language of the Heart,* 11-15; F. David Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 115-16, 145-46, 166-68.

52. Refer, for example, to chapter 4, "The Poetics of Virginity," of R. Howard Bloch's *Medieval Misogyny*. Refer also to the following for pragmatic spirituality: Elizabeth Robertson's "The Rule of the Body: Feminine Spirituality in the *Ancrene Wisse*," in *Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance Writings: Essays in Feminist Contextual Criticism*, ed. Sheila Fisher and Janet E. Halley (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 109-34.

53. This phrase is a paraphrasing of Amy Hollywood's book title, *The Soul as Virgin Wife* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), in which she explores the mystical and religious experience the writings of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century mystical women. Relevant for my paper was chapter 1, "Visionary Imagination and Apophasis" (1-25), the topic of which is the human soul's relation to the will of God.

54. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, The New Folger Library Shakespeare, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992).

55. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, 65.

56. Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare,* 203-204.

57. Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Harper, 1972), 4-10.

58. Sugg, *Murder After Death*, 142.

59. Ibid., 159.

60. Though we have different approaches, I agree with the importance of Othello's self-image in the last scene. Refer to Steven Doloff, "The 'Process' of Prejudice: *Othello* 1.3.128-145," *Notes and Queries* 41, no. 4 (Dec. 1994): 491-94; and Gale Kern Paster, "The Tragic Subject and Its Passions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 142-159, especially 148-49.

Marriage, the Violent Traverse from Two to One in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Othello*

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A. D. Nuttall once described Shakespeare's *Othello* as a play about "a hero who went into a house."[1] Such a description connoting domestic comfort sounds innocuous enough—but not according to early modern conceptions and representations of gender and violence. The early modern period evinces a greater distinction than our own between the male and the female conception of self. The Renaissance culture largely conceived the male self in terms (and ideals) of wholeness, completeness, autonomy, and self-sufficiency such that man's default state was a—much delusory—independent being, entailing a vexed pursuit to be "author of himself" (*Coriolanus*, 5.3.36).[2] In contrast, the female self—her sexual physiology seen as a receptacle, a concavity—was regarded in terms of incompleteness and nothingness. In the logic of early modern conceptions of gender, the woman was to achieve wholeness by linking herself—through marriage—with a male subject of wholeness. Indeed, according to common law, the legal personhood of marriage obtained solely in the man, and the woman, through coverture, became civilly dead.[3]

To explore the early modern experience of marriage in Shakespearean drama, I will juxtapose two plays rarely examined together: *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Othello*. Unlike the romantic comedies, which deal with courtship and end in marriage, both *Taming*, an early comedy, and *Othello*, a mid-period tragedy, present glimpses into newlyweds undergoing the transition from the individual to the joint state of marriage. The two plays, moreover, dramatize the clash between the dominance model premised on male supremacy and the conscience model based on consensual, companionate marriage.[4] Herman von Wied's hortatory pamphlet, *The Glasse of Godly Love*, teaches that a wife should be submissive to the husband as the church is submissive unto Christ, quoting

Paul's teachings in Ephesians 5:22-23. The love between Christ and his congregation should be a model by which to attain the earthly paradise of marriage. Inversely, the husband, Paul enjoins, should treat his wife as he would himself and his body: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the assembly. . . . Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:25, 28). In von Wied's elaboration, the husband must show "most fervent love and affection, all gentle behavior, all faithfulness and help, all comfort and kindness, as to himself, his own flesh and body; so that under God there is no love, no affection, no friendship, no nearness of kin, to be compared unto this, nor any one thing under the Sun, that pleases God more than man and wife that agree well together, which live in the fear of God."[5] These opposing Biblical prescriptions entail models of parity and hierarchy simultaneously. This crucial contradiction within conjugal relations informs the difficult transumption of the marital two-in-one in *Taming* and *Othello* and undergirds the negotiations of equity and dominance within the gender relationship in these two plays. Marriage for the early moderns involved an existential anxiety far more perilous to personhood than what we today would call wedding jitters. On the husband's side, the marital dyad at worst posed a grave threat to male authority and at best his successful adjustment to a loving, working partnership. On the wife's side, marriage was a gamble resulting at worst in her loss of identity and at best in a mutually loving and respecting union defined by male headship.

In the broad generic scheme, the comedy *Taming* presents the auspicious outcome and *Othello*, its tragic opposite. However, Shakespeare's characteristic mixing of high and low, tragic and comic elements in his works underscores the conceptual affinity rather than the formal difference between the two plays based upon the "happy" or "tragic" ending. The frightening specter of marital violence lurking in *Taming*, as confirmed by the early modern records of battered women,[6] suggests that tragedy lies never afar (like John Keats's Melancholy ever attendant at the heels of Joy); conversely, the first two acts of *Othello* are broadly recognized as comedy before the onslaught of marital travails. What partly distinguishes the "happy" or "tragic" ending in the two plays is the role of external forces, be they human provocateurs (i.e., Iago) or impersonal winds of fortune or chance affecting the sequence of events. It is clear by act 3 that the protagonists of *Othello* are beset by a more hostile and malign world of human and circumstantial machination than the protagonists of *Taming*, where the whiffs of domestic debacle

are dispelled in an arena of comic play and play-acting, with their assurances of building and mending rather than destroying social bonds. This topic of external forces, however, lies outside the scope of this paper, which will focus rather on the action of the protagonists themselves and how they induce the comic or tragic ending. Specifically, I argue that while the comic couple of *Taming*, through prudence and moderation, successfully order their marriage toward virtuous ends, their tragic counterparts in *Othello*, through their unaccommodating virtue, fail to coordinate a dual life together.

This examination of good and effective action grounds itself in the early modern discourse of virtue and moderation. Fulke Greville, in 1609, voiced the era's concern over humanity's "wearisome" condition of "self-division"—"born under one law" of reason and bound to another of passion.[7] Observing affective instability in daily life—"lethargies, frenzies, melancholy, drunkenness, and such other passions,"[8] to use *Maister Spenser's* words—the early moderns came to regard the rational governance of unruly emotions as essential for the pursuit of self-knowledge and self-mastery, heeding the ancient Delphic injunctions of "Know thyself" and "Nothing in excess." Regulating the passions through moderation became a primary focus of humanist virtue, whether in the context of Christian piety aimed for salvation or the ancient ideal of the good life—i.e., the full realization of the human potential.

Aristotle, in *Nicomachean Ethics*, defines moderation as a disposition to choose the just mean between excess and deficiency in emotion and action as a response to varying circumstances and relative to each particular person. As a situational ethic, moderation can only be limned "in outline and not precisely,"[9] but that didn't stop the golden mean from becoming a powerful cultural commonplace in early modern England. Despite its ubiquitous invocation as an ideal, there was a great divergence in how this ethical principle was to be construed or applied to the various—economic, religious, social, erotic—spheres of early modern life.[10] Within this controversial discourse, Shakespeare distinguishes himself from many of his contemporaries, who pitted passion against moderation, excess against a "lukewarm" mean (which novelist George Eliot three centuries later exemplified in Casaubon, the mediocre scholar, moldering away in "middle march"). Given his complexity of thought, Shakespeare, throughout his corpus, presents diverse representations of moderation, reflective of various contemporary views: e.g., self-restraint with regard to common pleasures, discipline in politics, virtuosity in self-

advancement, and feminine modesty. Among Shakespeare's various depictions of the mean, however, none, I argue, is as innovative and potent as virtuous moderation, deploying rather than decrying passion towards salutary and excellent ends. In *Taming* and *Othello*, as in so much of his canon, Shakespeare vividly dramatizes a conception of moderation faithful to the Aristotelian conception of the mean as a situational virtue, which encompasses powerful passions and actions.

The Taming of the Shrew opens up the ethical issues involving the passions, virtue, and moderation when young Lucentio's plan to "study, / Virtue and that part of philosophy / . . . that treats of happiness / By virtue specially to be achieved" (1.1.18-20) gets diverted by love in a conventional opposition of love and philosophy. Virtue, however, is the key guiding force in Petruchio's wooing and socializing of Kate. Contrary to the standard critical view, Petruchio's extreme means of taming constitutes virtuous moderation, according to Aristotle, the ability to implement the just mean of affect and action in a given situation.[11] His ranting is not uncontrolled anger, but skillful, controlled acting deployed towards the virtuous end: Kate emerging from behind her shield of shrew. Moderation is a virtuous extreme in value and an instrumental mean in practice, involving the entire range of extraordinary and moderate passion and action: an excellence of disciplined passion. Moderation not only regards pains, pleasures, and the physical appetites, but is also a mean in all actions, aimed for the well-ordered soul. As Aristotle suggests, even discerning the target in real life is much more complex than in archery in that the just mean is a moving target—not a simple arithmetic mean—varying by person, by circumstance, by emotion. The complexity redoubles as we see the taming working both ways: Petruchio and Kate, in their mutual taming of each other, skillfully modulate rhetoric and theatrics towards the aim of domestic flourishing. Crucial within this enactment of virtuous moderation is prudence, the Latinate humanist version of Aristotelian practical wisdom: the perfected ability to secure the best ends in life by forwarding the just affect and action as the situation demands. The first section of this essay demonstrates how the comic couple of *Taming*, through virtuous moderation, prudentially marshals their marriage toward salubrious ends.

The second and third sections of this study then examine how the tragic couple in *Othello*, through their inflexible "hypervirtue," fail to coordinate conjugal companionship. As the original meaning of *hamartia* suggests, they sorely miss the mark of integrating Mars

and Venus into a harmonious and fruitful union. *Othello* is not simply the story of "an easily inflamed man who has the unfortunate accident of meeting an Iago."[12] The seeds of disaster are sown in the characters of Othello and Desdemona themselves: as Heraclitus once noted, "Man's character is his fate [*daimôn*]."[13] In other words, one's own character, not the stars above, determines one's fortune or misfortune, *eudaimonia* or *dusdaimonia*. In the case of our tragic couple, they create *dusdaimonia* out of their marriage, Othello inexorably enacting upon Desdemona the disaster of his marital state and the violent literalization of the male headship in the smothering of his wife. Ironically, it is their very passion for virtue that induces their ruin. Contrary to the common focus of criticism, it is sameness rather difference that brings on the debacle. What I call "hypervirtue" on both sides ironically alienates the couple from each other.

Although both Othello and Desdemona are dedicated to the maintenance of Othello's "perfect soul" (1.2.31), the virtuous foundation of their two-in-one, this shared devotion ruthlessly isolates one from the other without the temporizing effects of human sympathy. Despite the "pity" (1.3.167, 4.1.186-87) that binds them in piercing and wistful admiration of the good, they cannot enact pity towards each other, immured in the chrysolite prisons of their "perfect souls." The analysis of good and effective action undoubtedly favors the comic protagonists because virtuous moderation is more generously dispensed among its protagonists to achieve happy outcomes, whereas tragedy depicts its protagonists descending towards disaster through character flaws and errors. The focus of comedy and tragedy diverge in this regard. While we can admire the well-wrought actions leading to a sometime stronger and sometime weaker vision of harmony and order in Shakespearean comedy, his tragedies particularly endow the theatrical performance with all the emotional intensity of the lived experience. Tragedy calls to mind what is more important than the mere success or failure in the power dynamics of gender: the movingly human, phenomenological experience of early modern and modern subject-spouses trying to achieve a working love through what Harry Berger calls "the discipline of tempered communion."[14]

Petruchio's moderation operates within the classical connection between virtue and knowledge, or wisdom. As Lodowick Bryskett, author of *A Discourse of Civill Life*, affirms, the man of moderation "knoweth that he is not born to himself alone, but to civil society and conversation, and to the good of others as well as of himself."[15]

Petruchio sees beneath Kate's defensive shield of a sharp tongue into her true worth, and taming, transcending its offensiveness to modern sensibilities, is the process to unveil her hidden virtue. Indeed, Petruchio is Kate's champion before a "sland'rous world" that sees her crookedly "limp[ing]" when, indeed, "Kate like the hazel-twig / Is straight and slender, and as brown in hue /As hazelnuts and sweeter than the kernels" (2.1.245-48), descriptions of more credible, homely beauty than the clichéd Petrarchan tropes by which Lucentio woos Bianca. In this manner, Petruchio tries to undo her generally "ill-favoured" status, promulgated by her father Baptista's preference for gentle-seeming Bianca of "beauteous modesty" (2.1.251). At the end of their famous verbal duel, he claims emphatically, "I am he am born to tame you, Kate, / And bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate / Conformable as other household Kates" (2.1.263-70). Not only does he resonantly reiterate her name, he claims the singularity of their union—"Thou must be married to no man but me" (2.1.267)—in this way, approaching love's ideal of finding "that special face" (2.1.11), something the other pair of youthful lovers, Bianca and Lucentio, have only incompletely found in each other.

Whereas feminist critics have generally resisted Petruchio's taming tactics as akin to modern methods of torture and brainwashing,[16] this essay situates itself in the "pro-Petruchio" camp, extending a humanist reading of his extremist methods of socializing Kate.[17] Petruchio employs extraordinary, prudential means to channel Kate's anti-social violence into productive passion, the so-called taming of Kate. First, Petruchio takes her away from her social circle immediately after the wedding. This action, which the feminist camp interprets as an act of cruelty, becomes, in this prudential humanist reading, a salutary action of distancing Kate from the source of harm, a familial and social circle inimical to her being. Second, Petruchio employs his command of theatrics and rhetoric to teach Kate a fundamental lesson about living in society: the need to play social roles. This is hardly a new idea—what is important here rather is that Petruchio is adept at finding the just mean between conforming with and opposing the concerns and conventions of his society as the situation demands. For instance, just as he eschews Petrarchan ideals for a more homely conception of beauty, Petruchio scorns outward garments for inner virtue with dramatic verve. Unlike many other Shakespearean characters, he exudes an assurance regarding himself and his place and power within society. It is with this assurance that he creates and re-creates himself through

theatrics and rhetoric towards profitable and virtuous ends. Thus to bring Kate around, Petruchio modulates his actions effectively between hyperbolic rant and gentle speech entailing the same governance of passions practiced by skilled early modern actors, or "prudent mediocritie," according to Thomas Wright.[18]

The marital battle of the sexes comes to a head during the "sun and moon" dispute, which has boiled down to who can put up the bigger fuss and win the title of petty tyrant. The sheer absurdity of his presumption to preside over celestial motions allows Kate to bow down without losing dignity and, more importantly, the understanding that play-acting can be used for constructive social ends. By seeing her shrewishness mirrored through Petruchio's tyrannical ways, Kate comes to realize that Petruchio, beyond his roaring façade, is her ally, friend, and husband, who not only sees and appreciates her worth but wants her to do the same. No longer needing a combative front against an inimical world, she has regained herself. And in her newfound self-possession without the bugbears of male detractors, Kate has also regained a world—over which she will morally preside, trumping Petruchio's formal husbandly authority.

Her famous final speech, ostensibly addressing proper female conduct with "Fie, fie, unknit that threatening unkind brow" (5.2.140), subtly echoes Petruchio's bravura speech on male virtue concluding with "Tush, tush, fear boys with bugs" (1.2.205) and, likewise, reveals her self-command and control of the immediate scene. Despite her external aim to rein in deviant female behavior and her apparent accommodation of distinct gender expectations, Kate subtly gives equal time to proper male conduct, thereby commixing the complementary male and female virtue into a "heavenly mingle" (*Antony and Cleopatra*, 2.1.58) of human excellence. In her hortatory speech to the other wives, Kate not only extols the ideal husband but also cunningly enumerates his contractual duties, the default of which would relinquish her from his authority:

> Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
> Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,
> And for thy maintenance commits his body
> To painful labour both by sea and land,
> To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
> Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe;
> And craves no other tribute at thy hands
> But love, fair looks, and true obedience—
> Too little payment for so great a debt. (5.2.150-58)

This speech recapitulates the Pauline injunction of husbandly duty towards the wife, which von Wied presents in *The Glasse of Godly Love* as a pre-eminent model of imitation to which all husbands are accountable. As Henry Smith explains in his conduct manual, "A Preparation to Marriage" (1594), "if [the husband] let [his wife] be better than himself, he seems to free her from her obedience, and bind himself to obey her."[19] Kate's exaggerated compliance with conduct-book female submissiveness, moreover, reveals its apocryphal nature, undermining the argument of physical strength as rationale for superiority and exposing the defects of natural law and the arbitrariness of positive law as based upon "custome, education, fortune, and a certayne tyrannicall occasion."[20] In performance, Kate's ending gesture of placing her hands "below [her] husband's foot" (5.2.177), if enacted as seizing his Achilles's heel, could be emphatically ambivalent, signalling both her wifely obeisance and her queenly checkmating of Petruchio through his *de facto* moral inferiority despite his *de juris* superiority. Bianca's self-assertive retort to Lucentio's complaint about losing the bet, "The more fool you for laying on my duty" (5.2.128), thereby correcting his view of her as either Petrarchan lady during courtship or submissive wife during marriage, also reinforces the satiric undertone of Kate's final speech. While Bianca rightly checks Lucentio's objectifying conception of women, Kate goes further constructively to model before her audience virtuous moderation as an effective art of living: a Platonic fusion of love and the good producing salutary ends in the world through Aristotelian practical wisdom. And that is how Kate domestiKates Petruchio and the others in the moral *oikonomia* of Padua.

Othello allows greater expression of heroic virtue through the characters of Othello and Desdemona while at the same time reducing the prudential action linked with comedy for the workings of *hamartia*, the character flaw and/or error(s) of judgment which yield (Aristotelian) tragedy. While most scholarship on Othello and Desdemona have focused on differences between them—sex, race, and age—my reading highlights sameness in Othello's and Desdemona's unaccommodating virtue as the root of their demise. The play's wondrous effect lies in this marvelous union of differences that transpires against all perceivable obstacles. Othello and Desdemona's extraordinary relationship, depicting the magic and misery, the enchantment and torment issuing from erotic desire as a so-called "attraction of opposites," explores to what extent difference enhances an amorous relationship and at what point it can prove deleterious. By generic imperative, the tragedy examines

both the internal and external, the characteral and cultural conditions by which Othello and Desdemona's marriage works its way to doom. In the interests of space, I will focus on the characteral, and hence, the prudential causes of their tragedy.

Despite their external differences in skin color, age, and social class, Othello and Desdemona are alike in one respect: both are, in the eyes of others, exemplars of virtue and self-dignity—he, through his martial prowess and commanding ability that constitute masculine virtue, and she, through maidenly chastity and social grace that constitute feminine virtue. At the same time, Othello, by virtue of his color, and Desdemona, by virtue of her sex, are both, in Robert Watson's words, "romantic innocents in a world of sexual intrigue."[21] Despite this marital breach triggered by the devious Iago, the cause of tragedy lies not so much in difference as in sameness: Othello's and Desdemona's hypervirtue—failure on both sides to temporize their idealism so as to bridge emerging conflicts instead of aggravating them. Despite their extraordinary union, Othello and Desdemona, as spouses, fail to modulate the demands of individual being with those of the joint marital being.

In the first half of the play, Othello displays a liberal nature that approves the sensual side of virtue and promotes the flourishing of beauty and love through pleasure:

> 'Tis not to make me jealous
> To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,
> Is free of speech, sings, plays, and dances;
> Where virtue is, these are more virtuous. (3.3.183-86)

Here, his *love* of Desdemona gives her *leave* (linguistic cognates[22]) to be the gracious, virtuous lady of the house. His liberality gives her liberty to display the social graces of civilized life.

Yet the world of civil and conjugal domesticity has also a disturbing erotic side, which begins to unman Othello. To Desdemona's departing words in act 3, scene 3, "Be as your fancies teach you. / Whate'er you be, I am obedient" (89-90), Othello exclaims in self-reflection, "Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul / But I do love thee, and when I love thee not, / chaos is come again" (91-94). Though Othello is referring to Desdemona, the epithet equally suits himself in the penumbra of marital dyad: caught between perdition and chaos, between loving and not loving, in a new, confounding world in which his sense of self hangs on his beloved's regard. When Othello rejoins Desdemona in Cyprus, having weathered a terrible storm, he exclaims, "If it were now to die / 'Twere now to be most happy" (2.1.186-87). Granted that

this is Othello's expression of his happiness at seeing Desdemona, conveying the perfection of the moment, one cannot help wondering what man would be content with death before the consummation of their marriage! Othello speaks of the perdition of loving and the chaos of not loving, but in his rapid decline from non-jealousy to a demand of "proof" in the same passage (3.3.195), Othello flees his own turmoil rather than save love.

Troubled in both the racial and sexual aspects of his being, Othello acts consistently to defend his manhood over his marriage, his personal interests over those of the joint being. Despite his cry of despair at the loss of love, he is more consumed by the loss of his mental peace. His anguish is so great that he buys this peace at the cost of bewhoring Desdemona. Sexual and racial insecurity assailing the core of his self-worth, Othello is not capable of love defined as emotional and psychic unity such that selfless devotion towards the beloved's well-being is equivalent with one's own well-being. For Othello, Desdemona remains an object to be enjoyed, appreciated, and used for male profit, not a subject in her own right, whose feelings and actions he respects and bewonders as those of a distinct individual. Consequently, Othello makes professions of justice regarding her alleged adultery, but shortly thereafter denies her the due process entitled to the accused. The judicious deliberation of "I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove" (3.3.194) is followed a mere 170 lines later by the violent exhortation, "Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore. . . . Give me the ocular proof" (3.3.364-65). It is Othello, who seems to have a change of heart—not Desdemona, as Iago insinuates: he wants back his "unhousèd free condition" (1.2.26). The gloriously active warrior would rather front the most harrowing dangers of nature and martial violence than the unbearable storminess of eros. That is why Othello easily accepts a combination of indirect and unreliable evidence—the circumstantial evidence of the handkerchief, pseudo-auditory proof, and various accounts of hearsay—the totality of which offers him an illusion of sufficient proof. Our students often ask in frustration, "Why doesn't Othello confront Desdemona directly about Cassio and give her a chance to speak?" But that is a moot point. In his psychic distress, he simply wants out—at the cost of bewhoring and expunging Desdemona. In his state of male insecurity, her speech could only incriminate her as *prima facie* evidence of promiscuity. Othello has cleverly maneuvered between the "perdition" of loving—the threat against his self-integrity—and the "chaos" of not loving—the void it leaves—towards a

falsely just mean: the self-justified peace of not loving Desdemona by virtue of her "proven" guilt.

Although Othello and Desdemona's marriage begins with all the promises of an edenic union, Othello quits paradise, his mind filled with foul thoughts, the reflection of his own fallen state, his alliance with the Satan-like Iago. The clash arises when Desdemona's generosity, linked to self-expansion, swells to the edge of feminine grace, which turns into wayward wantonness in the eyes of insecure Othello, his jealousy piqued by Iago's pernicious prodding. In their joint being, Othello takes an insinuation of Desdemona's adultery as an actual assault upon his "pure soul" such that in the most visceral terms, he "had rather be a toad, / And live upon the vapour of a dungeon / Than keep a corner in the thing I love / For others' uses" (3.3.274-7).

The couple's marriage devolves abruptly from the companionate to the dominance model as signaled by Othello's retraction of liberality in act 3, scene 4. The once rational and judicious Othello now practices superstitious hand-reading, interpreting her moist hand not auspiciously, but suspiciously, as a sign of sexual promiscuity, "fruitfulness and *liberal* heart" (3.4.36, my italics). The word *liberal* has assumed an insidiousness even as license has cankered to licentiousness in Othello's post-lapsarian view. In this, his first encounter with Desdemona after Iago's pernicious impact, Othello cannot perceive the true devil and already demonizes his innocent wife in a riddling manner: "For here's a young and sweating devil here / That commonly rebels. 'Tis a good, / A frank one" (3.4.40-42). Choosing to speak to Desdemona in a mystifying manner, Othello, even as he prematurely decides her guilt, prevents open communication with her, further shutting down her opportunities to defend herself. In this act of foreclosure, he subconsciously, yet insidiously, sends the "frank" Desdemona to Cassio, to "intermingle" ardently in his suit—not in lewdness, but out of boredom, for the "young and sweating devil here / That commonly rebels" is the woman idling away in domestic inconsequence, suddenly impassioned by an opportunity for grave action outside the home.

Othello's claim to "love not wisely but too well" (5.2.353) better suits Desdemona, consecrating herself absolutely to her husband's "soul and [mis]fortunes" (1.3.249). If Othello's normative actions represent the early modern man's first and foremost devotion to his inviolate self, Desdemona embodies the early modern wife's sense of self as embedded, for better or worse, in the joint being of marriage. Desdemona's accompanying Othello to Cyprus as

his "fair warrior" (2.1.179) seems to signal a happy union of Mars and Venus: Othello partakes in the social and domestic joys while Desdemona lives closer to the masculine, military life than what early modern women were generally allowed. In act 1, we sympathize with Desdemona's insistence on accompanying her husband to Cyprus and her complementary reluctance to stay behind in the vicinity of her disapproving father when her new devotion by marriage is to Othello. At first Desdemona's presence at Othello's side in Cyprus promises the harmonious mythical union of Mars and Venus, but the events of the play reveal, instead, that military and domestic actions do not mix auspiciously as Othello's expeditious martial adjudication of his domestic trouble clearly reveals. Given her open, solicitous nature ("liberal heart" [3.4.36]) and the murky boundaries between the martial and the social realms, it is hard to condemn the sympathetic motives behind her incursions into the military sphere. Nonetheless, Desdemona, immured in the ethos of "perfect souls," does not navigate well the sudden traverse from the companionate to the dominance model as her feminine grace soils in Othello's eyes into wayward wantonness.

Desdemona comes to tragedy by mistakenly pursuing virtue as an unqualified extreme, instead of modulating it according to the political imperatives bearing upon all human action. Her own impeccable honor, bound with her unassailable idealization of Othello, "keeps her from acknowledging his jealousy while pursuing a course of rhetorical action that aggravates it."[23] Desdemona engages "frankly" with Cassio, wholly out of touch with the emotional reality of her husband's jealousy. Desdemona's perception of his insecurity should alert her to mitigate her ardent suit in Cassio's behalf. Nonetheless, she does not make allowances for moral weakness and instead expects Othello to conduct himself as magnanimously as she does.

Given Cassio's misconduct in the drunken brawl (at Iago's insidious instigation), Othello's suspension of the lieutenant was a reasonable decision, which Desdemona, the very next day, tries to override with no regard in this instance for the rehabilitative effect of disciplinary action. In her conversation with Cassio, who is afraid of losing his position permanently, Desdemona rightly reassures him that Othello "shall in strangeness stand no farther off / Than in a politic distance" (3.3.12-13). Upon the entrance of Othello and Iago, Cassio himself enacts a "politic distance" and dismisses himself, "Madam, not now," in deference for penitential time. On the contrary, Desdemona contradicts her own words and solicits an immediate reinstatement of Cassio with no

regard for "politic distance." In her excess of pity (from which Othello himself previously benefited), she implores with pathos,

> *Othello:* Went he hence now?
> *Desdemona:* Yes, faith, so humbled
> That he hath left part of his grief with me
> To suffer with him. Good love, call him back.
> (3.3.52-55)

Not surprisingly, Othello repeats Cassio's very words: "Not now, sweet Desdemon. Some other time" (3.3.56). This verbal accord suggests two points: first, the two men will sort their difference out in due time and in good measure, and, second, Desdemona's affect-based meddling is not only unnecessary, but harmful to the natural course of repairing the martial, homosocial relationship. Yet Desdemona, veritably in the role of the "young and sweating devil . . . / That *commonly* rebels" (3.4.40-41, my italics), perversely forces the issue:

> *Desdemona:* But shall't be shortly?
> *Othello:* The sooner, sweet, for you.
> *Desdemona:* Shall't be tonight at supper?
> *Othello:* No, not tonight.
> *Desdemona:* Tomorrow dinner, then?
> *Othello:* I shall not dine at home.
> I meet the captains at the citadel. (3.3.57-60)

Blinkered, Desdemona does not infer from this last remark that the resolution regarding Cassio's dereliction of duty resides in a tougher, masculine form of interaction of the martial realm rather than the more affective, feminine form of interaction of the domestic realm. For a woman of reputed virtue, Desdemona displays an uncommon immoderation and a most common impatience. Still unrelenting, she then *demands* that Othello and Cassio reconcile within three days, giving as arguments the harshness of the punishment and Othello's personal debt to Cassio, who served as the loyal intercessor during their courtship. Her reasons, however, are not militarily sound. First, Cassio's participation in a drunken brawl resulting in the wounding of a man greatly exceeds what erroneously she undercuts "in our common reason [as] not almost a fault / T'incur a private check" (3.3.65-68). Second, as Cassio would well understand, Othello, in his duty as governor, must set aside all personal claims in the disciplining of his lieutenant. Desdemona's reasoning is common in two ways: she applies (common) civic procedure when military procedure is in order, and, furthermore, exhibits mediocre instead

of sound judgment—with the final implication that her reputed virtue refers more to traditional female chastity and fidelity than the practical wisdom required by virtuous moderation, or disciplined passion.

Yet Desdemona continues to flex her "grace or power" (3.3.46), even to the point of threatening consequences if Othello does not comply: "By'r Lady, I could do much" (3.3.75). She is the one guilty of having "so much to-do / With bringing [Cassio] in" (3.3.74-75), not Othello whom she accuses. Deeply attached to her, Othello indulgently grants her wish: "Prithee, no more. Let him come when he will. / I will deny thee nothing" (3.3.76-77). By any reasonable measure, Desdemona should be satisfied with Othello's answer, yet she is not, exclaiming, "Why, this is not a boon" (3.3.77), and rants about this denouement. To Desdemona, who has turned this event into a big issue involving her female agency, Othello's granting her a general blessing has the effect of belittling what, from her perspective of limited female agency, is weighty matter, "full of poise" into a domestic trifle such as entreating "you [to] wear your gloves, / . . . Or sue to you to do a peculiar profit / To your own person" (3.3.77-81). Ironically, Desdemona's speech has the curious effect of betraying her own psychic process as she, lacking "poise," uses Cassio's suit to gain "a peculiar profit / To [her] own person." Subsumed by marriage in Othello's gloriously active life, Desdemona is not content merely to listen vicariously about his adventures in the drawing room, but rather to engage actively in them herself.

Despite Emilia's remark, "Is this man not jealous?" (3.4.96), representing the commentary of the rational (wo)man, Desdemona, willfully involving herself in martial affairs as Othello's "fair warrior" (2.1.179), believes that "state matters" (3.4.151) of Venice are the cause of Othello's distemper.[24] Desdemona herself admits, however, that she has gone too far in promoting the interests of friendship over the interests of marital harmony. Instead of trying to temporize with shortcomings of other morally flawed beings, Desdemona focuses self-absorbedly on her penitence:

> Beshrew me much, Emilia,
> I was—unhandsome warrior as I am—
> Arraigning his unkindness with my soul;
> But now I find I had suborned the witness,
> And he's indicted falsely. (3.4.146-49)

If only for a moment, Desdemona regrets this recent rebellion of her soul, which she had joined eternally with Othello's. In her contrition, however, she is more focused on upholding her integrity than examining how her "frank" behavior might be aggravating his sense of insecurity and how she might change her course of conduct. Even her statement, "Nay, we must think men are not gods, / Nor of them look for such observancy / As fits the bridal" (3.4.144-46), is more a generalized observation about the gap between martial and marital spheres than an empathetic understanding of what her exceeding kindness has wrought in her sexually insecure husband. Desdemona's assurance of love, "'twas that [frank] hand that gave away my heart" (3.4.43), would have satisfied the former Othello, appeased by the thought that "she had eyes and she chose me" (3.3.193), but not the jealous Othello, whom she ignores through her narrow, solipsistic lens of hypervirtue. Moreover, simply exculpating herself as the cause of Othello's jealousy ("Alas the day, I never gave him cause" [3.4.153]) does nothing to confront the problem in real terms, which, as Emilia well understands, is a condition *independent* of cause, a disease within Othello's mind. An image of high expectation of conduct and achievement often becomes the impetus for a person to fulfill that image. But such is not the right strategy to deal with Othello in his pathological state. Desdemona's blinkered focus on her personal integrity prevents any practical handling of Othello's problem.

Thus, despite her confession to wrongdoing, Desdemona again, instead of following her own good counsel, continues to badger Othello about Cassio, this time in public. In her single-minded pursuit of reconciliation between Othello and Cassio, Desdemona shows an odd combination of cleverness and obtuseness. Not the "subtle whore" Othello thinks her to be, she resorts to cunning tactics of social pressure to mend bonds in the broadest sense of the venereal enterprise. Yet she does not modulate her virtuous project with the realities of interacting with fallible human beings. Thus her explanation to Lodovico about the "unkind breach" (4.1.218), trying to enlist him to her cause, is most "unpleasing to a married ear" (*Love's Labour Lost*, 5.2.877): "I would do much / T'atone them, for the love I bear to Cassio" (4.1.224-25). When Othello, astounded—"Fire and brimstone!" (4.1.226)—by her temerity, cautions Desdemona, "Are you wise?" (4.1.225), she obtusely continues to press the issue further. When "state matters" call him back to Venice, "deputing Cassio in his government" (4.1.229), in Othello's heated brain, Fortune and

Desdemona, the "subtle whore," might just as well be conspiring to bring him down. Desdemona, seeing his anger, only spurs him further, "By my troth, I am glad on't" (4.1.230), committing in Othello's mind, the ultimate act of madness justifying his slapping her face in public. Desdemona's utter disregard of Othello's jealousy seriously undermines her protestations of virtue: "Sweet Othello . . . I have not deserved this" (234-35). Technically, no, she does not deserve the public reprimand because she is innocent on the count of infidelity, but on account of angering her husband by refusing to perceive the jealousy roused within him, only the blind, hypervirtuous Desdemona would insist after this scene of provocation that she "never gave him cause" (3.4.153).

The gap between Desdemona's and Othello's views can further be explained by the fact that the wifely prerogative of free speech in their initially consensual, companionate marriage has by the effect of male insecurity regressed to the patriarchal injunctions of feminine silence, obedience, and chastity. According to this restrictive standard, Desdemona's open speech is in and of itself an expression of promiscuity.[25] Despite Lodovico's defense of her as "truly, an obedient lady" (4.1.243), there is room for doubt even within the context of a consensual, companionate marriage. An obedient wife in such a marriage would not act in bad faith by pursuing a double-faced strategy of calling him "sweet Othello," even as she intentionally provokes him to anger. Her gladness in Othello's return to Venice is, moreover, inconsistent with her initial insistence on accompanying her husband to Cyprus.

The challenge that presents itself for the early modern virago, a woman aspiring for greater agency, is the difficulty of balancing feminine obedience and masculine self-assertion towards best effects. Sympathizing with her passion for greater agency, we also witness how Desdemona botches her attempts at just action, unsuccessfully intermingling masculine and feminine modes of conduct in the intermediate space of Cyprus between the martial and the venereal. Ineffectively pleading Cassio's suit in a feminine, affective mode of action with masculine self-assertion, Desdemona fails to bridge the gap between the two spheres, reflective of her fractured being, and ultimately yields to female subsumption within the male being, a negation physically enacted by her death at Othello's hands.

In *Taming*, we revel at the successful prudential action of Kate and Petruchio, crowned with the happy end of sexual consummation: "Come, Kate, we'll to bed" (5.2.188). In *Othello*, Desdemona weds death, her sexuality tamed in chrysolite. Her

retreat to the marital bed, as heralded by the "Willow" song about forsaken love, underscores her "embeddedness" in the marital union to the loss of her life. The smothering of Desdemona in her marital sheets, in all its quiet horror, becomes the literal enactment of the coverture of the wife in the legal personhood of the man. As the other comedies featuring jealous men—*Much Ado*, *Merry Wives*, and *The Winter's Tale*—suggest, Kate could well have a darker future than hinted by the play's jocular end. Despite its generic happy ending, trouble lurks in *The Taming of the Shrew* as well as we can imagine gender and subject negotiations continuing after the curtain's close as they do in real life. A juxtaposed reading of *Taming* and *Othello* mutually informs the gender dynamics of the marital dyad in both plays.

Examining a comic and tragic portrayal of the erotic and political negotiations within marriage reveals the trade-off between prudential success and emotional intensity that Shakespeare himself negotiates in deciding between the comic or tragic mode, or as he often does, mixing the two to present a "mingled yarn" (*All's Well That Ends Well*, 4.3.69). Within the context of early modern matrimonial discourses, we see, with Othello's transformation from a calm, judicious commander into a zealous murderer, a devolution of the couple's marriage from the conscience model based on companionate marriage to the dominance model based on male supremacy and the famous triple injunction for wifely submission: silence, obedience, and chastity. The interpretation of Shakespeare's characteristically multi-faceted tragedy cannot be rigidly bound by this topical model, however; the play's literary greatness allows us to experience the moral struggle and the genuine terror of Othello's dilemma. A character's actions read in the context of his own—however delusive—moral aspirations, Othello's murder of Desdemona is the literalization of death-of-spouse dreams on the part of early moderns, for whom marriage was forever and divorce was not an option.[26] Given his visceral perception of being bound to the carcass of his vicious spouse, the only way that Othello can retrieve his "perfect soul" is to cut her off.

Similarly, in Desdemona's case, the challenge for the modern reader is to see her other than a female abject: to grant her tragic stature despite her seeming role of feminine passivity. In my estimation, Desdemona is a tragic hero (not heroine) in two respects: her noble spirit combined with her tragic prudential errors. In her controversial last words, she asserts her innocence as the core of her being: "A guiltless death I die" (5.2.132). When Emilia asks, "Who hath done this deed?" Desdemona replies enigmatically,

"Nobody—I myself. Farewell. / Commend me to my kind lord. O, farewell!" (5.2.121-24). Desdemona's paradoxical last words do not simply enact the wifely abject, but more subtly, the integrity of a woman who, with no other recourse, submitted herself nobly to the two-in-one. Othello's and Desdemona's failures in prudential action must be sympathetically seen within a relentless concatenation of untimely events, coincidences, and mutable human interaction, which make good action all the more challenging. Likewise, with less acuteness, we may also access Kate's phenomenological situation of a strong-minded early modern woman, spurned by the men of her society, who feel challenged by her wit and tongue. In Petruchio, we have one man unafraid to front the strong woman, who, in the process, might become a better man by replacing his machismo with true magnanimity and strength. Ultimately, it is not so much the gender/genre outcome—comic or tragic depending on successful prudential action—that reverberates in us long after the curtain's close, but rather the whole of the dramatic representation as phenomenological glimpses into early modern marriage, conveying the challenges, complexities, and joys that accompany the pursuit of good action in real life.

Notes

1. A. D. Nuttall, *A New Mimesis: Shakespeare and the Representation of Reality* (London: Methuen Publishing, 1983), 134.

2. Citations of Shakespeare are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997). I would like to thank Nancy Barta-Smith for her useful comments about the organization of this paper.

3. Meg Lota Brown and Kari Boyd McBride, *Women's Roles in the Renaissance* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 54.

4. Sara Munson Deats, "'Truly an Obedient Lady': Desdemona, Enilia, and the Doctrine of Obedience in *Othello*," *Othello: New Critical Essays*, ed. Philip Kolin (New York: Routledge, 2002), 233-34.

5. Hermann von Wied, *The Glasse of Godly Love, A Briefe and a Plaine Declaration of the Duety of Maried Folks*, trans. Haunce Dekin (London: I. C[harlewood] for H. S[ingleton], 1588), sig. Bi.

6. Although husbands were encouraged to use peaceful means to inculcate their wives in these hortatory treatises, wife-beating was, nonetheless, a legal means of "correction." In the case of a wife in danger of having "her brains knocked out," William Whateley, author of *A Bride Bush* (William Whately, *A Bride Bush or A Direction for Married Persons* [London, 1623], sig. Ee3 ^{v}), generally sympathetic to women, explains that she may take recourse of the law for safety "with the purpose of returning upon such security."

7. Fulke Greville, "Mustapha," in *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M. H. Abrams, 5th ed., 2 vols. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), 1:990.

8. Lodowick Bryskett, *A Discourse of Civill Life (1606)*, ed. Thomas E. Wright (Northridge: San Fernando Valley State College, 1970), 202.

9. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross, from *Introduction to Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 1947), 2.2.1104a108.

10. Joshua Scodel, *Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 3.

11. Aristotle, 2.6.1106a28.

12. Allan Bloom and Harry V. Jaffa, *Shakespeare's Politics* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1964), 38; see also A. D. Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 278, on Othello's victimization by Iago based on the textual clue in Othello's final speech: "but being wrought/ Perplexed in the extreme" (5.2.354-55).

13. Heraclitus, Fragment 119, *The Complete Fragments: Translation and Commentary and the Greek Text*, trans. William Harris, 31-32, http://www.community.middlebury.edu/~harris/Philosophy/heraclitus.pdf (4 April 2006).

14. Harry Berger, Jr., *Revisionary Play: Studies in the Spenserian Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 22.

15. Bryskett, *A Discourse of Civill Life*, 154. In ancient Greek philosophy, wisdom is the knowledge of marshaling goods, such as health, wealth, social status, and moral virtues, towards a chief good of happiness, or self-flourishing. Socrates believed that true wisdom was equivalent to virtue (no issue of weak will), and that virtue was sufficient for happiness.

16. Jean Howard, introduction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 139.

17. Dana E. Aspinall, ed., introduction to *The Taming of the Shrew: Critical Essays*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 13-14.

18. Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall (1604)*, ed. Thomas O. Sloane (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 179.

19. Henry Smith, "A Preparation to Marriage," in *The Sermons of Master Henry Smith* (London: Thomas Man, 1594), 21.

20. Agrippa von Nettesheim, *De nobilitate et praecellentia sexus foeminei (1509)* (*Female Pre-eminence, or The Dignity and Excellency of That Sex above the Male, an Ingenious Discourse*), trans. Henry Care (London: 1670), sig. F7.

21. Robert N. Watson, "Tragedy," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, ed. A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 330; Michael Neill, "Changing Places in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Survey* 37 (1984): 118.

22. See etymological explanation for OED entry, "leave, n.1": "The etymological sense is prob. 'pleasure, approval'; the root is identical with that of LOVE, LIEF, BELIEVE."

23. Harry Berger, Jr., "'Three's a Company': The Spectre of Contaminated Intimacy in *Othello*," *Shakespearean International Yearbook* 4 (2004): 257, pun intended.

24. See Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 60-64, for an excellent psychophysiological explanation of Othello's "puddle" spirit.

25. See Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 118, quoting Juan Luis Vives, *Instruction of a Christen Woman* (1540), trans. Richard Hyrde: "for [a woman] to be 'eloquent of speche' is tantamount to babbling and 'a token of a light mynde and shrowde conditions.'" See also Dana E. Aspinall, ed., *The Taming of the Shrew: Critical Essays* (New York: Routledge: 2002), 10.

26 Frances Dolan, "One Flesh, Two Heads: Debating the Biblical Blueprint for Marriage in the Seventeenth and Twentieth Centuries," Huntington Library, Los Angeles, 23 February 2008. See also her forthcoming book, *Marriage and Violence: The Early Modern Legacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

Puritan Relationships: Transformation and the Concepts of Virtue and Covenant in English Renaissance Literature

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Charles Trinkaus writes that there is not "a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, the cleric and the layman, the mystical and the rational which generated factions and multifarious parties, but a search for ways of trying to bring together and reconcile the apparently conflicting values."[1] For the people during the Renaissance or early modern period, religion permeated how they lived their lives and formed their relations. Humanist education revived the classics, including Platonic ideals, where relationships and senses could lead to a greater relationship with God and a more equal relationship in marriage. Puritans also proposed the idea of companionate marriage during the English Renaissance by transforming the ideas of virtue and covenant to apply to marriage, family, the King and, of course, God. While the evolution or transformation of marriage was affected by both classical and religious, specifically Puritan, sources, this paper will focus primarily on Puritan influences. Puritan theorists helped transform the concepts of virtue and covenant to apply the idea of companionate friendship to marriage. This transformation was eventually applied to God and the King, beginning the movement toward proto-notions of democracy in England. The evolution of companionate relationships, based on the transformation and mutability of the terms *virtue* and *covenant* will be illustrated in the later Renaissance literature of Shakespeare and George Herbert's "Redemption," which transforms even more in Milton's *Paradise Lost.*

The transformation of the word *virtue* from "virginity and virility" to "moral excellence and chastity" established more egalitarian marriage as a pattern for societal and religious relationships. The term had specific gender connotations: for men,

coming from the Latin root *virtus,* meaning "manliness, valour, and military prowess," but for woman, "virginity." The division complicated marital relations, but as theorists started to use the term as "moral excellence," this evolution also included the idea of a single standard of virginity for men and women, under more egalitarian terms. Ultimately, Alasdair MacIntyre, along with others, discusses how *virtue* transforms to "chastity and moral excellence."[2] Gregory Chaplin expresses how Milton, a known part of the Puritan movement, described conversation as the noblest end of marriage. Chaplin believes that "in doing so, Milton assumes that women are indeed capable of the mental fellowship from which Montaigne and classical commentators on friendship disqualify them, and there are moments in his argument where hierarchical gender differences almost disappear."[3]

Milton's definition of marriage evolves toward a more democratic union, with both parties capable of conversation, intellectual discovery, moral excellence, and even virginity. According to this idea, the typical hierarchy in the marriage relationship could disappear because of the equality expected from both members. Milton in *Paradise Lost* portrays how God gave Adam Eve in "Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self (7.1086-87)."[4] This equality was also an essential idea and passage for Puritans on how they set up their marriages. Marriage should be between help meet, complementary partners. Later Adam professes the idea that Eve seems so perfect and divine that "her doing seem'd to justifie the deed" (7.142). Eve was Adam's partner, so he felt justified in following her example. James Johnson suggests that "for the Puritans the primacy of mutual help in marriage is tied to their conception of marriage as based on an essentially covenantal model, with an emphasis on the mutual agreement of man and wife to live together as meet helps."[5] This redefinition of virtue not only helped change the concept of virginity to chastity to redeem marriage, but evolved toward a less absolutist form of government as well.

The different gender connotations complicate or make equal friendship or true help meets impossible. Separate connotations encouraged virtue really becoming vices. Jean Gagen explains that the male connotation coming from the Latin root *virtus* "did indeed emphasize valor at the expense of virtue (that is, justice and reason)."[6] The repercussions from this emphasis, which contradicted Christian charity, consisted of the idea of fighting for personal military glory even for unjust causes or personal revenge.[7] Gagen notes that the male emphasis on prowess existed

even in Aristotle's day and was not a product of the Renaissance. Hugh MacLachlan talks about how the Christian knight in Spenser's "The Fairie Queen," also a prominent work during the Renaissance, sees the world in a pagan manner, ultimately making him "confront the spiritual and psychological problems inherent in a system of personal justice (and injustice)."[8] Male prowess or revenge can be taken to an extreme, devaluing real virtue. This connotation of virtue seemed to be incompatible with the female connotation of virtue.

Shakespeare, in his play *Othello*, illustrates how male *virtus* creates unequal relationships, requiring from women something different than from men. Othello, the Moor, wins Desdemona by telling her stories of his military prowess. Othello relates that "she wished she had not heard it, yet she wished / That heaven had made her such a man. She thanked me, / And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her, / I should teach him how to tell my story, / And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake" (1.3.161-65).[9] Desdemona is attracted by Othello's stories of battle and brute strength. Othello reaffirms this idea of virility or prowess as virtue when he proclaims that it is the "plumed troops and the big wars that make ambition virtue!" (3.3.353-55). Othello's, and by extension Shakespeare's, idea of virtue for men, of course, does not include an idea of virginity or chastity. Marriage for men does not exact the same requirements; instead, physical valor was emphasized at the expense of cultivating other virtues for men. Jean Gagen also explains that valor or prowess, as we might call it, was so important "in the estimation of a gentleman's worth that it was often set apart for special emphasis and an honorable man was frequently defined as one who had never failed in justice or in valor?"[10] In Othello's case, he wins Desdemona through his military prowess, but that same *virtus* also caused Othello to end her life. Shakespeare illustrates how prowess or revenge taken to the extreme besmirches virtue. Othello's virtue becomes his vice. Men and women cannot have marriages of friendship or mutuality because male *virtus* will get in the way.

Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* shows an impulse to change this idea of *virtus* to one of moral excellence and chastity for both sexes, promoting the idea of companionate marriage and egalitarian tendencies. Chaplin explains how "Milton's theory of marriage thus represents the fusion of two discourses: Christian, as modified by reformed theologians and humanist scholars, and Renaissance friendship—the practice of classical friendship revived by humanist educators and the dissemination of classical texts."[11] Milton, along

with other theorists and activists, specifically Puritans and Humanists, redefined marriage as companionate or mutual friendship. Milton transforms war and prowess to charity and obedience to God's Holy Spirit in his works. His epic poem *Paradise Lost* becomes the pattern for this transformation to equality and a single definition of virtue. In the final book of *Paradise Lost*, Adam asks the angel Michael as they are about to be thrown out of the garden, "Who then shall guide his people, who defend?" (12.482-84). Adam is looking for physical protection and strength. Instead Michael replies to Adam's inquiry that

> . . . from Heaven
> He to His own a Comforter will send,
> The promise of the father, Who shall dwell,
> His spirit, within them, and the law of faith,
> Working through love, upon their hearts shall write,
> To guide them in all truth, and also arm
> With spiritual armor, able to resist
> Satan's assaults, and quench his fiery darts. (12.485-92)

In this reply, Adam, who has been living in innocence, relies on physical prowess. But when knowledge replaces innocence, that prowess becomes tainted and no longer virtuous. Adam must put his trust in the arm of God instead of the arm of the flesh. Also, Michael does not address just Adam, using the term *them*, not just *you*, to address both Adam and Eve. Not just Adam, but Eve will also receive the spirit. Russ McDonald proclaims that "the basis for conjugal mutuality was the doctrine of spiritual equality among men and woman,"[12] which Michael implies. This spiritual equality that Milton gives Adam and Eve in his poem stands as the basis for mutuality in marriage for all.

Othello also moves away from military prowess and revenge as virtue near the end of the play, but his virtue becomes his vice first. First, Othello declares lustfully as he strangles Desdemona that "had all [Cassio's] hairs been lives, my great revenge / Had stomach for 'em all" (5.2.51-52). When he believes Desdemona has betrayed her virtue, Othello leaps to defend or fulfill his. Emilia later reveals to Othello that Desdemona remained chaste. Othello realizes that his *virtus* has failed him, and he kills himself. Virtue in marriage must encompass more than military prowess because it so often becomes a vice and a tragedy. As Milton would have it, virginity and *virtus* become chastity, moral excellence, or love, as in *Paradise Lost*.

For women *virtue* meant virginity, which meant that without the move toward chastity, women lost their virtue in marriage.

Alasdair MacIntyre describes how most understand "chastity as virtue only because it is a useful device to secure that property is passed only to legitimate heirs, of those who believe that the passage of time confers legitimacy upon what was originally acquired by violence and aggression."[13] Women's virtue was lost through the use of men's virtue, but also lost in God's commanded covenant. It seemed inane. The jewel of Desdemona's dower is her virginity, which she offers in marriage to Othello. The characters hail Desdemona as virtuous even in marriage, but Iago expounds how he "will turn her virtue into pitch, / And out of her own goodness make the net / That shall enmesh them all" (2.3.334-336). Iago understands the idea that virtue as chastity ensures Othello's legitimate heirs. If Iago can "turn her virtue to pitch," he can make certain that Othello inverts his virtue by casting Desdemona away, never having children. Even though Desdemona may be virtuous and chaste, Iago twists her virtue and perverts Othello's military prowess into a sin by falsely murdering Desdemona. The differences that turn this former virtue to sin are Christianity and knowledge, as with Adam. To redeem and establish a more equal marriage relationship, virtue for all must include chastity and moral excellence.

Just like the movement from *virtus* to moral excellence for men, there was a movement to redefine *virtue* as "chastity" for women. Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well* possesses an idea of virginity as virtue and exclaims that "man is enemy to virginity; how may we barricade it against him" (1.1.112-13). Marriage under this former idea of virtue corrupts innocence or virtue, making it vulgar. Marriage strips women naked of their virtue. Considering that the people considered marriage as a God-given fulfillment of a covenant, it did not make sense. C. S. Lewis explained that "the word *naked* was originally a past participle; the naked man was the man who had undergone a process of naking, that is, of stripping or peeling . . . . Time out of mind the naked man has seemed to our ancestors not the natural but the abnormal man; not the man who has abstained from dressing but the man who has been for some reason undressed."[14]

Milton's *Paradise Lost* characterizes Adam and Eve's nakedness and marriage as Helena does—as unnatural or vulgar because of knowledge. Adam and Eve remain naked and innocent before they eat of the fruit, but eating the fruit changes their understanding of it. Adam explains to Eve how eating the fruit "leaves us naked thus, of Honour void / Of Innocence, of Faith, of Puritie / Our wonted Ornaments now soild and staind" (8.1074-1076). Their

nakedness, as well as their marriage, no longer symbolizes innocence, but vulgarity and unnaturalness; thus, their idea of virtue and marriage must change.

The people could not accept a definition of virtue that contradicted the idea of marriage. However, marriage can be virtuous if virtue is defined as chastity. Adam and Eve put on clothes and continue on their way in marriage. Parolles, in *All's Well That Ends Well*, explains to Helena that women should not keep their virginity against men's military assault. Instead, he suggests that losing their virginity in marriage might be seen as a "rational increase" (1.1.128). Women can be chaste and virtuous still and even gain virtue from marriage. If women refuse to marry and keep their virginity, "it is ever lost" because the virtue has gone out of it (1.1.131). True virtue for women is not lost, but gained in marriage. Helena later tricks her husband Bertram into fulfilling his marital obligations by consummating their marriage. The concept of virtue as chastity must replace the former knowledge or belief of virtue as virginity. Knowledge defiles male *virtus* and female virginity, so Puritans pushed to unite both genders' connotations of virtue under moral excellence and chastity. The union pushed toward companionate marriage as the template for relationships in general.

Charles Trinkaus expresses this struggle between Christianity and paganism regarding the role of virtue by stating that

> within this context of enormous confusion concerning the relationship sacred and profane, divine and human, the individual sought to possess power, again in some form or other . . . Particularly moral—for virtue is personal moral power, and the individual sought it by his own free will, or trusted it would come to him by grace, sufficiently, that is, to render him 'just' as well as 'justified.'[15]

Trinkaus sought to recover the definition of virtue as moral excellence and chastity in order to justify or redeem the actions of Humanists and Puritans, as well as the institution of marriage. The moral power that came from redeeming virtue or marriage as a more equal covenant, Puritans put into their relationships with the divine, government, familial, and all relationships.

The people of England formed these new relationships, as they did with marriage, on the basis of covenants. McGiffert argues that the covenant "strengthened their hand by bringing the unregenerate majority—every son of Adam and daughter of Eve—clearly within the covenantal design through a legal bond with the Deity."[16] The idea of covenant, like the idea of virtue, incorporated

a struggle for definition toward a more egalitarian system of marriage and relationships. Puritans, as well as others, "applied covenant thinking to the problems of a Christian understanding of marital union. A particular type of covenant doctrine results, or rather the doctrine of a particular kind of covenant, that between man and wife, which is closely similar to covenants between friends, within nations, and in the church."[17] That covenant was a covenant of friendship or mutual help. McGiffert cautions us to recognize that although "puritans of the Elizabethan era [from whom this concept originated] made something of covenant doctrine in their theological writings, they rarely put it to political use" because it usually backfired.[18] He further explains that "only a handful of militants before the seventeenth century dared broaden those precedents into a contract theory of the commonwealth."[19] Even if covenant descended from Puritanism as only an idea and not an active movement, it was still an idea that shaped social relationships as virtue did. Preacher William Whatley in 1624 declared the existence of "true contracts of mutual obligation of the relationships between ruler and people and between husband and wife. This implies that each relationship can be dissolved for non-performance of covenant duties: a king can be deposed, an errant marriage partner can be divorced. But as in the case of calling God to task, these ultimate implications of covenantal thought are approached gingerly by the Puritans."[20]

Covenants formed marriage, as well as all relationships with God and monarchy, along a more egalitarian model. Geller states that "all fundamental relationships—that of Britain to world history, that of king to country, that of husband and wife—are seen as based on the analogous relation of man to God within the covenant that leads to man's salvation."[21] James Johnson echoes that idea that "the doctrine of a particular kind of covenant, that between man and wife, . . . is closely similar to covenants between friends, within nations, and in the church."[22] These and other authors express how the covenant, especially the new companionate marriage covenant, spread to societal relationships like government, family, and the economy. The conflict between the different connotations of covenant, as promise and contract, defined how authority and duty were newly interpreted, especially in regard to covenants.

The idea of the covenant was not new, but the Puritans redefined it to help rationalize why an all-powerful God would care for mankind. Because the covenant included unequal parties, it incorporated ideas of equality and inequality, contract and

promise. The different connotations of *contract* and *promise*, as those of *virtue*, caused problems in establishing more equal relationships. Looking at definitions of *contract* and *promise* unlocks other nuances of covenant as well. *Promise* involves assurances to others, while *contracts* involve mutual legal agreements, including marriage agreements.[23] Christianity, as well as the feudal system, incorporates the idea of promise or endless obligation. In contrast, contracts were the system of business among foreigners and strangers. The different connotations do not seem compatible, but they existed.

Covenants form the basis of relationships, but different contexts make it difficult to know which connotation should take priority in application. Shakespeare's *King Lear*, for example, shows the tension between unequal and more egalitarian marriages caused by interpretations of virtue and covenant in governmental and familial relationships. Lear wants his daughters and subjects to promise endless love and obligation, or he will break his covenant or contract with them. The king acted with contractual obligation to his subjects, but believed his subjects had promissory obligations to him. Peasants had endless obligation, and the ending of one obligation was an invitation to take on more responsibility. John S. Coolidge explains that sovereigns are not actually bound by the covenant, but instead enforce the covenant. A subject cannot break the agreement by voice or actions, but "failure of the vassal to obey the conditions of the treaty may lead to his destruction, no doubt, but not to his ceasing to belong to the sovereign."[24] At the same time, the covenant seems to imply a measure of inequality and equality at the same time. Shakespeare shows how the struggle between contract and promise echoes in familial relationships.

The majority of people leaned more toward this egalitarian contractual system than a monarchial. For example, during Queen Elizabeth's reign, "Parliament jealously guarded its authority over taxation,"[25] even though the monarch supposedly had absolute control. Internal unrest like the Northern Rebellion is one example of how the people fought against the absolute system. Lear's subjects interpret their covenant with their king in a more contractual view when a relationship is fulfilled. Lear expects his older daughters' promise of obligation and love. Goneril delivers the promise of limitless obligation and love that Lear wants to hear when she replies, "I love you more than words can wield the matter . . . as much as child e'er loved, or father found" (1.1.53,57). Regan echoes the idea by responding that she consists "of the self-same metal" and finds "I am alone felicitate / In your dear highness love" (1.1.69, 75-76). When Lear's youngest daughter,

Cordelia, will not respond in similar manner, Lear disinherits her. Johannes Allgaier believes that Lear tries to demand what only God can demand, her will; and "to allow anyone, even a father or a king, to tear open that sanctuary with the brutality of power and authority means nothing less than submitting to spiritual rape; to accept a reward for it, even a kingdom, spiritual prostitution," which is why Cordelia refuses.[26] Then when Kent, who obviously loves Lear, tries to affirm Cordelia's love, Lear breaks their contract and banishes Kent. Lear says that Kent "sought to make us break our vow" (1.1.168). Kent still loves and recognizes the king's authority following the promise-based system. Cordelia follows a more contractual covenant—giving her husband first authority before her father and king. Puritan theology complicates the covenant by espousing going beyond the limitations of contracts, but also holding onto the idea of a king.

For example, Goneril and Regan see Lear's role as king, but redefine their obligation to Lear and not to his entourage—a more contractual or democratic model. The sisters do not feel endless obligation to the king or their father. Conversely, Kent and Cordelia continue to show obligation and promise to Lear even after Lear breaks the contract with them. Lear tells Cordelia that he "disclaims all my paternal care" (1.1.113) and tells Kent to take his "reward" (1.1.173) for interfering, banishment. Kent sneaks back in disguise to watch over Lear. Cordelia interprets her covenant with her king and father as a blend of contract and promise. She has basis to abandon Lear as he has abandoned her, but she tries to save him, pointing out in her clarification that she returns her duties "as are right fit" (1.1.97). Even though Cordelia distinguishes in her mind between her obligations to her father and her husband, she still struggles to understand her relationship with her father and her king, in light of her relationship to God.

The Merchant of Venice shows a similar struggle between family members, as well as in business, in relation to companionate egalitarian notions. Jessica's case interestingly seems to hold no real feelings of obligation for her father. Instead, Jessica expresses her sin: "to be ashamed to be my father's child! / But though I am a daughter of his blood, / I am not to his manners" (2.3.16-18). As Jessica refutes Shylock's authority as her head, she moves away from the more promissory system, but she does it to marry and become a Christian. These examples vividly show the tension between the promissory and contractual systems that occurred because Puritan covenant theology called for a blend of both.

Finally, different people use their imaginations to interpret business deals or relations in different ways. Shylock and Bassanio, with the Christians, define their *contracts* differently in *Merchant of Venice.* Charles Spinosa characterizes "Shylock as someone who conducts his business by instinct and gets results by developing relationships,"[27] adding that Shylock justifies his life to Antonio to develop their business relationship. When Antonio asks for money, he responds, "You spat on me on Wednesday last; / You spurned me such a day; another time / You called me dog; and for these courtesies / I'll lend you thus much moneys?" (1.3.121-24). While Shylock exacts a grave punishment for default, his willingness to consider the contract at all could be seen as magnanimous. Shylock leans toward a more egalitarian, contractual system; the Christians ultimately want a more Christian, promissory system, but a system without a place for the merchant. The Christians, Bassanio and Antonio, are known for their improvidence and benevolence because they are aristocrats and Christians—excluding Jews. When Antonio asks for the money, he tells Shylock to "lend it [the money] rather to thine enemy" (1.3.130). Shylock interprets his business deal as a contract and wants the punishment met, even if it seems cruel. Spinosa claims that "contractualism—the tendency to read intentions into all actions—will be constrained by a common practice and a common desire that require devotion more than reason."[28] Bassanio and Antonio work under a more promise-oriented business idea, a different intent; even though they tell Shylock they will abide by the terms of the contract, they expect mercy to be extended when the terms are not fulfilled. These examples show how the covenant becomes the basis for relationships.

The covenant has connotations of both contract and promise coexisting. While it seems that they should not be compatible, they both exist; and it is not always apparent which is more merciful, fair, or equal. William Ames, a Renaissance preacher, emphasized "God's ultimate control over the covenant, but also its status as 'firm promise' and 'gift,' rather than as bargain."[29] George Herbert also expresses this tension between contract and promise in his poem "Redemption." The persona in the poem acts under a contractual business transaction, which he wishes to cancel:

> Having been tenant long to a rich Lord,
> Not thriving, I resolved to be bold,
> And make a suit unto him, to afford
> A new small-rented lease, and cancel th' old.[30]

The persona cannot at first find him, but searches the cities where

> At length I heard a ragged noise and mirth
> Of thieves and murderers: there I him espied,
> Who straight, your suit is granted, said, and died.

The persona at first treats redemption like a contract, but obviously for the people, especially Puritans of the time, Christ's death exceeded any economic exchange ever made.

Lisa M. Gordis explains that the Christian Renaissance idea of covenant included the idea that God, and his extension the king, require obligation, but do not limit their power in any way.[31] The poem shows Herbert's own perception of the covenant by presenting "a rich Lord," who is also the Savior—combining the image of the king and God into one. For Herbert, the Savior acts under a promissory notion of covenant, while at the same time only demands contractual obligation. In all cases the covenant is not just contractual. Gordis explains how Herbert does not repudiate contractual and economic language entirely; instead, he limits it carefully, expending considerable intellectual energy to differentiate the covenantal relationship from an ordinary contract.[32] Herbert expressed that what people offer God is a contract, but he offers a promise of endless obligation; when humans operate under covenants of both contract and promise, as with virtue, their relationships are redeemed.

When looking at how the transformation of the terms of virtue and covenant played out in early modern English relationships of marriage, families, societies, or even religious relationships—illustrated through literature—we can see how uniting the connotations created more companionate or equal relationships. Men operating only on manly *virtus* used their prowess for unjust causes or revenge, and women lost their virtue as soon as they married. The connotations seemed incompatible, so they had to transform. When the people incorporated both moral excellence and chastity into virtue, they had more egalitarian redeemed relationships. When people worked only under a covenant conception of promise, it was one-sided, with endless obligation. When working under contract alone, relationships stay wooden. However, operating under both parts of the definition of covenant, their relationships reflected the divine covenant. The transformation of these terms created more egalitarian relationships and was the beginning of proto-democracy in England.

Notes

1. Charles Trinkaus, "Humanism, Religion, Society: Concepts and Motivations of Some Recent Studies," *Renaissance Quarterly* 29, no.4. (1976): 688.

2. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1981).

3. Gregory Chaplin, "'One Flesh, One Heart, One Soul': Renaissance Friendship and Miltonic Marriage," *Modern Philology* 99, no. 2 (2001): 271.

4. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 1677 ed. (Menston, UK: The Scholar Press, Ltd., 1972). Subsequent line references are to this edition.

5. James T. Johnson, "The Covenant Idea and the Puritan View of Marriage," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32, no. 1 (1971): 109.

6. Jean Gagen, "Hector's Honor," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1968): 133.

7. Ibid.

8. Hugh MacLachlan, "A Study of Revenge and Atonement in *The Fairie Queen*," in *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual I*, ed. Patrick Cullen and Thomas P. Ropche, Jr. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980), 137.

9. All line references to Shakespeares plays are to *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997).

10. Gagen, "Hector's Honor," 131.

11. Chaplin, "One Flesh, One Heart, One Soul," 267.

12. Russ McDonald, *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), 261.

13. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 231.

14. C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, Signature Classics (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), 104.

15. Trinkaus, "Humanism, Religion, Society," 689.

16. Michael McGiffert, "Covenant, Crown, and Commons in Elizabethan Puritanism," *The Journal of English Studies* 20, no. 1 (1980): 46

17. Johnson, "The Covenant Idea," 108.

18. McGiffert, "Covenant, Crown, and Commons," 32.

19. Ibid, 33.

20. William Whatley, "Advertisement to the Reader, in *A Care-Cloth Sermon*" (London, 1624), quoted in Johnson, "The Covenant Idea," 116.

21. Lila Geller. "*Cymbeline* and the Imagery of Covenant Theology," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 20, no. 2 (1980): 254.

22. Johnson, "The Covenant Idea," 108.

23. "Contract" and "Promise," *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2006.

24. John S. Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance in England: Puritanism and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), quoted in Lisa Gordis, "The Experience of Covenant Theology in George Herbert's 'The Temple,'" *The Journal of Religion* 76, no.2 (1996): 388.

25. McDonald, *The Bedford Companion,* 305.

26. Johannes Allgaier, "Is *King Lear* an Antiauthoritarian Play?" *PMLA* 88, no. 5 (1973): 1035.

27. Charles Spinosa, "Shylock and Debt and Contract in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature* 5 (1993): 76.

28. Ibid., 81.

29. William Ames, *The marrow of sacred divinity drawne out of the Holy Scriptures, and the interpreters thereof, and brought into method* (London: Edward Griffin, 1642), quoted in Gordis, "The Experience of Covenant Theology," 389.

30. George Herbert, "Redemption" in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M. H. Abrams (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986), 1336.

31. Gordis, "The Experience of Covenant Theology," 297.

32. Ibid., 386.

Shakespeare's War Brides

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war bride *n* (1892) 1: a woman who marries a serviceman ordered into active service in time of war. 2: a woman who marries a serviceman esp. of a foreign nation met during a time of war.[1]

Although the term "war bride" came into our language in the late nineteenth century, the concept of a woman marrying a soldier of foreign birth goes back to antiquity. Women who marry foreign soldiers, whether they are mercenary soldiers or victors, occur in myth and dramatic literature from ancient times to the present day. Many of the anxieties, experiences or social attitudes written about actual twentieth-century war brides can be found centuries earlier in literature.

In this paper I will look at characters in Shakespeare who could be viewed as war brides. I will also compare Shakespeare's war brides to other stage presentations of war brides from antiquity to the present. Further, I will be paying particular attention to the plays being produced as part of the 2008 summer season at the Utah Shakespearean Festival.

When googling "Shakespeare + war bride," I obtained only one hit: Hippolyta. Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is sometimes referred to as Theseus's war bride, but as her role is part of the framing device for the story, her personal history is not part of the action of the play. She appears also in *Two Noble Kinsmen*, but once again her story is not central to the action of the play.

On the other hand, in *Henry V*, the French princess, Katherine, is preparing to become a war bride from her first scene onwards. All in all, Katherine fares better than most war brides in literature or legend. She lives, as does her child. This contrasts dramatically with *Othello*, where Desdemona does not fare well; she dies childless, her husband dies, and shortly after her death news arrives that her father has died. It is interesting to observe how preparation for war versus cessation of fighting influence Desdemona's marriage in quite a different time frame than they do for Katherine in

Henry V. The time compression in *Othello* concentrates events much closer together to create an overwhelming environment.

Katherine's marriage in *Henry V* is used to secure a political alliance between countries that have recently been at war. A variation on this practice occurs in *Antony and Cleopatra*: "Octavius calls Antony back to Rome from Alexandria in order to help him fight against Pompey (Sextus Pompeius), Menacretes, and Menas, three notorious pirates. . . . Back in Rome, Octavius convinces Antony to marry his sister, Octavia, in order to cement the bond between the two men."[2] In this case the "war bride" is intended as an attempt to maintain a fraying domestic political alliance; however, Cleopatra has already captivated Antony, and the domestic war bride, Octavia, cannot compete with the foreign mistress. Antony's preference introduces another topic associated with war brides that will play into *Othello*—"the allure of the exotic."[3]

Examples of the first definition of war bride, "a woman who marries a serviceman ordered into active service in time of war," also occur in Shakespeare. *Henry V* has a second war bride. Just prior to going off to the war in France, Ancient Pistol marries Mistress Nell Quickly. After the English victory, he receives word in act 5, scene 1 that she has died of "a malady of France" (that is, venereal disease).[4] While these few lines warrant a "Note on the Text" in *The Riverside Shakespeare* about the emendation of the name "Doll" to "Nell," for this paper it introduces the association of venereal disease with war. Both Barbara G. Friedman, in her book *From the Battlefront to the Bridal Suite: Media Coverage of British War Brides 1942-1946*, and Hilary Kaiser, in her book *French War Brides in America: An Oral History*, write on the military's ongoing concern in almost all wars with promiscuity and venereal disease.[5]

All's Well That Ends Well can be read to have an interesting and ironic variation on the idea of a war bride as "a woman who marries a serviceman ordered into active service in time of war." Although the French King in act 2, scene 1, has kept Bertram from going off to the Florentine wars due to his youth and the expectation that the Florentine women are sexually available to the young French soldiers, Bertram sneaks off to the wars after his forced marriage to Helena as a way of avoiding his bride. Hilary Kaiser writes in her 2008 book on French war brides, "As military historians have often pointed out, combat and sexual activity usually go hand in hand."[6] Similarly, Barbara Friedman in her 2007 book on British war brides writes, "The uncertainty of war inspired a carefree attitude among soldiers and civilians that was sometimes expressed as promiscuous behavior."[7]

Helena willfully capitalizes on this aspect of war to consummate a marriage that her husband has vowed not to. After Bertram's military triumphs—as related by Diana ("They say the French Count has done most honorable service" [3.5.3-4]) and her mother the widow ("It is reported that he has taken their great'st commander, and that with his own hand he slew the Duke's brother" [3.5.5-6])—he makes plans to meet Diana, with assistance from Paroles, and then sets up a liaison with her. Unknown to Bertram, Helena has followed him to Florence and arranged to substitute herself for Bertram's intended conquest. What is of interest for this paper is that the wartime environment has helped facilitate Helena's plan. She would have had a far more difficult time arranging the bed-trick back in Rousillion or at the French court where she would be known as his spurned wife. And Bertram needed the war environment to sow his wild oats, away from the ever-guiding presence of his mother or the King of France.

Troilus and Cressida also touches on many aspects of the war bride experience. Helen of Troy is one of the oldest examples of a war bride in literature; however, Helen does not figure prominently in the action of Shakespeare's play. Although Troilus does not actually marry Cressida, their interactions play out in the manner of a war bride scenario and introduce the jealousy motif into this discussion of Shakespeare's war brides—a motif that will come to the fore in *Othello*.

This paper will center on Desdemona. The genesis for this inquiry into stage representations of war brides came from watching a recent revival of *Otello* at the Los Angeles Opera. As Italian operas based on Shakespeare often have a way of leaving Shakespeare behind and reverting to the original Italian novella, this performance also brought up the notion of looking at Cinthio's short story, Shakespeare's source. The absence of Desdemona's back story in the opera libretto made me wonder about the impact on her character of being a war bride. Since the opera cuts Shakespeare's first act and opens in Cyprus, Desdemona's eloquent speeches from act 1, scene 3 are absent. Her speeches in this Shakespearean scene deeply inform the listener of her strength of character, sophistication, and education. This scene is also pivotal in showing that the Duke of Venice's need to "straight employ [Othello] against the general enemy Ottoman" (1.3.47-48) diminishes family and personal concerns for Desdemona and Othello. Would the Duke of Venice, who is arguably the wealthiest and most powerful man in the world, ignore the personal plight of Brabantio—one of his own—if he didn't absolutely need for Othello

to prepare for battle against the Turks? Like almost any leader in wartime, military concerns supersede other concerns which may be more personally important to the individual, but not to the country. Although his first inclination is to keep Desdemona in Venice, like many Western governments centuries later during World War II, the duke concedes to the war bride to placate the soldier.

To appreciate Shakespeare's point of view, it is useful to look back at his source and observe the changes. Frank Kermode in his essay on *Othello* in the 1974 edition of *The Riverside Shakespeare*, relates that Cinthio's main character is nameless throughout, being known only as "the Moor."[8] A direct translation of Cinthio by J. E. Taylor in 1855 gives this account: "Although the parents of the lady strove all they could to induce her to take another husband, she consented to marry the Moor; and they lived in such harmony and peace in Venice that no word ever passed between them that was not affectionate and kind. Now it happened at this time that the Signoria of Venice made a change in the troops whom they used to maintain in Cyprus, and they appointed the Moor commander of the soldiers whom they dispatched thither."[9]

When the Moor takes command in Cyprus, Kermode continues, "he decides to take the risk of allowing Desdemona to accompany him on a dangerous voyage rather than be parted from her, and they move to Cyprus (in the same ship). . . . It will be noted that Shakespeare allowed this story to change . . . . [H]e allows them no quiet married life in Venice; their marriage now begins among the tensions and alarms of a remote and embattled Cyprus."[10]

In other words, Shakespeare has made Desdemona a war bride.

Kermode continues, "In the play the lovers are reunited, one might say almost married, in Cyprus; in Cinthio they travel safely in the same ship. . . For good reasons Shakespeare wanted an intense concentration of event—the blissful reunion at Cyprus, the consummation of the marriage [this time] interrupted by the Cassio brawl."[11]

Note that Shakespeare has added the pressing threat of battle with the Turkish fleet to the story. Therefore, an important part of the definition of *war bride* present in Shakespeare is missing from Cinthio—that is, the "active service" part, the notion of the union occurring "in time of war." Shakespeare's Desdemona is a war bride; Cinthio's is not. As a war bride, her character is affected: She is placed in an environment that is not only unfamiliar, but also has an element of danger. Further, where Cinthio says the Moor and Desdemona lived in harmony and peace in Venice for a

time, Shakespeare does not give them one night together as a married couple before the move to Cyprus. He interrupts the wedding night and separates them.

Even though Desdemona travels to Cyprus to be with her husband, Othello still manifests the fears of infidelity that typically afflict servicemen. Freidman writes that concerns "that their women might not be faithful was an almost constant source of worry among . . . soldiers."[12] This statement from a recent social history of war provides an insight into why Othello and Desdemona's marriage does not work. Once back on active duty, there is no place for them to develop as husband and wife. Othello knows soldiers; he knows how soldiers talk of women; he knows what soldiers do with women. He knows the link between war and infidelity. So does Iago. Iago also knows that it doesn't take much to exploit a soldier's concern about a wife's fidelity; whether she's back at home or whether she's near the camp, soldiers worry about fidelity. Desdemona does not know that soldiers are constantly worried about fidelity.

I've mentioned that in researching this paper I went to the social sciences to read accounts of the war-bride experience. What surprised me in these accounts was how *Othello* and other stories and myths presage the actual experiences of real war brides. Certain details in works such as *Othello* were played out centuries later in real life. For example, like Desdemona, the World War II war brides were transported on ships separately from their husbands and reunited dockside. Another historical oddity from Friedman's book not to be omitted from this study cites "a notorious [British murder] case in 1945 [that] involved a soldier who strangled his expectant wife after learning her pregnancy was the result of a liaison with another man; the husband was acquitted."[13]

A more universal, and probably more significant, situation for war brides often concerns education. Kaiser writes extensively on the difference in educational backgrounds between French war brides and their American GI husbands. For the most part, the women were much better educated than the soldiers. "According to the French women I interviewed," writes Kaiser, "one of the problems that could lead to incompatibility in the couple was the 'education gap' between them and their GI husbands. . . . In addition, since French schools have always tended to teach 'Culture' (with a capital C) . . . the women were obviously more *cultivée* than their American husbands . . . and some of [the women] complained about the cultural and educational disparity between them and their husbands.[14]

This educational disparity is also present in *Othello.* Desdemona cites her education eloquently in act 1, scene 3, lines 182-83, whereas Othello apologizes for his in lines 81-82 saying, "Rude am I in speech / And little blessed with the soft phrase of peace." Though the Duke usually speaks in verse, he switches to prose when he gives instructions directly to Othello in lines 221-28.

It is notable how, despite the technological advances of recent centuries, there is still a shared common experience of the human condition which is remarkably constant over the centuries. Kaiser notes that "there is . . . a poignant and universal quality about these women's stories that goes beyond the . . . dimension of their encounters and subsequent marriages with [soldiers]."[15]

Could familiarity with the stories from literature actually help prepare a modern war bride to expect certain experiences? I find it interesting that although we often turn to the social science, for answers today, for centuries it was myth and legend that explained or foreshadowed life experience. War brides, like the previously mentioned Helen of Troy, go back to ancient myths. Another, the Phaedra myth, is later dramatized by Racine. In it Theseus marries Phaedra (daughter of the late King Minos), whom he receives from her brother Deucalion, who wished to seal the friendship between Crete and Athens (King Minos had previously waged war against Athens).

Yet another war bride is found in the Philomele myth, which is retold in Timberlake Wartenbaker's recent play, *The Love of the Nightingale.* For mercenary military aid, Philomele's older sister, Procne, is given in marriage by her parents to Tereus and goes north to a less cultured life in Thrace. Procne's laments about never returning to her family in Athens are echoed by war brides interviewed by Hilary Kaiser: "Nevertheless, all of the women I interviewed remain deeply attached to the[ir] . . . distant homeland, the place where they were born. Whenever possible they return on visits or open their homes to . . . [their] family."[16] In Wartenbaker's play, the visit of Procne's sister Philomele leads to destruction of Procne's family life and the death of her only child.

As a part of its 2008 season, the Utah Shakespearean Festival presented one of the great romantic war bride stories—*Cyrano De Bergerac.* Roxane is one of the classic examples of the first definition of a war bride. Note that Roxane, like Desdemona, has her wedding night interrupted by a call to battle. Like Desdemona, she travels to where her husband is stationed. But a more significant similarity between them is one they have in common with many historical war brides—the educational disparity between a young woman and

a soldier. Roxane's telling Christian that she loves his soul more than his looks presages World War II war brides' discoveries that "the handsome soldier in uniform would turn out to be an uneducated farm boy."[17] Cyrano keeps this information from Roxane, but Christian goes off to his death with the realization that his union with her is superficial.

In late twentieth-century drama, the predicament facing Setsuko Shimada, a young Japanese woman of aristocratic birth in Velina Hasu Houston's play *Asa Ga Kimashita*, echoes that of Desdemona. Both plays illustrate what Barbara Friedman writes about "the allure of the exotic,"[18] as both women marry dark-skinned men. Setsuko's father does not approve of the match and, coupled with the loss of the bulk of his estates by decree of the occupying Americans, the play ends with his suicide.

"*Asa Ga Kimashita* (*Morning Has Broken*)," Houston writes in the introduction to her play in *The Politics of Life: Four Plays by Asian American Women*, "is the first play in a trilogy of plays that includes *American Dreams* and *Tea*. *American Dreams* focuses on Creed, the African-Native American soldier we meet in *Asa Ga Kimashita*, bringing [his war bride] Setsuko . . . home to New York."[19] Stressing the autobiographical nature of her work, Houston adds, "*Asa Ga Kimashita* is a story that I formulated during my late teenage years, based on extensive discussions that I had with my mother about our family history in Japan relating to the World War II experience. This peculiarly Japanese play is also part of the African American experience, by virtue of its exploration of a Japanese woman's interracial romance with an African-Native American."[20] By the third play *Tea*, Creed is dead and the play explores the suicide of Setsuko.

Like Desdemona and Othello, Setsuko and Creed illustrate a point that Kaiser writes about: "Under 'normal' circumstances, these two young people would probably not have met at all . . . but this is wartime."[21] Wartime has always been able to force people to come in contact with and interact with others whom they would otherwise never have met.

As with Setsuko and Desdemona, the issue of exogamous marriage appears in another selection in the Utah Shakespearean Festival's 2008 season—*Fiddler on the Roof*. Set against the failed Russian revolution of 1905, Tevye's third daughter, Chava, parts ways with her father when she wants to marry a young man wearing the wrong uniform—that of a Russian Bolshevik. Marriage outside the tribe is no more acceptable to Tevye than it was to Brabantio. In real life, Friedman notes that "the *New York Times* wrote on

November 26, 1944: 'most . . . [war brides] come against the advice of parental or religious authority in their native land.'"[22] Tevye's second daughter, Hodel, could also be viewed as a war bride in that her husband, Perchik, is a dissident in the revolution.

Shakespeare, like writers before and after him, told the stories of war brides. Hilary Kaiser in the forward to her book on war brides writes, "'Why these . . . scenes?' you might ask. Where's the connection? different stories, different continents, different circumstances. And yet, there *are* threads; there *are* links."[23] The examples in this paper show some of those links and promote the idea of looking at characters by common experience.

Finally, I would like to mention something quite serendipitous on this topic. When I submitted the proposal for this paper, I was unaware that this season's production of *The Taming of the Shrew* would play Katherina as a war bride. In director Jane Page's interpretation of the script, Petruchio is an American officer in post-World War II Italy. Although this is an imposed concept and not in the script itself, those who have seen the production can appreciate how it makes for a pleasant romp through the play. By giving Petruchio a military background, the overbearing way he "commands" his bride to say what he says, and to do as he instructs, becomes more understandable and perhaps a little less sexist to a modern audience. The stage business and costume design support this theme as Kate dons a military uniform and does an ironic mock salute as she follows his seemingly outlandish demands. Also, it is almost prescient how act 4, scene 1, the meat-eating scene at Petruchio's, and act 4, scene 3, the tailor scene, adapt to the directorial concept in way that reflects the actual European World War II war-bride cultural experience with American GIs. Kaiser writes, "Another problem the women had not reckoned on was suffering from 'culture shock'. . . . [T]he reality of adapting to a new culture on their own without the support of family and friends was fraught with difficulties. As intercultural researchers tell us, first you adapt on the superficial level: [As]. . . you adopt the dress and habits, you cook the food. Then you discover that there are so many hidden differences—the underside of the 'iceberg,' so to speak—the ways of thinking, the norms and values, the core beliefs."[24] In director Page's concept, the notion of "taming" the shrew takes on the greater context of culturally adapting to a spouse.

It is almost astonishing how many war brides were on stage at the Utah Shakespearean Festival this summer: Kate, via a directorial concept, Desdemona, Roxane, and two of Tveye's daughters, Hodel and Chava, in *Fiddler on the Roof*. That's four out of six plays. Clearly

the subject of war brides in dramatic literature is one that warrants further study.

Notes

1. "War Bride," *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc, 2003).

2. http://www.playshakespeare.com/antony-and-cleopatra/synopsis (accessed October 12, 2008).

3. Barbara G. Friedman, *From the Battlefront to the Bridal Suite: Media Coverage of British War Brides 1942-1946* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 53.

4. All in-text line references to Shakespeare's plays are from G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974). 1199.

5. Friedman, *From the Battlefront*, 41-42, 89; and Hilary Kaiser, *French War Brides in America* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008), xxxv.

6. Kaiser, *French War Brides,* xx.

7. Friedman, *From the Battlefront,* 5.

8. Frank Kermode, introduction to *Othello* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974), 1199.

9. Giraldi Cinthio, from *Hecatommithi* (1565), trans. J.E. Taylor, 1855, http://www.clicknotes.com/othello/Osource.html (accessed August 5, 2008).

10. Kermode, introduction to *Othello*, 1199.

11. Ibid.

12. Friedman, *From the Battlefront*, 47.

13. Ibid., 50.

14. Kaiser, *French War Brides*, 151-152.

15. Ibid., lii.

16. Ibid., 156.

17. Ibid, xxix.

18. Friedman, *From the Battlefront*, 53.

19. Velina Hasu Houston, introduction to *Asa Ga Kimashita (Morning Has Broken)* in *The Politics of Life: Four Plays by Asian American Women*, ed. Verina Hasu Houston (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 210.

20. Ibid.

21. Kaiser, *French War Brides*, xv.

22. Friedman, *From the Battlefront*, 94.

23. Kaiser, *French War Brides*, xvi.

24. Ibid., 150.

"In Quarter and in Terms like Bride and Groom": Reconfiguring Marriage, Friendship, and Alliance in *Othello*

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In act 2, scene 3 of Shakespeare's *Othello*, Iago describes the outbreak of violence between Montano and Cassio as unprecedented in view of their prior relationship, which shows the respect that two men, in the service of their nation, would afford each other during wartime. When Othello asks, "Who began this?" (2.3.172), Iago responds, "I do not know. Friends all but now, even now, / In quarter and in terms like bride and groom / Devesting them for bed" (173-75).[1] Iago's choice of simile, of course, reminds the audience that the play's actual bride and groom, Desdemona and Othello, have recently undressed themselves for bed, leaving the public world of the Venetian military and retiring to the privacy of their bedchamber. Although Iago shapes for his own ends our perceptions of a male political alliance as a friendship that resembles a marriage, the similarity between marriage and friendship is indeed disquieting in *Othello*, partly because the characterization of Othello's marriage to Desdemona and friendship with Cassio are strikingly similar, but also because both kinds of relationships at times appear to transcend the traditional boundaries set for them by the state. Both marriage and male friendships in the play are shaped by dynastic expectations, whether familial or political, and both seek to embrace more flexible models that replace duty to family and nation with personal self-fulfillment.

What is in evidence throughout the majority of *Othello* is the intensive disruption of the dynastic and contract-oriented rule that structures human relations through the privileging of the affective and largely clandestine nature of the relationships that the play produces. This rejection of tradition is set against the military needs of Venice: a desire to defeat the Turks and keep Cyprus under

Christian rule. Because the bulk of these struggles are set not in Venice but in Cyprus, the dynastic marriage and the military alliances that resemble it are placed in a context that has the potential to elude the mechanism of the state. By grounding its action in a public military setting rather than a more isolated domestic scene, the play's privileging of affective relationships over traditional dynastic alliances allows for certain problematic role reversals—in particular, Desdemona's supplanting of Cassio's place as Othello's friend and lieutenant, and Cassio's assuming (and anticipating) Desdemona's role as Othello's abandoned beloved. Although *Othello* never quite succeeds in validating private affective relationships over those informed by the more public dynastic concerns, in rejecting the latter the play draws attention to the instability of dynastic models and, at the same time, the ambiguous nature of the idea of affection or emotion, whether that term is applied to marriage or male friendship. What *Othello* cannot escape is the dynastic forces that shape the text: try as it might to elevate affective relationships over dynastic alliances, the text and its characters ultimately fall prey to the resilience of the latter.

In its treatment of marriage, *Othello* introduces and creates tensions between two models of marriage: the dynastic or lineal marriage and the "companionate" or affective marriage. The traditional discourse of dynastic marriage reflects larger concerns regarding the necessity of marriage to what Lisa Jardine describes as the "long term objectives of lineal family": the production of heirs and the ability to supplement the family with the offspring of other powerful houses through the exchange of women,[2] an activity implicitly linking the success of the family to the health and security of the state. An early modern literary example of this model at its most politically urgent is the marriage of Antony and Octavia in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, a match suggested by Agrippa in order "to hold" Antony and Octavius Caesar "in perpetual amity, / To make you brothers, and to knit your hearts / With an unslipping knot" (2.2.133-35). After the match is agreed upon, both men acknowledge the benefits such an alliance will provide Rome. Anthony declares to Octavius that "from this hour / The heart of brothers govern in our loves / And sway our great designs" (2.2.156-58); Octavius replies, "Let her [Octavia] live / To join our kingdoms and our hearts" (2.2.160-62). Both men acknowledge the precise relation of woman to the dynastic model marriage: she is an object of exchange, serving either to rehabilitate male alliances or to help forge new bonds between men.[3] Following Pierre Bourdieu, Stephanie Chamberlain uses the

term "symbolic capital" to describe the "invaluable properties of exchange within a marriage market based on familial status and domestic alliances."[4] In the case of *Antony and Cleopatra*, the state depends on a political strategy that will bring Antony in line with Rome's political objectives, with Octavia functioning as the symbolic capital that, theoretically, will enable Octavius to gain the upper hand.

Disseminated widely in sermons and conduct books in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the discourse of affective marriage emphasizes the importance of companionship in marriage rather than political and economic gains.[5] In Edmund Tilney's *The Flower of Friendship*, an early modern dialogue on marriage, Master Pedro describes the ideal marital relationship as consisting of a "perfite love [that] knitteth loving heartes, in an insoluble knot of amitie," emphasizing mutual affection as well as friendship.[6] This new model continued to stress equality in terms of birth, but acknowledged the importance of choice in betrothal, which, theoretically, would result in a marriage that consisted of friendship, and, potentially, a more equal partnership between husband and wife. In Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, for example, kinship ties are acknowledged at the play's opening, but more central to the description of the newly married couple is their compatibility. Sir Charles Mountford recognizes the marriage of Anne and Frankford as based on an affective model that has its roots in Protestant ideas about the nature of matrimony: "There's equality / In this fair combination; you are both scholars, / Both young, both being descended nobly" (1.69-71).[7] He concludes, "There's music in this sympathy; it carries / Consort and expectation of much joy" (72-73). Sir Charles's use of the words "equality" and "consort" implies a mutuality to the marriage contract that is not necessary in the dynastic model. Similarly, in *Othello* Iago points out to Roderigo that Othello lacks the "required conveniences" (2.1.234) necessary to fulfill the companionate marital ideal: "loveliness in favor, sympathy in years, manners, and beauties" (2.1.231-32). Although Iago's illustration of ideal partners is introduced as evidence against the marriage of Othello and Desdemona, like Sir Charles he articulates the more agreeable possibilities that marriage might contain.[8]

Both lineal and affective marriages can be founded upon a legal contract sanctioned by kinsman, church, and state; however, non-lineal marriages can assume a clandestine nature in which the "contract" is motivated primarily by affection. While a companionate marriage can emphasize both dynasty and amity, as

does the marriage in Heywood's play, the clandestine relationship depends almost exclusively on the personal desires of the couple. As Lisa Jardine notes, "Whereas 'alliance' and its contractual undertakings rested squarely in the public domains (its negotiations formally recorded and witnessed), 'affection' and individualized emotional attachment establish private and invisible bonds which escape the terms of recognized kinship relationships" and "might be entirely undetectable in the public domain."[9] For Jardine, this applies equally to marriage and friendship, both of which have the potential to be transformed by the absence of formal contracts—in the case of *Othello* with disastrous results. Like the unsanctioned relationship between Antony and Cleopatra, a marriage based on affection (or desire) over strictly dynastic concerns can prove disastrous for the state's management of both partners in that relationship. Anthony, for example, is entirely unmanned in his submission to Cleopatra—and Octavius sees this arranged marriage between his political colleague and his sister as a means through which he, on behalf of the state, can attempt to refocus his new brother-in-law on politico-dynastic concerns. In *Othello*, undetectable clandestine bonds are always dangerous, potentially disruptive of not only valuable kinship ties, but also of the state's political and economic interests.

This privileging of affection over political and economic demands provides the source of conflict in Shakespeare's *Othello*, where a clandestine marriage thwarts the lineal expectations of the father of the bride, who must defer to the state's judgment regarding the legitimacy of what he sees as a misalliance. *Othello* introduces in Desdemona a heroine who is socially rebellious within the confines of her father's household, somehow managing to engage in a clandestine courtship and to marry without his consent. Iago reveals this news to her unsuspecting father, emphasizing the nature of Desdemona's actions as disruptive of lineal conventions. Roderigo characterizes her elopement as "a gross revolt" (1.1.137) against her father, and when her absence from her father's household is confirmed, Brabantio characterizes her actions as "treason of the blood!" (1.1.173): in other words, a clear disruption of the lineal expectations of both the individual family and society at large. As Sandra Logan points out, economic forces within the emerging concept of the modern state demand "a focus on external or international interests as more significant than internal or domestic concerns," even the interests of the lineal family, which in *Othello* is rendered "antithetical to the emergent state formation."[10] When Brabantio makes this grievance public,

interrupting the military counsel of the senate, he reveals not only the private nature of his disappointment, but also what he perceives to be the political nature of Desdemona's infraction. While the "gross revolt" of Desdemona demonstrates the vulnerability of the senator's symbolic property to Othello, who can claim neither lineage nor citizenship within the social structure of Venice, this breech goes unpunished because the state must depend on the offender, Othello, to protect its international interests.

If, as Jardine suggests, there was a growing concern about a disruption of the dynastic line in early modern England, then *Othello* provides an ideal canvas for exploring these issues.[11] Not only does Othello and Desdemona's marriage flout Brabantio's desire to exercise paternal authority in the dispersal of his property, but Othello's designation as the play's "racial other" also concentrates the more pedestrian anxieties regarding non-lineal marriage—those, for example, that cross lines of class or nation or fail to contain fears of unbridled female sexuality. Desdemona has tied "her duty, beauty, wit, and fortunes / In an extravagant, and wheeling stranger / Of here and every where" (1.1.139-40), eschewing a legitimate alliance with a countryman for an illegitimate coupling with a foreigner. When Iago informs Brabantio that "an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe" (1.1.90-91) and "your daughter and the Moor are [now] making the beast with two backs" (1.1.119-20), he plays into cultural fears regarding racial difference, miscegenation, and unbridled female desire. Warning Brabantio that he will "have [his] daughter covered with a Barbary horse" and "have your nephews neigh to you" (1.1.114-15), Iago feeds the senator's most grotesque anxieties about the disruption of the dynastic line. Iago's representation of this clandestine marriage displays a total perversion of the contractual, lineal marriage, which, he asserts, will produce an unintelligible succession of heirs crossing not only boundaries of race, but also refiguring the black Othello and the allegedly hypersexual Desdemona and their offspring as beasts.[12]

Desdemona and Othello, however, represent their feelings for one another within the Protestant paradigm of companionship and affection, which at its most elevated usually downplays strictly lineal concerns. When questioning Othello about the match, the First Senator inquires whether Othello's attentions were "by request, and such fair question / As soul to soul affordeth?" (1.3.115-16). Othello claims, "She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd, / And I lov'd her that she did pity them" (1.3.169-70). Othello explains that Desdemona falls in love with him out of admiration and pity

for the many trials he has faced over the course of his life, and she confirms her commitment to his person when she remarks, "My heart's subdued / To the very quality of my lord" (1.3.253-54). In spite of Iago's claims, there is little evidence in the text to corroborate the existence of excessive sexual passion on either Othello's or Desdemona's part. Othello challenges Iago's charges of sexual excess, albeit to reassure those who may disapprove of the match or question his fitness for military action, when he claims he wishes Desdemona to accompany him to Cyprus, not

> To please the palate of my appetite,
> Nor to comply with heat (the young affects
> In [me] defunct) and proper satisfaction
> But to be free and bounteous to her mind. (1.3.265-68)

Although Iago uses sex to incite anxiety about Desdemona and Othello's relationship, even he admits that it is Othello's "soul" which she has "enfettered" (2.3.338), implying that the body is not the actual site of Othello's weakness.

The First Senator's emphasis on the relationship of soul to soul, as well as Othello's interest in Desdemona as an individual with a mind worthy of his "bounty," certainly represents the companionate ideal at its height, especially given that marriage counsel in this vein often warned against excessive passion.[13] Despite Iago's representation of Othello and Desdemona's relationship as hypersexualized, the physicality of this alliance is largely limited to one brief reference by Othello to the wedding bed, when he says to his new bride, "Come, my dear love, / The purchase made, the fruits are to ensue; / That profit's yet to come 'tween me and you" (2.3.8-10). These "fruits" are not easily interpreted: has the marriage yet to be consummated, is Othello eager for a sexual reunion with his wife, or is he thinking of reproduction? This is the only explicit reference to the marital bed while the integrity of this marriage, at least for husband and wife, is still intact. Until Othello's jealousy is unleashed through Iago's manipulations, the marriage of Othello and Desdemona would seem to represent companionship—and possibly friendship—over sexual desire.

Yet as Thomas Luxon points out, the humanist ideals that informed marriage are nonetheless at odds with the spiritual doctrine about the relationship of husband and wife: "Being married still meant being made 'one flesh' with a woman," while "being friends with a woman would have meant sharing 'one soul in bodies twain,' a relationship that supposedly transcended the flesh and lasted forever, even (especially) beyond the grave."[14]

Although Othello's emphasis on the soul over the body invites us to examine this marriage as similar to masculine friendship, we should be aware that companionate marriage, if similar to friendship, might work to promote a woman beyond her perceived spiritual and intellectual limits. In elevating the marriage of Othello and Desdemona to a relationship that transcends the flesh, *Othello* invites a comparison to the "friendship doctrine" of the period, which Luxon describes as "unlike marriage or brotherhood" because it "insists that the most 'complete' or 'virtuous' friends locate their similarity on a spiritual plane."[15] Yet in *Othello*, marriage begins to impinge upon the plane reserved for the doctrine of friendship, and friendship takes on some of the features—both dynastic and companionate—of the very models of marriage that *Othello* fails to reconcile.

In *Othello* the organization of marriage, both in its dynastic and companionate forms, finds a multifaceted parallel in the structure of friendship. Male alliances function similarly to the marriage alliance in *Othello*, whether the marriage is the lineal and contractual one denied Branbantio or the affective and clandestine ideal of the play's central couple. Just as Desdemona denies Brabantio his paternal rights, Othello similarly circumvents an established social practice, that of military promotion, by elevating a man who has demonstrated loyal friendship, Michael Cassio, over one with a proven military record, Iago. The play's treatment of marriage or friendship reveals a sanctioned or expected alliance rejected publically, with a covert relationship based largely on affection assuming its place. While the clandestine affective alliance of Othello and Desdemona is exposed quite early in the play, the non-kin male alliances in *Othello* come under scrutiny more slowly as the plot progresses. The relationship between Othello and Cassio—which, although characterized in part by a professional alliance, is rooted in a personal friendship—is perhaps more mysterious as even the audience does not know what, prior to the beginning of the play, actually motivates it. This friendship is bound by an "indebtedness" that is invisible in the public domain and, as a result, both are able to undermine more formal, sanctioned male alliances upon which an orderly society depends. *Othello* begins, then, by acknowledging not one, but two clear betrayals of the lineal model in favor of an affective one: in both cases a long-standing hierarchy is dismantled, in which a much anticipated reward—whether it be the exercising of paternal rights or the promise of professional advancement—is withheld.

The elements of dynastic marriage in contest at the play's opening function as a model to structure all relationships between men, not just those kinship alliances forged through the exchange of women. The root of Iago's hatred for Othello is Othello's choice of Cassio for his new lieutenant, and initially it is this breech in the lineal military system that is the driving force of Iago's desire to punish Othello: "Preferment goes by letter and affection, / And not by old gradation, where each second / Stood heir to th' first" (1.1.37-39). Likening himself to an "heir" cheated of his dynastic rights, Iago rebukes Othello for both ignoring the hierarchy that guarantees promotion by seniority and trading his professional affiliation with Iago for his personal attachment to Cassio. In his bid for the lieutenancy, Iago appears to have relied on his military record and on more traditional and "public" methods of recommendation in his quest for advancement: Iago petitions "three great ones of the city" (1.1.9), for example, to put political pressure on Othello, who "evades them" (1.1.14), advancing Cassio instead. The highly politicized public domain of military advancement, in which elite men trade favors, fails Iago, who, in turn, demonstrates his flexibility by publically accepting the limits of his professional alliance, while at the same time making himself indispensible as Othello's advisor in private, domestic matters.[16]

Just as the dynastic alliance applies to both marriage and male alliances, its affective alternative shapes both types of relationships. Luxon points out that classical teaching on male friendship "insisted that the most virtuous sorts of friendships could only grow between men similar in age, education, station, and virtue."[17] Moreover, this classical friendship doctrine is not specifically lineal, suggesting that friendship at its most elevated is something very separate from the tradition of dynastic marriage with its usual concern with forging familial alliances. Michel de Montaigne privileged non-kin male friendship over those based on a lineal alliance, whether through blood or marriage. While he recognizes male kinship ties as "friendships which the law and dutie of nature doth command us," he describes male friendship as allowing for an exercise of "our genuine libertie" by allowing men to enjoy "affection and amitie" where they choose. Montaigne also asserted that "all those amities nourished by voluptuousnesse or profit, publike or private need, are thereby so much the less faire and so much the less true amities, in that they intermeddle other causes, scope, and fruit with friendship, than it selfe alone."[18] While male friendships in *Othello* are not burdened by kinship connections, neither are they privileged as centers of private solace free from political complications.

Whether we consider the earnest friendship of Cassio or the false friendship of Iago, in each case Othello's experience of male amity is complicated by social, economic, or professional expectations. Although Iago casts the friendship of Othello and Cassio as one defined first and foremost by affection, it is also informed by a professional relationship that, when breeched, undermines the underlying friendship.

Initially, the friendship of Cassio and Othello is based not on public displays of loyalty and professional recognition, but rather on a private, affective, and, to some extent, clandestine relation that is cemented through Cassio's assistance in the "wooing" of Desdemona. Prior to the unveiling of this aspect of their relationship, we have little idea of what bond existed between them or even what brought them together in the first place, given Cassio's alleged lack of actual military experience. The fact that the relationship has no legitimate public face until Othello names Cassio his lieutenant lends credibility to the suspicion with which Iago regards that alliance. Moreover, the friendship of Othello and Cassio is clearly distinct from the professional alliance enjoyed by Othello and Iago prior to the play. Even though it is Iago who first introduces the concept of "affection" existing between the general and his lieutenant (1.1.37), it is most emphatically confirmed when Othello dismisses him: "Cassio, I love thee, / But never more be officer of mine" (2.3.242-43). The play displays the intimacy of their relationship—specifically, that Othello entrusts Cassio with the wooing of Desdemona—only *after* Cassio has already lost his place. As a result, the friendship is defined more in the past than in the present, and is represented throughout much of the play as a painful loss.[19]

The perceived value of friendship in the play, with Othello entrusting first Cassio and later Iago with help in the management of his personal affairs, produces a strange triangularity to the male relationships throughout the play, with male characters functioning as substitutes for one another in a complex matrix of male alliances. Although Iago's relationship with Roderigo is based on mutual hatred of the Moor, and is a "false" friendship that Iago manipulates for his own gain, it is nonetheless rather similar to the "wooing" partnership established by the friends Othello and Cassio. Similarly, Othello is as dependent on Iago in his testing of Desdemona as he was on Cassio in his initial wooing of her; instead of this dependency growing out of trust in friendship, however, it grows out of desperation and rage. During the course of the play's action, Desdemona is central to the forging of male bonds, whether as

the object of desire that necessitates Roderigo's alliance with Iago, as the source of reconciliation for Othello and Cassio, or as the pawn that Iago uses to exact his revenge on Othello. As old public bonds and private friendships are abandoned and new ones forged, Iago moves from his position as rejected candidate for the lieutenancy to Cassio's replacement as Othello's chief officer. Iago is now not only second in command, but he is also Cassio's emotional successor, serving not as a loving accomplice to the bond of Othello and Desdemona as Cassio had so recently done, but rather as the one who brings about the marriage's absolute destruction. Although this shift in alliances, along with the movement away from lineal dynastic alliances toward affective clandestine ones, began in Venice, it is crucial that these movements occur in the post-war, yet still militarized, public space of Cyprus.

As the birthplace of Venus, Cyprus might seem an ideal location for the flowering of a clandestine marriage, yet throughout *Othello* it is more closely associated with the military world of her consort, Mars. This tension between love and war is evident throughout the text, particularly as the more public, politicized, and masculine spaces of the play become the staging ground for more personal, domestic conflicts. The text betrays an anxiety about the domestic invading the public sphere upon the arrival of the play's wives in Cyprus, when Iago delivers his infamously misogynist tirade near the quay. It would seem that the dangerous presence of women exhibits the same force it had back in the senate's council chamber—where Othello assured the senators that his wife's presence in battle would not "scant" the important duties of state:

> No, when light-wing'd toys
> Of feather'd Cupid seal with wanton dullness
> My speculative and officed instruments,
> That my disports corrupt and taint my business,
> Let huswives make a skillet of my helm. (1.3.271-75)

Othello acknowledges here the effeminizing presence of women in a military zone, arguing that the failure to meet his military charge should result in a comic, yet emasculating, female punishment. Similarly, in an attempt to rid himself of the clingy Bianca, Cassio reveals the implications of being found in her company: "I do attend here on the General / And think it no addition, nor my wish / To have him see me woman'd" (3.4.194-96). Clearly, the presence of a woman in the context of state military business is seen as a detriment, a mark of dishonor, and Bianca's presence might work to undermine Cassio's plan to reconcile with Othello.

As Julia Genster notes, early modern manuals on military discipline single out soldiers who consort with women other than their wives, linking the presence of women in military settings to the absence of "moral conduct."[20] Cassio's concern about being seen with a woman confirms the problematic status of woman—whether wife or courtesan—within the militarized space of Cyprus, and it exposes the vulnerability of men to women who occupy the public sphere.

Just as the play's military spaces are domesticated, so too are its domestic spaces militarized. While *Othello* is often read as a domestic tragedy, there is little of the play to associate it with the physical household, an important feature of the companionate marriage as it was explored in early modern texts, whether polemical or dramatic.[21] As Lorna Hutson reminds us, early modern polemical writings on marriage focused as much on household management and economics as they did on compatibility in marital relations.[22] If *Othello* is read as a domestic tragedy, its domestic conflicts are largely played out in an increasingly public environment, one in which issues of household management, not to mention the women's role as the rightful steward of her husband's property in his absence, are virtually absent. The private interactions of Desdemona and Othello are invisible to the audience except when Othello's jealousy has increased to the breaking point. The public appearance of Desdemona in the first two-thirds of the play figure her more as a military spouse taken up with her husband's political concerns than a housewife wrapped up in domestic affairs. If anything, the play details—at least prior to the unraveling of her marriage—an escape from the domestic world in which Desdemona is exclusively bound to paternal authority. In Venice she occupies the predictable position of the sheltered woman isolated from individuals outside her father's world, except through the occasional dereliction of her household duties in order to hear her future husband's autobiographical narrative (1.3.149-52). In Cyprus Desdemona is neither confined to or by the household because it is absent.

The militarized nature of the domestic and the domestication of a military zone work to destabilize clear distinctions in *Othello* between public and private contexts and, inevitably, female and male roles. This intermingling of domestic and military is especially evident in the substitution of roles by Desdemona and Cassio, with the play's transformation of Desdemona into Othello's lieutenant (or Captain) and Cassio into his rejected lover. In the course of the play, Desdemona manages to transcend the definition

of wife as symbolic capital by becoming, in some regards, a spiritual equal to her husband akin to that symmetry found in male friendship, a repositioning which enables her to claim more freedom and authority when she arrives in Cyprus. Yet contradictory and competing representations of Desdemona confuse our understanding of her from the start: Brabantio, for example, describes her as already potentially rebellious to his authority ("so opposite to marriage that she shunned / The wealthy curled darlings of our nation" [1.2.68-69]) and yet an appropriately submissive and chaste daughter ("A maiden never bold; / Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion / Blushed at herself" [1.3.96-98]). Othello describes her as appropriately feminine and obedient ("the household affairs would draw her hence" [1.3.149]), yet clearly willing to imagine the possibilities for experiences denied her sex: according to Othello, she "she wished / That heaven had made her such a man" (1.3.163-64). While it is possible that Desdemona is hinting for a suitor with Othello's qualifications, it is equally possible that she imagines herself experiencing a life of trial and adventure that only a man can experience. While Cassio dubs her "our great captain's captain" (2.1.76), perhaps gallantly suggesting her "mastery" over her husband, Othello greets her as "my fair warrior" (2.1.182)—a statement far more difficult to entangle within the representational matrix in which Desdemona finds herself throughout the play. It seems clear, however, that whatever Desdemona's function in Venice, whether in her father's household or in the senate chamber, she is described in terms of war upon her arrival in Cyprus—either as her husband's superior or as his equal.

In what sense might Desdemona be a "warrior" within the context of her positioning as wife to a military commander?[23] Regardless of how she is represented by others or how she represents herself, Desdemona ultimately assumes the structural position of second to Othello, creating a parallel between her lieutenancy in the barely present domestic sphere and Cassio's in the domesticated political sphere. Moreover, she anticipates Cassio's concerns, speaking for him before he has barely determined to speak for himself. Desdemona agrees to play the role of his ardent "solicitor" (3.3.27), and, instead of wifely pleading, she resorts to a friendly bullying of her husband to come to his decision within a set number of days. In effect, Desdemona comes close to giving Othello an ultimatum, and her projected strategies of persuasion are unwifely, to say the least: "His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift" (3.3.24), she boasts to Cassio, emphasizing her power

role as tutor-priest to her husband's inferior role as schoolboy-penitent. As long as the domestic and military spheres are separate, any authority Desdemona holds within her husband's symbolic household is appropriate and non-threatening. By allowing Desdemona to join him in Cyprus, however, Othello enables her to cross the threshold of the domestic, which, in turn, enables Iago to intervene even more aggressively in Othello's domestic affairs.

Conversely, Cassio's loss of honor and the loosening of the bond he shares with Othello render him as impotent as an abandoned wife. Throughout much of *Othello*, Cassio plays the role of the penitent lover, who, despite his own keen sense of dishonor, nonetheless pleads to be readmitted into Othello's favor. His courtly attitude toward Desdemona—displayed in both her absence (2.1.63-67, 73-75 and 2.3.12-25) and in her presence (2.1.167-70)—is resurrected in his more urgent dealings with her as her husband's surrogate. The scene in which he approaches Desdemona for assistance places him in the role of supplicant to Othello, while she functions as the one who holds, at least symbolically, the power to grant his request. Although Emilia has already assured him that his banishment is temporary, as well as necessary to placate the Cyprians for the time being, Cassio still seeks "the advantage of some brief discourse / With Desdemona" (3.1.55-56). Cassio, like a lover uncertain of his beloved, expresses his fear to Desdemona that her husband "will forget my love and service" (3.3.17-18) and that in his absence another will fill his place. Desdemona later describes him to Othello as a "suitor," a man "languish[ing] in your displeasure" (3.3.44-45) and, indeed, when Desdemona makes clear in act 3, scene 4, that she can no longer aggressively put forward his petition, Cassio notes that all he has left "to ransom me into his [Othello's] love again" (120) is the record of his former honor and friendship.

Although Desdemona and Cassio are not competitors for Othello's love in a romantic sense, their functional similarity to each other reveals the ways in which the presence of friendship within marriage can create complications. As presented by Iago, it looks like the classic homosocial triangle in which two male friends compete for the favors of the same woman, yet in actuality it is Othello's love and preferment, not Desdemona's, upon which the successes of both Cassio and Iago depend. Desdemona's vowing of friendship to Cassio in act 3, scene 3, might seem harmless enough, but it is exploited by Iago to suggest, not a shared allegiance—that both Cassio and Desdemona admire and "love"

Othello, thereby justifying their friendship—but a conflict of interest: Cassio and Desdemona may have betrayed Othello. The fear, of course, is that Desdemona's "vow" could potentially surpass her marital vow. Despite the potentially transgressive nature of Desdemona's promise, she ultimately serves the function in the world of male alliances that, as a woman, she was always intended to. Instead of cementing a bond between her father and her husband, she ultimately functions as a "moth of peace" (1.3.258), a role she herself rejects early in the play. In Iago's words, she is a mender of the "broken joints" of Cassio and Othello's friendship, which she alone can "splinter" (2.3.316-17). This mockery of the dynastic character of the marital contract in its most public of forms reminds us yet again of the endurance of lineal models despite their lack of affective appeal. There is an alliance to be forged, and Desdemona is positioned ideally to finesse it. That Desdemona fails to mend these rifts, however, seems less important than her repositioning by the play's end as the wife who is as much victimized by the resilience of dynastic models of marriage as she is by individual men.

In *Othello* two important social structures—dynastic marriage and military promotion—are essentially dismantled, yet by the play's end the male affective alliances are restored as Iago's false friendship is revealed and Othello is able to ask pardon from Cassio (5.2.305-308). Yet the play concludes with a reversion to the dynastic-lineal structure: Othello is, post-mortem, incorporated into the lineal family that he at least publically eschewed, with his wealth (and presumably Brabantio's) bypassing the dead Desdemona to be enjoyed by her kinsman, Gratiano. As Othello's murder-suicide ends the play, together with Iago's murder of Emilia, both the benefits and inconveniences of marriage are eclipsed by the necessity of punishment for the "hellish villain" (5.2.379) and Lodovico's return to Venice to bring news of this "heavy act" to the Duke and senate (5.2.382). In the end, Desdemona's isolation from Venice is evident in her estrangement from her male kinsmen, who, although expressing dismay at her husband's treatment of her, fail to redeem her from the fate of the woman in domestic tragedies that privatize marriage to the extent that female characters have no male protection other than that afforded them by their husbands.[24] Although in some sense the central marriage and friendships that had been complicated by Iago's plots are validated at the play's conclusion, ultimately both of the play's marriages are utterly destroyed, and Cassio's friendship, dismantled yet somehow recouped, plays second fiddle to the reestablishment of the state-

family partnership at play's end. What will be remembered are the unsettling manipulations of Iago, whose adherence to older political structures is ultimately upheld by the plays' conclusion, making his own fate irrelevant within the broader context of both the Turkish conquest and the domestic justice that the play enacts.

The marriage of Othello and Desdemona is abhorred by Brabantio and Roderigo and tolerated by the state, but only one character other than the married couple themselves in the play seemed to have celebrated this match. Courteous Cassio, who invokes "Great Jove" (2.1.79) to protect Othello at sea, reconfigures the dynastic politics of the play when his asks the deity to "swell his [Othello's] sail with thine own powerful breath," so that he may "Make love's quick pants in Desdemona's arms, / Give renewed fire to our extincted spirits, / And bring all Cyprus comfort" (2.2.80-84). That Cassio invokes this appeal, not on behalf of a dynastic marriage and Venice, but on an unsanctioned marital relationship and the safety of a vulnerable Venetian colony, is interesting to say the least. While the failure of the affective, unsanctioned alliance of Othello and Desdemona reveals the vulnerability of the dynastic structure that enables Venice as a colonial power, Cassio's presence as the sole survivor of the human emotional bond that once encompassed husband, friend, and wife reminds us that the affective ideal may still resonate for one of the play's central characters. The marriage bed of Othello and Desdemona brings neither them nor Cyprus any lasting comfort, yet the play's ending may well invite nostalgia over what, in Cassio's intercession, may have been. In the end Cassio's odd yoking of an image of sexual consummation with the comfort and security of the nation confirms the unresolved ambivalence with which this play alternately treats marriage—and its problematic counterpart and co-conspirator—friendship.

Notes

1. All quotations from Shakespeare's plays are from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington, 5th ed. (New York: Longman, 2004).

2. Lisa Jardine, "Companionate Marriage versus Male Friendship: Anxiety for the Lineal Family in Jacobean Drama," in *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England: Essays Presented to David Underdown*, ed. Susan Dwyer Amussen and Mark A. Kishlansky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 234.

3. Although anthropologist Gayle Rubin offers a framework to understand women as objects of economic exchange in kinship relations, recent scholarship has attempted to complicate our understanding of women's function within marriage, specifically with regard to legal and property rights maintained after marriage. See, for example, Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), especially 39-47; and Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the

Political Economy of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157-210.

4. See Stephanie Chamberlain, "Resolving Clandestine Disputes: Narrative Strategy and Juridical Authority in *Othello*," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 31, no. 2 (Winter 2005), 263.

5. In her introduction to Edmund Tilney's *The Flower of Friendship*, Valerie Wayne paints a complex picture of companionate discourse, noting that the writings of influential humanists, such as Desiderius Erasmus (*Encomium*), Juan Louis Vives (*Instructions for a Christian Woman*) and Pedro di Luxon (*Coloquios matrimoniales*), were widely adapted during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and often drastically revised the original source to promote emergent Protestant and puritan ideologies of marriage and, in some cases, equality for women (in *The Flower of Friendship: A Renaissance Dialogue Contesting Marriage*, intro. and ed. Valerie Wayne [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992], 1-38). For a discussion of how conduct books addressed changes in the institution of marriage at this time, see Karen Newman, *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 15-31.

6. Edmund Tilney, *The Flower of Friendship*, 110.

7. Thomas Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, ed. Brian Scobie (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985).

8. Although there has been debate regarding whether early modern conduct books reflected a shift in practice that afforded women real power, Martha Howell argues, "European marriages were being more explicitly defined as voluntary bonds between spouses who regarded their unions . . . as the principle site of their emotional lives" (*The Marriage Exchange: Property, Social Place, and Gender in the Cities of the Low Countries, 1300-1550* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998], 236).

9. Jardine, "Companionate Marriage," 236.

10. Sandra Logan, "Domestic Disturbance and the Disordered State in Shakespeare's *Othello*," *Textual Practice* 18, no. 3 (2004): 355, 362-63. For further discussions of symbolic versus economic capital in theatrical texts of the period, see also Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies*, 55-71, and Lyn Bennett, "The Homosocial Economics of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Renaissance and Reformation* 24, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 35-61.

11. Jardine, "Companionate Marriage," 234.

12. For discussion of race in relation to anxieties regarding gender and female sexuality, see Patricia Parker, "Fantasies of 'Race' and 'Gender': Africa, *Othello* and Bringing to Light," in *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (New York: Routledge, 1994), 84-100; Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), especially chapter 1; and Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1989).

13. Tilney, for example, counsels, "Hastie love is soon gone. And some have loved in post haste, that afterward have repented them at leisure" (*Flower of Friendship*, 110).

14. Thomas Luxon, "Humanist Marriage and *The Comedy of Errors*," *Renaissance and Reformation* 24, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 49.

15. Luxon, "Humanist Marriage," 58.

16. For a reading of this scene as an example of Iago's disempowerment, see Logan, "Domestic Disturbance," 363-65.

17. Luxon, "Humanist Marriage," 48-49.

18. Michel de Montaigne, "Of Friendship," *Florio's Montaigne*, intro. George Saintsbury (New York: AMS Press, 1967), 199, 197-98.

19. Although I read this relationship between Othello and Cassio as homosocial rather than homoerotic, it shares a common bond with many of the female homoerotic alliances in Shakespeare: Celia and Rosalind, Hermia and Helena, and Emilia and Flavina. Speaking of James Holstun's claim that female homoerotic desire is often described in an elegiac fashion ("'Will you Rent Our Ancient Love Asunder?' Lesbian Elegy in Donne, Marvell, and Milton," *ELH* 54, no. 4 [Winter 1987]: 835-67), Valerie Traub notes that in these female alliances in Shakespeare, "nostalgia circumscribes the possibility, in particular, of 'feminine' female intimacy, limiting it to a mournful expression of what was rather than what is or might be" (172). See Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

20. Genster cites the 1586 treatise *Army Orders, Lawes and Ordinances set down by Robery Earle of Leycester* as a text possibly relevant to Cassio's situation. Among fifty-five articles of conduct, the fifth prescribes "whipping or banishment" (790) for men who consort with women other than their wives or those legitimately associated with the Army: nurses or launderers. See Genster, "Lieutenancy, Standing In, and *Othello*," *ELH*, 57, no. 4 (Winter 1990), 785-809.

21. For discussion of domestic tragedy on the Renaissance stage, see Lena Cowen Orlin, "Domestic Tragedy: Private Life on the Public Stage," in *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 367-83; Peter L. Rudnytsky, "*A Woman Killed With Kindness* as Subtext for *Othello*," in *Renaissance Drama: Relations and Influences*, New Series 14, ed. Leonard Barkan (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1983), 103-105; and Julia A. Carlson, "Like Me: An Invitation to Domestic/Tragedy," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 98, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 332-53.

22. See Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 19-22.

23. Joan Ozark Holmer reads Desdemona as a warrior "in the secular sense since her tongue is her sword or her only weapon, used defensively against Othello and offensively on behalf of Othello"; however, she also resembles the Christian warrior of Erasmus's *The Handbook of the Christian Soldier* "with her faith as a shield (Eph. 6.17)" (133). See Holmer, "Desdemona, Woman Warrior: 'O, These Men, These Men!' (4.3.59)," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England: An Annual Gathering of Research, Criticism, and Reviews* 17 (2005): 132-64.

24. For a discussion of how Desdemona's kinsmen, Lodovico and Gratiano, neglect an opportunity to intervene on her behalf, see Ruth Vanita, "'Proper' Men and 'Fallen' Women: The Unprotectedness of Wives in *Othello*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 34, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 341-56.

ACTING SHAKESPEARE
A Roundtable Discussion with Artists from the Utah Shakespearean Festival's 2008 Production of *Othello*

Michael Flachmann
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Featuring: J. R. Sullivan (Director), Jonathan Peck (Othello), Lindsey Wochley (Desdemona), James Newcomb (Iago), Corliss Preston (Emilia), and Justin Gordon (Cassio)

Flachmann: Welcome to the culminating event in our Wooden O Symposium, the Actors' Roundtable Discussion about *Othello.* I'd like to begin with a question for the actors, and then we'll come back to Mr. Sullivan for his opinion. With a play produced as frequently as *Othello*, how do you make these roles your own? How do you balance the demands of the script, the director's vision, and your own innate ability and life experiences to take ownership of these roles? We'll start off with Jonathan, please. You've done the role twice before, right?

Peck: Actually, two and a half times. The first one was ninety minutes in Knoxville, Tennessee. Four actors did the show, which was very strange [laughter].

Flachmann: Aside from that production, Jonathan, how do you make this role your own when it has been done so often, with so many films and video tapes available, and so much information about past performances?

Peck: Number one, you try to avoid watching other actors do the role. You're going to steal, of course [laughter]; you're going to borrow from other actors, but I've found several cultural idiosyncrasies to personalize my characterization of Othello. For instance, if you spend time in Africa, you see people squat on their haunches while they wait for buses. And African men have no qualms about walking down the street holding hands. You also see

this behavior depicted in Egyptian paintings. I didn't want to go as far as using an accent or dialect, which I think sometimes distracts from the words you are saying. And then you end up working with some really amazing directors who . . . Oh, I've already got the job [laughter]. You come in with your own ideas, and then you collaborate with people you trust. I guess that's pretty much it.

Flachmann: Great! We're off to a good start. Lindsey?

Wochley: I like to begin with the text, with what I have that's solid in front of me, and then take into consideration the other actors I'm working with and the director's vision of the play. Desdemona is nineteen, and she's very fantastical. In this production, she daydreams most of the time and is very happy with Othello. She loves him with all her heart.

Flachmann: Good job. Jamie?

Newcomb: Yes, I also begin with the text, but you have to understand that in regional theatres in this country, most of the conceptual decisions about the play are made long before the actors start the rehearsal process. I have occasionally been part of the initial design conferences; that's always a joy to be involved from the beginning, but it doesn't happen very often. So you have to be very careful about any kind of rigid choices you make as you approach the text.

I started working on Iago last December. For such a massive role, you have to be pretty familiar with the language before you come into rehearsals—especially here, where you have about two and a half weeks of actual rehearsal that is spread out over seven weeks. But I also couldn't be too rigid in decisions I had made about the character since I was going to be collaborating with the director and with other actors. So much of the joy in the process is in what we come up with collectively.

Corliss and I met early in the rehearsal process for breakfast and came up with a very interesting idea about the relationship between Emilia and Iago. Then you just have to take your best shot. You make a series of assumptions in the rehearsal room as you conceive the play, and then you hope that the audience will affirm your assumptions by the way they respond to the play. That's pretty much the context in which we work.

Flachmann: Thanks, Jamie. Corliss?

Preston: Yes, I agree with Jamie. I was cast in February, and I know from working here before that I need to get on the text immediately. I try to learn the role before I get here, just so I have it inside me, and then when I hear the design concepts and what we're going to cut, I let go of pieces of the play I learned, but I still

keep them in my head. I already know different pieces of the puzzle that I can incorporate, even though they may be cut. I've seen this show a lot, and I've always found Emilia a bit of a puzzle. There's such ambiguity to her until the end of the play, when she gains clarity and you get to see who she really is. I love that arc to her character and tried to make it as exciting as possible. And I did get together with Jamie so we could discuss a lot of our choices. They weren't set in stone.

And I also like to go to museums and just look at paintings and sculpture and see if anything hits me instinctively. I also did a lot of research. I love to see what's out there. I think it's very important to have your own ideas before you enter into rehearsal and then be ready to let them go. But I think about the role beforehand so the ideas can gestate inside me.

Flachmann: Thank you, Corliss. Justin?

Gordon: I approach plays in a similar fashion. I always begin with the text and see where that takes me, but I try to be as open as possible when I arrive at the rehearsal process. And then I really begin to look for the parallels between myself and the character I'm playing. I found Cassio very eager to begin his new career, much in the way that I, too, am beginning my career as an actor. The eagerness and the desire to do well are parallels that I found between myself and Cassio.

Flachmann: Excellent. Let's move the microphone down to Mr. Sullivan. Jim, are the problems of making a production your own vastly different for a director than for an actor. You start with the script, of course, and have a direction in which you want to proceed. Jamie has said, I think quite accurately, that many of the most important conceptual decisions are made before the actors are on board. So how do you as a director approach a play like this that's done so frequently and has such a rich production history behind it?

Sullivan: Well, at this theatre, of course, I think the actors have much more conceptual input, especially those who have been here before. If the play is being done in the outdoor Adams Theatre, the architecture, based on the recollection of a Tudor theatre, encourages a playing style that enhances the relationship of the actor to the audience through the natural light that is available for the first ninety minutes of the performance. In fact, we're now seeing [in August] lighting cues at this point in the summer that we set after midnight in late June!

The work on the outdoor stage at the Utah Shakespeare Festival is generally going to be, for want of a better word, "traditional."

First and foremost, most directors want the play to mean something right now. So all our decisions are made with one foot in Shakespeare's time and another firmly planted in our own. Costume designer Bill Black has supported this concept with contemporary trousers on the men in this production that are actually black jeans or black leather pants; all this, I think, helps make the issues of the play sadly tragic and frighteningly contemporary for a modern audience.

Flachmann: Thank you. Several of you have said that you start with the script, and then your relationship with the script is changed through the rehearsal process. I wonder if you can share specific examples without revealing any dark secrets about the production. Can you think of any moments that were changed because of your interaction with Jim and the other actors?

Wochley: In act 1, scene 3, my interaction with my father actually changed a lot. At first, I was playing the relationship as if I cared about him [laughter]. But I found out through rehearsal that she really doesn't care at all. He wasn't there for her in her life. Othello is all I need now. I don't need my father at all. He's just a weight around my neck. After Jim and I talked about that relationship, my understanding of the scene changed a lot.

Flachmann: Lindsey, is the insight that your father hadn't cared for you textually supported, or is it a back story that you and Jim came up with in rehearsal?

Wochley: I think the text is ambiguous enough that you can interpret it in any way you choose. So I guess I would have to say it's a back story.

Flachmann: Jamie, any special moments for you, sir?

Newcomb: Jim and I had talked a lot about the scene on the dock in Cyprus at the beginning of act 2. I had this idea about Iago's relationship with Desdemona and how she's a catalyst for Iago's growing villainy and malice. This prompts the question about his motivation, which is one of the great ambiguities in Shakespeare. I don't actually think his motives are ambiguous at all. There are a lot of reasons why he behaves the way he does. It's an accumulation of circumstances that lead to a specific decision to go deeper into his plot. I think he's certainly immoral and unethical, but opportunities that are available to him allow his further unscrupulous behavior

One of the most crucial moments for me is on the dock with Desdemona when we're waiting for Othello, and she prompts me to entertain her. I tell a series of bawdy jokes, but I'm also wooing her because I think she's quite attractive. Desdemona has qualities

no other woman possesses, and every guy who sees her is smitten by her, and Iago is certainly one of them. And then he has this very unfortunate epiphany as he is looking at this young, beautiful woman he would never be able to possess, never could have possessed, and there's a shocking juxtaposition with Emilia on the dock and with Desdemona and myself, because you have to remember that nobody loathes Iago more than himself. And it's a stark realization to see Cassio come up and take her by the palm, to witness this suave, slick Florentine work his magic on women. It suddenly shifts into something much uglier, and so Jim and I wanted to make this scene with Desdemona a real turning point in the production.

Flachmann: That section is often cut in production, isn't it?

Newcomb: Yes, that part is generally cut. Jim wanted to delete it initially, too, but we had a talk about it and reinstated it in that context.

Flachmann: Corliss, I'm assuming you'd like to respond to that.

Preston: If rehearsals are a true collaboration, you start to find out why these scenes are necessary. Even if you decide to cut them, you need to know why they are there. You have to at least understand what you are missing. In rehearsals, Jim spent a lot of time trying to guide me away from certain character strengths so I could save them for the end. When you are first in rehearsals and you're reacting to everything, you're pretty much wearing your heart on your sleeve. So Jim would try to say, "Yes, that's all underneath. Now let's try to put something on top of it." So I think it was a true collaboration in the creation of my character between the playwright, the director, myself, and the people I was on stage with.

Flachmann: Thanks, Corliss. Justin any epiphanies for you during the rehearsal process?

Gordon: Absolutely. In act 2, scene 3, when I lose my lieutenancy, my initial approach to it was shell shock, complete shell shock, and I think the first choice I made was to underplay it too much. And then Jim and I talked about Cassio's youth, and it's almost like he has a temper tantrum that an adolescent would throw when he disappointed his parents, which felt a lot more right, especially with everything Cassio has on the line up until that point and how embarrassed and ashamed he feels for failing Othello. So that was a definite change for me.

Flachmann: Jonathan?

Peck: I talked earlier about the production I did in Tennessee, which toured through a lot of small towns. One morning we're in Maresville, Tennessee, and the director says when we go into these rural high schools, we want to be very careful with the kiss. If you've ever been to a high school assembly, the football team always sits up front. So we do the kiss, and we're used to high school kids kind of rumbling, but we heard this sort of low growl come out of the football team during the kiss [laughter]. So I looked around for an exit [laughter], and I walked over and said, "You guys crank up the van and keep that motor running, because if I have to leave, you're on your own" [laughter]. I like what Jim has done in that opening scene because it's clear from the staging that the marriage has been consummated. We got that whole question out of the way early so people could focus on the story. During the Renaissance, to prove your newly wedded wife was a virgin, you'd go to the window and hang out the bloody sheet. Rather than do that, we have a moment with the handkerchief that says they've consummated the marriage. I agreed with Jim that we needed to communicate that at the top of the play. Let's get the kiss out of the way, too. Let's just tell the story.

Flachmann: I'm glad you brought that up, Jonathan. What about some of the other back stories? Would any of you feel comfortable talking about extra-textual decisions you made about your characters' lives before the play begins?

Preston: Well, we've already discussed certain moments that changed in rehearsal, because once you get on stage with each other you start to create this whole other universe. One decision, which was actually determined in the casting, was that Iago and Emilia are a middle-aged couple as opposed to a younger couple, which helped us heighten certain aspects of the roles. Jamie and I started talking about how they were two kids from the Bronx [laughter], and they had a lot of potential. They were both ambitious, and they thought they were going to achieve all these dreams and go all these places, and then they end up twenty years later, and none of these dreams has happened. Their great potential has gone nowhere, which is a real disappointment to them. Nor have they any hope of a future generation fulfilling their fantasies because they are childless. We also discussed the possibility of a physically abusive relationship, but the more we talked about it, the more interesting the emotional abuse seemed [laughter]. I know so many marriages that are messed up on that level: how many buttons you push and how you can manipulate each other and how you can still want that person to love you even though they

don't give you anything you need. Dysfunction is always fun . . . when it's not your own life [laughter].

Newcomb: There's a co-dependency in this relationship, and of course we're living in a patriarchal society. Iago is undeniably intelligent, but he's not very savvy politically. He's never risen above anything but an ensign, and he's forty-seven years old (as we say in the play). So we hit upon this idea that Emilia is desperate for some kind of affection from him, which I can give her on occasion, but I can also pull it away. After Othello is sent to Cyprus, our station is elevated. Othello has put Emilia in charge of his wife, which means we are going to make ourselves collectively indispensable to Othello and Desdemona, which will help me in my attempt to get the lieutenancy from Cassio. We were probably pretty sharp cookies early on, pretty hip, and saw the world in that light. We were smart and the rest of the world wasn't. That kind of conceit ultimately becomes quite toxic.

Flachmann: Thanks. I want to get Jim in on that question. So these guys go out to breakfast and come back to rehearsal and say they've got this play all figured out [laughter]. What role do you have in these decisions? Were you keen on this concept?

Sullivan: That's what I expect them to do. Because of our repertory rehearsal schedule, we don't get to the play more than sixteen guaranteed hours a week. It's difficult to build momentum in rehearsal for something that's as complex and rich as this play. For me, it's largely a matter of taking what they bring to the room and shaping it. But you expect them to investigate the script on their own. That's what they do: Through the words in the text, they make relationships with each other that are authentic and honest. They avoid the actor's nightmare by knowing who they are and what they're about. The combination of this level of talent at the festival and the difficult rehearsal schedule always makes the work richly fulfilling for me and hopefully also for our audiences.

Newcomb: Yes, I'm just so proud of Emilia for what she's done. Getting Desdemona to plead for Cassio fits in perfectly with my plan.

Flachmann: While Jamie has the mic, I wonder if we should talk a little bit about the soliloquies in the play and especially about the relationship between the characters and the audience. What kind of special bond is that? I'd be interested in hearing from Jamie and Jonathan on that question.

Newcomb: I find direct address in Shakespeare fascinating because I know there's a dramatic convention in which the character is speaking to the audience, but in the world of the play, whom is

he really talking to? I have a line early in the first scene with Roderigo where I say, "Heaven is my judge," and I sort of laugh at the idea of it because I don't think Iago is a very religious character! [laughter] Since Iago is a pragmatist, there isn't any empirical proof of God in a staunchly Catholic world. One day in rehearsal, I had a wonderful idea: What if God was right in front of me? What if all these people in the audience are God? And I'm going to tell you exactly what I plan to do. To date, nobody has stood up and said that's enough of that [laughter].

During the course of the play I have the three direct-address soliloquies in a row, which get progressively meaner, and I'm looking right at you as I'm saying all these horrible things and asking you an implied question: Are you going to do anything about this? [laughter] Near the end of the play, when I have the scene with Desdemona and Emilia and say everything's going to be all right, I have a silent soliloquy, which was an idea Jim and I had about turning to the audience and not saying anything, just letting the thought sit there unspoken. At that point, I don't have to say anything to you any more. And I actually wonder if God is going to do anything to help these characters. I guess not [laughter]. So that is the context for my direct address, and I think it's important for the actor doing the soliloquy to have a very specific idea about whom he is talking to.

Flachmann: Lovely. Jonathan, do you want to add anything to that?

Peck: I see many of my soliloquies as "interiors" rather than "direct address." For example, when I say, "Haply, for I am black / And have not those soft parts of conversation / That chamberers have," I think this is a thought rather than a statement directed to the audience. However, there is something I'd like to say about Jamie's direct address [laughter]. He has a moment . . . let's get this out now [laughter].

Newcomb: Just before Othello enters in one scene, I do an impression of a monkey. And the audience always responds strongly. Sometimes they even laugh nervously.

Peck: And sometimes, I think most times, there is an audible gasp. Since we know that what he's doing is horribly racist, the question becomes, "How complicit is the audience in Iago's racism?"

Newcomb: Yes, that's the first moment of complicity. Anybody who laughs at that extremely rude gesture is implicated in the play's racist attitude.

Peck: It's one of the reasons things deteriorated in Germany in the 1930's. Does your silence make you complicit? If you guys would like to talk about it later, I'd sure like to do that [laughter].

Flachmann: Let's discuss character arcs a little more, how the characters change as the play progresses. Jonathan, do you want to start?

Peck: I think this play is where Shakespeare shows his maturity in writing characterization. Othello's arc to me is so clear. It begins with his new love and his joy in his marriage. Then he descends from that love to suspicion and then to outright jealousy and then to my favorite part: the madness that comes with jealousy.

At my house on the back of my bedroom door, I have a growth chart for my daughter: "Look at you: you grew 5 inches last year" [laughter]. In a sense, this play is like that for me. You learn how to deal with the verse; then you figure out the character arc, which goes from happiness to jealousy to madness and finally to death. As an actor, you learn how to tell the story, and then you start to fill in the blanks with all the little details. I've never been jealous before because I am not that kind of person. And when you finally feel that and the attendant madness, it is the green-eyed monster. The madness that comes with that discovery makes the story just so much clearer!

Flachmann: Good job. Lindsey?

Wochley: I think the moment my arc changes is when he asks me for my handkerchief. When he starts telling me this story about the sibyl who "In her prophetic fury sew'd the work," it all starts going downhill because I don't know what's wrong. I don't know what's happened to him. He won't tell me; he won't talk to me. All I know is I lost his handkerchief, and he's livid about it.

Flachmann: Jamie, we talked about a moment at which you lose control in the play. I wonder if that's part of your character, when things spiral out of control?

Newcomb: For Iago, there's a very clear dramaturgical arc. I trick Roderigo, then do the gulling of Cassio, and then move on to the big guy. I drive him all the way until he falls to the ground in a fit, and that's a huge moment of triumph for Iago. Up to that point, I've done my work mostly in two-person scenes: Iago/Roderigo, Iago/Cassio, or Iago/Othello. Suddenly, Cassio comes in during the fit, and three people are involved. And I say now I'm going to bring Bianca into it, and I'm going to have Othello stand behind this screen and watch the action, so it starts to get more complicated. Later, when Lodovico comes in with Desdemona, I have to orchestrate even more people. In act 5, scene 1, Iago is

dancing as fast as he can; luckily, Bianca shows up at the wrong time, and I blame it all on her.

Flachmann: Corliss, what about your character arc?

Preston: I was fascinated throughout the rehearsal process with the idea of Emilia's identity and how she discovers who she is through the course of the play. I read an article by Simone de Beauvoir about the role of women in a patriarchal society. What was really fascinating to me is that women will bond with males of their own class before they will bond with another woman. I come from a working class environment; based on my own experience, I think that insight is true. I have no problem stealing the handkerchief.

For Emilia, the problems in the play are always somebody else's fault, until she takes responsibility for her own actions at the end of the production and chooses to tell the truth. There's a level of enlightenment there. She's starting to discover who she really is, and she's willing to risk death to find herself. But I'm also intrigued when Desdemona lies about the handkerchief. I'm ready to fess up, and then you lie about it, and I think, wow! this is interesting. Then all of a sudden Emilia starts to bond with Desdemona as one woman to another, and that progression continues when she starts to reveal what she thinks. The ultimate betrayal is the realization that her husband set her up through the whole thing.

Flachmann: Thanks. Justin?

Gordon: If you listen to Cassio's language early on, he's very courtly in the way he praises Desdemona and when he talks to Othello and Iago. Cassio is rigid when he describes Desdemona because he's being very careful to do a good job as the lieutenant. He has the office, but I don't think he fully owns it yet. And then when he loses his office, he almost looks to Iago as a kind of mentor, as a guide. He's helping me, he's teaching me how to be more like one of the soldiers. And I think he finally becomes a man when he walks into act 5, scene 2 and sees the carnage. He sees his best friend kill himself. The man whom he has trusted has betrayed everyone. The woman he has loved on a variety of levels is dead before him.

Everything that he knows is gone. When he becomes governor of Cyprus, he's attained the highest status, but he's had to lose everything to get it. I think that's when Cassio becomes a man. There's even a shift in his language at the end when he says very simply, "Dear General, I never gave you cause. . . . I found it in my chamber." Everything is very direct at this point; he has lost all the airs he had at the beginning of the play. So for me, that's the arc.

He goes from being an eager, officious upstart, wanting to prove himself, to a real man by the end of the play.

Flachmann: Great, thank you. Jim, you have the responsibility, of course, of coordinating all these characters' arcs. Do you feel like a juggler in a three-ring circus?

Sullivan: No, I'm an audience for them throughout the process. When these events happen in rehearsal, moving to the point where you can have all these arcs interacting with one another and interacting with an audience, it's a real miracle. That's why we do it.

Flachmann: I wonder if Jonathan and Lindsey could say a few words about their relationship, particularly the age and ethnic differences? What is it, Lindsey, that attracts you to Jonathan's character? "She loved me for the dangers I passed, / And I loved her that she did pity them." I wonder if that's a solid foundation for a marriage? [laughter]

Wochley: For Desdemona, it is. The script explains that she has had all these suitors and that she didn't want to marry any of them. And then Othello comes along and tells her these fantastical stories; it's a dream world, and he's my knight in shining armor. With reference to the age difference, I also see him as the father figure I never had, which adds so much more to my love for him. It's only two days before he kills me, right? We really don't know each other at all. Our relationship at the beginning—well, throughout the whole play—is purely based on attraction, and I don't really know him as a man. So when he switches from "I love you" to calling me a whore, I think this isn't the man I married. This isn't the man I fell in love with. I keep thinking it's a little bump in the road. We'll get through this. I don't have any family or friends. Emilia is the only woman I've ever been close to in my life, and I've only known her for a few days.

Flachmann: Jonathan, anything to add?

Peck: Yes. Othello is basically used to protect trade routes and the economic viability of Venice. But Desdemona is the one who has actually listened and who has an idea of who I am and what I've gone through in life. When you find a person like that, they are very special to you, particularly when you are a stranger in a strange land. Justin and I have talked about this a lot. What Othello really does is send Cassio to talk to her. Now as I think back on my life, I remember doing that in ninth grade [laughter]. I sent Cedric to talk to Debra, and the next thing I know, they're going out. Why'd you do that, man? [laughter]

Cassio is suave: He's a Florentine, and he's good looking, and he's of her own ethnicity and class. So it's easy to take that to the next level and say, what did he tell her when I sent him to talk to her? Why wouldn't she fall in love with him? He is familiar to her, and I am not. I look at her father and say, "She thanked me." I work for these other guys, and they never thank me. They write me a check, and I'm gone. The woman actually looks at me and says, "Thank you for telling me these stories. Thank you for entertaining me." And I think that's the basis of his love for her.

Flachmann: Thanks, Jonathan. What about the balance of the characters in the play? Whose play is it?

Sullivan: That's a very good question. I never think of a play, even Hamlet, as dominated by one character. To me, the ensemble makes it happen. But the weight of this play, the spring of action, is certainly with Iago. I'm reminded of a phrase from Melville's Billy Budd, "the mystery of iniquity," and I think that's the compelling aspect of the play. And it's the one that compels us still. We've created pop entertainment around it, certainly. Mass culture broods about it. The nature of evil is the meditation of the play, and that makes it the catalyst for the action of the play. Iago works though other people's hands until the very end. When he's caught and brought back, he has a kind of stoicism, which turns the final act into his ultimate creation at this point. Consequently, I have shifted the production to that focus because that's what I find most intriguing.

Flachmann: That's part of the enigma of Iago not speaking at the conclusion, isn't it? One of the definitions I love of "great art" is that it is inexhaustible. We keep looking into it and finding new and wonderful discoveries. Jamie, anything to add here?

Newcomb: I think Iago starts bad and gets worse as the play progresses. He's one of those unfortunate individuals who have very large egos and terrifically low self-esteem. It's all a sport for him. When someone loses his scruples and his ethics, the world gets out of his way because we depend on each other's innate goodness. When somebody can take advantage of that and see what a person's weakness is and manipulate it, that's a pretty scary prospect, and it's empowering in a very negative way. As I worked on the role, I found there was a kind of quirky "slouchiness" that Iago has early in the play; as he gets more successful, he becomes more still, upright, and powerful as the play progresses. So by the end of each performance, of course, we find there wasn't ever any core to Iago. There's no "there" there. He's the nowhere man. By the end of the play, what you see is emptiness. His last line is,

"From this time forth, I never will speak word." There's a terrible stillness in that moment.

Flachmann: Jonathan, how does your descent into madness happen? What percent is your own gullibility, and what percent is Iago's brilliance at manipulating the people around him?

Peck: Iago says, "The Moor is of a free and open nature, / That thinks men honest that but seem to be so, / And will as tenderly be led by the nose / As asses are." He assumes that everyone around him is honest and truthful and that we are all working towards the same goal. This realization allows this Machiavellian ensign to create a web that ensnares Othello. In society, in politics, we often see people who cannot stand watching someone else who is truly good. They have to tear them down because it makes them feel like a lesser entity.

Flachmann: Jim, a closing comment from you?

Sullivan: Iago's words are an infection in the ear of Othello. He unleashes a disease that turns this man of elegance and accomplishment into a monster; he destroys a marriage and turns rapturous love into murderous jealousy. As the catalyst, as the infecting agent, he stands back and is astonished and delighted by his own creation. That way he's an audience within the audience sometimes.

Flachmann: What a lovely comment to end on. Please join with me in thanking these wonderful actors and this brilliant director for spending so much time with us this morning [applause]. We appreciate the opportunity to gain some insight into your art and lives. My thanks also to the organizers of the Wooden O Symposium, especially to Michael Bahr, Matt Nickerson, and Jessica Tvordi; to Scott Phillips and the Utah Shakespearean Festival; and, finally, to all of you in the audience who support this beautiful theatre. You are the most important ingredient we need to make these plays come alive each year [applause].

UNDERGRADUATE PAPER

The Two Gentlemen of Verona: The Homosocial World of Shakespeare's England

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The homoeroticism of Shakespeare's plays has become something of a cliché in modern American theater and scholarship. Characters such as Antonio and Sebastian in *Twelfth Night* and Bassanio and Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* are assumed to have a homosexual relationship. The key words in this point of view, however, are "modern" and "assumed." The twenty-first century reader often takes it for granted that any intensely personal relationship must include a sexual element. Yet Shakespeare's characters may be more accurately viewed from the English Renaissance perspective of a homosocial public structure that exalted male friendship over any other relationship. While homoeroticism expresses same-sex love and desire in narrow, personal terms, homosociality extends beyond individuals into the social order. Homosociality reveals male relationships as an unstable balance of power, rivalry, and non-sexual intimacy. It excludes women, not because they are sexually undesirable, but because women are a commodity to be used in establishing male dominance.[1] Modern western society places the highest value on the romantic love between a man and woman, but Shakespeare's culture most valued the equal and morally uplifting platonic relationship of two men.

It has been suggested that *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* could be used as a how-to guide for proper young gentleman in the seventeenth century,[2] portraying not only appropriate manners, but also feelings suitable to their station. As such, the intense male relationship it chronicles classically illustrates the homosocial nature of Shakespeare's world. While Proteus and Valentine's romantic love for the women is central to the plot's development, their homosocial love for *each other* is the central theme. From the

beginning they refer to each other as "my loving Proteus" (1.1.1) and "sweet Valentine" (1.1.11).[3] They spent their childhood in close company (2.4.62-63) and, upon parting, promise to maintain that closeness with letters (1.1.59-62). Yet Proteus's relationships with the women force him to question, and eventually betray, the bond with his friend, a serious breach of societal trust, according to the customs of Shakespeare's day.

A proper young gentleman of the English Renaissance was expected to keep his word at all costs, particularly with his homosocial relationships. As such, when Proteus falls in love with Sylvia, he is more remorseful for falsehood to his friend than to his former lover. He laments, "To leave my Julia, shall I be forsworn. / To love fair Sylvia, shall I be forsworn. / To wrong my friend, *I shall be much* forsworn" (2.6.1-3, emphasis added). The homosocial relationship is so dominant, in fact, that when Proteus's attempted rape of Sylvia is thwarted, he offers his apology to Valentine rather than to the victim herself:

> My shame and guilt confounds me.
> Forgive me, Valentine. If hearty sorrow
> Be a sufficient ransom for offense,
> I tender 't here. I do as truly suffer
> As e'er I did commit. (5.4.78-82)

In a homosocial order, Valentine controls Sylvia's virtue. It is Valentine's honor that has been threatened and Valentine whose forgiveness must be sought—which, as a proper young English gentleman, Valentine grants immediately:

> Then I am paid,
> And once again I do receive thee honest.
> Who by repentance is not satisfied
> Is nor of heaven nor earth, for these are pleased;
> By penitence th' Eternal's wrath's appeased.
> And that my love may appear plain and free,
> All that was mine in Sylvia I give thee. (5.4.83-89)

Homosocial primacy was taken for granted in Renaissance England, and the homoerotic reading of Shakespeare's plays that is so dominant today is of fairly recent origin. Jane Thomas maintains that classical literature was used by "campaigning homosexuals in the late nineteenth century to provide strategic evidence, a language and frame of reference for the expression of prohibited desires and experiences."[4] Establishing precedents in the literary canon could (and did) promote a wider acceptance of homosexuality. However, such readings may be more reflective of

our own culture than of Shakespeare's. During the Victorian era, for example, the puritanical Malvolio was considered the hero of *Twelfth Night*. In the late seventeenth century, Thomas Rymer believed that *Othello* was good advice for housewives.[5] Until the mid-nineteenth century, the tragedy of *King Lear* was given a cheerful resolution to suit audience expectations. It is in this vein that modern theater and academia have promoted a homoerotic subtext to Shakespeare's plays. While it is natural for individuals to lean toward their own perceptions, readers must be wary of imposing their own philosophy upon texts created in a different age and culture. One should question the claim that "homoerotically charged male bonds were a *central* aspect [my emphasis] of (England's sixteenth- and seventeenth-century) culture," particularly when simple male friendship is considered one of the "homoerotic practices."[6] Understanding the homosocial nature of Renaissance England should temper broad assertions.

Part of the difficulty arises from the language used for friendship at that time, phrasing that seems hyperbolic by our standards. Ace Pilkington explains that Shakespeare's England had yet to experience the "Victorian deep freeze" that later limited the public expression of emotion. He says, "It was possible to say things in Elizabethan and Jacobean England that sound overblown to modern ears. . . Everybody [made] extreme statements about emotion."[7] Modern American language reserves intimate pronouncements for romantic love, while pre-Victorian English used the same terms for both friends and lovers. As such, it was considered appropriate for Michel de Montaigne to say of his friend, "It is I wot not what kind of quintessence of all this commixture which, having seized all my will, induced the same to plunge and lose itself in his; which likewise having seized all his will, brought it to lose and plunge itself in mine with a mutual greediness and with a semblable concurrence."[8] Earlier, the twelfth-century monk St. Anselm wrote lovingly to relatives joining the priesthood, "My eyes eagerly long to see your face, most beloved; my arms stretch out to your embraces. My lips long for your kisses; whatever remains of my life desires your company, so that my soul's joy may be full in time to come."[9] The same highly charged, emotional language applied to all relationships.

That this language was not used to denote homosexual relationships is evident from Montaigne's writings. In his essay "On Love," he rejected homosexuality, in particular the practice of pederasty, as "justly abhorred by our customs."[10] The nature of homosociality, in fact, proscribes homosexual relations.[11] In *The*

Two Gentlemen of Verona, Proteus and Valentine are not jealous of their companions' lovers, but supportive. Valentine teases Proteus for his devotion to Julia, yet then encourages him by saying, "But since thou lov'st, love still and thrive therein / Even as I would when I to love *begin*" (1.1.9-10, my emphasis). He is not already in love with his friend, but expects a future romantic relationship. When Sylvia questions Proteus's loyalty to the homosocial relationship now that he has a romantic one, Valentine assures her that "love hath twenty pair of eyes" (2.4.95) and can simultaneously encompass both romantic and homosocial ties. When Proteus arrives at the Duke's court, Valentine sincerely inquires after Proteus's love life (2.4.129). Only when Proteus humiliates his friend with attempted cuckoldry, inverting the social ascendancy of homosocial love over romantic, do the relationships compete. Justin Matthew Gordon, who portrayed Valentine in the Utah Shakespearean Festival's 2008 production of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, maintains that Renaissance dueling over women developed to resolve such competing loyalties by eliminating the primary male relationship altogether.[12]

Arthur Quiller-Couch criticizes Proteus and Valentine's homosocial relationship for elevating male friendship "out of all proportion" to the modern primacy of romantic love.[13] He roundly condemns Valentine for offering Sylvia to his friend, declaring, "There are now *no* Gentlemen in Verona!"[14] Isaac Asimov, however, points out that in relinquishing Sylvia, Valentine maintains the ascendancy of the homosocial relationship.[15] Indeed, such a strong attachment was in perfect keeping with Renaissance expectations. Women had their role in procreation and social climbing, but they were not expected to inspire the same attachment as that shared by two equal men. True friends were so close to one another that they were intellectually and spiritually the same person. Montaigne wrote, "If a man urge me to tell wherefore I loved him, I feel it cannot be expressed but by answering, 'Because it was he, because it was myself.'"[16] In 1631 in *The English Gentleman*, Richard Brathwait declared friendship to be "two hearts . . . so individually united, as neither from the other can well be severed."[17]

Such friendship derived its superiority from its equal and freely chosen nature. According to Montaigne, marriage would not answer because it was a forced relationship based upon social expediency rather than emotional completion.[18] Kinship could not reach the high level of homosociality since it and its attendant duties were imposed rather than chosen. Montaigne noted that the love that brothers bear for one another was not only required, but also easily

contaminated by competition, particularly at the time of inheritance.[19] He believed that filial love also fell short of ideal in that it required an equality considered inappropriate between parent and child.[20] Francis Bacon insisted that friendship must be between men of equal status and intellect because "a man cannot speak to his son but as a father; to his wife but as a husband; to his enemy but upon terms: whereas a friend may speak as the case requires, and not as it sorteth with the person." It was taken for granted that wives and other family members "could not supply the comfort of friendship." The term "friend" was reserved for "private men."[21]

The homosocial relationship also claimed the advantage over other ties by its effortless simplicity. Montaigne avowed that friendship comes about from a natural inclination between similar personalities.[22] His own great friendship with Stephen de la Boétie, he said, established itself with joyous ease:

> We sought one another before we had seen one another, and by the reports we heard one of another, which wrought a greater violence in us than the reason of reports may well bear. I think by some secret ordinance of the heavens we embraced one another by our names. And at our first meeting, which was by chance at a great feast and solemn meeting of a whole township, we found ourselves so surprised, so known, so acquainted, and so combinedly bound together, that from thence forward nothing was so near unto us as one unto another.[23]

When compared to the torment required to establish an unsteady romantic love, it is easy to understand the presumed superiority of male friendship. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Valentine mocks Proteus's efforts to woo Julia when he says,

> To be in love, where scorn is bought with groans,
> Coy looks with heart-sore sighs, one fading moment's mirth
> With twenty watchful, weary, tedious nights;
> If haply won, perhaps a hapless gain;
> If lost, why then a grievous labor won;
> How ever, but a folly bought with wit,
> Or else a wit by folly vanquishéd. (1.1.30-36)

Homosocial love, according to Renaissance theory, was an easy path to happiness; romantic love required deceit, labor, and foolishness, and might not lead to happiness at all.

From the modern standpoint, extraordinary affection rightly belongs to lovers. Modern marriage books and seminars are filled with advice on how to be best friends; and indeed perfect companionship within marriage was desired by some in

Shakespeare's day as well. Montainge yearned for a union that provided both the mental and emotional blissfulness of homosociality and the physical elation of romantic connection.[24] However, Renaissance men despaired of forming a powerful bond with women because they considered women incapable of doing so. Montaigne insisted that women could not maintain the intellectual strain of powerful friendship.[25] Bacon considered a wife and children to be barriers to male success by virtue of their financial dependency.[26] Under this premise, Thomas Mallory's Arthur laments, "And much more I am sorrier for my good knights' loss than for the loss of my fair queen; for queens I might have enow, but such a fellowship of good knights shall never be together in no company."[27]

The natural inferiority of women to men made them unsuitable as gentlemen's companions, as even the servants expound in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Lance states unequivocally that "to be slow in words is a woman's only virtue" (3.1.335-36) and that pride "was Eve's legacy and cannot be ta'en from her" (3.1: 339-40). Woman's illogical nature is underscored when Lucetta explains why she prefers Proteus to Julia's other suitors: "I have no other but a woman's reason: / I think him so because I think him so" (1.2.23-24). Women were thought to be so illogical, in fact, that they did not even know their own minds. When Proteus sends a love letter to Julia, she haughtily refuses to read it despite her strong love for him. Her pride prohibits her from obtaining the thing she most desires, and she blames her maid for her own failing:

> And yet I would I had o'erlooked the letter.
> It were a shame to call her back again
> And pray her to a fault for which I chid her.
> What fool is she that knows I am a maid
> And would not force the letter to my view,
> Since maids in modesty say "no" to that
> Which they would have the profferer construe "ay"!
> (1.2.53-59)

Despite her inward repentance, she maintains her haughtiness with her maid and even destroys the precious letter. Then she mourns,

> O hateful hands, to tear such loving words!
> Injurious wasps, to feed on such sweet honey
> An kill the bees that yield it with your stings!
> I'll kiss each several paper for amends. (1.2.112-15)

Julia's irrational opening scene validates Valentine's later assurance to the Duke that "a woman sometimes scorns what best contents her" (3.1.93).

With such a negative view of women, it is no wonder that any relationship with them was viewed as corrupting. Bacon observed that the madness of romantic love weakens and destroys even the greatest of heroes, so it should be kept strictly separate from a man's serious actions.[28] In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the uplifting homosocial love Proteus and Valentine bear for one another is corrupted by their romantic love for women. Proteus's love for Julia begins his destruction. It separates him from his ideal companionship with Valentine and debases his own education by keeping him at home:

> Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits.
> Were't not affection chains thy tender days
> To the sweet glances of thy honored love,
> I rather would entreat thy company
> To see the wonders of the world abroad
> Than, living dully sluggardized at home,
> Wear out thy youth with shapeless idleness. (1.1.2-8)

Like other young men his age, Proteus should be at court learning "every exercise / Worthy his youth and nobleness of birth" (1.3.34). Instead, love is ruining his expectations:

> And writers say: as the most forward bud
> Is eaten by the canker ere it blow,
> Even so by love the young and tender wit
> Is turned to folly, blasting in the bud,
> Losing his verdure, even in the prime,
> And all the fair effects of future hopes. (1.1.47-52)

The danger of romantic love, in the Renaissance view, was that it caused a man to lose his self-control.[29] When Valentine teases Proteus for loving Julia, Proteus protests, "So, by your circumstance, you call me fool"; Valentine quips, "So, by your circumstance, I fear you'll prove" (1.1.38-39). Valentine knows it is useless to try to reason with Proteus because love has put Proteus beyond all reason. Valentine questions, "But wherefore waste I time to counsel thee / That art a votary to fond desire" (1.1.53-54). But it is not Proteus who is responsible for abandoning his friend and his studies, but Julia. It is she who has "metamorphosed" (1.1.68) him and love that has overmastered him and made him a fool (1.1.41-43). Romantic love interfered with true friendship by making men inconstant. Proteus bemoans,

> Methinks my zeal to Valentine is cold,
> And that I love him not as I was wont.
> O, but I love his lady too too much.
> And that's the reason I love him so little. (2.4.213-16)

His greatest crime is not his attempted rape of Sylvia, but his betrayal of his friend. He does not feel remorse until Valentine condemns his false friendship: "The private wound is deepest. O, time most accursed, / 'Mongst all foes that a friend should be the worst!" (5.4.75-76). If friendship had primacy over all other obligations, as Montaigne asserted,[30] Proteus's offense lies in devaluing the most important bond in Renaissance society.[31]

The play's closing scene supports the ideology of the day and reestablishes the homosocial structure. Michael Mangan observes that "homosociality . . . works in such a way as to exclude, commodify and/or idealize women,"[32] precisely what Proteus and Valentine learn as they mature in their relationships and become true gentlemen. There is the promise of a double wedding, but friendship is supreme and the women fade into their proper place in the background. As Proteus and Valentine belonged to each other in the beginning (1.1.12), they end as "one house, one mutual happiness" (5.4.186). The women are silent as the men enjoy their conviviality.

The highly emotional language of male friendship in Shakespeare's plays, then, must be taken at face value. *The Encyclopedia of Homosexuality* notes Shakespeare's empathy for humanity in all its variety, yet concludes that "no distinctly gay characters are evident."[33] Pilkington contends that inserting a homoerotic subtext "is simply not to pay attention to what was going on. Everybody (talked) that way." He cautions that converting homosociality to homoeroticism in Shakespeare's plays would change the entire canon to be about homosexual relationships. Moreover, a homoerotic reading drastically changes the tone of the plays. Comic scenes between heroes and their cross-dressed heroines become earnest love scenes; tales of thwarted ambition become jealous tirades.[34]

Pilkington questions whether the tendency toward homoerotic readings is the result of our own homophobic society, a self-censorship arising from the fear of even appearing to be homosexual. There also appears to be an impulse to impose a homoerotic subtext in order to support personal ideology. Leslie Fiedler attacks the "self-congratulatory buddy-buddiness (and) astonishing naïveté" of homosociality for its assumed lack of a sexual element.[35] Yet to portray Shakespeare's characters homoerotically is also an assumption, inferring a sexual relationship against historical evidence to the contrary. This is not to say that a homoerotic reading is completely without merit as reader-oriented criticism. The timelessness of Shakespeare's plays leaves them open

to a great deal of interpretation, allowing them to touch modern audiences as fully as they did Elizabethan playgoers. The difficulty lies in the hegemonic proportions such a reading has come to take in modern academia. Reshaping the literature to reflect one's ideology is unproductive, however, and creative interpretation should not take precedence over close reading and historical context.

Notes

1. Michael Mangan, *Staging Masculinities: History, Gender, Performance* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 221.

2. Jeffrey Masten, "*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*: A Modern Perspective," in William Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, The Folger Shakespeare Library (New York: Washington Square Press, 1999), 213.

3. All references to Shakespeare's plays are from William Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, The Folger Shakespeare Library (New York: Washington Square Press, 1999).

4. Jane Thomas, "Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* and 'Comradely Love,'" *Literature & History* 1 (Autumn 2007): 1-15, http://search.ebscohost.com.

5. Curt Zimansky, ed., *The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), 132-64; cited byAcc Pilkington, telephone interview, February 20, 2008.

6. Masten, "*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*," 201-202.

7. Pilkington, telephone interview.

8. Michel de Montaigne, *Selected Essays of Montaigne*, ed. Walter Kaiser, trans. John Florio (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), 62.

9. Quoted in Nancy Lindheim, "Rethinking Sexuality and Class in *Twelfth Night*," *University of Toronto Quarterly* (Spring 2007): 679-713, http://search.ebscohost.com.

10. Montaigne, *Selected Essays,* 60.

11. Mangan, *Staging Masculinities*, 121.

12. Justin Matthew Gordon, actor who portrayed Valentine in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* at the 2008 Utah Shakespearean Festival (personal interview, August 9, 2008).

13. Arthur Quiller-Couch, introduction to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ed. Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson, New Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; New York: Macmillan, 1921), xiv; quoted in Masten, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 200.

14. Arthur Quiller-Couch, *Notes on Shakespeare's Workmanship* (New York: Henry Holt, 1917), 67.

15. Isaac Asimov, *Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare, Volume I* (New York: Wings Books, 1970) 473.

16. Montaigne, *Selected Essays*, 62.

17. Richard Brathwait, *The English Gentleman* (London: by John Havilant [for Robert Bostock], 1630), 243; quoted in Masten, "*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*," 202.

18. Montaingne, *Selected Essays*, 60.

19. Ibid., 59.

20. Ibid., 58.

21. Francis Bacon, "Of Friendship," in *The Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral, of Francis Ld. Verulam Viscount St. Albans* (Authorama Public Domain Books, November 2003), http://www.authorama.com/essays-of-francis-bacon-27.html.

22. Montaigne, *Selected Essays*, 60.

23. Ibid., 62.

24. Ibid., 60.

25. Ibid.

26. Francis Bacon, "Of Marriage," *The Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral, of Francis Ld. Verulam Viscount St. Albans* (Authorama Public Domain Books, November 2003), http://www.authorama.com/essays-of-francis-bacon-9.html.

27. Thomas Mallory, *Le Morte d'Arthur* (Internet Sacred Text Archive, 2008), http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/mart/mart476.htm.

28. Francis Bacon, "Of Love," *The Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral, of Francis Ld. Verulam Viscount St. Albans* (Authorama Public Domain Books, November 2003), http://www.authorama.com/essays-of-francis-bacon-11.html.

29. Ibid.

30. Montaigne, *Selected Essays*, 65.

31. Michael A. Harding, actor portraying Eglamore in the Utah Shakespearean Festival 2008 production of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, notes the similarity to contemporary gangs and their primacy of male bonds over all other relationships (pers. comm.).

32. Mangan, *Staging Masculinities*, 121.

33. Wayne R. Dynes, ed., *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), svv. "Shakespeare, William."

34. Pilkington, telephone interview.

35. Leslie Fiedler, *A New Fiedler Reader* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1999), 4-5.