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Audience as Eavesdropper in Shakespearean Drama

by

Judith Matthews Craig

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Introduction

"What a piece of work is a man . . . in appre-
hension how like a god. . . ."

Hamlet (II, ii, 312, 315)

To speak of the audience of a Shakespearean play as an eavesdropper is not to accuse the audience of being a voyeur. At stake is a very important distinction between the Elizabethan and the modern theater. As Robert Hapgood puts it, in a modern theater, the spectator is treated like a willing slave, while Shakespeare's spectator is treated like a king: "At a conventional modern performance I expected to be 'enthralled.' I am boxed and hushed in the dark auditorium, my attention held by detailed sets, pinpointed by elaborate lighting, and intensified to 'gripping' climaxes."\(^1\) But the experience at the Globe was different. With the unchanging stage setting, the constant daylight, the all-male cast, and its "steadily throbbing pentameters"\(^2\), the Elizabethan theater presents an experience of continuous action which grips the spectator only to the extent of his imaginative participation.\(^3\)

Part of the difference results, of course, from the structure and conditions of the Elizabethan theater. Galleries ran all around the theater, and the actors could
be seen from every direction, as in a circus. In the roofless yard the common people crowded around the stage on three sides, while the rich young men of the upper classes vied with the actors in fashionable attire. As S. L. Bethel explains, "Even with the abundance of make-up, scenery, and properties in use today, it would have been impossible for actors so closely beset with audience, to create and sustain an illusion of actual life, especially as they performed in broad daylight."

The modern idea of a play as a life-like spectacle performed before a passive audience began after the Restoration in England, when theater took a very different turn. John Dryden had signaled this change as early as 1672, when, in Of Heroic Plays, An Essay, he claimed deception as the dramatist's aim. Dryden argued that trumpets, drums, canons, and sound effects offstage are essential "to raise the imagination of the audience, and to persuade them, for the time, that what they behold in the theatre is really performed. The poet is then to endeavor an absolute dominion over the minds of the spectators; for though our fancy will contribute to its own deceit, yet a writer ought to help its operation."

As time passed, the excessive realism of the theater which had developed by the nineteenth century worked
against the fact of "theater" itself for Charles Lamb, who believed that Shakespeare's plays should not be performed. For Lamb, Hamlet's soliloquies had become genuinely private, not public, meditations—"these profound sorrows, these light and noise abhorring ruminations, which the tongue scarce dares utter to deaf walls and chambers". How, demands, Lamb, can the soliloquies be represented by a "gesticulating actor, who comes and mouths them out before an audience, making four hundred people his confidante at once?" (p. 96). The audience has already become a voyeur.

Shakespeare, however, did not conceive of his audience as voyeur, peering into a life-like two dimensional world created to deceive him for a short while of its reality. Shakespeare never fails to remind the audience of the play's essential artificiality, and, in fact, in the four plays discussed here, presents a play-within-the-play in which the audience is given an image of itself as spectators of a play. The playwright does not endeavor to assume "an absolute dominion over the minds of the spectators" in Dryden's words: he relies on the imagination of the perceiving audience to create the play world. Harry Berger has pointed out that in plays with soliloquies, the audience is given a role in the play by virtue of direct address,
just as the observer of a perspective painting stands in both the actual space of the gallery and the extension of the three-dimensional field of the painting. In plays containing plays-within-the-play, the focus of perspective extends even deeper into the fictional world of the play itself. By extending the focus of perspective even beyond the play-within-the-play to eavesdropping scenes, I hope to show that Shakespeare conceived of eavesdropping scenes as miniature plays, scenes overheard and commented upon by a hidden audience. Eavesdropping is a metaphor for the act of watching a play. The judgments made by the perceiving mind on each of these planes, audience as eavesdropper and audience as spectator of the play-within-the-play, point to the ethical judgments faced by the audience of the play in the theater every day in actual life. The line of regression begun in eavesdropping scenes, which are like miniature plays observed by a hidden audience, ends with the vision left the Elizabethans by medieval Christianity of earthly life as a pageant watched and silently judged by an unseen God. Each plane is linked by the presence of a perceiving, interpreting mind which provides the ethical framework. This analogy was first introduced in Christian thought by Saint Augustine, who conceived of time as perceived by the consciousness of
man as analogous to eternity in the mind of God.

Sonnet 15 provides the best vision of the medieval weltanschauung which I feel influenced Shakespeare's conception of playwriting:

When I consider everything that grows,  
Holds in perfection but a little moment,  
That this huge stage presenteth naught but shows  
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;  
When I perceive that men as plants increase,  
Cheerèd and checked even by the selfsame sky,  
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,  
And wear their brave state out of memory;  
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay  
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,  
Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay,  
To change your day of youth to sullied night;  
And, all in war with Time for love of you  
As he takes from you, I engraft you new.12

The first two quatrains of this sonnet establish what Erich Auerbach has called a figural view of time, a view which first entered Western thought through the Judeo-Christian tradition.13 According to Auerbach, the figural view challenged the classical antique view which "carefully interrelated the elements of history, which respected temporal and casual sequence, [and which] remained within the domain of the earthly foreground."14 The figural view, on the other hand, vertically links occurrences in temporal earthly time to Divine Providence, which alone is able to devise such a plan of history and supply the key to its understanding (p. 74). As Auerbach continues:

The horizontal, that is the temporal and causal,
connection of occurrences is dissolved; the here and now is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events, it is simultaneously something which has always been, and which will be fulfilled in the future; and strictly, in the eyes of God, it is something eternal, something omni-temporal, something already consumated in the realm of fragmentary earthly events. This conception of history is magnificent in its homogeneity, but it was completely alien to the mentality of classical antiquity, it annihilated that mentality down to the very structure of its language, at least of its literary language, which—with all its ingenious and nicely shaded conjunctions, its wealth of devices for syntactic arrangement, its carefully elaborated system of tenses—became wholly superfluous as soon as earthly relations of place, time, and cause had ceased to matter, as soon as vertical connection, ascending from all that happens, converging in God, alone became significant. (p. 74)

The sense of vertical connection between different levels of reality in Shakespeare's sonnet works through analogy: the natural earth is compared to an artificial stage where shows are presented in secret confluence with Divine Will revealed in the stars, and men are compared to the lesser order of plants which grow and die in relative isolation, yet are organically related in time to the larger design of Providence again represented by the stars. Earthly time presents a fragmentary, discrete view constantly seeking interpretation from above. With the demise of Latin and its horizontally ordering connectives as the literary language, the vernacular was freed in the Renaissance to express as whole universe through the vertical ordering of analogy. The microcosm and the macro-
cosm are organically related in the perceiving mind of
God, who foreknew the End at the Beginning in a simultaneous
whole man calls eternity, which is revealed in earthly time
through the vertical connections established by Providence.
Saint Augustine, in fact, came to an understanding of
eternity in The Confessions through his own meditations on
his perception of time:

For these three exist in the mind, and I
find them nowhere else: the present of things past
is memory, the present of things present is sight,
the present of things future is expectation. . . . a long time is long only from the multitude of move-
ments that pass away in succession, because they
cannot co-exist: that in eternity nothing passes
but all is present. . . . all the past is thrust
out by the future, and all the future follows upon
the past, and past and future alike are wholly
created and upheld in their passage by that which
is always present. Who shall lay hold upon the mind
of man, that it may stand and see that time with
its past and future must be determined by eternity
which stands and does not pass, which has in itself
no past or future?15

Although man's conscious perception is minuscule compared
to that of omniscient God, he perceives and interprets in
simultaneity in a succession of moments that cannot co-
exist; indeed he perceives the past as succession only
through memory.

In this scheme of things, the Poet as perceiver and
as creator was like God: a Maker who, as Sir Philip
Sidney says, "lifted up with the vigor of his own invention,
doth growe in effect another nature, in making things
either better then Nature bringeth forth, or, quite a newe, formes such as never were in Nature." In the third quatrain of Sonnet 15 and in the couplet, Shakespeare presents the Poet as caught in earthly time while watching a beautiful youth grow old. Motivated by love, however, the Poet seeks to "engraft you new" (line 14) in a higher vision of poetic beauty not subject to decay. Using a word describing an artificial supplement to nature's own growth processes, the Poet seeks by artifice to construct a vision based on nature but beyond the vicissitudes of natural time, just as the figural view of Providence promises a vision of salvation outside of death.

In seeking to put his vision on the stage for all the world to see and judge, Shakespeare indeed creates nature both as we know it and as we do not know it: witches, fairies, the sea coast of Bohemia, double time, lovers who speak in Petrarchan sonnets, fools who speak wisdom in malapropisms, and magicians who create tempests to suit their will. It has become a critical commonplace that Shakespeare's world is organic, perpetually engendering whole worlds out of the most varied forces. Translating this vision into an actual play, however, requires more than the opening prayer of the Prologue who appears on the stage at the beginning of Henry V:
O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention:
A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene. 17
(lines 1-4)

The poet's problem of filling an empty stage is the
Prologue's as he asks pardon of the "gentles all" (line 8)
and looks around him at the "unworthy scaffold" (line 10):

Can this cockpit hold
The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram
Within this wooden O the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt?
(lines 11-14)

Agincourt will come to the "unworthy scaffold" the same
way that Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane--through the tricks
of the imagination:

Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts:
Into a thousand parts divide one man
And make imaginary puissance.
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' th' receiving earth;
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times
Turning th' accomplishment of many years
Into an hourglass; for the which supply,
Admit me Chorus to this history;
Who, Prologue-like, your humble patience pray,
Gently to hear, kingly to judge our play.
(lines 23-34)

In an Elizabethan play, the audience's belief is invoked
rather than suspended willingly in the imaginative
recreation of another world. In Augustine's terms, the
consciousness of the observer, like the mind of God,
perceives in simultaneity: it can transform the "accom-
plishment of many years/Into an hourglass" (lines 30-31) or allow a man dressed as a Prologue to enter another fictional world in another role, here as part of the Chorus. When the Prologue appeals to the spectator's imagination, his ability to transform a bare stage into the "vasty fields of France" (line 12), he is recognizing the audience's role in the play, the god-like ability of every person to participate in a fictional world based on his own perception of reality. The resulting play succeeds only to the extent that the spectator is willing to participate.

However, Shakespeare did not merely acquiesce in the limitations which the physical conditions of his theater placed upon the play: he actually exploits them so that conventions in production are integrally related to the situation on stage. As Anne R. Rice points out, he continually draws attention to the play as artifice through conscious use of the play metaphor at critical junctures. In Antony and Cleopatra, for example, Cleopatra objects to Octavius' triumph:

\[ \ldots \text{I shall see} \\
\text{Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness} \\
\text{I' the posture of a whore.} \ldots \]  

(V, ii, 219-221)
Or Macbeth, the hardened tyrant facing rout and defeat, hears of the news of his wife's death:

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more.

(Macbeth, V, v, 24-26)^21

Bethel goes on to say that an Ibsen drama, attended to passively, is discussed afterwards in abstract terms, but "in a Shakespearean play, criticism is an integral part of apprehension, and apprehension thereby becomes an activity of the whole mind."^22 In encouraging the spectator to participate in the play not only with his imagination but with his critical faculties as well, Shakespeare creates plays which do not, in Helen Gardner's terms, imitate the "audible and visible surfaces of life."^23 The Elizabethan stage points up the artificiality of theater not only with play metaphors, but with conventions or rules established by the consent of everyone present. In eavesdropping scenes, for example, conventional means must be used to make clear what is heard and what is not heard. As Gardner explains, in an overhearing scene, the audience must assume that the person on stage is deaf to asides and that eavesdroppers are impenetrable to sight even if on the same stage with everyone else. The constant use of comment makes it clear that the audience participates in the convention that listeners were neither seen nor heard
by their victims although eavesdroppers are perfectly visible and audible to the audience.\textsuperscript{24} Gardner goes on to isolate three eavesdropping conventions which contribute to the artificiality of an Elizabethan play:

First, the overhearers, being already on the stage, announce their intention of listening and take up their positions as eavesdroppers in full view of the audience; secondly, the overhearers comment on what they can hear; and thirdly, at the close of the scene they come forward from their hiding place and by comment or discussion show what they have heard and what its effect on them has been. (p. 347).

These elaborate precautions against misunderstanding are in keeping with the kind of drama that Shakespeare wrote and with the conditions of his stage. The stage conditions made it impossible for the dramatist to rely on his audience to interpret gestures and facial expressions. The stage was too crowded, and the audience was not, as in the modern theater, all seated in front, looking from approximately the same angle at a neatly framed picture. A modern director can accentuate facial expression with lighting and make-up, but the Elizabethan drama is a drama of words. As Gardner concludes, "On the Elizabethan stage, where the conditions were so different, nothing was left to the actor; every action was described; every emotion was fixed in words, with what seems to modern critics, used to the laconic dialogue of to-day, extreme self-consciousness." (p. 352). This self-conscious
artificiality, marked by continual reference to the play as a play, in metaphor, eavesdropping conventions, or plays-within-the-play, calls for an imaginative participation on the part of the audience as it often recognized itself on stage in some "guilty creature sitting at a play". After all, every spectator was "connected as players in a play written by the unknown and unfathomable Cosmic Poet; a play on which He is still at work, and the meaning and reality of which is as unknown to them as it is to us."\(^{25}\)

This critical perspective on the play world and the conviction of its separateness and artificiality, as well as the conviction of its ethical function to teach with "delight to move men to take that goodness in hands, which without delight they would flye as from a stranger"\(^{26}\) in the words of Sir Philip Sidney, can be traced back to the Corpus Christi cycle plays. As William A. Armstrong notes, Shakespeare seems to have acquired a firsthand knowledge of these plays in his youth when the guildsman of Coventry regularly staged their Corpus Christi plays despite official prohibitions. These performances were so famous that the phrase "Coventry play" came to be used as a kind of generic term for all drama of this kind.\(^{27}\) Coventry is close to Stratford on Avon, and Armstrong believes that it is altogether likely that the young
Shakespeare was one of the multitudes who saw the shearmen and tailors of that city perform their nativity play on a pageant wagon at appointed places in the street. The most memorable episode in this play occurs when Herod, frustrated in his plan to trap the Magi, rages "in the pageant and in the street also." Hamlet stigmatizes the actor who tears a passion to tatters as one who "out-herods Herod" (III, ii, 14-15). The best treatment of this important influence on Elizabethan drama that I know is given by V. A. Kolve in his brilliant book, The Play Called Corpus Christi. He begins by talking about the Christian religion as it influenced medieval drama.

Christianity has at its center a story that claims to have the power to change men's souls in terms of what is most important in not only their individual lives but in the course of history. Since the philosophical justification of this claim is not available to everyone, especially in the Middle Ages when most people were either illiterate or knew no Latin, Christianity made its claims in terms of history, in the action of Providence (p. 3). As an illustration of Providence in action, the Corpus Christi play was most significantly concerned with the ways God has allowed himself to be known in time. These cycle plays illustrating the sacred history of the world
from Creation to the Last Judgment had a different form and function from the morality plays which chiefly focused on men's ethical choices. Since the audience included the learned as well as the unlearned, exposition of theological doctrine was included in the play, but chiefly drama in the Middle Ages sought to appeal to an emotional understanding of man's existence as a creature under God (p. 4). The Corpus Christi play taught that by feeling pity, grief, and love for Mary and Christ in their human roles, men could better come to an understanding of God's action not only in the past, but as Christ's sacrifice affects their lives in the present. The Biblical past was shown stripped of its specifically Jewish character in order that it could be seen as significant in its totality to England; the sequence of events in the cycle existed to reveal God's truth mimetically in vertical connection with the audience's time, not merely to demonstrate a horizontal, causal vision of history (p. 122). In viewing God's design in active fulfillment, man is reminded that even his own time is significant and that his actions are relevant to a much larger design, that he is a player in a much larger play himself.

In the treatment of the Passion, for example, the thorny doctrinal question of the free will of the torturers
of Christ was solved by creating a dramatic world analogous to the world it imitates. In the Towneley cycle the torturers make a game out of the blindfolding and buffeting of Christ distancing their cruelty in a contest of skill and craft (p. 188). The York executioners offer an interesting variant in their game to see who can raise the cross with Christ on it. The comic subplot, the miniature game world within the play, elicits a very misleading response if not viewed within the larger perspective of the whole play (p. 189). Multiple levels of awareness are thus established in the minds of the audience: the comic, game level of the torturers, the pain and suffering of Christ, and the ultimate meaning of his human suffering in the larger plan of Providence.

The dramatic resolution of these levels of awareness depended, as Kolve demonstrates, on the familiar medieval antitheses of "earnest" and "game" (p. 19). The Latin word that the Middle Ages used to designate their mimetic shows was ludus of which "play" and "game" are the English equivalents (p. 12). "Play" became the common term for the vernacular drama. When the drama moved out from the Church into the streets and the market place, places where men naturally played, it was redefined as "game" and allowed to exploit its "play" characteristics while at the same
time retaining its "earnest" mimetic function (p. 19).

Kolve quotes from Johan Huizinga's analysis of the nature of play, *Homo ludens*, to further explain what this new departure meant:

Summing up the formal characteristics of play we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary" life as being "not serious," but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and place according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formulation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means. It is . . . a stepping out of "real" life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own. Every child knows perfectly well that he is "only pretending," or that it was "only for fun". . . . The consciousness of play being "only a pretend" does not by any means prevent it from proceeding with the utmost seriousness. . . . The inferiority of play is continually being offset by the corresponding superiority of its seriousness. (pp. 19-20).

The Corpus Christi play sought to encourage a greater understanding, both emotional and theoretical, of the central Christian story. As such it was considered "profitable game" (p. 20). As opposed to modern drama, its aim was never to deceive the spectator of its reality or to create a separate world into which the audience peered like a voyeur. Although its action took place in "game", not in "earnest", it was mimetically designed to tell the truth about reality--a reality in which the spectator himself
played a role in an ongoing play.

The Elizabethans, then, inherited from the late Middle Ages a drama which allowed a variety of responses within an ordered, ethical framework. Yet, in the drama of the Elizabethans, the superstructure of the whole is replaced: the drama of Christ is no longer the central focus of drama presented. As Auerbach explains, "The new dramatized history has a specific human action as its center, derives its unity from that center, and the road has been opened for an autonomously human tragedy. The great order of the past--Fall, Divine Sacrifice, Last Judgment--recedes, the human drama finds its order within itself; and it is at this point that antique precedent intervenes with plot-complication, crisis, and tragic resolution. . . ."31 The dissolution of medieval Christianity brings out a dramatic need for multiple perspective:

Through this need . . . the elemental sphere and the moral and human sphere become mutually related. An immense system of sympathy seems to pervade the universe. Furthermore, Christianity had conceived the problems of humanity (good and evil, guilt and destiny) more excitingly, aesthetically, and even paradoxically than had antiquity. Even after the solution contained in the drama of original sin and salvation began to lose its validity, the more deeply stirring conception of the problem and the related ideas of the nature of man long remained influential. In Shakespeare's work the liberated forces show themselves as fully developed yet still permeated with the entire ethical wealth of the past. (p. 324).
In Shakespeare's idea of a play the attitude of the observer is paramount: the drama exists to mimaetically remind him of the importance of his actions as a creature part of a much larger design, an ongoing play whose last act has yet to come.

In the following study, I will examine and interpret the multiple-perspective view of the play in the four plays which have plays-within-the-play. In the first one, Love's Labor's Lost, the progression from eavesdropping scenes to the little play put on by the lords for the ladies in the Dance of the Muscovites to the actual play-within-the-play, The Pageant of the Nine Worthies watched by an audience of both men and women, illustrates the importance of ethical judgments made by the perceiving mind from the simplest encounters in the eavesdropping scenes to largest overall design implicit in the whole play. Caught by the playwright in a brilliant exposure of the folly of being an unsympathetic eavesdropper, Berowne finds the play in which he has a part destroyed by a corresponding lack of sympathy on the part of the ladies. The failure of the play to end like an old comedy, with the traditional marriage ceremony, illustrates the precarious dependence of the play's success upon the individual responses of its actors—and its audiences. The failure of the play is
the failure of society and the entrance of Mercade
shatters not only the resolution of the play, but the
promised renewal of society as well. Berowne, the mocking
eavesdropper, is thrown into the world of the theater
audience at the end of the play to jest in a hospital.
As a vicious eavesdropper he has also proved a bad audience
and must be purged of his sins in the harsh realities of
this world.

Alvin Kernan has found in the history plays a move-
ment which parallels the passage from the Middle Ages
with its implicit hierarchal ordering to the Renaissance
with its concern for individualism.\textsuperscript{32} I find a similar
movement in the four plays which have plays-within-the-
play. In \textit{Love's Labor's Lost} it is established society
which purges Berowne; in \textit{A Midsummer Night's Dream}, the
lovers' turbulent emotions find release in the night world
of the forest only to be sanctified in the marriage
conferred upon them by society the following day. In
\textit{Hamlet}, the audience eavesdrops on a sick and corrupt
society and finds a moral interpreter on stage in Hamlet's
tortured efforts to purge it of Claudius' evil. Finally,
in \textit{The Tempest}, Prospero as ruler and duke is exiled
across the sea to an island where he must come to a personal
resolution which will save his society. In his last play
it is not so much the ordering within society as the ordering within the individual soul that Shakespeare stresses, and audience as eavesdropper merely acquiesces in Prospero's actions to further the designs of Providence. It might be objected that the diminished role of the audience in his last play signals a change in Shakespeare's conception of drama from the open, public atmosphere of the Globe, dependent upon the imaginative participation of the audience for its success as theater, to the more exclusive, private conception of theater, symbolized by the move to the Blackfriars. As Allardyce Nicoll makes clear, "The usual assumption is that the Blackfriars, being a roofed building and appealing to a better-class public, was fitted for the display scenic effects impossible of achievement at the Globe and that these scenic effects were modelled largely on the settings of the contemporary court masques."  

Nicoll, however, finds that all the available evidence is either completely negative or else runs directly counter to such a supposition. Shakespeare's essential vision remains intact--it only shifts in focus from the prosperity of society to the prosperity of the individual, always stressing the interdependence of the two within the ethical framework of the Christian-Platonic tradition.
Footnotes


2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.


5 Ibid.


7 John Dryden, Of Heroic Plays, An Essay, quoted in Kolve, p. 22.


9 Charles Lamb, "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation," quoted by Eastman, p. 96.


11 Ibid., p. 10.


22. Bethel, p. 15.

24 Ibid.

25 Auerbach, p. 327.

26 Sidney in Hardison, p. 107.


28 Ibid.


30 Kolve, p. 3.

31 Auerbach, pp. 323-324.


34 Ibid., p. 52.
Chapter I: Love's Labor's Lost:

"Beat not the bones of the buried"

"Why then, I'll just explain it to you." McMurphy raises his voice; though he doesn't look at the other Acutes listening behind him, it's them he's talking to. "The flock gets sight of a spot of blood on some chicken and they all go to peckin' at it see, till they rip the chicken to shreds, blood and bones and feathers. But usually a couple of the flock gets spotted in the fracas, then it's their turn. And a few more gets spots and gets pecked to death, and more and more. Oh, a peckin' party can wipe out the whole flock in a matter of hours, buddy, I seen it. A mighty awesome sight. The only way to prevent it--with chickens--is to clip blinders on them. So's they can't see."

Ken Kesey, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

In Act II, scene i of Love's Labor's Lost Boyet tries to get the Princess of France to understand that the King of Navarre has fallen in love with her. She has reason to doubt him and asks for an explanation. Boyet replies:

Why, all his behaviors did make their retire
To the court of his eye, peeping thorough desire.
His heart, like an agate with your print impressed,
Proud with his form, in his eye expressed.
His tongue, all impatient to speak and not see,
Did stumble with haste in his eyesight to be;
All senses to that sense did make their repair,
To feel only looking on fairest of fair.
Methought all his senses were locked in his eye,
As jewels in crystal for some prince to buy;
Who, tend'ring their own worth from where they were glassed,
Did point you to buy them, along as you passed.
His face's own margent did quote such amazes
That all eyes saw his eyes enchanted with gazes. 
I'll give you Aquitaine, and all that is his, 
And you give him for my sake but one loving kiss.¹ 
(II, i, 234-249)

The Princess, however, is not impressed, and she walks away, leaving Boyet to fend off the jeers of her maids, Rosaline, Katherine, and Maria. They taunt him as an "old love-monger" (II, i, 254) who merely speaks skillfully. Boyet cries out, "Do you hear, my mad wenches?" "No," replies Rosaline. "What then? Do you see?" "Ay," replies Rosaline, "our way to be gone." (II, i, 258-262).

Shakespeare's concern as a dramatist was to get people to hear and to see what was going on around them. Yet, the failure of the wooing in Love's Labor's Lost to end like an old comedy, with the lovers' resolving their difficulties in a marriage which brings a renewed sense of social integration to the whole community,² has been increasingly evident to observers from Berowne, the disappointed lover in the play, to the latest critics. As Thomas M. Greene puts it, the marriage is "where it belongs, in the indefinite future, not altogether remote, but much too long for a play."³ Greene notices that the failure of the marriage to take place in Love's Labor's Lost may be due to a deficiency in the play of "society" in its two meanings: as community and as grace of conduct. For Greene, "Love's Labor's Lost is
distinguished by a certain slenderness of feeling, a delicate insubstantiality. It is most certainly not a trivial play, but its subtlety remains a little disembodied. One source of that impression may be the play's lack, unique in Shakespeare, of any firm social underpinning." He goes on to contrast it with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where the comic figures provide a realistic working class that could keep society functioning. On the other hand, the play is also about society as "the happiness of life" (IV, ii, 164) to quote Sir Nathaniel. It comments on the kinds of conduct which sustain living societies in and out of plays:

> The grace of entertainment, the grace of love, the grace of wit, the grace of civility—*Love's Labor's Lost* is about the pursuit of these fragile goals. Its opening adumbrates the need of some ulterior, metaphysical principle to 'grace us in the disgrace of death' . . . . to live with the best sort of grace—with enlightened intercourse between the sexes, with gaiety and true wit, with poise, taste, decorum and charity. The ending does not discredit this object, even if it acknowledges the helplessness of wit before suffering, and even if it extends the realm of grace to unexpected social strata.

In the end, the audience is left not with a marriage celebration but with Marcade, not with the Princess but with greasy Joan.

The failure of the marriage is directly related to the failure of community: men should be responsibly human, and the lords of the play fail miserably. To achieve eternal
fame in the mouths of men, the scholars of the King of Navarre create a private, exclusive society by verbal fiat. By outlawing women and the unlearned, the men sin against themselves by refusing to acknowledge their common humanity with others as sexual beings who speak the same language based on common sense. As Malcolm Evans puts it, in their world, to be human is to be literate. Nathaniel, on the authority of Aristotle, relegates illiterate constable Dull to the status of animal, then to plant. The comic pedants in this way serve to make the apparently commendable motives of the scholars more explicitly selfish and destructive, both to themselves and to society. Book-learning expressed in witty banter is used both by the pedants and the courtiers as a badge of superiority and exclusiveness. Evans concludes, "While the comic pedants exclude the 'animal' yokels from their self-appointedly elitist affairs, the courtiers combat in self-dramatizing heroic battles the 'animal' within: their own physical nature, with its inescapable concomitants, sexuality and death." Instead of using learning as Sidney would have it, as a delight to move men toward that goodness from which they would otherwise flee, the men of Navarre use it selfishly as an exclusive way to attain personal immortality through fame.

Evans also believes that this perspective on the
scholars' motives was a personal concern of Shakespeare's as well:

For Shakespeare, working at a time when theatre was under attack from Puritans and civic authorities and the printing press was regarded as an instrument of immorality, this was more than an abstract issue. With *Love's Labor's Lost*, Shakespeare defined his commitment to the oral/aural art of drama. . . . In terms of the play, drama . . . stage[s] a paradigm of give and take, of speaking and listening. . . . But responsibility for the success of the drama does not rest wholly with the actors; while written words' one-way flow . . . beguiles the acquiescent reader, the contract which links poet, actors and audience in the theatre is reciprocal in nature, demanding a positive act from each sector, particularly from the audience who, to make drama possible must respect his conventions, listen and respond. (p. 124)

As several critics, beginning with Bobbyanne Roesen in 1953, have noticed, it is significant that the misguided young men of *Love's Labor's Lost* are a bad audience during the Show of the Nine Worthies. They refuse to accept the convention of character and repeatedly interrupt the performance, refusing to "bestow . . . the sense of hearing:" (V, ii, 665) on Armado, who plays the part of Hector. In emphasizing the audience in his plays, Shakespeare calls attention to the community of common people who listen in the theater and in effect takes sides "in the dilemma confronting the poet in the sixteenth century." In the words of Evans:

He undertakes this commitment to speech and drama at
a time when other poets, as Samuel Daniel wrote, were leveling their pens "like spears" against that "tyrant of the North, Grosse Barbisme" and seeking in the written word a personal immortality. Daniel justified his poetry as an attempt to transcend the finality of death:

To come against Oblivion and the Grave,
That Else in darkness carries all away,
And makes of all an universal prey.

For Shakespeare the immortality of the written word is illusory; the social role of the poet was to give words to the actors who would present them to the audience, thus giving them free circulation within the theatre and by extension, the community.  

But Love's Labor's Lost, in depicting the egotistical brutalities of society as it is in reality, is more than a moral guideline for behavior; in self-destructing before the very eyes of the audience, in dissolving the very fabric of the play, it implicates the community of men who watch in its vision:

These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air;
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.  

(The Tempest, IV, i, 149-158)

From his first play to his last, Shakespeare was concerned with the impact of words upon the living.

In Love's Labor's Lost the happiness of society as the grace of wit, entertainment, and love as well as the inte-
gration of society in the sense of on-going, fruitful community hinges upon the marriage of the King of Navarre and the Princess of France. But as Shakespeare brilliantly shows, the individual lack of charity and human sympathy within each group creates a miniature society so completely dominated by competition that the larger task of integrating the community through marriage becomes quite impossible. If the King is blindly pursuing fame through withdrawal into a private society of male scholars, the Princess is just as surely slipping into death through a blind adherence to the values of her social position, wealth and beauty.

In both groups wit serves as the means of self-enhancement. The Princess and her group mock the play presented by the lords when they come dressed as Muscovites to swear their love. They wish to thwart what they perceive as mere egotism, "mock for mock is only my intent" (V, ii, 140) and, like the lords of the Show of the Nine Worthies, refuse to "bestow the sense of hearing" (V, ii, 665) on what was meant to be the happiness of society, entertainment and love. Lacking a fundamental understanding of Christian charity, both groups are bad audiences, and both, in refusing to listen to a play-within-the-play, destroy the larger play in which they have a part. Because the play ends with no marriage celebration, Shake-
peare, the poet, must assemble the fragmented groups on stage together for the final grace of entertainment, two lyric songs composed in honor of the owl and the cuckoo, symbols of learning and broken oaths, respectively—the lords' greatest sins. But the characters are outside the world of the play now, and no conventions can protect them from "the sudden glare of actuality" in which they must face the theater audience.

Critics as a whole have been ruthless in penetrating the lords' pretenses to reveal the self-delusion in their desire to set up an academy which will "make us heirs of all eternity" (I, i, 7). The men play at being scholars, then play at being in love:

. . . just as they were smitten with the dream of contemplation and austerity, of fame and wisdom, they are easily and equally smitten with the notion of love, new roles to play, new gaudy words to say. Their objectives have changed, not their basic awareness or their natures. They are still seeking occasions that will enable them to exhibit themselves.

Gates Agnew finds Berowne the most interesting of the lot. Berowne's tone is "a tone compounded of many simples: self-ridicule, frustration, as well as exhuberance and pride in the ability to cope; moreover its mixedness becomes increasingly evident as the play progresses, echoing the profound servitude to anxiety and erotic necessity which is not
obscured by Berowne's facade of independent volition and rational integrity. The brilliance of Berowne's wit derives in part from the effect of his mocking spirit in critical self-consciousness. He knows his fellows to the extent that he knows himself, and he converts that knowledge into power over them. For example, Berowne is skeptical about the King's desire to win fame through ascetic study:

Shall have continual plodders ever won
Save base authority from others' books.
These earthly godfathers of heaven's lights,
That give a name to every fixed star
Have no more profit of their shining nights
Than those that walk and wot not what they are.
Too much to know is to know nought but fame;
And every godfather can give a name.

(I, i, 86-93)

But when the King asks him to forego the period of study, Berowne equivocates, saying that he has already sworn to stay, when he has done nothing of the kind; he even raises another objection before putting his name to paper. The Princess of France is coming on business, and it would be a "dangerous law against gentility" (I, i, 127) to make her stay a mile from court on the penalty of losing her tongue. The King is easily convinced, saying "[s]he must lie here on mere necessity" (I, i, 147), and Berowne triumphantly extends this equivocation to the entire oath, picking up on the word, "necessity":

Necessity will make us all forsworn
Three thousand times within this three years' space:
For every man with his affects is born,
Not by might mast'red, but by special grace.
If I break faith, this word shall speak for me,
I am forsworn "on mere necessity."

(I, i, 148-153)

The smaller question of the Princess' visit is quite unresolved in Berowne's pompous pronouncement, and the effect of his critical wit on the group venture is rather to display his own self-awareness than to work for its genuine improvement. No sooner has Berowne signed than he looks around for some "quick recreation" (I, i, 160) before his confinement which the King promises from Don Armado.

The King's lack of conviction in enforcing his high-minded pursuits reveals his own lack of self-knowledge, and his weakness has reverberations throughout the whole society. Constable Dull interrupts the King's description of Don Armado to bring in Costard, the Clown, who has been arrested because he "'sorted and consorted, contrary to [the King's] established proclaimed edict and continent canon . . . with a wench'" (I, i, 254-255). The King reminds him that it was "proclaimed a year's imprisonment to be taken with a wench" (I, i, 282-283), and Costard tries Berowne's old trick of equivocating on the meaning of the words which will force imprisonment on him:

Costard. I was taken with none, sir, I was taken with a "damsel".
King. Well, it was proclaimed "damsel".
Costard. This was not damsels neither, sir, she was a virgin.
King. It is so varied too, for it was proclaimed "virgin".
Costard. If it were, I deny her virginity. I was taken with a maid.
King. This maid will not serve your turn, sir.
Costard. This maid will serve my turn, sir.
(I, i, 285-294)

The comic underplot thus provides a gloss on what Berowne has just done to the King's ideal of the contemplative academy. Trying to extricate himself from what seems to him to be a meaningless quibble over insignificant details, the King leaves the larger context of his whole venture wide open for puncture by a wit. Berowne and Costard both point out that the King's ascetic decrees are contrary to nature; "[s]uch is the simplicity of man to harken after the flesh" (I, i, 216-217).

This overlooking of man's lower nature in the pursuit of ideal (an affliction characteristic of other noble rulers in Shakespeare--it nearly destroys Angelo and Prospero), is projected in society as a whole as vacillation in enforcing his commands. When the King pronounces his sentence on Costard as fasting a week with bran and water, Costard shows his lack of respect by wittily retorting that he would "rather pray a month with mutton and porridge" (I, i, 295-298). When Constable Dull delivers him to
Armado for imprisonment, Dull announces even another sentence: "a must fast three days a week" (I, ii, 127-128). In the meantime, Armado, the King's law enforcement officer, has fallen in love with the same wench, Jaquenetta, and in effect, fulfills the letter of Costard's witty puncture of the King's original pronouncement. He frees Costard altogether to serve as his pander to Jaquenetta, breaking the King's law as well as his trust as a law enforcement officer to get her to "serve his turn":

    I give thee thy liberty, set thee from
durance, and in lieu thereof, impose on thee
nothing but this. [Gives a letter.] Bear this
significant to the country maid Jaquenetta.
[Gives a coin.] There is remuneration; for the
best ward of mine honor is rewarding my dependents.
(III, i, 129-134)

In treating Costard like a "dependent" (1.134), a child who has no understanding of what is being done to him, both the King and Armado corrupt him. Honor becomes equivalent in Costard's mind with "remuneration," just as bribery becomes for Armado a means of protecting his honor, lost when he forgets his duty to serve his lust—and with Costard's girlfriend! Costard soliloquizes:

    May sweet ounce of man's flesh, my icony
Jew!--Now will I look to his remuneration.
Remuneration? O that's the Latin word for
three farthings. Three farthings--remuneration.
"What's the price of this inkle?" "One penny."
"No, I'll give you a remuneration." Why, it
carries it! Remuneration! Why, it is a fairer name than French crown. I will never buy and sell out of this word.

(III, i, 136-143)

Because his love has been sold for three farthings, Costard, whose name is a term applied derisively to the head in the sixteenth century (OED), becomes so destroyed that he even prefers to take the word "remuneration" over a desire to wish the pox (French crown) on Armado. He has lost his spirit; he "will never buy and sell out of his word" (1.143) again. If, as the Elizabethans thought, the commonwealth was the King's body, Costard's soul is a high price to pay for the King's lack of self-knowledge.

Although critics have been diligent in exposing the self-delusions of the men who desire to be scholars at the expense of everyone else, the corresponding lack of charity in the women has hardly been touched upon. Most critics note that the ladies are a good audience to the Show of the Nine Worthies, but none of them criticizes the Princess and her retinue for being a bad audience to the Lords' declaration of love in the Masque of the Muscovites--a far more important play. Although Bobbyanne Roesen notes that "the women have prevented their lovers from expressing a genuine passion," she feels that their action is justified:

Beneath the delicate language, the elegance and the gaiety [of the masque], lies genuine passion, but
the women from the world outside, where love has been coupled for them with death and reality, see only artifice and pose. The artificiality which has become natural to the four friends and the environment in which they live holds them from the accomplishment of their desire, for the ladies, hearing from Boyet of the masque in which their lovers intend to declare themselves, are unable to perceive in the scheme anything but attempted mockery, and in defending themselves, frustrate the serious purpose of the entertainment.18

Most critics, however, disagree with Roesen for giving the men credit for serious passion at all. Neil Goldstein argues that when Berowne praises women, it is not spirit or beauty that the lover spies in his lady's eyes but rather a reflection of himself.19 C. L. Barber agrees:

That the play should end without the usual marriage is exactly right in view of what it is that is released by its festivities. Of course what the lords give way to is, in a general sense, the impulse to love; but the particular form that it takes for them is a particular sort of folly--what one could call the folly of amorous masquerade, whether in clothes, gestures, or words. It is the folly of acting love and talking love, without being in love.20

The best example of this kind of behavior Barber finds in Berowne's justification of the lords' decision to forswear their oaths for love:

For when would you, my liege, or you, or you, In such leaden contemplation, have found out Such fiery numbers as the prompting eyes Of beauty's tutors have enrich'd you with? . . . . But love, first learned in a lady's eyes, Lives not alone immured in the brain, But with the motion of all elements Courses as swift as thought in every power,
And gives to every power a double power
Above their functions and their offices.
(IV, iii, 319-322, 326-331)

Barber notices "how little Berowne is concerned with love as
an experience between two people. All his attention is
focused on what happens within the lover, the heightening of
his powers and perceptions." But how can Berowne experi-
ence love as a relationship if his lover believes that he is
only mocking her? In Act II, scene ii, Boyet has described a
similar rhapsodic experience (quoted in the introduction to
this chapter) based on the King's reaction to his first
vision of the Princess, and Boyet believes that it is
indeed love. When the ladies refuse to listen to what he
is saying, Boyet believes they "are too hard for me" (II, i,
302). Even Berowne, equivocator that he is, knows that he is
in love: "Well, I do nothing in the world but lie, and lie
in my throat. By heaven, I do love, and it hath taught me
to rhyme. . . ." (IV, iii, ii-13). It would seem that a
closer look at the Princess and her group might be in order:
She might not be "beyond question the internal arbiter of
values in Love's Labor's Lost."22

The first glimpse that we have of the Princess is
through a senior member of the French court. Boyet, who
has come as an escort on the ladies' journey to Navarre,
gives the Princess sound advice about the nature of her
embassy and about her father's plans for her:

Now, madam, summon up your dearest spirits
Consider who the King your father sends,
To whom he sends, and what's his embassy:
Yourself, held precious in the world's esteem,
To parley with the sole inheritor
Of all perfections that a man may owe,
Matchless Navarre; the plea of no less weight
Than Aquitaine, a dowry for a queen.
Be now as prodigal of all dear grace
As Nature was in making graces dear
When she did starve the general world beside,
And prodigally gave them all to you.

(II, i, 1-12)

He is telling her that she should intelligently consider her father's motives. As we have learned from Act I, her father is "decrepit, sick, and bed-rid" (I, i, 136), and instead of sending an experienced diplomat to Navarre to negotiate the fate of Aquitaine, he is sending his daughter, "held precious in the world's esteem" (1.4) to parley with "[m]atchless Navarre" (1.7) over a fit "dowry for a queen" (1.8). Clearly, the King of France is hoping that they will fall in love and marry, solving his problems of policy and succession before he dies. Boyet's advice to the Princess is to be "as prodigal of all dear grace" (1.9) as nature was prodigal in giving so many graces to her. In echoing "grace" and "prodigal" twice, Boyet is emphasizing magnanimity, the perfection of the moral virtues according to Aristotle and chosen by Spenser in the introduction to The Fairie Queen as the virtue of Arthure, "the image of a
brave knight, perfected in the twelve private morall vertues," because magnaminity, or Magnificence in Spenser's terminology, contains all of the others.\textsuperscript{23} The Princess' special charge is to use her beauty wisely and generously; it is her special "grace" which in the play is opposed to the vain pursuit of the grace that the King of Navarre is seeking through fame:

Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,  
Live regist'red upon our brazen tombs  
And then grace us in the disgrace of death

(I, i, 1-3)

Marriage is the only "spite of cormorant devouring time" (I, i, 4) which can "buy/That honor which shall bate his scythe's keen edge/And make us heirs of all eternity" (I, i, 5-6).

But the Princess does not listen. She answers:

Good Lord Boyet, my beauty, though but mean,  
Needs not the painted flourish of your praise.  
Beauty is bought by judgment of the eye,  
Not utt'red by base sale of chapmen's tongues.  
I am less proud to hear you tell my worth  
Than you much willing to be counted wise  
In spending your wit in the praise of mine.

(II, i, 13-19)

Most critics praise the Princess for this speech. Unlike the men, she "has utmost respect for words as symbols of reality",\textsuperscript{24} and she is more conscious of poses as poses\textsuperscript{25} than the men. I find considerable posing in this speech, however. The Princess, in a revelation of true egotism, has
not heard anything in Boyet's argument other than praise of her own beauty. Although she acts self-deprecating, "my beauty, though but mean" (1.13), she imperiously puts Boyet down as a base flatterer whose only motive is to seduce her with false praise. Moreover, he is not worthy even to praise her sincerely, as she reminds him in a pompous platitude: "Beauty is bought by judgment of the eye/Not utt'red by base sale of chapmen's tongues" (11.15-16). She has no conception of beauty as a grace freely given; it must be "bought" (terms reminiscent of Costard's soulless "remuneration") and not debased by "chapmen," a slur on Boyet's inferior social position. She even wonders if he is flattering her only to demonstrate his own propensity for witty self-aggrandizement. In fact, critics usually see this acuteness of the Princess' disregard for flattery\(^26\) as exposing that very trait in the lords, which surely it is in part; but Boyet has not been merely flattering her. In one of the most subversive and deadly poses of the play, the Princess has deliberately chosen not to open herself to an opportunity for love and marriage and instead has opted for an opportunity to show herself off as a superior judge of moral virtue. Instead of the generous warmth of magnanimity we feel the chill of narrow self-flattery. This cold-hearted pose reverberates from the Princess' first entrance in the
play to the entrance of Marcade who brings an unspoken message which she can hear clearly enough.

The rest of Act II illustrates the impasse that is developing between the courtiers of Navarre and the ladies of France. It turns out that the ladies in the Princess' retinue have met their future lovers before and have formed favorable opinions of them. As the Princess remarks:

God bless my ladies! Are they all in love, That every one of her own hath garnished With such bedecking ornaments of praise?

(II, i, 77-79)

The ladies are not, however, blind to their lovers' faults. Maria feels that Longaville has "a sharp wit matched with too blunt a will, /Whose edge hath power to cut" (II, i, 49-50). The Princess' impression of the men of Navarre as "merry mocking lord[s]" (II, i, 52) is further reinforced by the lack of hospitality she receives from Navarre. As we have seen earlier, the question of how to handle the Princess' visit was never fully resolved, and it seems that the King has finally decided to lodge her in the park, like "one that comes to besiege his oath" (II, i, 85-86) rather than to risk losing face among his fellows for the sake of hospitality. The Princess then proceeds to catch the King in the same trap that Berowne had set in the act before. The King is guilty of perjury if he breaks his oath and guilty of
inhospitable rudeness if he keeps it:

I hear your Grace hath sworn out house-keeping.
'Tis deadly sin to keep that oath, my lord,
And sin to break it.
But pardon me, I am too sudden-bold;
To teach a teacher ill beseemeth me.
Vouchsafe to read the purpose of my coming,
And suddenly resolve me in my suit.

(II, i, 104-110)

The Princess is as forceful as Berowme in pointing out the
King's errors to him and just as reluctant to use her criti-
cism charitably for the good of the whole community. Instead
of trying to find a way to help the King out of his embar-
rassment and furthering her father's aims, she retreats into
her self-deprecating pose and hopes for a quick settlement
of her mission.

The paper which she gives the King implies that the
Princess' father had planned their marriage to settle his
debt. Two hundred thousand crowns were owed the King of
Navarre by France, and in his letter the King of France
claims to have paid a hundred thousand crowns, saying
nothing about Aquitaine or the remaining hundred thousand
owed. It would seem that he hoped that Navarre would fall
in love with his daughter and accept Aquitaine as a dowry
for the remaining half unmentioned in the letter. The King
of Navarre, however, has not received the first hundred
thousand and is mystified by the whole proceeding:
Dear princess, were not his requests so far
From reason's yielding, your fair self should make
A yielding 'gainst some reason in my breast,
And go well satisfied to France again.

(II, i, 149-152)

In his blind adherence to rational logic, the King thinks
France unreasonable, but he also feels a new kind of logic
in his breast which might demand a different kind of "yield-
ing" from the Princess. But the Princess is as deaf as ever
to another's wishes and hears in the King's speech only an
imputation of wrong against her social position:

You do the King my father too much wrong,
And wrong the reputation of your name,
In so unseeming to confess receipt
Of that which hath so faithfully been paid.

(II, i, 153-156)

The King protests that he has never received any money, and
Boyet intervenes to settle the quarrel by reporting that the
money will come the next day in a packet from France. What
could have been a gracious reception by the Princess of a
hint of love has ended in a dispute. It is in this context
that Boyet makes the speech quoted above on the King's
violent reaction to the Princess' appearance:

If my observation (which very seldom lies)
By the heart's still rhetoric disclosed with eyes
Deceive me not now, Navarre is infected.

(II, i, 228-230)

As we have seen, Boyet's description of the King's behavior
does not move her. The Princess will neither see nor hear;
"Boyet is disposed" (II, i, 250). In her own words, "All pride is willing pride (II, i, 36), and hers is so.

Shakespeare creates two emblematic scenes which capture the attitudes present in the court of Navarre and in the Princess' camp in the park which destroy the hoped-for marriage. In the first, the Princess is pictured as a huntress, as a "murderer" (II, i, 8) who kills to be kind. The lords' faults are exposed in an eavesdropping scene in which they listen to each other perjure himself by declaring love.

As Neil Goldstein has pointed out, the bold, haughty ladies of the Princess' camp are hardly the Renaissance ideal of the beloved. Although Goldstein is right in showing how Love's Labor's Lost satirizes Petrarchan love conventions, the ladies, by taking on the traditionally masculine role of hunter pursuing his deer, do more in this scene than satirize sixteenth-century literary conventions. The scene illustrates the deliberate cruelty on the part of the Princess to her lover in order to win the praise of her group--the fault usually attributed to the men alone. The Princess enters asking a forester if it was the King whom she saw spurring his horse up the hill, but the forester does not know who it was:
Princess. Whoe'er 'a was, 'a showed a mounting mind.

Well, lords, today we shall have our dispatch; On Saturday we will return to France.
Then, forester, my friend, where is the bush That we must stand and play the murder in?
   Forester. Hereby, upon the edge of yonder coppice, A stand where you may make the fairest shoot.
   Princess. I thank my beauty, I am fair that shoot, And thereupon thou speak'st the fairest shoot.
   Forester. Pardon me, madam, for I meant not so.
   Princess. What, what? First praise me, and again say no?
   O short-lived price! Not fair? Alack for woe!
   Forester. Yes, madam, fair.
   Princess. Nay, never paint me now!
Where fair is not, praise cannot men the brow.
Here, good my glass, take this for telling true--
[giving him money]

Fair payment for foul words is more than due.
Forester. Nothing but fair is that which you inherit.
Princess. See, see—my beauty will be saved by merit!

(IV, I, 4-21)

In this revealing banter with the forester, the Princess' true character is unmasked. She is not sexually unaware, "whoe'er 'a was, 'a showed a mounting mind" (1.4), and yet she prepares to leave as soon as the packet arrives from France. More than Berowne's equivocation, her cold show of vanity is the most self-incriminating and destructive pose of the play because she is aware of her cruelty in hurting other people. She is looking for a bush to play murderer in, and she goes to great lengths to hear praise of her beauty from him through a show of wounded pride, and then by literally giving him money for telling the truth. This act
prompts him to give her legitimate praise ("Nothing but fair is that which you inherit" [1.20]). Like Armado buying honor with words, the Princess buys truth with platiitudes, "praise cannot mend the brow" (1.18), and both contribute to the corruption of society with their "remunerations."

As her speech to Boyet revealed, truth for the Princess is not a guiding force to correct her egotism, and life to her is a game of manipulating others with fine words for her own self-glorification.

The fact that the Princess knows that she is playing a game makes her not a paragon of value in the play but the person most directly responsible for the failure of the marriage. She continues:

O heresy in fair, fit for these days!  
A giving hand, though foul, shall have fair praise.  
But come, the bow! Now mercy goes to kill,  
And shooting well is them accounted ill.  
Thus will I save my credit in the shoot;  
Not wounding, pity would not let me do't;  
If wounding, then it was to show my skill,  
That more for praise than purpose meant to kill.  
And out of question so it is sometimes,  
Glory grows guilty of detested crimes,  
When, for fame's sake, for praise, an outward part,  
We bend to that the working of the heart;  
As I for praise alone now seek to spill  
The poor deer's blood that my heart means no ill.  

(IV, i, 22-35)

As most critics point out, the King began the play by giving up the graces of society for fame, but as the play progresses, he moves toward a more realistic knowledge of life
gained through the experiences of love and suffering.\textsuperscript{28} For the Princess, however, the progress is in the opposite direction: she becomes a "shooter," pronounced "suitor" in Elizabethan English,\textsuperscript{29} in the pursuit of fame in the form of praise for her beauty. She uses the semblance of mercy and the face of pity to kill her "poor deer" (1.35) with complete disregard for Blake's formulation of Christian charity: "For Mercy has a human heart,/Pity a human face." Because she is more interested in maintaining her own social position than "losing face" among her ladies to help the King overcome his embarrassment, her beauty, her "glory" (1.31) becomes guilty of a "detested crime" (1.31) no more forthrightly expressed in the play than in Constable Dull's steadfast declaration to Sir Nathaniel and Holofernes that "'twas a pricket that the princess killed" (IV, ii, 49). To make sure that no one misses the pun, Shakespeare puts a little speech in the mouth of Holofernes:

"Sir Nathaniel, will you hear an extemporal epitaph on the death of the deer? And, to humor the ignorant, I call the deer the princess killed, a pricket....

The preyful princess pierced and pricked a pretty pleasing pricket;
Some say a sore, but not a sore till now made sore with shooting...."

(IV, ii, 50-53, 57-58)

Boyet brings the moral home:

Do not curst wives hold that self-sovereignty
Only for praise sake, when they strive to be
Lords o'er their lords?
    Princess. Only for praise, and praise we may
    afford
To any lady that subdues a lord.

(IV, i, 36-40)

In their exclusive academy, the men create a mutual admira-
tion society held together by witty self-display; the women
create a correspondingly cruel and limited society maintain-
ed by wit at the expense of their lovers.

The problem of wit and society has been brilliantly
analyzed by C. L. Barber in Shakespeare's Festive Comedy:

... the physical attributes of words are used by
wit: a witticism capitalizes on "external" associa-
tions," that is to say, it develops a meaning by
connecting words through relations or likenesses not
noted or used in the situation until found. . . .

In repartee, each keeps jumping the other's
words to take them away and make them his own, find-
ing a meaning in them which was not intended. . . .
The point . . . is that to use one another's words
in banter is like making love; each makes meaning
out of what the other provides physically. . . .
Boyet can go especially far in this way because he
is the safe elderly attendant of the royal party of
ladies, limited by his age and role. . . . When
there is a real prospect of going from words to
deeds, words are more dangerous. 30

Barber quotes the repartee between Rosaline and Boyet to
illustrate his point:

        Boyet. My lady goes to kill horns; but if
        thou marry,
Hang me by the neck if horns that year miscarry.
Finely put on!
        Rosaline. Well then, I am the shooter.
        Boyet. And who is your deer?
        Rosaline. If we choose by the horns, yourself.
Come not near.
Finely put on indeed!

Maria. You still wrangle with her, Boyet, and she strikes at the brow.

Boyet. But she herself is hit lower. Have I hit her now?

Rosaline. Shall I come upon thee with an old saying, that was a man when King Pippen of France was a little boy, as touching the hit it?

Boyet. So I may answer thee with one as old, that was a woman when Queen Guinever of Britain was a little wench, as touching it hit it.

Rosaline. 'Thou canst not hit it, hit it, hit it,
              Thou canst not hit it, my good man.

Boyet. 'An I cannot, cannot, cannot,
          An I cannot, another can.

(IV i, 113-130)

In this repartee, wit may be like making love in that the physical appropriation of another's words takes place, but the effect on the people involved is destructive to the growth of love as a relationship between two people.

Rosaline's reference to King Pippin as a little boy is surely castrating in effect. When "my lady goes to kill horns" (i.13) through wit, the men are right to exclude women from their private academies on the pain of losing their tongue. Yet, a woman can be affected adversely by wit to the point that she loses her tongue from dumbness. What could a woman possibly say to this witty exchange between Dumain and Berowne that would not be defensively castrating?

Berowne. O, if the streets were paved with thine eyes,
Her feet were much too dainty for such tread.
Dumaine. O vile! Then as she goes, what upward lies
The street should see as she walked overhead.
(IV, iii, 277-280)

Boyet's rejoinder quoted above (1.125) about "Queen Guinever" is surely a defensive reference to a woman who has lost her honor through wantonness. A woman in a man's world is very vulnerable—even Cordelia and Desdemona who were virtuous came to particularly hard fates. The Princess chooses to remain safely outside the academy in the park, and by continually reminding the King of his oath, she is surely helping to protect her own honor. On the other hand, when he enters her territory to declare his love, she should not in all courtesy terrorize him with her wit. Thinking of Armado and Jaquenetta, Costard has the last word in this "greasy" scene: "Lord, lord, how the ladies and I have put him down! O' my troth, most sweet jests, most incony vulgar wit" (IV, i, 143-144).

In the masculine world, wit used as a form of one-upmanship to display learned egos results in a highly competitive society where tender human feelings must be repressed and, if expressed, expressed in isolation. Act IV, scene iii shows what happens to the academy when the men fall in love: they declare their feelings in secret and when discovered, rely on the biggest equivocator of all to provide the rationalization for irrational feelings.
Berowne, whose power over the others lies in his greater degree of self-knowledge, is the first to come on stage and openly declare his love:

The king is hunting the deer; I am coursing myself. They have pitched a toil; I am toiling in a pitch--pitch that defiles. Defile--a foul word! Well, set thee down, sorrow, for so they say the fool said, and so say I, and I the fool. Well proved wit! By the Lord, this love is as mad as Ajax: it kills sheep; it kills me--I a sheep. Well proved again o' my side.

(IV, iii, 1-8)

In this debate with himself, Berowne merely increases his anguish by turning his fine mind against himself, believing himself defiled, ensnared and foolish for having a human feeling, a common enough occurrence among the unlearned. He feels so bad that he even loses some of his killer instinct and admits, "By the world, I would not care a pin if the other three were in. Here comes one with a paper. God give him grace to groan" (IV, iii, 17-20). It is the King, coming with his love poem, and Berowne, in a show of courage, immediately hides.

In the first of the plays-within-a-play, Berowne becomes an eavesdropper, a hidden audience, commenting on the play before him in asides to the theater audience. When the King begins to sigh, Berowne exclaims:

Shot, by heaven! Proceed sweet Cupid. Thou hast thumped him with they bird bolt Under the left pap. In faith, secrets!

(IV, iii, 22-24)
The King's reading of his poem, however, is interrupted by Longaville who also enters "Like a perjurer wearing papers" (IV, iii, 46), so that the King is likewise forced to hide himself, leaving Berowne to watch over two of his fellows. As Longaville begins to read his sonnet, Berowne forgets his desire for comradeship in pain and begins to make fun of Longaville:

This is the liver-vein, which makes flesh a deity,  
A green goose a goddess. Pure, pure idolatry.  
God amend us, God amend! We are much out o' th' way.  
(IV, iii, 73-75)

In the next moment his prayer is answered; Dumaine enters with a paper, Longaville hides, and Berowne, like a god, has his little world spread before him completely at his mercy. And Berowne, as brilliant as he is, does not miss the comparison:

All hid, all hid—an old infant play.  
Like a demi-god here sit I in the sky,  
And wretched fools' secrets heedfully o'er-eye.  
More sacks to the mill—O heavens, I have my wish!  
Dumain transformed! Four woodcocks in a dish!  
(IV, iii, 77-80)

Like the theater audience, Berowne has been put in a godlike position, watching a play before him, even as he is conscious of being watched by God above ("four woodcocks in a dish" [1.80]). But the question of how Berowne will use his power ("They that have pow'r to hurt and will do none . . . rightly do inherit heaven's graces", Sonnet 94)³¹
is implicit in his un-Christian unconcern for the feelings
of others ("more sacks to the mill" [1.79]) and in his
refusal to admit his involvement in their fate. When
Dumaine concludes his poem wishing that the others were with
him, Longaville and the King, who have remained sympathetic-
ally silent as audiences, advance to acknowledge their
partnership in perjury. But the King is concerned about
Berowne's reaction, "How will he scorn, how will he spend
his wit!" (IV, iii, 146). Berowne enters on cue:

Now step I forth to whip hypocrisy,
Ah, good my liege, I pray thee pardon me.
Good heart, what grace hast thou, thus to reprove
These worms for loving, that art most in love? . . .
You found his mote, the king your mote did see;
But I a beam do find in each of three.
O what a scene of fool'ry have I seen,
Of sighs, of groans, of sorrow and of teen!
O me, with what strict patience have I sat,
To see a king transformed to a gnat!
To see great Hercules whipping a gig,
And profound Solomon to tune a jig,
And Nestor play at push-pin with the boys,
And critic Timon laught at idle toys!

(IV, iii, 149-154, 160-169)

Berowne is the supreme equivocator here, judging his fellows
with the harshness of the Old Testament in the words of the
New. He does not see that the beam is in his eye rather
than the King's and that the King has not judged his
courtiers at all. When he laughs at greatness fallen in
the shrunken figure of Hercules, his scorn foreshadows that
with which he will destroy another play, the Pageant of the
Nine Worthies. The King finally asserts himself and points out Berowne's advantage:

King. Too bitter is thy jest.  
Are we betrayed thus to thy over-view?  
Berowne. Not you by me, but I betrayed to you;  
I that am honest, I that hold it sin  
To break the vow I am engagèd in,  
I am betrayed by keeping company  
With men like you, men of inconstancy.  

(IV, iii, 175-179)

It is the play itself that finally betrays Berowne as a lover: Jaquenetta and Costard enter with Berowne's sonnet to Rosaline, mistakenly delivered to Jaquenetta. Berowne admits his guilt, but he has not mastered his arrogance: he dismisses Costard as a "whore-son loggerhead" (IV, iii, 204) born to do him shame. Instead of sincerely acknowledging to himself that he is really at fault, Berowne takes out his anger and frustration on Costard and refuses to talk about his love further until "this audience" (IV, iii, 208) leaves. Berowne is a true aristocrat: he does not want to share his humanity with any ordinary people.

When Dumaine pleads for "some salve for perjury" (IV, iii, 288), Berowne develops the sophistical argument that "it is religion to be thus forsworn" (IV, iii, 362). Loving women draws a man out of his selfish, egotistical pursuits ("[l]earning is but an adjunct to ourself" [IV, iii, 313]) to add "a precious seeing to the eye" (IV, iii, 332) which reveals a "heaven drowsy with harmony" (IV, iii, 344).
Love is the charity which fulfills the law in Berowne's religion, and his harsh judgment on hypocrisy becomes tempered not with the mercy of fellow-feeling and sympathy for others but with the rationalization of lust: "Advance your standards, and upon them, Lords! Pell-mell, down with them!" (IV, iii, 366-367).

If the play so far has shown the development of attitudes which prevent a fruitful marriage from unifying society, Act V crystalizes these attitudes in two plays-within-the-play, both of which have bad audiences. Holofernes, Armado, Sir Nathaniel, and Moth plan to present the Pageant of the Nine Worthies before an assembled audience of the lords and ladies, but first the ladies receive news from their lovers. Rosaline has received a letter from Berowne in which he has drawn her picture, and the Princess reacts with a slur on Rosaline's unfashionable dark hair: "Beauteous as ink--a good conclusion" (V, ii, 41). Competition is as rife in the Princess' camp as it is among the lords. But the Princess is not only unkind, she is overly money-conscious as well. She tells Maria that it would have been better if her letter were shorter and the string of pearls she received longer. Then she begins to take on airs of wisdom: "We are wise girls to mock our lovers so" (V, ii, 58). When Boyet announces that the men will arrive dressed
as Muscovites "to parley, court and dance" (V, ii, 122) with the girl on whom he has just bestowed a favor, the Princess retorts:

And will they so? The gallants shall be tasked
For, ladies, we will every one be masked,
And not a man of them shall have the grace,
Despite of suit, to see a lady's face.
Hold, Rosaline, this favor thou shalt wear,
And then the king will court thee for his dear.
Hold, take thou this, my sweet, and give me thine;
So shall Berowne take me for Rosaline.
And change you favors too; so shall your loves
Woo contrary, deceived by these removes.

(V, ii, 126-135)

But Rosaline wants some human interaction; she feels that even if Berowne is her fool, she is "his fate" (V, ii, 68) and wants to dance if he asks her. Here the Princess makes it quite clear that she is being more than coy, that she wants to kill her lover's heart:

Princess. No, to the death we will not move a foot,
Nor to their penned speech render we no grace,
But while 'tis spoke each turn away her face.
Boyet. Why, that contempt will kill the speaker's heart,
And quite divorce his memory from his part.
Princess. Therefore I do it, and I make no doubt
The rest will e'er come in if he be out.
There's no such sport as sport by sport o'erthrown.
To make theirs ours and ours none but our own.
So shall we stay, mock[ing] intended game,
And they, well mocked, depart away with shame.

(V, ii, 146-156)

The Princess, taking a great deal of pride in the skill of her cruelty, achieves her aim, and the lords' little play is "dash[ed] like a Christmas comedy" (V, ii, 463).
The Show of the Nine Worthies is scheduled to begin immediately, but the chastized King is reluctant to watch the pageant. As Thomas Greene explains, "the pageant represents a quintessential parody of their own offenses against propriety." Berowne tries to equivocate again:

We are shame-proof, my lord; and 'tis some policy
To have one show worse than the king's and his company.

(V, ii, 511-512)

But for once, the King stands firm in his convictions—only to be over-ruled by the shrewish Princess showing off her skill in gamesmanship:

King. I say they shall not come.
Princess. Nay, my good lord, let me o'errule you now.
That sport best pleases that doth least know how,
Where zeal strives to content, and the contents
Dies in the zeal of that which it presents.
Their form confounded makes most form in mirth
When great things laboring perish in their birth.

(V, ii, 513-519)

Just as she had been insensitive to the King's embarrassment at being shamed into swearing love to the wrong woman, the Princess is insensitive to the fact that she is manipulating the feelings of the actors who play the Nine Worthies into putting themselves into the public eye only to be laughed at, into staging a comedy for the sake of "mirth" (1.518) alone. Like Berowne, she watches Hercules doing a jig as a play having no relevance to herself or to her fate as a human being; she is there to be entertained merely as an unim-
passioned spectator with no stake in the Worthies' fall from
greatness. While Berowne attempts to dismiss the audience,
Costard and Jaquenetta, to his fall from superiority from
the stage, the Princess commands the lords to witness a
spectacle that can only heighten their embarrassment and
diminish the dignity of the actors who play the parts. Bobby-
anne Roesen has noted that Holofernes' response, "This is not
generous, not gentle, not humble" (V, ii, 630) in the face
of the brutal mocking that he receives from the lords is
the first time that he becomes "a figure of real dignity
and stature, restrained and courteous in the face of the
most appalling incivility."33 Similarly, when Armado cries
out, "The sweet war-man is dead and rotten; sweet chucks,
beat not the bones of the buried, when he breathed, he was
a man" (V, ii, 661-663), he must step out of his role as
Hector to retain his dignity on stage. "Beat not the bones
of the buried"--the lords in mocking their performance and
the ladies in encouraging it give more credence and attention
to the dead show before them than to the living play around
them. As J. J. Anderson explains, "If they could only see
it, the very performance they are mocking contains a warning
that their arrogance is ultimately futile, that gaiety and
wit are not enough, that human needs cannot be overridden
forever."34
Costard, indeed, does interrupt the play with news of Jaquenetta. She is two months pregnant, and Costard fears that she will be cast away unless Armado assumes responsibility for her. But typically, Armado is angrier at being accused of wrongdoing in the public eye (like Berowne in Act Iv, scene iii) than concerned with Jaquenetta, and he challenges Costard to a duel:

Armado. Dost thou infamony me among potentates? Thou shalt die.
Costard. Then shall Hector be whipped for Jaquenetta that is quick by him and hanged for Pompey that is dead by him.

(V, ii, 678-682)

Costard, who had played Pompey in the pageant, is no longer the spiritless, soulless dunce victimized by everyone in the play. He takes center stage to use the show itself to be the vehicle of his revenge. He will fight in his shirt if need be for Jaquenetta, while the others find their play dissolving around them with the entrance of Marcade.

After Marcade enters, the lords and ladies play out their accustomed roles with an increasing air of frantic urgency as if to escape restriction. The King begs for a final hearing of his suit in the face of the Princess' bereavement, but she does not understand him; Berowne makes another facile attempt to explain but the Princess dismisses their love as nothing more than "courtship, pleasant jest . . .
Joan in a loveless world is cheered by the cry of the owl, the traditional symbol of wisdom, whose song seems to echo from the happier spring world of gaiety and courtship, "Tu-whit, Tu-who!" (1.290). If, as S. K. Heninger, Jr., believes, the songs are an emblem for the cyclical changes that a year's time will bring, then perhaps the perjured but witty lords and the artificial but beautiful ladies will grace society with a marriage. But "beat not the bones of the buried", "that's too long for a play." (V, ii, 662, 879).
bombast and . . . lining to the time (V, ii, 781-782). For such perjured lords, only a new oath will do, and the ladies mete out the punishment: a hermitage for the King, a hospital for Berowne and a twelve-month waiting period for all four before their suit can be renewed. Browne perceptively comments:

Our wooing doth not end like an old play;
Jack hath not Jill. These ladies' courtesy
Might well have made our sport a comedy.

(V, ii, 875-877)

The play has been exposed for what it is: "sport" (1.877) without the living grace of a marriage celebration to turn it into a comedy. Society remains fragmented and artificial because the ladies' show of ceremonious platitudes and regal beauty coupled with the lords' wit and energy has lacked the true essence of courtesy: charity.

For the songs which grace the end of the play, the characters assemble out of their roles (except for Armado who functions as the master of ceremonies) as audience. The songs are split into a learned debate between the owl and the cuckoo. In the Song of Ver, the Spring song, the artificial beauty of the pastoral world is marred by the sound of the cuckoo, a foolish bird whose song symbolizes the perjured oaths and tarnished dreams of a broken marriage. In the Song of Hiems, the harsh, wintry reality of greasy
Footnotes


4 Ibid., p. 315.

5 Ibid., p. 328.


7 James L. Calderwood, Shakespearean Metadrama (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 60.


9 Ibid.


11 Evans, p. 125.

12 Ibid., pp. 125-126.


17. Roesen, p. 421.

18. Ibid.


21. Ibid., p. 106.


27. Goldstein, p. 345.
28 Roesen, p. 425.

29 Arthos, note 110, p. 78.


32 Greene, p. 323.

33 Roesen, p. 423.

34 Anderson, p. 60.

Chapter II: *A Midsummer Night's Dream:*

"In another key"

This above all, to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

Polonius, *Hamlet* (I, iii, 78-80)

If Polonius' advice to his son, Laertes, is true, then the plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* stands as a contradiction in terms. Night follows day, but the lovers who remain true to themselves by fleeing the rational but repressive world of Theseus' court enter "a realm of nightmare" where "former relationships disintegrate," where "truth, honor, and love metamorphose into falsehood, disloyalty and malice" and where "the whole structure of reason and order is swallowed up in a chaos"¹ of fairy world. The confident notion of self that Polonius so carelessly assumes becomes lost in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in "suggestions that beneath the surface of ordered, civilized, rational existence lies a gulf of meaningless and even latent malignity--'jaws of darkness' in wait for true love--are certainly present."² Jan Kott has even linked Bottom's ass' head with the grotesque fantasies of Goya's Caprichos.³

Most critics agree, however, that these suggestions
are triply distanced from the audience by the artifice of three plays: by Shakespeare's play, by Puck's and Oberon's "fond pageant" (III, ii, 114)⁴ and by the mechanicals' "merry and tragical" (V, i, 58) play-within-the-play, "Pyramus and Thisbe." As David Young points out, the action by which we become aware of these various inner plays is an eavesdropping situation, "that of one character standing aside to watch characters who are less aware of a given situation." Then comes Puck's epilogue, which reminds us that everything we have been watching is a play, an event in a theater with ourselves as audience. Here is a larger perspective, enveloping all the others.⁵ Indeed, this triple focus, of chaos contained within the artifice of three plays, is for James L. Calderwood "a major kind of knowledge which A Midsummer Night's Dream makes available to its audience . . . the inner forms and impulses of the human mind itself--the tricks and shaping fantasies of strong imagination and the forces that contain it." It follows then, that "this inner world which the audience encounters does not appear in mimetic reproduction, 'as in a mirror', but as projected through the prism of artistic imagination" (emphases mine).⁶

In Love's Labor's Lost we have seen a play which is a mimetic reproduction of society as it exists in a loveless
world. A lack of charity causes the play world to dissolve without the traditional comic integration of society through marriage, and the characters are banished back to France or off to hermitages or hospitals where the real-world exigencies of time and suffering take over. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, on the other hand, the comic resolution of marriage expands across the borders of fiction "in another key" (I, i, 17) to "embrace and absorb the social world beyond"\(^7\) in a play about a wedding written for a wedding. In the words of Calderwood:

> At the end, the comic resolution is total: the disparate worlds of nobles, workmen, and fairies are incorporated into the festive preparations; dissension and alienation dissolve "like far-off mountains turned to clouds" of dream, and are supplanted by the waking reality of immanent marriage. But there is also an openness of form in that, somewhat like Hermione's statue, art unfolds into reality, the internal fiction of the drama not only mirroring but indeed, merging with the theatrical occasion as the boundaries between art and reality disintegrate. If we remember that the play was probably written and first performed as part of the festivities attending an aristocratic wedding, it becomes evident that Shakespeare's first audience was insinuated with the audience of Bottom's play as the entertainment honoring Theseus and Hippolyta becomes not merely analogous to but literally part of the entertainment provided by Shakespeare's play for the unknown couple whose marriage was being celebrated. (p. 509)

Audience as eavesdropper becomes more than an analogy: at the original performance at least, the metaphor becomes an
occasion for the imaginative marriage of love and art in reality.

However, for the four lovers to have attended the play-within-the-play at Theseus' wedding, in itself a play for a wedding, they must have passed safely through the forest of nightmare and chaos dominated by the fantasy of the fairies' pageant. When Theseus greets them with a waking vision of a happy marriage in an ordered society, a proper marriage of passion and reason in the human mind itself emerges as the imaginative projection by the playwright of the perceiving mind itself: in Calderwood's terms, the vision of "the inner forms and impulses of the human mind itself" (p. 517) that is the play, as it orders itself from repressive reason to disordered fantasy to marriage, is a projection of the proper ordering of society as well, even as this ordering takes place in society. The macrocosm and the microcosm are unified. Indeed, it is this "high moral function of the poetic imagination" that R. W. Dent sees as Shakespeare's "closest approximation to a 'Defense of Dramatic Poesy' in general."8

It is my belief that Shakespeare's vision in A Midsummer Night's Dream of the proper functioning of the poetic imagination can be substantiated by a close look at the various Platonic and Christian traditions culminating in the
Elizabethan World Picture and by tracing the arguments of various other defenders or attackers of poetry in light of this tradition. Because I believe, along with Dent, that A Midsummer Night's Dream is Shakespeare's defense of poetry, I feel that my reading of the play will be better served if approached through the controversy surrounding poetry and imagination in the sixteenth century.

The relation of fantasy and imagination, the role of art in society, and the value of morality in drama were crucial questions in Shakespeare's lifetime, when Puritan thinkers such as Stephen Gosson in The Schoole of Abuse (1579) denounced poets for corrupting the commonwealth:

> These are the cuppes of Circes, that turne reasonable creatures into brute beasts; the balles of Hippomenes, that hinder the course of Atalanta, and the blocks of the Devil, that are cast in our ways to cut of the race of toward wittes. No marveyle though Plato shut them out of his schoole, and banished them quite from his common wealth, as effeminate writers, unprofitable members, and utter enimies to virtue. . . . As in every perfect common wealth there ought to be good laws established, right maintained, wrong repressed, vertue rewarded, vice punished and all manner of abuses thoroughly purged, so ought there such schools for the furtherance of the same to be advancened, that young men may be taught that in greene yare, that becomes them to practise in gray hayres.

Gosson's argument is right out of The Republic—and Theseus' Athens. However, when Sidney wrote An Apologie for Poetrie in 1583 in rebuttal, his argument in defense of the poets
was also "essentially Platonic."\textsuperscript{10} For Sidney, a poet "was called \textit{Vates}, which is as much a Diuiner, Fore-seer, or Prophet" because "his hart-rauishing knowledge . . . did seeme to haue some dyuine force in it":\textsuperscript{11}

And may not I presume a little further, to shew the reasonablenes of his worde \textit{Vates}? And say that the holy Dauids Psalmes are a diuine Poem? If I doo, I shall not do it without the testimonie of great learned men, both auncient and moderne: but euen the name Psalmes will speake for mee, which, being interpreted, is nothing but songes. . . . [David] maketh you, as it were, see God comming in his Maiestie; his telling of the Beastes ioyfulnes, and hills leaping, but a heauenlie poesie, wherein almost hee sheweth himselfe a passionate lover of that vspeakable and euerlasting beautie to be seene by the eyes of the minde, onely cleered by fayth[.].\textsuperscript{12}

The argument that a poet is a "passionate lover" possessed with a divine madness comes from \textit{Phaedrus}:\textsuperscript{13}

'False is the tale' that when a lover is at hand favor ought rather to be accorded to one who does not love, on the ground that the former is mad, and the latter sound of mind. That would be right if it were an invariable truth that madness is an evil, but in reality, the greatest blessings come by way of madness, indeed of madness that is heaven-sent. . . . it is in place to appeal to the fact that madness was accounted no shame nor disgrace by the men of old who gave things their names; otherwise they would not have connected that greatest of arts, whereby the future is discerned, with this very word 'madness', and named it accordingly. No it was because they held madness to be a valuable gift, when due to divine dispensation, that they named that art as they did. . . . You see then what this ancient evidence attests. Corresponding to the superior perfection and value of the prophecy of inspiration over that of omen reading, both in name and in fact,
is the superiority of heaven-sent madness over man-made sanity.

(244a3 - b1, b6 - c4, d1 - 5)

Sidney's argument that the highest vision of the divine lover is immortal beauty in the mind's eye originates with Diotima's discourse to Socrates in the *Symposium*:

Whoever has been initiated so far into the mysteries of Love and has viewed all these aspects of the beautiful in due succession, is at last drawing near the final revelation. And now, Socrates, there bursts upon him that wondrous vision which is the very soul of the beauty he has toiled so long for. It is an everlasting loveliness which neither comes nor goes, which neither flowers nor fades, for such beauty is the same on every hand, the same then as now, here as there, this way as that way, the same to every worshipper as it is to every other.

Nor will his vision of the beautiful take the form of a face, or of hands, or of anything that is of the flesh. It will be neither words, nor knowledge, nor a something that exists in something else, such as a living creature, or the earth, or the heavens, or anything that is--but subsisting of itself and by itself in an eternal oneness, while every lovely thing partakes of it is such a sort that, however much the parts may wax and wane, it will be neither more nor less, but still the same inviolable whole.

(210e2 - 211b4)

When Sidney speaks of this beauty as "cleared by fayth" he refers to the Christianizing of Platonic thought or "Neoplatonism" which reinforced Christian doctrine throughout the Middle Ages. In the words of Sears Jayne, Neoplatonism is "the idea that the universe is all one. Being, that within that Being are various levels of existence, that everything on one level corresponds with something on ever other
level, and that there is therefore a hierarchy of beings from man as animal through the ranks of angelic and celestial beings to God." As Jayne continues, all medieval thought up to the twelfth century was Neoplatonic rather than Aristotelian; and such popular authors of the Middle Ages as Augustine, Boethius, and the Pseudo-Dionysius carried Christian Neoplatonism to England as they did to all other parts of Western Europe. By the fourteenth century, Neoplatonism in the form of cosmological theory had become materia litteris. But about 1570, a new Plato burst upon the English scene—not Plato the cosmologist or Plato the politician, but the Plato of the Symposium: "Plato the apostle of love and beauty, of everything to which the 'barbarous' English aspired in their scramble to catch up with the civilized continent." Jayne concludes:

Sidney, Spenser, Davies, Grevill, Daniel, Drayton, Chapman, Drummond, the Fletchers, Shakespeare—almost every poet of the period contributed to making it a period of Platonic poetry. In this poetry of idealized love and beauty may be seen Ficino's distinctive influence in England. It is not that he made of Plato a Christian or a Neoplatonist, for Plato had been a Christian Neoplatonist, among other things, throughout the Middle Ages. Ficino's contribution was that he made Plato a philosopher of love and beauty, which he had never been before. (p. 225)

Even during the centuries when the Platonic dialogues were lost, then, their influence was felt through intermediaries; when Ficino's translation of the Symposium made itself felt
in the Petrarchan poetry of the Continent, Plato as the exponent of love as creator and revealer pervaded the thinking of the important Elizabethan defenders of poetry. 18

Indeed, to counter Gosson's image of Plato as moralist and expunger of poets from the commonwealth as corrupters of the young (ironically, the same charge brought against Socrates), Sidney hails Plato as a poet himself:

And truely, even Plato, whosoever well considereth, shall find that in the body of his work, though the inside and strength were Philosophy, the skinne as it were and beautie depended most of Poetrie: for all standeth vpon Dialogues, wherein he faineth many honest Burgesses of Athens to speake of such matters, that, if they had been sette on the racke, they would never have confessed them. Besides, his poetical describing the circumstances of their meetings, as the well ordering of a banquet, the delicacie of a walke, with the enterlacing meere tales, as Giges Ring [in Book II of The Republic], and others, which who knoweth not to be flowers of Poetrie did never walke into Apollos Garden. 19

Here Sidney ascribes to Plato the praise accorded to the third and highest group of poets: the strength and learning of philosophy is clothed in the beauty and delight of poetry rather than starkly presented as mere statement, characteristic of the second group of poets:

But because thys second sorte is wrapped within the folde of the proposed subject, and takes not the course of his owne inuention, whether they properly be Poets or no let Gramarians dispute: and goe to the thyrd, indeed right Poets, of whom chiefly this question ariseth; betwixt whom and these second is such a kind of difference as betwixt
the meaner sort of Painter (who counterfeet onely such faces as are sette before them) and the more excellent, who, haung no law but wit, bestow that in colllours vpon you which is fittest for the eye to see. . . . For these third be they which most properly do imitate to teach and delight, and to imitate borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be: but range onely with learned discretion, into the diuine consideration of what may be, and should be. These bee they that as the first and most noble sorte, may iustly bee termed Vates, so these are waited on in the excellen [te] est lan-
guages and best vunderstandings, with the fore described name of Poets: for these indeede doo meerely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach, and delight to moue men to take that goodnes in hande, which without delight they would flye as from a stranger; and teach, to make them know that goodnes whereunto they are mouued, which being the noblest scope to which euer any learning was directed, yet want there not idle tongues to barke at them.20

This defense of poetry, as conferring the delight upon learn-
ing which will move men to a knowledge of goodness, can be construed as an echo of Alcibiades' praise of Socrates in the Symposium: "But if you open up his arguments, and really get into the skin of them, you'll find that they're the only arguments in the world that have any sense at all, and that nobody else's are so godlike, so rich in images of virtue, or so peculiarly, so entirely pertinent to those inquiries that help the seeker on his way to the goal of true nobility." (22a1 - 6).

Although it cannot be proved that Shakespeare had read the Symposium or any of the Platonic dialogues,21 it is use-
ful to understand how Platonic arguments permeated Elizabethan thought and by implication, Shakespeare's plays. We have seen how the play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, can be viewed as the image of the human mind ordering itself into a marriage of reason and passion even as it brings to fulfillment the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta within and celebrates the aristocratic wedding in society without. The focusing of the weddings in vertical alignment is a projection of the artistic imagination rather than a mimetic imitation of existing society. This vision of the ordering power of the human mind is, as we have seen from Sidney's *Apology*, essentially Platonic in origin, and is the divine gift of the greatest of Poets, those termed *vates* or makers, because they range with learned discretion beyond created nature to give us a vision of what may be and what should be based on what is: "Nature neuer set forth the earth in so rich tapistry as diuers Poets haue doen, neither with plesant riuers, fruitful trees, sweet smelling flowers, nor what-soeuer els may make the too much loued earth more louly. Her world is brasen, the Poets only deliver a golden."22

The idea of an internal ordering in the microcosm bringing about an external ordering in the macrocosm was a commonplace to the Elizabethans. As E. M. W. Tillyard explains in *The Elizabethan World Picture*, the agile
transition from abstract to concrete, from ideal to real, from sacred to profane was central to Elizabethan thinking because they "were conscious simultaneously and to an uncommon degree of 'the erected wit and the infected will of man'."23 Fused with Judeo-Christian ethics and Neoplatonic cosmology, the Elizabethan world picture found correspondences between the ordering of a man's soul (in the Socratic sense) and the ordering of the commonwealth: the great chain of being "leads to a language of comparison and analogy" because a whole series of correspondences or parallel relationships between the natural order and the human order exists.24 The symmetry of the natural order is reflected in the predictable motion of the stars and the hierarchial order of the animal world. In the same way the human order reflects diversity within the organic unity of an established hierarchial system: the commonwealth ruled by the king, protected by the soldiers and maintained by the citizenry can be broken down into the smaller organic units of the family, dominated by the male (reason) over the female (passion) for the rearing of children. The individual human body is similarly an organic unit ruled by the mind (reason) over the heart (passion) and bodily functions (appetite). The heart whose virtue is courage corresponds to the soldiers of the common-
wealth and the wife of the family (soldiers were conceived of as guardians), while the head, whose function is to regulate the body's actions through reason and understanding, corresponds to the king or father. Gosson's whole argument against poets is that they corrupt the hierarchy of the human order by substituting the false images of fantasy, produced by the infected will of the lower parts of the body, for the true images imparted by reason or understanding. Sidney counters this argument with the Platonic idea that a right poet is not a mimetic reflector of the false distortions of fantasy but a divine creator whose eye (imagination) imparts visions of the human order as it should be, based on analogies from the natural order.

Although we cannot know exactly what Shakespeare read, he must have been familiar with Socrates' argument for the banishment of the poets from *The Republic* since, as O. B. Hardison, Jr., explains, "this banishment was never far from the minds of either the enemies or the defenders of poetry."25 In Book X of *The Republic*, Socrates makes his argument:

> And does not the fretful part of us present many and varied occasions for imitation, while the intelligent and temperate disposition, always remaining approximately the same, is neither easy to imitate nor to be understood when imitated, especially by a nondescript mob assembled in the theater? For the representation imitates a type that is alien to them.
By all means.
And it is not obvious that the nature of the mimetic poet is not related to this better part of the soul and his cunning is not framed to please it, if he is to win favor with the multitude, but is devoted to the fretful and complicated type of character because it is easy to imitate?

It is obvious.
This consideration, then, makes it right for us to proceed to lay hold of him and set him down as the counterpart of the painter, for he resembles him in that his creations are inferior in respect of reality, and the fact that his appeal is to the inferior part of the soul and not to the best part is another point of resemblance. And so we may at last say that we should be justified in not admitting him into a well-ordered state, because he stimulates and fosters this element in the soul, and by strengthening it tends to destroy the rational part, just as when is a state one puts bad men in power and turns the city over to them and ruins the better sort. Precisely in the same manner we shall say that the mimetic poet sets up in each individual soul a vicious constitution by fashioning phantoms far removed from reality, and by currying favor with the senseless element that cannot distinguish the greater from the less, but calls the same thing now one, now the other.

(605a - c2)

As we have seen, Sidney uses the analogy of the counterfeit painter in another context, to describe the second group of poets who give bare philosophic statement without the delight of poetry's "sweet foode". Plato's chief accusation against the mimetic poet, however, is that he corrupts not only the "senseless" masses, but also those who pretend to be ruled by reason:

I think you know that the very best of us, when we hear Homer or some other of the makers of tragedy imitating one of the heroes who is in grief, and is delivering a long tirade in his lamentations
or chanting and beating his breast, feel pleasure, and abandon ourselves and accompany the representation with sympathy and eagerness, and we praise as an excellent poet the one who most strongly affects us in this way.

I do know it, of course.

But when in our own lives some affliction comes to us, you are also aware that we plume ourselves upon the opposite, on our ability to remain calm and endure, in the belief that this is the conduct of a man, and what we were praising in the theater that of a woman.

I do note that...

And so in regard to the emotions of sex and anger, and all of the appetites and pains and pleasures of the soul which we say accompany all our actions, the effect of poetic imitation is the same. For it waters and fosters these feelings when what we ought to do is to dry them up, and it establishes them as our rulers when they ought to be ruled, to the end that we may be better and happier men instead of worse and more miserable.

(605c8 - e2, 606d2 - 8)

For the Elizabethans, to whom the commonwealth was the King's body, this argument had tremendous force.

Sidney, however, and for the purposes of my argument, Shakespeare, believed in another, higher function of the poet. Socrates makes an argument for this kind of art in Book VII of The Republic. He has just told the parable of the Sun and the Cave in which men who have not seen the vision of the good are like cave dwellers who perceive dancing shadows as reality. Socrates explains, "my dream as it appears to me is that in the region of the known, the last thing to be seen and hardly seen is the idea of good, and that when seen it must needs point us to the conclusion
that this is indeed the cause for all things of all that is right and beautiful, giving birth in the visible world to light, and the author of light and itself in the intelligible world being the authentic source of truth and reason, and that anyone who is to act wisely in private or public must have caught sight of this." (517b6 - c5). One can see the ground for the Christian and Neoplatonic cosmological associations even in The Republic. Socrates continues:

Then, if this is true, our view of these matters must be this, that education is not in reality what some people proclaim it to be in their professions. What they aver is that they can put true knowledge into a soul that does not possess it, as if they were inserting vision into blind eyes.

They do indeed, he said.

But our present argument indicates, said I, that the true analogy for this indwelling power in the soul and the instrument whereby each of us apprehends is that of an eye that could not by converted to the light from the darkness except by turning the whole body. Even so this organ of knowledge must be turned around from the world of becoming together with the entire soul, like the scene-shifting periaactus in the theater, until the soul is able to endure the contemplation of essence and the brightest region of being. And this, we say, is the good, do we not?

Yes.

Of this very thing, then, I said, there might be an art, an art of the speediest and most effective shifting or conversion of the soul, not an art of producing vision in it, but on the assumption that it possesses vision but does not rightly direct it and does not look where it should, an art of bringing this about.

Yes, that seems likely, he said.

(518b6 - d8)

In Theseus' famous speech in A Midsummer Night's Dream on
the lunatic, the lover, and the poet (V, i, 3-22), it is the apprehending eye whose "shaping fantasies" (V, i, 6) links these three groups. The poet's eye "[d]oth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven" (V, i, 13) in a comment on "Shakespeare's own achievement in offering us both a sense of universal nature and a specific picture of the nature of things... In its vast category of correspondences--the cosmic and the mundane, the macrocosm and the microcosm... the play may well be seen as the artist's creation rivaling the 'Elizabethan World Picture' in which Shakespeare himself trusted."28 In its imaginative projection of the simultaneous ordering of the macrocosm and the microcosm, Shakespeare's defense of poetry was never better expressed than in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

His defense, however, is not only of the importance of imagination in poetry, but in love and marriage as well. In placing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into the highly developed tradition of Christian Neoplatonic love poetry, Paul Olson makes a very impressive argument. He explains that love in a well-ordered marriage was regarded in the words of Chaucer's Theseus as the chain which "bond/The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the land/In certeyn boundes" (KT, 2988-2992).29 This divine love, like the "perfect harmonie" of music, maintained the patterned hierarchy of
society and kept the stars in their paths. Marriage was a pattern for the concord in the universe when the male ruled his mate in the same way that reason was ordained to control both the will and the passions. Sixteenth century sermons, scriptual commentaries, marriage manuals and encyclopedias of general knowledge argued that before the Fall, men propagated their kind according to the promptings of charity, but with the temptation of Eve, sensuality overcame Adam and Adam's reason. The Fall transformed divine, rational love in man into unreasonable, selfish lust which sought more to please itself than to follow God's plan for the world in general. Since a line in the "faire cheyne" had been broken, the marriage in Eden was kept as an institution, as a fragment shored against the complete ruin of rationality in man. It could in a poetic sense allow Adam's intellect again to rule Eve's willfulness in the midst of a fallen world.30

Marriage was assigned not only a positive social value, but it also carried with it various spiritual symbolisms. The meeting of God and the soul and the relationship between Christ and the Church were described in marital terms. Moreover, Olson finds practical advice in popular manuals on marriage which he believes is pertinent to A Midsummer Night's Dream: parents were advised not to force unpleasant
matches upon their children but "to haue respect to gods
ordinance, and to the right ordinate consent of the
parties..." Children, on the other hand, were counselled
that marriage must be undertaken only with the consent of
the parents (p. 101). Of course, these symbolic and
practical commonplaces about marriage could only be effec-
tive if love, not authority, or "remuneration" as in Love's
Labor's Lost, were the binding chain in creating these
various bonds.

The first scene of A Midsummer Night's Dream establishes
the variations on these themes which eventually resolve them-
selves into the "perfect harmonie" of the marriages at the
end of the play. According to Olson, Shakespeare's Theseus
evokes memories of Chaucer's Theseus, who had conquered "all
the regne of Femeny" (KT, 865-866) in that he has won the
love of the Amazon, Hippolyta, with his wisdom (p. 101).
He has righted the natural hierarchy of the human order
with his assertion of male reason over usurping feminine
willfulness, but although he has won her love with force,
"doing thee injuries" (I, i, 18), he supplants authority
with love: "I will wed thee in another key,/With pomp,
with triumph, and with reveling." (I, i, 19-20). Modern
critics take issue with this image of Theseus, as the
emblem of reason and justice, arguing that he was connected
with lechery, perfidy and kidnapping in numerous contemporary sources. Later in the play, Shakespeare himself makes some allusions to Theseus' murky past when Oberon accuses Titania of falsity:

How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst not though lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigenia, whom he ravished?
And make him with fair Aegles break his faith,
With Ariadne and Antiopa?

(II, i, 74-80)

Titania replies that "[t]hese are the forgeries of jealousy" (II, i, 81), but whatever the truth about Theseus' perfidies, the point seems to be that an ordering of reason over passion has taken place within Theseus' own soul before the play has begun, emphasizing the necessity for the rule of reason and understanding in the individual soul before marriage can take place. As implied before, Hippolyta, as queen of the Amazons, is a dangerous symbol of female passions which constantly threaten the establishment of rational order both in the individual soul and society. Olson cites other examples of the Amazon motif in Renaissance literature: Pyrocles in Sidney's *Arcadia*, who is costumed as an Amazon, offends Musidorus mainly because Musidorus sees in him the overthrow of "the reasonable parte of our soule" by "sensuall weaknes." Spenser pictures a similar inversion of the faculties of the soul in his
Amazonian, Radigund (FQ, V, v, 25). It should be emphasized, however, that these figures are symbols for states of the soul and are not mimetic reproductions of actual people in society. Every soul is androgynous, and when critics refer to the passions as "female" or to the reason as "male", these are understood as metaphors merely. The announced marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta establishes A Midsummer Night's Dream as a comedy in a truly major key from the beginning: the orderly subordination of passion to reason in marriage is a metaphor for the integration of the soul as well as society.

But in scene one there are as yet problems within the commonwealth of Athens: Egeus enters "full of vexation" (I, i, 23) against his daughter, Hermia, because she refuses to marry his choice for her, Demetrius. Disorder erupts in the family and the commonwealth as he argues that Lysander has "stol'n the impression of her fantasy" (I, i, 32) with "feigning voice, verses of feigning love" (I, i, 31). The disorder mushrooms as he unwittingly brings up the issue against which every right poet must fight: that the lures of poetry have led unsuspecting innocence from the path of righteousness, replacing reason's true images with fantasy's feigning ones, "bracelets of . . . hair, rings, gauds, conceits,/Knacks, trifles nosegays, sweetmeats,
messengers/Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth. (I, i, 33-35). Another link in the chain is threatened as malice shows his threatening head beneath the reasonable order of things: "With cunning has thou filched my daughter's heart,/Turned her obedience, which is due to me,/To stubborn harshness" (I, i, 36-38). The problem of distinguishing between the images of fantasy and of imagination, the problem faced by Shakespeare in justifying his existence as a poet, is also Hermia's: how can she convince her father that her love is true and not just fantasy's impression or female willfulness? She appeals to the seat of her imagination, her eyes: "I would that my father looked but with my eyes." (I, i, 56). Theseus, who is a lover himself, refuses to recognize her plight and taking the role of a tyrant, says she must either yield to the law, go into a convent or die. Hermia's refusal to grant sovereignty to Theseus' unreasonable tyranny paradoxically reveals that reasoned imagination not feigning fantasy is the source of her love. Since, as we have learned from Sidney's Apology, poetic imitation can reveal things as they should be in the human order, Hermia's refusal to bow down to authority shows her essential autonomy as a reasoning soul. She is not a "form in wax" (I, i, 49) to be imprinted by her father but a perceiver and lover of beauty in her
own right and will be molded by none but her true love.
She will suffer persecution rather than yield up her
legitimate perception of her rightful place in the order
of things:

If then true lovers have been ever crossed,
It stands as an edict in destiny:
Then let us teach our trial patience,
Because it is a customary cross,
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
Wishes and tears, poor Fancy's followers.
(I, i, 150-155)

Her perception is her very soul, and Theseus' and her
father's blatant disregard of the judgment of her eyes
reveals their unreasoned dismissal of women as metaphors
for submission or fickle passion. Hermia faces up to her
trial in the spirit of Socrates' ideal of manly acceptance
of affliction quoted above, leaving fruitless "wishes and
tears" behind to "poor Fancy." (I, i, 155).

Scene i also introduces another heroine who has the
same problem with reason and love, but in another context.
We recognize her as Helena, Nedar's daughter, who, as
Lysander has informed us, dotes on Demetrius, the other
suitor for Hermia's hand. Lysander explains that Demetrius
is a "spotted and inconstant man" (I, i, 110) who "won her
soul" (I, i, 108) and then left her inexplicably for Hermia.
Helena enters distractedly; like Hermia, the world does
not conform to her perception of how it should be, and she
is trying to make sense of it somehow. Like Egeus, she believes that Hermia must be exercising some magic trick on Demetrius to substitute reason's true images with fantasy's false ones: "O, teach me how you look, and with what art/You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart!" (I, i, 192-193). After Lysander and Hermia leave for the woods, Helena soliloquizes on her plight:

How happy some o'er other some can be! Through Athens I am thought as fair as she. But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so; He will not know what all but he do know. And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes, So I, admiring of his qualities. Things base and vile, holding no quantity, Love can transpose to form and dignity. Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind, And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind. Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste; Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste: And therefore is Love said to be a child, Because in choice he is so oft beguiled. As waggish boys in game themselves forswear, So the boy Love is perjured everywhere. For ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne, He hailed down oaths that he was only mine And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt, So he dissolved, and show'd of oaths did melt. I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight, Then to the wood will he tomorrow night Pursue her; and for this intelligence If I have thanks, it is a dear expense: But herein mean I to enrich my pain To have his sight thither and back again. (I, i, 226-251)

Helena begins on a bitter note; although Lysander has wished that Demetrius might dote on her as she on him, Helena knows that Demetrius' only happiness is doting on
Hermia. She has the reasoned judgment of all Athens on her side: Demetrius is "spotted and inconstant" (I, i, 110) as well as foolish for giving up a good-looking girl who loves him for one of equal looks who does not. Demetrius' inconstancy makes Helena suspect her own powers of reason in choosing him to love: he errs by being inconstant, and she errs for admiring his qualities. Demetrius is "base and vile" (1.232), but Helena's love has unreasonably transposed him "to form and dignity" (1.233). In trying to figure out where she went wrong in her judgment, Helena analyzes the conventional emblem for blind love, winged Cupid. Winged Cupid is painted blind because love ignores the evidence of the senses, the eyes, and looks "with the mind" (1.234). And because she cannot stop loving him in spite of the evidence of her eyes, "Love's mind" (1.236) lacks judgment and is too hasty in commitment. Like a child, she loved before she could reason and is now the victim of a very adult betrayal: Cupid is a child. He is a boy child because he acts like a wanton youth swearing love in "game" and not in "earnest", playing not only with her feelings, but with her reason, just for a lark. Reason and commitment have become suspect for Helena because before he looked into Hermia's eyes, he "hailed down oaths" (1.243) that he was true, but Hermia's "heat"
(1.244) quite literally dissolves him of all reason and commitment, leaving Helena chasing about in a fog of self-contradiction and self-doubt. She decides to tell him of Hermia's flight to the woods out of a perverse sense of love's logic--she will get to see him for one moment of bittersweet pain, but only if he can spare her the courtesy of thanking her for her "intelligence" (1.248)!

In Act II, the underside of Theseus' Athens or the daylight world of rational, civilized behavior confronts the lovers as they enter the woods, the kingdom of Oberon, the Prince of Shadows. Here in the dark of a forest at night, the depths of the human mind find release in the fairy world of fear and superstition, passion undisciplined by reason. Paul Olson believes that the fairies provide "a stage projection of the inner relationship of the lovers", and Sidney R. Homan agrees:

Far from being antithetical to Athens, the forest at times seems to be more of projection of the mortals' collective unconscious. Egeus inadvertently anticipates Puck's magic when he claims that Lysander has "bewitched the bosom of [his] child" and "stol'n the impression of her fantasy." (I, i, 27-32). And Helena's impulsive wish that she might have Hermia's power to attract men is fulfilled literally when Puck's misapplied herb literally brings her both Demetrius and Lysander as lovers, reducing Hermia to the role of unmourned exile. In a sense the characters unconsciously call the supernatural upon themselves, and a psychoanalytic reading might well diagnose the time spent outside Athens as a form
of wish-fulfillment.35

But Oberon's kingdom is more than a form of wish-fulfillment. The fairies' world is a fantasy world where the pathetic fallacy operates to an astonishing degree: according to Titania, the blight in the natural world is caused solely by her quarrel with Oberon, and even the corn has "rotted ere his youth attained a beard" (II, i, 95). As David Young points out, the panoramic vistas in the fairies' descriptions of their activities in the natural world make the audience aware simultaneously of man's pettiness and grandeur36—a vista which in turn provides the audience with the feeling of how fantasy operates on the human mind unchecked by reason. Reason corrects fantasy's distortions of man's greatness or pettiness by reporting accurate sense impressions from the outside world to check his inner impulses. When, as frequently happens, reason becomes influenced by passion, or some other emotion, the mind's eye becomes a false reporter of sense data,37 not of things as they should be (imagination's eye), but things as the ego distorts them in spite of reason (fantasy's eye). In Young's words, "Oberon is mysterious, but his chief device for magic is the very familiar pansy. Titania is exotic, but her pensioners are merely cowslips. Puck harries the homespuns but admits himself that it is their own fear
that makes senseless things appear to be hostile to them (III, ii, 28)."38

In the fairies' world, all of the familiar hierarchies of the Elizabethan World Picture are inverted. In contrast to Theseus' proper domination of the Amazon, Hippolyta, Titania is in rebellion against Oberon's authority in violation of the human and natural order. As J. Dennis Huston has pointed out, her feminine fantasies are those of Acrasia's Bower in Spenser, where the male is reduced to a state of infantile paralysis through over-protection and over-mothering:39

Set your heart at rest.
The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a vot'ress of my order,
And, in the spicèd Indian air, by night
Full often hath she gossipèd by my side
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking th'embarkèd traders on the flood;
When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Following--her womb then rich with my young squire--
Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
To fetch me trifles, and return again
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.

(II, i, 122-134)

For Titania, the energy, courage, and foresight of the men who carried civilization across unknown seas is reduced in a gossip session to an occasion for self-display. The symbol of their venture, the sails, is merely a metaphor for the self-satisfaction of pregnancy and the remembrance
of wanton love; the reason for their venture, trade and economic support of civilization is merely an occasion for others to bring her "trifles" (1.133).

Moreover, Oberon's technique for righting the hierarchies in fantasy world is the reverse of Theseus' in Athens. Instead of encouraging the development of reason in Titania by making her understand and accept her proper place in the order of things, as Theseus does with Hippolyta with the promise of marriage, Oberon manipulates Titania emotionally. The juice of the pansy, or love-in-idleness, merely encourages Titania's natural inclination to fantasize, and the resulting affair with Bottom is an excess of carnal indulgence from which she is later repelled. As Huston explains, Titania wraps Bottom up in vines and flowers and dotes on him like a baby. She wants to deprive him of rational speech:

Come, wait upon him, lead him to my bower
The moon methinks looks with a wat'ry eye;
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforced chastity.
Tie up my lover's tongue, bring him silently.

(III, i, 197-201)

Bottom, however, is not so easily reduced to the bestiality of an ass. He has recognized Puck's antics as tricks played upon his mind to deprive him of reason, as "knavery of them to make me afeard" (III, i, 113). When Snout announces that
that he is changed into an ass, Bottom turns to the reason of his own sense perception rather than the fears of his ego's distortions and retorts, "What do you see? You see an ass head of your own, do you?" (III, i, 116). The others are asses, cowards for running away. He will sing so that "they shall hear I am not afraid" (III, i, 124-125). When his song awakens Titania and her fantasies of love, he refuses to believe that she has any reason to swear love so vehemently to him: "... to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays; the more the pity that some honest neighbors will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion." (III, i, 144-147). Bottom can make satirical jests (gleek) about his present situation or attribute to his dream of love to divine vision as he does later (IV, ii, 203-222). His reason distances his ego from the potentially tragic corruption of emotional manipulation, and later it allows him the option of translating the experience into art: "I will get Peter Quince to write a ballet of this dream. It shall be called "Bottom's Dream" because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the Duke." (IV, ii, 217-221). In the words of Paul Olson, "The body quite naturally will have sexual appetites, ... [but] these appetites need not undermine man's reason, his social responsibility, or
his spiritual seeking."

Meanwhile, the four lovers have undergone similar transformations. Under the influence of "that shrewd and knavish sprite" (II, i, 33), Puck, or Robin Goodfellow as the occasion demands, the fantasy-breeding juice of love-in-idleness has transformed Lysander from devotion to Hermia to fancy for Helena:

Content with Hermia! No; I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
Not Hermia but Helena I love:
Who will not change a raven for a dove?
The will of man is by his reason swayed,
And reason says you are the worthier maid.

(II, ii, 111-116)

Lysander's immersion in a fantasy world is implicit in his argument: like Demetrius, he cannot give rational grounds for his preference of Helena to Hermia; she is a dove as compared to a raven (l.114). So he resorts to rationalisation, or the substitution of fancy's desires, the wishes of the ego, for reason's commitments: "reason says you are the worthier maid" (l.116). It is not reason, but will that chooses Helena over Hermia, and the inversion of reason and will in line 115 ("The will of man is by his reason swayed") reflects the inversion of passion over reason in Lysander's soul. As R. W. Dent has pointed out, Demetrius and Lysander are totally undifferentiated in the play, whereas Helena and Hermia are differentiated solely
in matters of taste, short or tall, fair or dark, and in the fact of their constancy in holding to their initial inexplicable choices.\textsuperscript{42} Perhaps Shakespeare was deliberately providing the audience with objective evidence to undercut Lysander's sophistical argument.

Dent has argued that true love does exist in \textit{A Midsummer Night's Dream} as distinct from the "fancy-dominated abbrevations that mark inconstancy."\textsuperscript{43} However, "the eventual pairings are determined only by the constancy of Helena and Hermia in their initial inexplicable choices."\textsuperscript{44} But although the men succumb to fancy's fickleness in switching from woman to woman, the happy end is not achieved without the total immersion of all four into all sorts of traps laid by Puck, "the strife inherent in elemental nature."\textsuperscript{45} Helena believes that she is as "ugly as a bear (II, ii, 94) because Demetrius' eyes lack the pansy juice to "love and languish for [her] sake/Be [she] ounce, or cat, or bear." (II, ii, 29-30). Hermia has a dream that a serpent ate her heart away just before Lysander forsakes her, when male inconstancy has been identified with a spotted snake (II, ii, 9; I, i, 110). Hermia then irrationally accuses Demetrius of killing Lysander in his sleep in spite of Demetrius' constant protestations of love, and when Demetrius finally receives
the pansy juice and hails Helena as his "goddess, nymph, perfect, divine" (III, ii, 137), Helena, accustomed to fancy's distortions in Demetrius' behavior, cannot see the reason in his love:

    O spite!  O hell!  I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment:
If you were civil and knew courtesy,
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you now hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too?

(III, ii, 145-150)

Like Egeus, Helena sees malice where there is only reason, and she even believes Hermia to be the instigator of all the derision against her. In her confusion she conjures up an equally outrageous fantasy of what their past friendship has been to make Hermia's betrayal look even blacker:

    We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key;
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
Had been incorporate.  So we grew together,
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition;
Two lovely berries molded on one stem. . . .

(III, ii, 203-211)

Hermia and Helena continue to quarrel over their physical differences, while Lysander and Demetrius battle over Helena in a cloud of fog generated by Puck. Both pairs are like "puppets" (III, ii, 289) manipulated by the fantasies unleashed by the "king of shadows" (III, ii, 347),
but in Oberon's words, "all this derision" (III, ii, 370) is destined to prove "a dream and fruitless vision" (III, ii, 371). As Frank Kermode explains, "The antidote by which the lovers are restored 'to wonted sight' is 'virtuous' (III, ii, 367), being expressed from 'Dian's bud', (IV, i, 70) which, by keeping men chaste keeps them sane. So far the moral seems to be simple enough; the lovers have been subject to irrational forces; in the dark they have chopped and changed, like the 'little dogs' of Dylan Thomas' story, though without injury to virtue. But they will awake, and . . . return to the city and civility."46

Yet, the audience, as eavesdropper to all of these happenings, has actually been watching the images of the lovers' fantasies. The lovers never saw the fairies; their dreams were only a "fierce vexation" (IV, 1, 72) caused by Puck's mistakes in combination with their own fantasies. Unlike either the lovers or Bottom, however, we as audience have been admitted to a more complex vision—we have been witnessing a play, the creation of Shakespeare's imagination.47 Yet, the character who is most critical of the lovers' story and, by implications, what we have been witnessing is himself a "fairy toy" (V, i, 3) and a creation of "antique fable" (V, i, 3).48 On the other hand, Theseus, in his speech criticizing the lovers' story, is
the only character in the play who makes the connection between the "shaping fantasies" (V, i, 5) of lovers and poets. Perhaps it would be helpful to look at Theseus' speech more closely:

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact.
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy,
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

(V, i, 4-22)

In a passage that operates by analogy and comparison, the functions of imagination and reason, apprehension and comprehension respectively, cooperate in every case mentioned except that of the madman. He "sees more devils than vast hell can hold" (1.9) in a comparison of quantity between two like things rather than similitude between two different things. By definition, a man is mad when reality exists solely within his own mind, unformed by contact with the outside world. Theseus' madman sees only devils:
his mind and hell are the same place. The lover, on the other hand, sees extraordinary beauty in a face that looks undistinguished to common sense perception. The lover's vision is recognized as "extra-ordinary" because it exists beyond the range of cool reason in a personal vision which is an intensification rather than a rejection of reasoned judgment. The poet, however, is like the madman in that he ranges beyond earthly creations in his vision—but he finds heaven instead of hell. In Sidney's analogy, he creates a golden world from a brazen one, that is, he recreates the world as it should be from the world as it is. It is recognizable to common sense perception through the analogies of local names and habitations. Like the lover's vision, it works by metaphor, disclosing a relationship between two things. As a Renaissance critic explains: "The true form which is the essence of a metaphor is not some power of our mind, but rather the similitude and the conformity which is found between diverse things, and the intellect, not the fantasy, is what produces the metaphor and words are the materials with which it is produced."50 The coherence and constancy of a poet's art, then, spring from his consistent use of the metaphoric principle as a device not only for reflecting experience but for controlling it and expressing its unity.51 What makes a poet's
world golden is the consistent unity so often lacking from life as we know it in experience. As Theseus points out, imagination exercised in real life usually degenerates into fantasy's tricks: a joy "apprehended" invariably causes the desire for its "comprehension" in the cool facts of reason (11.19-20). Suffering, either from the terrible costs of realization or from the disappointment of failure, usually results. On the other hand, a determined desire to protect oneself from this suffering can result in an unreasoned fear of the outside world: "Or, in the night, imagining some fear,/How easy is a bush supposed a bear!" (11.21-22). Indeed, Theseus' own rejection of the lovers' fantasies may be an irrational desire to protect himself, as Hippolyta points out the consistency in their story that Theseus has overlooked:

But all the story of the night told over,  
And all their minds transfigured so together,  
More witnesseth than fancy's images,  
And grows to something of great constancy;  
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.  
(V, i, 23-27)

Like the poet's art, the reasonable "constancy" (1.26) of the lovers' story cannot be dismissed as a distorting fantasy, especially by another lover. The one constant element of the plot, both of the lovers' story and of the play, is the evolution of order between the sexes.52 For
the audience, as for the lovers, the realignments of love wrought by the dream of the night simply do not disappear at dawn, any more than the fairies do.\textsuperscript{53}

As C. L. Barber has pointed out, Midsummer Eve in England was a time when a maid might find out who her true love would be by dreams or divinations.\textsuperscript{54} In making an intellectual connection between the constancy in the lovers' stories and the constancy in the poet's art as correlatives of common sense perceptions, rather than of fantasy's distortions, \textit{A Midsummer Night's Dream} stands, like Sonnet 116, as a self-justifying monument to the existence of true love. To say that true love does not exist is to say that the poet's art does not exist which is to deny the evidence of our common sense perceptions: after all, audience as eavesdropper has been in the process of watching a play.

To make this point clearer, most of the fifth act of \textit{A Midsummer Night's Dream} centers around Bottom's play-within-the-play. Staged by the mechanicals and observed and commented upon by an audience composed of the lovers in Theseus' court, it presents a foil to the entire play of which it is a part.\textsuperscript{55} Not only are the lovers' sufferings burlesqued in the "merry and tragical" (V, i, 58) trials of Pyramus and Thisbe, but the audience response is anticipated in the comments of the stage audience. As Dent
explains, the mechanicals' play-within-the-play is in its nature mechanical because Bottom refuses to grant the audience imagination grounded in reason. Indeed, Bottom abuses his own imagination by perceiving his audience as fundamentally irrational. Sometimes he is afraid that they will take the play too literally, as when he protects the ladies from Lion, and sometimes he is afraid that they will not take the play literally enough. Bottom creates moonshine literally in rehearsal by consulting an almanac and in performance by having a man, "with lantern, dog and bush of torn" (V, i, 135) present the conventional symbol of the man in the moon. In his play, Shakespeare had relied on the audience's imaginations to create moonshine, and by counting on their memories of common sense perception, he does not abuse their common sense in the play, as Bottom does with his farcical symbol. In the same way, Bottom abuses the plot by giving it away in the prologue, while Shakespeare lets the audience participate in its unfolding. When Bottom grants his audience an over-indulgence in fantasy, as when he fears that the ladies will take the suicide literally or faint at the roar of the lion, the audience reaction is the opposite of the effect intended. It is Hippolyta who is critical of the indulgences the play requires from the audience:
Hippolyta: This is the silliest stuff that I ever heard.
Theseus: The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.
Hippolyta: It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.
Theseus: If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.
(V, i, 211-218)

Hippolyta, who found constancy in the lovers' stories, knows fantasy's distortions when she sees them, and unlike Theseus, does not separate imagination from its operation in life into a work of art. Ironically, Theseus, who looks for imagination in art, but equates lovers and poets with madmen, banishes good art from Athens along with the lovers. However, he uses his imagination more than he gives himself credit for in according the actors the dignity of men who have a right to pursue excellence by the lights of their own imaginations. Theseus' denunciation of the play as a "shadow" (1.212) is contradicted by his serious and respectful treatment of it and its actors.

In the epilogue, Puck asks for the same indulgence from the members of the theater audience in spite of his anticipation that they will miss the constancy of what has transpired:

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended:
That you have but slumb'red here,
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend:
If you pardon, we will mend.
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearnèd luck
Now to scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long;
Else the Puck a liar call:
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

(V, i, 425-440)

Like the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* itself, the epilogue
is self-justifying in its dependence upon constancy and
love as the prime movers in the universe. If the players
can escape without the hissing of the audience, the
"serpent's tongue" (1.435), amends will be made or Puck
will be called a liar. Since Puck, the "elemental force
of strife in nature"57 is never a liar, the spotted
serpent of inconstancy will emerge as the applause of the
audience, and Puck will join everyone's hands as Robin
Goodfellow. Like Bottom with his ass's head, we will all
sing of our visions and not be afraid.
Footnotes


2 Ibid.


6 Calderwood, pp. 517-518.

7 Ibid, p. 510.


12 Ibid., p. 103.


16 Ibid., pp. 215-216.

17 Ibid., p. 225.


19 Sidney in Hardison, p. 101.


22 Sidney in Hardison, p. 104.


25 Hardison, footnote to Gosson, p. 89.

27 Sidney in Hardison, p. 106.


30 Ibid., pp. 99-100.


32 Olson, p. 102.


34 Olson, p. 115.

35 Homan, pp. 74-75.

36 Young, p. 80.

37 Dent, pp. 115-116.

38 Young, pp. 147-148.

39 Huston, pp. 219-220.

40 Ibid.

41 Olson, p. 115.
42 Dent, p. 116.

43 Ibid., p. 118.

44 Ibid., p. 116.


47 Dent, pp. 121-122.

48 Young, pp. 139-140.

49 Homan, p. 78.

50 Bulgarini as quoted by Young, p. 163.

51 Young, p. 160.

52 Calderwood, p. 510.

53 Ibid., p. 515.


55 Dent, p. 124.

56 Ibid., p. 126.

57 Fisher, p. 309.
Chapter III: *Hamlet:*

"By indirections find directions out"

Yes, for great is the struggle, I said, dear Glauccon, a far greater contest than we think it, that determines whether a man prove good or bad, so that not the lure of honor or wealth or any office, no, nor of poetry either, should incite us to be careless of righteousness and all excellence.

Socrates, *The Republic* X.608b4 - 8

It has become fashionable in this, the Atomic Age, to dismiss such Socratic norms as "good" and "bad" as purely relativistic and to explain *Hamlet* in terms derived from quantum mechanics. Stephen Booth, for example, finds "the power of rhetoric and context to make a particular either good or bad at will is . . . a topic in the play"¹ and Bernard McElroy, borrowing from Norman Rabkin, explains *Hamlet*'s behavior through "complementarity", a term derived from quantum mechanics in which "two things which logically should contradict each other or cancel each other out can exist side by side, both being perfectly true."² Because his mind exhibits complementarity, *Hamlet* can launch an attack on "the most basic assumptions of a purposeful moral order" and then, in the end, come to terms with it, "only after having given it a thorough
shaking up." McElroy asserts:

It should be evident from the foregoing that I disagree with the long critical tradition that makes Hamlet a disillusioned idealist suffering from a severe case of moral debilitation. To see him as a confused undergraduate, a kind of Renaissance Holden Caulfield, stunned to ineffectuality by the discovery that his elders are not necessarily his betters, is to sentimentalize him and over simplify his tragedy.  

In the words of Norman Holland, it is a curious thing about Hamlet: as each century tries to explain him, it seems to find there--itself.

As students of the sixties, however, and of ethical relativism as well, some of us tend to see Hamlet in a different light. There were those of us who were "confused undergraduates" in the late sixties at large American universities, and we were "stunned to ineffectuality" by the same spectacle that Hamlet witnesses: seeing that which gave us life, his mother, our university, giving herself over and over, physically and spiritually, to anyone violent enough or corrupt enough to force his will upon her. For Hamlet, and for us, tragedy is not merely a word describing a category of plays, and poison in the ear is more than a metaphor. We who watched the armies of Fortinbras marching under the trees where we had once read Plato, the source of the Elizabethan commonplace that the rule of reason in the outside state is analogous to rule in the individual soul,
cannot take the measure of a man who restores order to his own fractured soul and purges a corrupt state of its inner poison in the process in terms derived from quantum mechanics. As a more sympathetic critic, G. K. Hunter, explains:

. . . it becomes increasingly clear what kind of answer must be made to Eliot's basic charge that the play is an "artistic failure" because it provides no "objective correlative" to explain the turmoil in Hamlet's soul. The only adequate answer seems to the present writer to be the most radical one—that the state of Denmark and the state of Hamlet's soul are different sides to the same coin; that the sickness of the prince is merely another mode of showing forth or talking about the poison in the whole community. . . . This is a state where . . . [t]he preconditions of reason break down: one can smile and smile and be a villain. That these are objective possibilities may not have occurred to the comfortable Victorians. But if the realities of the mid-twentieth century have taught us anything about literature it ought to be this, that in Hamlet we are face-to-face with an oppressively true picture of social breakdown and its human consequences, not merely with the fantasy-world of a damaged poetic sensibility. 5

If we, as undergraduates in the late sixties, must use such antiquated words as "good" and "bad" or "Providence" to explain our vision of Hamlet, then I pray that the sophisticated modern critic will leave his judgment of what is sentimental and over-simple to Heaven.

I do not mean, however, to imply that none of what McElroy and Booth say is useful. Later I will use many of Booth's insights, and here I quote McElroy's reflection on
Shakespeare's purpose in writing Hamlet:

[Shakespeare's] dramatic premise seems to have been that the discrepancy between appearance and reality is intolerable to a mind that places prime value upon truth, and that the inscrutability of the universe presents an unsolvable dilemma to a man who demands absolute values based upon absolute truth. Hamlet is such a man and has such a mind, yet the world he must deal with is filled with deceptions and unanswerable questions. Hence the play itself is, among a great many other things, an elaborate dialectic upon the need for absolute values and the impossibility of absolute values.  

It is my belief, however, that absolute values of good and bad do exist at the end of the play because Hamlet has suffered for them. Hamlet's death, made acceptable to him by the indirections of Providence, is the means by which the absolute rightness and endurance of those values, which, as we have seen from the last chapter, constituted the heritage of the Renaissance from the Christian Neoplatonic tradition of the Middle Ages, are reaffirmed. The play, it seems to me, works through the thematic and structural device of eavesdropping to unfold the process by which Hamlet finds "directions out" through the "indirections" of Providence to purge the rottenness in the state of Denmark through his conscious self-sacrifice.

In order to make clear the role of audience as eavesdropper in this play, however, I feel that it is first necessary to distinguish between what I believe was Shake-
Shakespeare's idea of an audience and what modern critics generally assume. In *Hamlet*, we are very lucky to have Hamlet himself give very specific and precise advice to the players, which I will assume reflects Shakespeare's own opinions. In it, Hamlet distinguishes between "the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise" (III, ii, 11-13) and the "judicious" (III, ii, 28) spectator:

... let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so o'er-done is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now, this overdone, or come tardy off, though it makes the unskillful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve, the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theater of others. (III, ii, 17-30)

Shakespeare makes it very clear that the function of the playwright, then and now, is highly moral, showing the eternal truth of virtue and scorn of virtue in the temporal dress of the age. If the playwright is remiss in this function in the eyes of one "judicious" observer, the judicious man's censure is worth more than the laughter and applause of a whole theater of others. In other words, the ultimate value on moral judgment which the playwright
sets for himself is also expected in a judicious spectator. A judicious spectator looks beyond the surface configurations for a higher understanding of moral worth. This spiritual understanding is approached through the use of reason, a distinctively human faculty, as Hamlet reiterates over and over again. Ultimate meaning is therefore located in the spiritual understanding of the figure of virtue or of scorn apart from the spontaneous emotional associations generated by the surface action. Judicious perceiving, as opposed to the perception of the groundlings who see only "inexplicable dumb shows and noise" (III, ii, 13-14), is a tuning of the ear and the eye to a figural understanding of the eternal image of virtue or scorn beyond its embodiments in the temporal surface manifestations of the "very age and body of the time" (III, ii, 25). As St. Augustine remarks in his thoughts on the uses of eloquence, "... it is a mark of good and distinguished minds to love the truth within words and not the words."¹⁰

Augustine goes on to warn against taking figurative expression literally in On Christian Doctrine:

But the ambiguities of figurative words . . . require no little care and industry. For at the outset you must be very careful lest you take figurative expressions literally. What the Apostle says pertains to this problem: "For the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth." (II, Cc. 3.6). That is, when that which is said figuratively is
taken as though it were literal, it is understood carnally. Nor can anthing more appropriately be called the death of the soul (Cf. Rom. 8:16) than that condition in which the thing which distinguishes us from the beasts, which is the understanding, is subjected to the flesh in pursuit of the letter. He who follows the letter takes figurative expressions as though they were literal and does not refer the things signified to anything else. For example, if he hears of the Sabbath, he thinks only of one day out of the seven that are repeated in a continuous cycle; and if he hears of Sacrifice, his thoughts do not go beyond the customary victims of the flocks and fruits of the earth. There is a miserable servitude of the spirit in this habit of taking signs for things, so that one is not able to raise the eye of the mind above things that are corporal and created to drink in eternal light.

(III, v, 9)

As D. W. Robertson explains, it is not difficult to cite evidence that figurative expression in both literary and visual art was designed to lead the mind of the observer through exercise to a spiritual understanding of eternal truth not only in the Middle Ages but well into the Renaissance as well.¹¹ Robertson quotes the preface to the Anticlaudianus of Alanus de Insulis, a "work of enormous influence"¹² in the Middle Ages, which stresses the function of exercise and the ultimate appeal to the reason implied in the approach of a judicious observer:

For in this work the sweetness of the literal sense will caress the puerile hearing, the moral instruction will fill the perfecting sense, and the sharper subtlety of the allegory will exercise the understanding nearing perfection. But may the approach to this work be barred to those who, following only the sensual motion, do not desire
the truth of reason, lest a thing holy be defouled by being offered to dogs, or a pearl trampled by the feet of swine be lost, if the majesty of these things be revealed to the unworthy.\footnote{13}

Alanus de Insulis obviously expects his readers to avoid a spontaneous reaction to the "sensual motion" of the words in reading the work before them. Instead, they were to exercise reason in the search for the unchanging truth inaccessible to those interested only in "carnal" gratifications of the senses.

It should also be emphasized that reason or understanding implies a conscious referral of temporal surface phenomena to the eternal truth of God. In Augustine's terminology, things of this world are to be used with reference to enjoyment in the all-pervading love of God: if they are enjoyed in themselves alone, an illicit indulgence in a "perverse sweetness" alienates us "from our country, whose sweetness would make us blessed. Thus in this mortal life, wandering from God, if we wish to return to our native country where we can be blessed we should use this world and not enjoy it [merely], so that the invisible things of God being understood by the things that are made (Rom. 1.20) may be seen, that is, so that by means of corporal and temporal things we may comprehend the eternal and spiritual." (I, iv, 4). If reason's ultimate focus is diverted away from the
unchanging realities of God to the transitory and deceptive world of corporal gratifications, a "kind of fornication of the spirit" (I, xxiii, 35) occurs.

This distinction can best be understood by comparing reason as Iago and Ulysses use it and as Hamlet uses it. In Edward Hubler's observation, "An overreliance on reason and a belief in untrammeled free will are hallmarks of the Shakespearean villain; the heroes learn better." In his first soliloquy, Hamlet cries out against the "uses of this world" (I, ii, 134) using the imagery of "an unweeded garden" (I, ii, 134):

O God, God,
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't, ah, fie, 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed. Things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.

(I, ii, 132-137)

Because of his mother's sin, Hamlet is alienated from enjoyment in the transitory "uses of this world." He has lately "lost all [his] mirth" (II, ii, 304) because truth and his place in God's plan seem lost in a murky swamp of "fornication of the spirit" and deception: he can find no rest from the perversity that has alienated him "from our country whose sweetness would make us blessed" in Augustine's phrase. He feels subjected to Fortune's Wheel, that symbol of temporal decay and transitory value that
corrupts all earthly nature. In Ulysses' sophistry in
*Troilus and Cressida*, "One touch of nature makes the whole
world kin"¹⁵ (III, iii, 174) and Fortune seems to destroy
all lasting value:

Let not virtue seek
Remuneration for the thing it was. For beauty, wit,
High birth, vigor of bone, desert in service,
Love, friendship, charity are subject all
To envious and caluminating time.

(III, iii, 169-173)

In the logic of Ulysses, if virtue's image cannot be dis-
cerned in the outside world, it follows that virtue and
eternal truths do not exist: "Time hath, my lord, a
wallet at his back, Wherein he puts alms for oblivion"
(III, iii, 145-146). Augustine himself says, "For charity
itself, which is the end and fulfillment of the Law, cannot
be right if those things which are loved are not true but
false." (III, xxviii, 61).

But Hamlet cannot accept a love or a logic which is
based on what is false and transitory. In his poem to
Ophelia he writes:

Doubt thou the stars are fire,
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar,
But never doubt I love.

(III, ii, 116-119)

The whole universe may be turned upside down, but Hamlet's
love is true and unchanging. He cannot love deception
either in Ophelia or in the transitory uses of this world, because he can find enjoyment in neither. He is forced, in Augustine's words, to value still more highly "an immutable life, a life which is not sometimes foolish and sometimes wise but is rather Wisdom itself" (I, viii, 8). At the end of the play, when he tells Horatio to "absent thee from felicity awhile" (V, ii, 348) to tell his story, the felicity that he sees in death is the secure understanding of his place in God's plan, an understanding gained throughout the play by his constant habit of referring corporal things to God's eternal truth. When the inducements of Providence make his directions clear, it is not a fatalist's submission to blind circumstances that he feels, but the reasoned acceptance of his role in furthering the purposes of unchanging truth. His love of what is true and unchanging enables his mind to eventually cleanse itself of the distractions of corruptible nature; his reason shows him, in the words of Augustine, "a way home to the country of the blessed" (I, x, 10).

Iago, on the other hand, uses reason to deny the supremacy of God so that he may set man up as the sole author and manipulator of his own destiny. His reason, expressed in the following speech to Roderigo, reveals the sin of pride:
Virtue? A fig! 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus, or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many—either to have it sterile with idleness or manured with industry—why, the power and corrigeable authority of this lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions. But we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings or unbitted lusts, whereof I take this that you call love to be a sect or scion.\(^\text{17}\)

(I, iii, 314-328)

Love for Iago is "merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will" (I, iii, 330-331), which is governed by the self-serving, pragmatic curb of reason. He has no conception of the selfless brotherly love of Christian community or of love as a guiding force in finding one's place in God's plan. Where Hamlet saw the commonwealth of Denmark as an unweeded garden, Iago sees the weeds only in the "unbitted lusts" (1.326) of the body. Iago does not recognize the analogies between the human body and the commonwealth so prevalent in Christian thinking. For him, reason is not a continuous habit of referring corporal things to eternal truth but enlightened self-interest in following "but myself" (I, i, 55). As Irving Ribner makes clear, Iago stands for social disintegration, because he cannot perceive a social order whose perfection reflects
the love of man for God's truth. Although both *Hamlet* and *Othello* are tragedies, reason is the means to salvation of the individual and of society in the first and the means of their destruction in the second.

It follows from what we have said that in the appreciation of Shakespearean tragedy, the attitude of the observer is of primary importance. Audience as eavesdropper, or rather judicious observer as eavesdropper, has an active role in the play. As Irving Ribner explains:

> Tragedy is a form of experience in which the audience is active rather than passive, participates rather than receives. The literal level of the action must be compelling and real, and the author by the power of his artistry must be able to enthrall us completely and bring our emotions into play. Some critics would see this literal level as the sole requirement of tragedy, but this is only half of the picture. We must also have the level of abstraction, of rational argument, against which the emotional commitment of the audience must be brought into play. The highest form of tragedy thus involves a tension between our emotional involvement in experience and our rational contemplation of its meaning.

D. W. Robertson goes on to say that in the appreciation of figural art, the attitude of the observer is of primary importance because no work of art involving figural interpretation exists "in a world of its own." For this reason, "the 'pure aesthetics' developed since the early nineteenth century has little validity as an approach to it." The audience of a Shakespearean play occupies a
position similar to an eavesdropper, a part of the world of
the play, rather than one of a voyeur, looking in on another,
separate world.

Nevertheless, some critics have denied that a difference
between Shakespearean and modern theater exists and have
failed to see the relevance of belief, and specifically
Christian belief to Shakespearean tragedy, and have argued
in fact, that tragedy and Christianity are essentially
incompatible. They find in Shakespeare's most profound
explorations of the meaning of his universe an essential
negation in which suffering is mysterious and meaningless
and in which there is no discernible principle of order
operating in human affairs. Since most critics agree,
however, that tragedy is a form of experience in which
the audience is active rather than passive, participating
in the ethical choices made, perhaps it would be helpful
to examine a current affective critic, Stephen Booth, in
his essay on *Hamlet* in light of Augustinian aesthetics.

Booth begins his essay, "On the Value of Hamlet" with an attack on what Hamlet and Shakespeare in his huge
corpus portray as reason: the referral of human thought
and action to the eternal truths of God. "*Hamlet*", says
Booth, "was of course born into the culture of Western
Europe, our culture, whose every thought--literary or non-
literary—is other than its apparent self." (p. 138) In the Platonic (and Shakespearean) tension between appearance and reality, Booth immediately opts for appearance and proposes to look at *Hamlet* "for what it is: a succession of actions upon the understanding of an audience." (p. 139) As far as Shakespeare's own definition of an audience goes, Booth has already joined the masses of groundlings who, unable to discern the image of virtue apart from her fashionable temporal dress, hear only inexplicable noise at plays. And noise is apparently what Booth hears: "From beginning to end, in all sizes and kinds of materials, the play offers its audience an actual and continuing experience of perceiving a multitude of intense relationships in an equal multitude of different systems of coherence, systems not subordinate to one another in a hierarchy of relative power." (p. 164) Sometimes the play makes sense, and sometimes it does not: "Whenever the play seems mad it drifts back into focus as if nothing odd had happened. The audience is encouraged to agree with the play that nothing did, to assume (as perhaps for other reasons it should) that its own intellect is inadequate. The audience pulls itself together, and goes on to another crisis of its understanding." (p. 160) Augustine, of course, would say that Booth's intellect is not at fault; it is just that he has
given up using it in his own first premise. By not recognizing the ultimate validity of eternal truth, he has committed a kind of "fornication of the spirit" (I, xxiii, 35), or an immersion in the shifting, baseless emotional associations generated by the surface action. This "carnal reading" of events in the play results in an unhealthy subjection of the spirit and intellect to base sensual motion and leads to a willful neglect of man's highest gift: reason, or the ability to expose nature's flux to the clear light of truth. In a familiar medieval metaphor, by taking figurative expression literally, Booth has discovered the chaff and left the fruit untouched.

In trying to explain Hamlet's behavior in terms other than complementarity, it would perhaps be helpful to look at Hamlet's initial state of mind more carefully within a Christian context. Is he justified in being so upset over his mother's overhasty marriage to Claudius? And what are we to make of the Ghost's revelations? We have said before that his mother's sin alienates Hamlet from enjoyment in the uses of this world, but what exactly does this alienation mean? In Act II, Hamlet expresses his alienation to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in more detail:

I have of late, but wherefore I know not,
lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercises, and indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire: why, it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals; and yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust?

(II, ii, 303-317)

Hamlet can no longer see "the beauty of the world" (II, ii, 315-316) in the heavens, in the earth or in the soul of man because his own soul is fractured: the harmony and reason which before appeared to govern both the universe and his soul now seem to be appearance only. Passion, disorder, and temporal decay seem to rule everywhere now instead of reason. In order to emphasize the "falling off" (I, v, 47) that has taken place within his perception, I quote a passage from Plato's Timaeus, the source of much Elizabethan cosmology,23 to show the fundamental unity between macrocosm and microcosm that was supposed to be the norm:

The sight in my opinion is the source of the greatest benefit to us, for had we never seen the stars and the sun and the heaven, none of the words which we have spoken about the universe would ever have been uttered. But now the sight of day and night, and the months and the revolutions of the years have created number and have given us a conception of time, and the power of inquiring about the nature
of the universe. And from this source we have derived philosophy, than which no greater good ever was or will be given by the gods to mortal man... God invented and gave us sight to the end that we might behold the courses of intelligence in the heaven, and apply them to the courses of our own intelligence which are akin to them, the unperturbed to the perturbed, and that we, learning them and partaking of the natural truth of reason, might imitate the absolutely unerring courses of God and regulate our own vagaries... The same may be affirmed of speech and hearing... the sense of hearing is granted to us for the sake of harmony. And harmony, which has motions akin to the revolutions of our souls, is not regarded by the intelligent votary of the Muses as given by them with a view to irrational pleasure, which is deemed to be the purpose of it in our day, but as meant to correct any discord which may have arisen in the courses of the soul, and to be our ally in bringing her into harmony and agreement with herself, and rhythm too was given by them for the same reason, on account of the irregular and graceless ways which prevail among mankind generally, and to help us against them.24

(47al - b2, b5.- c4, c7 - e2)

As everyone knows, a good deal of the intellectual ferment in the Renaissance was caused by the discoveries of the astronomers—that the movements of the stars were not "absolutely unerring" (47c2). Kepler discovered that the revolutions of the planets were elliptical rather than circular, Copernicus that the earth moved rather than the sun (Cf. Hamlet's poem to Ophelia II, i, 127), and even ordinary observers, such as Horatio, knew that comets "stars with trains of fire" (I, i, 117) and "disasters in the sun" (I, i, 118) were harbingers of disaster in the
human order. If vagaries were demonstrated in the stars, how could helpless, mortal man clam the disorder in his own soul?

Blind religion was one answer, as Marcellus proposes in Act I more in hope than certainty:

Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Savior's birth is celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long,
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm:
So hallowed and so gracious is that time.
(I, i, 158-164)

But Horatio, the intellectual, only believes "in part" (I, i, 165); the other part of him believes in the empirical method, of testing and evaluating sense data with his own eyes. He will not believe the Ghost "[w]ithout the sensible and true avouch/Of mine own eyes" (I, i, 57-58), just as Hamlet will not damn his soul, albeit "prophetic" (I, v, 40), to carry out the revenge command of a ghost which may be a devil. He must first test its word, which he does in the play-within-the-play. Art, as Hamlet and Shakespeare employ it, there, in closet scene with Rosen-crantz and Guildenstern, has the power to reveal the condition of the individual soul to scrutiny by a judicious observer.25 As with Horatio, part of Hamlet is a judicious spectator, who tests and evaluates the sense impressions of
his own eyes and hopes that others do the same.

It appears, then, that if reason no longer emanates from the unerring motion of the stars, it must of necessity lie in the power of the individual mind to use it wisely and with reference to unchanging ethical truth. As Augustine explains, "And the Artificer, so to speak, gestures to the spectator of His work concerning the beauty of that work, not that he should cling to it completely, but so that his eyes should scan the corporal beauty of things that are made in such a way that the affection returns to Him who made them." In general then, sensory beauty has exactly the same function that we have seen attributed to figurative expression: it is a means of approaching eternal truth. This approach is made in both cases through the action of reason. Whether beauty is used with reference to truth or abused depends on the "will" of the observer. If he fails to act reasonably, he will refer the beauty of what he sees to his own satisfaction; that is, he will act in cupidity rather than in charity. These alternatives are analyzed in detail by D. W. Robertson in his seminal chapter on "Medieval Aesthetics" in A Preface to Chaucer, and they seem to me to have a great deal of importance for an understanding of Hamlet's behavior.
In the first place, Augustine assumes that the human spirit is guided by God as a principle which animates the body. Its action in adjusting the body to stimuli it receives produces sensations. And it forms phantasiae or images as a result of this activity, and these may be retained in the memory of sensible things. Sometimes these images are combined to produce phantasmata of things not actually perceived. When in the course of its operations, the spirit suffers, it does not suffer from the body but from itself as it diminishes itself in submitting to the body. The spirit is therefore most powerful and the body most healthful when the spirit perceives and loves the beauty transmitted to it from God in the rational movement of the natural order, such as the motion of the stars, and when it creates a similar rational motion in itself. The same beauty may be reflected in creatures, or in the fantasies derived from the perception of creatures, but it is there an inferior beauty. And when the spirit, through an association with the flesh, comes to love this inferior beauty, it becomes contaminated. Its contamination is reinforced by pride, through which the spirit seeks to be a master itself, imitating but not following God. Through prudence, which enables us to distinguish between the eternal and the temporal; temperance, which enables the
spirit to free itself from inferior beauty; fortitude, which strengthens the spirit in adversity; and justice, which enables us to preserve the hierarchal order described above, the spirit may achieve peace and harmony with the body. Since the beautiful is that which is loved, and since love is the animating force in the universe in Christian thought, it is not difficult to understand why the problem of beauty is of prime importance in Medieval and Renaissance aesthetics. Indeed, the perception of beauty was conceived in terms analogous with the depiction of the Fall in Genesis. 28

John the Scot develops one of the most famous of these theories relating the act of perception of beauty to the Fall of Man. He envisages Paradise as human nature, divided into two regions--interior and exterior. The first of these regions is characterized as the man. He represents the spirit, and within him dwells truth and all good. This region is therefore the habitat of reason, containing the Tree of Life and the Fountain of Life from which flows the four streams of cardinal virtues mentioned above. This interior region should be "married" to the exterior region, characterized as the woman, in a manner prefigured by the marriage of Christ and the Church. The exterior region is the region of the corporal senses--falsity and vain
fantasies. It contains the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the serpent, or illicit delight. It is obvious that in souls envisaged as gardens of this kind, true beauty and delight are to be found in the inner region and whatever impresses the outer region as being beautiful should be referred to the inner region for judgment. But in practice, this is not always done, since people are inclined to act effeminately rather than virtuously.²⁹

Scotus follows this discussion with an example of the temptation of greed:

When a phantasy of gold or of some precious material is impressed on the corporal sense, the phantasy seems to that sense beautiful and naturally attractive because it is founded upon a creature which is extrinsically good. But the woman, that is the carnal sense, is deceived, and delighted, failing to perceive hiding beneath this false and fancied beauty a malice that is cupidity, which is the "root of all evil" (I Tim. 6.10). "Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her," Our Lord says (Matt. 5.28), "hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." But if He had spoken openly, He might have explained, whoever impresses the phantasy of feminine beauty on his carnal sense has already committed adultery in his thought, desiring the wickedness of libido, which secretly attracts him beneath the imagination of the false beauty of that woman. . . .³⁶

All error thus begins in the exterior or aesthetic region of the garden, and through its delight in a fantasy of beauty which it falsifies, it may corrupt and pervert the inner region of the garden, just as Eve successfully
tempted Adam in the Fall. We should observe, however, that the evil involved in this process of perversion does not lie in the object. Nor does it necessarily form a part of the beauty of the object. It lies in the libido, the cupidity, which Scotus describes as lurking beneath that beauty when it becomes a part of an image formed by the corporal senses. Matters become critical when the image formed by the corporal sense is placed in memory and considered in thought. If thought pleurably contemplates cupidinous satisfaction, the result is the evil abuse of beauty: the downfall of the reason and the corruption of the garden are distinct possibilities. On the other hand, if thought refers the beauty of the image to the Creator, all is well. The "man" retains hierarchical ascendancy over the "woman"; the spirit continues to guide its servant the body; the beauty of the "woman" remains innocent.

In Augustinian moral theory three stages are involved in the commission of any sin: suggestion, delight or pleasurable thought, and consent of the reason. Only after consent takes place in the mind does the sinner prepare for overt action, a sin "in deed." If sins in deed are repeated, the sinner may come to sin "in habit." The suggestion to commit a sin takes place when an attractive
object is perceived; the delight arises in the contemplation
of the object, or of its image, with a view to fleshly
satisfaction; and if this delight is not repressed by the
reason, consent takes place. As we have seen above, this
process is analogous with the Fall. Suggestion enters the
senses subtly, like the serpent. There carnal appetite,
or Eve, may take pleasure in what is suggested and cause
the reason, or Adam, to consent. If consent of the reason
takes place, the soul is expelled from the garden, or
Paradise--from the light of reason into the darkness of
the purposeless flux. Like figurative expression, beauty
must be interpreted with regard to higher truth. If, of
our own free will, we descend from the love of the highest
beauty proper to the reason to a lower beauty, proper to
the senses, then we deserve the moral darkness which results.
Only through repentence and better habits can we recover
our sight. 33

Maynard Mack, Jr., has noticed that the Ghost gives
his murder by Claudius mythic dimensions through allusions
to the Eden story: 34

Now, Hamlet, hear.
'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,
A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forg'd process of my death
Rankly abused. But know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

(I, v, 34-40)
In the references to "orchard" (1.35) and "serpent" (11.36, 39), connotations of the Fall are certainly present; but the Ghost has expanded the figurative expression that describes Claudius' crime to include Denmark as a garden "abused" (1.38) by an exact copy, "forgèd process" (1.37), of the action of the crime. Poison is being poured into the ears of everyone in the commonwealth through the cupidinous speech of Claudius--his motives are self-serving, and as king he is pouring suggestions of evil into the ears of all around him. His honeyed, blurred speech is designed to disguise truth and foster evil. The common soldiers feel the uncertainty of life in a directionless flux foisted upon them by a king who serves himself and not God: in their tentative questions to each other in the first scene, they "assail" (I, i, 31) the ears of Horatio in the dark with their questions. The serpent of suggestion now wears the crown, and as Marcellus says, "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark." (I, iv, 90).

What is rotten in Denmark is the loss of meaningful communication, as it was recognized that "the loss of perfect language is more than anything else the sign of the Fall, since in Eden speech is the outward manifestation of the inner Paradise." Adam's naming of the animals in Genesis 2.19 was interpreted as an understanding of "both their
internal and external signatures—a congruence lost at the time of the Fall itself.

Claudius' first speech makes his own fall, the lack of congruence between his outer show and inner reality, abundantly clear:

Therefore our sometime sister, now our Queen, Th' imperial jointress to this warlike state, Have we, as 'twere, with a dropping eye, With mirth in funeral, and with dirge in marriage, In equal scale weighing delight and dole, Taken to wife.

(I, ii, 8-14)

As Stephen Booth points out, it takes Claudius more than six lines to say the moral impropriety of "our . . . sister . . . have we . . . taken to wife." This unnatural union is "plastered together with a succession of subordinate unnatural unions made smooth by rhythm, alliteration, assonance and syntactical balance." In "[w]ith mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage" (1.13) a moral indecorum is made to sound decorous in an unnatural rhetorical balance—"as one would use a particularly heavy and greasy cosmetic—to smooth over any inconsistencies whatsoever." (p. 149). Other words in the speech, "jointress" (1.11), "disjoint" (1.20) and "colleaguèd" (1.21) are "excessively lubricated rhetoric by which Claudius makes unnatural connections between moral contraries . . . as gross and sweaty as the incestuous marriage itself." (p. 149).
Claudius' pseudo-eloquence provides the clearest warning to the spectator in the play of Augustine's admonishment that "good and distinguished minds" look for the truth within the words rather than lapsing into a sensuous enjoyment of their rhetorical beauty. As we shall see, Hamlet is the only person present at the court to do just that.

After Claudius' effective dismissal of Cornelius and Voltemand, and then Laertes, on various journeys with true ceremony and executive dispatch ("You cannot speak of reason to the Dane/And lose your voice" [I, ii, 43-44]), Hamlet's first line, an aside to the audience, is like a breath of fresh air: "A little more than kin and less than kind!" (I, ii, 64-65). As Booth has observed, his aside functionally allies the audience with him throughout the play as "champions of order in Denmark." (pp. 150-151). I would expand this observation to say that the audience and Hamlet are in effect judicious eavesdroppers on the whole murky world created by Claudius' sin. Hamlet and the judicious observers in the audience have seen through Claudius' greasy words to the foul truth they disguise; and since Claudius' perversion of soul comes out in his language, Hamlet's resort to a pun to make the meaning clear is entirely in order. He refuses to be cajoled into the
ambiguity of Claudius' address, "my cousin Hamlet, and my son" (I, ii, 63) and retorts that he is "more than kin" (1.64) if he is a "son", but "less than kind" (11.64-65) toward Claudius in his feelings. Moreover, since "kind" (1.65) in Middle English means "natural", there is an implied slur on Claudius' unnatural union which his pompous words cannot hide. Hamlet's use of puns and antic disposition stem from the conflict he faces in being part of a world that is muddled and darkened by lies and deception; his reason repels him from it but unlike the judicious observers in the audience, he cannot sit and merely judge it. He must act.

Hamlet's first long speech in the play explains what acting in Denmark does to his soul: it fractures the soul into the familiar Platonic dualities of shadowy appearance without and true reality within where reason resides:

> Seem, madam? Nay, it is, I know not "seems."
> 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother, Nor customary suits of solemn black, Nor windy suspiration of forced breath, No, nor the fruitful river in the eye, Nor the dejected havior of the visage, Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief, That can denote me truly. These indeed seem, For they are actions that a man might play, But I have that within which passes show. These but the trappings and the suits of woe.  

(I, ii, 76-86)

As Charles R. Forker notes, "Playing is a stock metaphor for pretence and hypocrisy in Shakespeare, and most
references to actors are pejorative."39 Shakespeare believed that the function of a playwright is to show virtue her image, but an actor, by profession, is one remove from the arena where virtue exists. A "show" is to present an image of virtue to the reason of the judicious observer in an appeal to his inner reality where ethical decisions are debated every day. Hamlet knows that the interior man, his spirit within which refers all actions to God's truth, "passes show" (1.85). Claudius, on the other hand, is the consummate actor of the play: he believes that his "show" of rule in Denmark and his "act" of marriage are the ultimate realities, and he subjugates all ethical decisions to this transitory end. Until Hamlet can master the passion that erupts in violent outbursts against Claudius' "act", he cannot, in Hardin Craig's succinct terms "achieve that indifference to consequence"40 which will make him the perfect hero—unswerving in his reliance on God.

Irving Ribner has suggested that "Shakespeare framed the role of Hamlet to represent the life-journey of everyman in an ordered universe ruled by a benevolent God."41 I would add, however, that Shakespeare's "everyman" is a Christian: he refers all of his actions to God's truth. In his first soliloquy, he wants to commit suicide in the
face of such overwhelming evil and seeming purposelessness, but he will not give the consent of his reason leading to such an action because suicide is against God's "canon" (I, ii, 132):

O that this too too sullied flesh would melt, Thaw, and resolve itself into dew, Or that the Everlasting had not fixed His canon 'gainst self-slaughter.

(I, ii, 129-132)

Suicide is a mark of a despairing mind which lacks faith in a purposive moral order. The Christian attitude, in the words of the Psalmist, is one of steadfast patience in the hope that God's plan will make itself known:

I will lift mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. . . .
They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever. . . .
The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Psalms 121:1, 125:1, 121:8
(King James Version)

Before the play ends, Hamlet will have gained the Psalmist's vision in the face of death: "If it be now, 'tis not to come: if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all." (V, ii, 221-224).

In Ribner's view of Hamlet as everyman, Shakespeare retained the basic structure of the original Hamlet story but changed its focus. The original story had centered
around three plots by which the uncle had tried to entrap
and destroy his nephew, but each time Amleth had out-
witted his adversary by his greater cunning. In his play,
Shakespeare also presents a series of contests between
Hamlet and Claudius, but in each encounter it is not Hamlet's
victory that Shakespeare stresses: rather, it is Hamlet's
defeat. Hamlet makes one attempt after another to accom-
plish his goal, but each attempt is a failure or only
partial success. His plans are marred by those very human
shortcomings which reveal him as neither an automatic saint
nor a pathological killer, but as a soul facing conflicts
of reason and passion familiar to "everyman" as he searches
for God's plan in what seems meaningless chaos.42

The Hamlet that Shakespeare shows us in his first act
is an ordinary man, bowed down by his own infirmities—a
sense of his own impotence in the face of pervasive evil
and enraged by a profound disgust at the infirmities of
others:

That it should come to this:
But two months dead, nay, not so much, not two,
So excellent a king, that was to this
Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth,
Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on; and yet within a month—
Let me not think o't; frailty, they name is woman—
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body
Like Niobe, all tears, why she, even she--
O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourned longer--married with my uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules.

(I, ii, 137-153)

Hamlet emphasizes his mother's frailty not in the sense, I think, that she was adulterous when her husband was alive, but that she was so easily swayed to forget him after he was dead. Implicitly, the power of Claudius' serpentine suggestion to corrupt others is felt. Gertrude has a heart unfortified, a heart that will love one man exclusively one month and another the next. As M. M. Mahood puts it, Gertrude seems, "like Augusta Leigh, to have 'suffered from a sort of moral idiocy since birth'."

Claudius is a worthy opponent for Hamlet, because he has a superior mind and emotional strength marshalled behind his self-serving ends. Hamlet, however, is attempting the impossibly when, in the closet scene, he tries to make Gertrude see the enormity of her moral wrong. The killing of Polonius shocks her into something like contrition for a brief moment:

O Hamlet, speak no more.
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul,
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct.

(III, iv, 89-92)

But when Hamlet continues to "speak daggers to her" (III,
iii, 404), the Ghost's intervention in her behalf paradoxically works against him in that she becomes convinced that he is so mad that his reproaches can be safely forgotten. She cannot see the Ghost, and her utter incapacity to share Hamlet's vision is summed up in her words, "yet all that is I see" (III, iv, 133). Gertrude lacks Hamlet's "prophetic soul" (I, v, 40) which sees embodiments of moral truths--she sees only the literal surface of things. As Mahood explains, "Hamlet accepts this incapacity in words which record the beginning of that wisdom which comes to nearly every one of Shakespeare's tragic heroes. Hamlet is not Shakespeare's weakest hero but his strongest, and never stronger than when he here discovers that average humanity can never share his vision of a naked evil, but needs the shelter of those pretenses which have become so transparent to his own way of seeing. So he bids Gertrude: 'Assume a virtue, if you have it not' (III, iv, 161)." Hamlet must keep silent because there is no one to share his burden. Even Horatio, the man "[t]hat is not passion's slave" (III, ii, 74) is not one who can sympathize with Hamlet's fractured soul; Hamlet must keep silent about his deepest griefs, pouring them out only in soliloquies to an understanding audience.

Most of his encounters, however, center around the
Polonius family. As we have seen in the last chapter, Polonius' oft-quoted advice to his son, Laertes, "This above all, to thine own self be true,/And it must follow, as the night the day,/Thou canst not then be false to any man" (I, iii, 78-80), is based on a total trust in what Augustine would call fantasies created by the spirit in service of the body. Reason, for Polonius, is a means to further the unexamined desires of the body, which he equates with the self, since he never refers these desires to God's truth for examination. His influence can be seen in the advice Laertes gives to his sister, Ophelia:

For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favor,  
Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,  
A violet in the youth of primy nature,  
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,  
The perfume and suppliance of a minute. . . .  
Perhaps he loves you now,  
And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch  
The virtue of his will; but you must fear,  
His greatness weighed, his will is not his own.  
For he himself is subject to his birth. . . .  
The chariest maid is prodigal enough  
If she unmask her beauty to the moon.  
Virtue itself scapes not caluminous strokes.  
(I, iii, 5-9, 14-18, 36-38)

Like Ulysses, Laertes believes that virtue is subject to "caluminating time" (Troilus and Cressida, III, iii, 173), and like Iago, he believes that love is a "lust of the blood and a permission of the will" (Othello, II, iii, 330-331). Laertes' values are all subject to Fortune's Wheel,
an observation that Ophelia does not fail to make:

Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,  
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,  
While, like a puffed and reckless libertine,  
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads  
And reeks not his own rede.  

(I, iii, 47-51)

In other words, how can he talk about virtue to her when he appears not to believe in it as a reality for himself or for Hamlet? Polonius solves this "thorny" (1.48) problem of maintaining the semblance of virtue without its reality "with windlasses and with assays of bias" (II, i, 65)---or, with the manipulative, eavesdropping tactics of Reynaldo who drops "the bait of falsehood" to catch the "carp of truth" (II, i, 63) in Laertes' activities. Like Polonius unleashing Reynaldo on Laertes in Paris or "loos[ing]" (II, ii, 161) Ophelia onto Hamlet so that he and Claudius can eavesdrop on the situation, Claudius also engineers little plots to trap Hamlet, such as sending Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to spy on him. In effect, Polonius and Claudius are using the same eavesdropping techniques as Shakespeare, the playwright: masterminding little "plays" to unmask the true condition of a human soul. The results, however, are completely different. Whereas Shakespeare presents as a given Claudius' facade of kingly virtue and propriety, he gives the judicious observer in the audience a "moral interpreter" on stage in Hamlet,
whose bitter asides and soliloquies penetrate the darkness in Elsinore. Polonius and Claudius, however, create nothing but darkness with their "shows" directed to serve themselves. As the audience eavesdrops on Hamlet's sufferings as he searches for the truth in Denmark in the midst of the conflicting shows designed to deceive and entrap him, both the audience and Hamlet "initiate the moral action of the play" in the words of Robert Ornstein. The parallel between Polonius and Claudius as manipulators of truth and the playwright as unfolder of truth in the action of Providence is the literal action from which the judicious observer must discern the figure of virtue in her unchanging image.

The Ghost, however, has instructed Hamlet that "howsoever thou pursues this act,/Taint not thy mind" (I, v, 84-85). He is to purge Denmark of Claudius' evil without resorting to any unethical practices himself. In this seemingly impossible task, art, as Shakespeare conceives of it, as the revealer of the true conditions of men's souls, is Hamlet's only means of action before Providence deems him ripe for the actual killing of Claudius. As mentioned before, he employs it in the closet scene with Gertrude in the comparison of the two portraits of her husbands and with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the
recorder scene (III, ii, 371-380), but his first reference to the moral implications of art is in the fishmonger scene with Polonius. Polonius asks him what he is reading and Hamlet replies, "Words, words, words." (II, ii, 194). Like the clowns in the gravedigger scene, Hamlet reduces the action to its most literal surface meaning. Polonius, however, wants interpretation, which implies a figurative reference to something other than its "apparent self" in Booth's words. He wants "the matter" (II, ii, 195), and Hamlet gives him what most critics find to be an obscure answer:

Slander, sir; for the satirical rogue says here that old men have gray beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plumtree gum, together with most weak hams. All which, sir, Though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for you yourself, sir, should be old as I am if, like a crab, you could go backward.

(II, ii, 198-206)

Hamlet is reading (and thinking) slanders; his rendering of the "matter" is an exact description of Polonius himself: but Hamlet is not a "satirical rogue" (II, ii, 198). He will not slander Polonius to his face and, moreover, does not believe that this is the purpose of art. It is not "honest" (1.204), since slander is only one point of view. To accuse Polonius of the faults of age to his face is to employ an unfair advantage, for, as Hamlet points out,
Polonius would be as young as he himself is, if he could go backward in time. Time is relative in that each instant embodies many different vantage points which are placed in relative position to each other. The purpose of written "matter" which lasts beyond the instance should be to honestly set down the truth as it is revealed from many different points of view to discerning judgment. As Hamlet tells Polonius later, "Use every man after his desert, and who shall scape whipping? Use them after your own honor and dignity. The less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty." (II, ii, 540-543). A Christian understanding of the relativity of time does not lead to despair or scathing judgment of others, since each instant offers a chance for spiritual maturity in understanding the viewpoint of others. Art should offer the same honesty, not merely judgment—which will eventually be qualified by time itself.

In the play-within-the-play, however, Hamlet has a specifically stated purpose: to "catch the conscience of the King" (II, ii, 617). Here Hamlet wants to eavesdrop on the King's reactions to "something like the murder of [his] father" (II, ii, 607), with Horatio concurring, to see if he can have direct proof of the Ghost's revelation. The Player's Speech leading up to this resolution has been
brilliantly analyzed by many critics, notably Harry Levin, on whom I will rely extensively; however, it is interesting to note that a psychoanalyst, Alexander Grinstein, has validated the approach of the play-within-the-play as a psychoanalytic device to confirm the reality of an event. He quotes Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*: "In other words, if a particular event is inserted into a dream, as a dream by the dream workitself, this implies the most decided confirmation of the reality of the event—the strongest affirmation of it." Viewing *Hamlet* from the standpoint of Claudius, then, the play-within-the-play is a representation of reality as it actually happened in the murder; while the continuation of the play merely represents reality as Claudius wishes it. Moreover, Grinstein adds that the play-within-the-play presages what will happen within reality as the play presents it: a nephew of the King kills the King in the end.

As critics make clear, the Player's Speech, "Aeneas' tale to Dido, and thereabout of it especially when he speaks of Priam's slaughter" (II, ii, 457-458) is a functional part of the play and an organic necessity. As Levin puts it, *Hamlet* rediscovers his own plight in the verbal painting of the Player's Speech: "The narrator, pious Aeneas, recalls him to his filial duty. The King, his father, like
Priam, has been slaughtered. The Queen, his mother, ironically unlike Hecuba, refuses to play the part of the mourning wife. As for the interloping newcomer, . . . Pyrrhus . . . he too is prompted by the unquiet ghost of his father, Achilles." The rhetoric of the speech, however, points us in another direction, as Arthur Johnston explains:

This is the task that Hamlet is called upon to perform. The Player's Speech therefore has the function of directing attention to this fact not in idea but in reality, by representing vividly the classical scene in which the deed is performed. What is significant about the episode chosen to mirror the act that Hamlet is called to do is the reversal of emotional sympathy; the deed is one of terror, its perpetrator inhuman and brutalized. "Roasted" in wrath and "fire" the "hellish Pyrrhus" is damned. The speech is an oblique device for painting the deed to be done and the qualities required to perform it. Our sympathy lies with the victim, not the avenger. 52

In keeping with the rhetorical tone described, Johnston notes that in the soliloquy which follows, Hamlet identifies with the player making the speech and not Pyrrhus. In Priam he sees not his father but a King whose collapse is inseparable from the fall of the state, and in Pyrrhus Hamlet sees not a revenger like himself but a bloody villain like Claudius. 53 Hamlet's reaction to the speech, then is not one of simple identification with a brutal avenger but a complicated assessment of the whole scene, including the role of the Player.
Levin, in fact, sees the soliloquy as a mirror image of the Player’s Speech. Midway, when the Player curses Fortune as a strumpet (II, ii, 504), Hamlet falls "a-cursing like a very drab" (II, ii, 598). Since "the Elizabethan conception of art as the glass of nature was ethical rather than realistic," Hamlet's decision to test Claudius with a play is not illogical:

I have heard that guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaimed their malefactions.

(II, ii, 601-604)

Johnston notes that the reference to guilty creatures at a play is historically accurate: John Upton in 1746 found a reference to the tyrant, Alexander of Pherae, in Plutarch's Life of Pelopides. He was ashamed to be seen weeping for the miseries of Hecuba:

And an other time being in a Theater where the tragedy of Troades of Euripides was played, he went out of the Theater, and sent word to the players notwithstanding, that they shoule go on with their playe, as if had beeene still amonge them: saying that he came not away for any misliking he had of them or of the play, but because he was ashamed his people shoule see him wepe, to see the miseries of Hecuba and Andromacha played, and that they never saw him pity the death of any one man, of so many of his citizens as he had caused to be slaine. The guilty conscience therefore, of this cruel and heathen tyran, did make him tremble. . . .

Hamlet's soliloquy begins with the parallel between the "cue for passion" (II, ii, 571) in art and in life as he
asks why the player can "cleave the general ear with horrid speech" (II, ii, 573), and he can "say nothing" (II, ii, 580):

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, That he should weep for her? What would he do Had he the motive and cue for passion That I have? 

(II, ii, 569-572)

In the words of Levin, his soliloquy departs from and returns to the theatrical sphere. 56

In trying to understand why Shakespeare chooses a play for Hamlet's mode of action, Levin looks back at the Player's Speech, of which the soliloquy is a mirror image, to find the key. He notices that the Player's Speech does not present Hecuba's emotions directly, but appeals to the spectators, in this case, to the gods:

But if the gods themselves did see her then, When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs, The instant burst of clamor that she made (Unless things mortal move them not at all) Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven And passion in the gods. 

(II, ii, 523-529)

As Levin points out, the gods' attitude, if they feel, is one of compassion, a sympathetic participation in the feelings of Hecuba. 57 This conflation of the god-like power of spectators is hinted at again in Hamlet's reaction to Claudius' insinuation that his purposes in sending Hamlet to English are not altogether to Hamlet's benefit:
Hamlet. Good.
King. So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.
Hamlet. I see a cherub that see them. But come
for England!

(IV, iii, 46-49)

The view of the gods, then, is compassionate not in their
extension of sympathy to mortals, but in the fact that
their vantage point enables them to see how everything
fits into a pattern.\textsuperscript{58} This view is further emphasized
in the Player's Speech in that it is Aeneas who is speaking.
He is speaking to Dido, Queen of Carthage, who killed her-
sell in heroic self-sacrifice because Aeneas would not
forsake his divine mission for her love. One of the most
potent myths of the English Middle Ages and Renaissance
was the widespread belief in the lineal descent of King
Arthur from Aeneas through Brutus, eponymous founder of
Britain.\textsuperscript{59} If Englishmen could trace their literary and
spiritual heritage back to the fall of Troy and Aeneas'
divine mission as founder of Rome, then his presence in
Hamlet as an actor as well as a witness in this plan can
be viewed as paralleling Hamlet's. Hamlet's mission is
to eradicate an old order based on falsehood in preparation
for the founding of a new. Dido, the silent spectator,
has a parallel with the audience in the theater, but as
the lover of Aeneas, her role is also paralleled in that
of Ophelia. Unlike Dido, however, Ophelia is not heroic:
her love is sacrificed to her father's false reason rather than to Hamlet. She dies not on a flaming pyre but in a slow drowning symbolic of her fate. "[D]ivided from herself and her fair judgment, /Without the which we are pictures or mere beasts" (IV, v, 85-86), she is a picture of "one incapable of her own distress" (IV, vii, 178).

This identification between Hamlet and Aeneas is made, as Levin points out, by the position both the player of Aeneas and of Hamlet occupy in the play as actors. As Levin explains:

By means of his acting, the Player stimulates passion . . . he functions as a surrogate for the various mythical figures whose representative sorrows he personifies, and bridges the gap between their world and Hamlet's. . . . When Hamlet hits upon his ingenious plot, it projects him in two directions at once: back to the plane of intra-dramatic theatricals and forward to the plane of his audience. A spectator of the players, he has his own spectators, who turn out to be ourselves, to whom he is actually an ACTOR. Here we stand in relation to him—that is, to his interpreter, be he Garrick or Gielgud—where he stands in relation to the player. The original emotion, having been handed down from one level to another of metaphor and myth and impersonation and projection, reaches the basic level of interpretation, whence the expression can make its impression upon our minds. There reality lodges, in the reaction of the AUDIENCE: the empathy that links our outlook with a chain of being which sooner or later extends all the way from the actors to the gods.60

Like Berowne in Love's Labor's Lost who watches his friends enter with their love poems, every audience sits "like a demi-god . . . in the sky" (Love's Labor's Lost, IV, iii,
79) to witness the actions of others and to see how they fit into a plan; moreover, the empathetic response of the spectators is probably the closest link to the empathy of the gods that we mortals will ever feel. As Levin puts it:

[Shakespeare's] willingness to share [Hecuba's] unhappiness, across so many removes, and even to question the ways of providence as manifested toward her, finds its polar opposite in the fable of La Fontaine (x, 13), where the object-lesson is viewed in relatively comfortable detachment:

Quiconque, en pareil cas, se croit hai des cieux Qu'il considere Hécube; il rendra grâce aux dieux.

... For Shakespeare whose world was a stage and whose theatre was the Globe, life itself could be "a poor player," the best of actors could be "but shadows," and Hamlet's ambition could be "the shadow of a dream." Of the roles that the playwright may have played himself, we hear of one in particular, the ghost in Hamlet; but it is traditional for the actor who plays that role to double as the First Player. May we not suppose, without straining conjecture very far that it was Shakespeare who first delivered the Player's Speech; and that he is speaking expressly, through its rhetorical configurations, of how poetry accomplishes its effects? 61

The power of drama, then, to pierce the deep recesses of a guilty soul will be the "cunning of the scene" (II, ii, 602) which Hamlet exploits in the play-within-the-play.

That the King is susceptible to this kind of moral exposure is implied in his own aside to the audience before the play-within-the-play takes place. Polonius says, "'Tis too much proved, that with devotions visage and pious action we do sugar o'er/The devil himself." (III, i, 47-49).
The King is impelled to reveal his guilty conscience to the audience:

0, 'tis too true.
How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!
The Harlot's cheek, beautied with plast'ring art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word.
O heavy burden!

(III, i, 49-55)

The same metaphor, of cosmetic art which covers ugly sin beneath, is used in the nunnery scene, immediately following, when Hamlet berates Ophelia for placing devotion to her father and his false values above belief in the virtue of Hamlet's love:

I have heard of your paintings, well enough.
God hath given you one face, and you make for yourselves another. You jig and amble, and you lisp; you nickname God's creatures and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to. I'll no more on't; it hath make me mad.

(III, i, 144-149)

His sexual excitement continues into the next scene where the play-within-the-play is staged. He is still mad at Ophelia for refusing his love letters and seems to intuit that she has allowed herself to be used as bait to entrap him. He continues to speak "daggers" (III, iii, 404) to her and to Claudius while the play is going on, daggers which drive the point home: "So you mistake your husbands. --Begin murderer." (III, ii, 258-259).

The metaphor of bait to catch the "carp of truth"
(II, i, 63) was first introduced by Polonius in his instructions to Reynaldo, but it continues in the title of the play-within-the-play, The Mousetrap. According to John Doebler, the "cross of the Lord was the devil's mousetrap (Muscipula diaboli); the bait by which he was caught was the Lord's death."62 In a title which is neither farcical nor tautological, the trap set by Hamlet for Claudius, the "devil", has a host of conventional associations as Doebler explains:

By the time Shakespeare's audience reaches the play within the play, it has already come to see Claudius as a gluttonous, erotic devil who infects the whole body politic, the kingdom of mankind, with poison. When the trap is set, the devil snaps at the bait; the mouse is caught but he is caught by one who must himself die to defeat him fully. Hamlet's death, however, unlike those of Othello or Macbeth, results in tragic resurrection, in the sense that he has died while saving the kingdom for mankind.63 Moreover, there is a similar moment of double vision in the play-within-the-play for Claudius. As Grinstein has made clear, Claudius sees simultaneously the shadow of his crime and a threat to his life when Hamlet tells Lucianus, the nephew to the king, to "Begin murderer." (III, ii, 259), and Lucianus "poisons him i' the garden for his estate . . . [and] gets the love of Gonzago's wife." (III, ii, 267-270). This is the quintessential image of one of the play's major themes: the relation between heavenly justice and earthly rationalization. At the same time that Claudius sees the image of
his crime, he also sees the foreshadowing of his death.

This point is made clearer by comparing the similarity of the Player King's logic and that of Claudius. The Player King tells the Player Queen who, in a comment on Gertrude's behavior, has sworn eternal love to her first husband:

I do believe you think what now you speak,  
But what we do determine oft we break.  
Purpose is but the slave to memory,  
Of violent birth, but poor validity. . . .  
For 'tis a question left us yet to prove,  
Whether love lead fortune, or else fortune love.  
The great man down, you mark his favorite flies;  
The poor advanced makes friends of enemies;  
And hitherto doth love on fortune tend. . . .  
Our wills and fates do so contrary run  
That our devices still are overthrown;  
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.  
(III, ii, 192-195, 208-212, 217-219)

The Player King, like Ulysses, Laertes and Polonius, believes in Fortune's dominance in the affairs of men. All is random, chaotic and inexplicable because virtue is undermined by time. Hamlet, however, remaining steadfast in virtue, "delve[s] one yard below their mines" to "blow them at the moon" (III, iv, 209-210). Claudius' mines are not deep enough, as he believes in virtue, but like Faustus, will not repent of his crimes because he loves Fortune's effects more than he loves virtue:

"Forgive me my foul murder"?
That cannot be, since I am still possessed
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
May one be pardoned and retain th' offense?
In the corrupted currents of this world
Offense's gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above.
There is no shuffling; there the action lies
In his true nature, and we ourselves compelled,
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
To give in evidence.

(III, ii, 52-64)

Claudius does not have to wait until he gets to heaven to
give evidence of his "shuffling" (1.61); he equivocates
beautifully to Laertes in the next act to get him to
participate in a plot to kill Hamlet:

But that I know love is begun by time,
And that I see, in passages of proof,
Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.
There lives within the very flame of love
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it,
And nothing is at a lie goodness still,
For goodness, growing to a plurisy,
Dies in his own too-much. That we would do
We should do when we would, for this "would" changes,
And hath abatements and delays as many
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents,
And then this "should" is like a spendthrift sigh,
That hurts by easing. But to the quick of th' ulcer--
Hamlet comes back; what would you undertake
To show yourself in deed your father's son
More than in words?

(IV, vii, 111-126)

Little does he know that his "evidence" (III, iii, 64) of
repentance in the previous act saved his life: Hamlet
passed up a chance to kill him because he appeared to be
praying in a church. Hamlet is no Pyrrhus who killed Priam
on the Altar of Apollo, nor is he like Laertes, who responds
to Claudius' challenge to avenge his father by daring to
cut Hamlet's throat "i' th' church!" (IV, vii, 127). When Claudius does die, he is "hoist with his own petar" (III, iv, 208)--killed as a result of his own plot against Hamlet's life. A man who reasons by the vanities of Fortune rather than by God's eternal truth and dies for it, in Hamlet's words, "did make love to this employment" (V, ii, 57). Like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, his "defeat/Does by [his] own insinuation grow." (V, ii, 58-59).

Critics have almost unanimously agreed that Hamlet returns from his journey a changed man, although they differ on the reasons for the change. J. Gold, in his analysis of "Hamlet's Sea-Change", gives a good account of how Hamlet has changed:

Here is a calm, serene, philosophical Hamlet, who speaks no longer in soliloquies, who observes and comments with detached candor. Indeed the whole frantic tone of the early acts has disappeared, and indeed there is a sense of detachment that the reader or audience derives from Hamlet, the kind of providential expectation that characterizes the last stages of Greek tragedy or the morality play.

Indeed Hamlet's first words in Act V reflect his new-found sense of propriety in the congruence of words and actions: "Has this fellow no feeling of his business? 'A sings in gravemaking." (V, i, 66-67). The games he used to play with Polonius in II, ii, 193-206 or in III, ii, 384-390 are reversed in the banter that he has with the clowns who are digging Ophelia's grave. Now they take the surface
meaning of the words, leaving Hamlet to welter around in
the obfuscation of meaning that results from literal
interpretation. Hamlet retorts: "Thou dost lie i't, to
be in't and say it is thine. 'Tis for the dead, not for
the quick; therefor thou liest." (V, i, 127-129). Hamlet
knows the clown's game, "How absolute the knave is! We
must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us."(V,
i, 139-140).

In the same scene, there is a popular stage tradition
which would have Hamlet leap into the grave with Laertes
when he discovers that it is Ophelia's grave that he has
been quibbling over. Irving Ribner and Edward Hubler,
however, both agree that there is "no warrant for this either
in the good quarto or the Folio texts, the notion being
based on a stage direction (260 s.d.) in the corrupt first
quarto which Nicholas Rowe took over and which most sub-
sequent editors have followed."66 Hamlet does not abandon
himself to the blind passion which Laertes' words provoke.67
Ribner argues that his speech following the supposed stage
direction shows Laertes not Hamlet to be the aggressor:

Thou pray'st not well.
I prithee take thy fingers from my throat,
For, though I am not splenitive and rash,
Yet have I in me something dangerous,
Which let thy wisdom fear. Hold off thy hand.
(V, i, 261-265)

Perhaps, as Hubler and Ribner suggest, it is Laertes who
leaps out of the grave to attack Hamlet. Hamlet has
learned to see such passion as he had once exhibited as
merely futile and meaningless rant.68

Dost thou come here to whine?
To outface me with leaping in her grave?
Be buried quick with her, and so will I.
And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us till our ground,
Singeing his pate across the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou'lt mouth,
I'll rant as well as thou.

(V, i, 279-286)

By the fifth act, Hamlet has learned to master his passion
in the face of evil. Laertes, in contrast, cannot and
falls into the "foul practice" (V, ii, 318) of Claudius' plot.

Cleansed of his passion and removed from a desperate
involvement in the things of this world, Hamlet can now
act in worldly affairs like "an agent of a larger order."69
He can judge Claudius' evil in Gold's words "with a much
more telling quiet: a resolve that speaks of action
infinitely more than the earlier ravings,"70 or the self-
berating soliloquies to the audience. But how did Hamlet
get to this point? Gold finds an answer in Hamlet's letters
from sea to Horatio and to Claudius. He tells the King that
he is "naked" and "alone" (IV, vii, 51, 52), and to Horatio,
he explains that he has set a new course "[e]re we were two
days old at sea." (IV, vi, 15-16). Clearly, Gold says,
his return is intended as a rebirth. He was a prisoner in
Denmark, but now he is a voluntary prisoner of pirates,
people cut off from the past. (p. 54). Moreover, his use of
the word "grapple" (IV, vi, 19) to describe his hold on
the pirate ship echoes Polonius' use of the same word
when he tells Laertes in listening to his precepts to
"[g]rapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel" (I, iii,
63). Hamlet has finally wiped away "[a]ll saws of books,
all forms, all pressures past/That youth and observation
copied there" (I, v, 99-100) to carry out the Ghost's
command to revenge. As Gold explains:

The world of Denmark, of politics, of intrigue,
and of law is a world forsaken by Hamlet when
he leaps from one ship to the next. He alone
makes the shift while "th' yet unknowing world"
goes on its way. . . . For the new Hamlet the
affairs of state, of this world, are so miserable
that he can request Horatio not to die by saying,
"absent thee from felicity awhile." Hamlet's
final state of mind is not merely one of despair
but one which comprehends that from some larger
view, which he has now attained, nothing is
meaningless: not even death, which he finally
welcomes and accepts. . . . (p. 55)

When reason finally conquers passion enough to discern the
action of Providence beneath the apparently fortuitous
events of his life, the result is a vision of Augustine's
country of the blessed, radiant and harmonious within the
spirit. As Hamlet tells Horatio:

Rashly
(And praised be rashness for it) let us know,
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well
When our deep plots do pall, and that should learn us
There's a divinity thatshapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

(V, ii, 6-11)

He has learned to discover the action of Providence in the
most insignificant of actions. Horatio wonders how he
sealed the commission to send Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
to death instead of himself, and Hamlet replies: "Why,
even in that was heaven ordinant./I had my father's signet
in my purse. . . ." (V, ii, 48-49). Because he understands
and accepts his role in the larger design, he can view
Laertes' predicament with compassion: "For by the image of
my cause I see/The portraiture of his." (V, ii, 77-78). He
has learned that "to know a man well were to know himself"
(V, ii, 140, 141) in the old Socratic precept.

According to D. W. Robertson, a familiar Augustinian
figure for the world is the sea. On his voyage to
England, Hamlet has been spiritually reborn: in a figure
which sums up the sailing metaphors so prevalent in the
rest of the play, Hamlet "knows [his] course." (II, i, 65).
Polonius may talk of "windlasses" (II, i, 65) and of "reach"
(II, i, 64), and the King may plot by "drift of conference"
(III, i, ) to avoid the "wind of blame" (IV, vii, 66)
yet "but yaw neither in respect of his quick sail" (V, ii,
115-116) toward ignominious death. Polonius characterizes
"the holy vows of heaven" (I, iii, 114) in his advice to Ophelia as "springes to catch woodcocks. I do know, / When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul / Lends the tongue vows" (I, iii, 115-117) yet, one by one Polonius, Laertes and finally Claudius fall "as a woodcock to mine own springe . . . justly killed with mine own treachery." (V, ii, 307-308). Like unskillful sailors on the sea, they have "come tardy off" (III, ii, 26) for failing to plot their courses by heaven.

In the final duel with Laertes, the King offers "an union" (V, ii, 273) or a pearl of "large size, good quality and great value, especially one which is supposed to occur singly" (OED) to Hamlet if he gets the first or second hit. Although Hamlet has felt a "gaingiving" (V, ii, 216-217) about his heart before the match, he knows that "[t]here is special providence in the fall of a sparrow" (V, ii, 220-221), and he is ready to accept God's will, even if it means death. But his enemies too are ready, Laertes with his venomed foil and Claudius with his union pearl full of poison. As M. M. Mahood explains, only when his own minutes are numbered, does Hamlet assume his destined role as avenger, and his consent to destiny is sealed in one of Shakespeare's most meaningful puns:72

Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damned Dane
Drink off this potion. Is thy union here?
Follow my mother. (V, ii, 326-328)

Like the "base Judean, [who] threw a pearl away/Richer than all his tribe" (Othello, V, ii, 343-345) Claudius is basically an infidel: he drinks death from the poison of his own union pearl. Hamlet, on the other hand, through his faith in Providence, has "proved most royal" (V, ii, 399) and dies a soldier's death. He dies between Fortinbras, whose name means "strong arm" and Horatio, whose name is related to the Latin word oratio, or speech. 73 In their names, these two characters suggest the two poles of the play, speech and action which achieve their union in Hamlet. But speech and action by themselves have proved fruitless in overcoming Claudius' poison during the course of the play: it is in their union, in Hamlet's reason which refers all words and actions to the eternal truth of God, where lies the true pearl of the play, "richer than all his tribe" (Othello, V, ii, 345).
Footnotes


3 Ibid., p. 13.

4 Ibid., p. 46.


7 McElroy, p. 88.


11 Robertson, p. 60.
12 Ibid.

13 Alanus de Insulis, Anticlaudianus, quoted by Robertson, p. 60.


18 Ribner, p. 96.


20 Robertson, p. 136.

21 Ibid.

22 Booth, pp. 137-176.


26 Saint Augustine, De libro arbitrio, quoted by Robertson, p. 66.

27 Robertson, p. 67.

28 Ibid., p. 68-69.

29 Ibid., pp. 69-70.

30 John the Scot, De divisione naturae, quoted by Robertson, pp. 70-71.

31 Robertson, p. 71.

32 Ibid., p. 72.

33 Ibid., p. 73.


36 John Webster, Academiarum examen, quoted by Fish, p. 115.

37 Booth, pp. 148-149.

38 Hubler's note in Hamlet, p. 42.


41 Ribner, Patterns, p. 82.

42 Ibid., p. 66.


44 Ibid., pp. 125-126.


46 Ibid.

47 Weidhorn, pp. 52-53.


49 Ibid., p. 152.

50 Ibid., pp. 151-152.


53 Ibid., p. 29.

54 Levin, p. 289.


56 Levin, p. 290.
57 Ibid., pp. 290-291.

58 Ibid., p. 292.


60 Levin, pp. 293, 294-295.

61 Ibid., pp. 295, 296.


63 Ibid., p. 168.


65 Ibid., p. 53.

66 Ribner, Patterns, p. 86.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Gold, p. 55.

70 Ibid.

71 Robertson, pp. 305-306.

72 Mahood, p. 129.

73 Holland, p. 164.
Chapter IV: The Tempest:

"Such stuff as dreams are made on"

And Jesus was a sailor
When he walked upon the water
And he spent a long time watching
From his lonely wooden tower,
And when he knew for certain
Only drowning men could see him
He said, "All men will be sailors then
Until the sea shall free them."

Leonard Cohen, "Suzanne"

As we have seen from the last chapter, sailing metaphors and sea changes are not new themes to Shakespeare.

Nor, as Robert Speaight points out, are tempests:

The Shakespearian tempest, as distinct from the play which bears that title, well merits the study that has been given it. . . .
Even in the early comedies it was already playing its part. It shipwrecked Viola and Sebastian on the coast of Illyria; it sent (according to the first report) Antonio's argosies to the bottom of the sea. It performed an overture to the death of Julius Caesar, and an accompaniment to the murder of Duncan. As Shakespeare's work gathers to its close, it contributes very importantly to the tense stillness, the painfully conquered quiet of the final plays. In Twelfth Night and The Merchant of Venice, it had done no more than help the action forward, and in Julius Caesar and Macbeth it had done no more than vividly illustrate it. Only in King Lear does Shakespeare begin to use the storm as an instrument of moral purpose. In The Winter's Tale it was thanks to the tempest that Perdita was abandoned so fortunately, on the sea-shore, and in Pericles, the central character, who, like Miranda, is the
very personification of innocence, bears the name Marina. She, too, has been rescued from the sea after a desperate voyage. She, too, having been taken for lost, is found. Thus the symbolism of the storm is linked to the symbolism of the sea. The two are placed at the service of an overmastering idea—the idea of loss and recovery.

The tempest in the last plays functions as an agent of Providence, bringing about a moral purpose at first unforeseen. As we shall see in *The Tempest*, the original storm into which Prospero is cast is re-enacted by Prospero himself in the first scene as a prelude to the comic action of the play, the reintegration of society through love, expressed in the play through the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda and through Prospero's forgiving of his enemies. As Sigurd Burkhardt sees this comic action, "In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare as Prospero shows how all the chaos and turbulence, the separation and loss and grief and madness, were but means to the one true end: the joining of two young people who would, except for the tempest, have remained apart."² Society's reintegration through the marriage of Miranda to the future King of Naples saves the throne of Milan for Prospero and the sovereignty of Milan and Naples from Antonio's tyranny and usurpation. That the rule of reason in the commonwealth and the king's body are analogous can be seen in the recurring motif of the tempest. A tempest of hatred
and rebellion is unleashed in the commonwealth of Milan when, as King, Prospero neglected his duties and "grew stranger" (I, ii, 76) to the state, "being transported and rapt" (I, ii, 76-77) in the solitary pleasure of secret study of the liberal arts. The storm unleashed in the state parallels the storm unleashed in Prospero's soul as he was cast adrift onto the sea:

To cry to th' sea that roared to us; to sigh
To the winds, whose pity, sighing back again
Did us but loving wrong.

(I, ii, 149-151)

The sea, which was the instrument of crime, providentially becomes the instrument of redemption as Prospero learns the governance of the passions in his soul through the actual practical application of the knowledge gained through study of his liberal "arts". Instead of merely studying, he is forced to govern himself and his island kingdom through the actual practice of virtue. The analogy with a sailor learning to steer his tossing boat is a familiar metaphor in medieval literature, for example in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde:

Owt of thise blake wawes, for to saylle,
O wynd, o wynd, the weder gynneth clere;
For in this see the boat hath swych travaylle,
Of my connyng, that unneth I it steere,
This see clepe I the tempestous mater
Of disespeir that Troilus was inne

(Troilus and Criseyde, II, 1-6)
Since sailing in a tempestuous sea is roughly analogous to the exercise of Christian virtue in the conflicting winds and currents of life, Prospero's "sea sorrow" (I, ii, 170) is actually a providential means to put into practice his "art" for the salvation of himself and his wronged society. The Tempest is, I believe, the clearest statement that Shakespeare has left us of his core of belief in the Christian-Platonic tradition.

In Book IV of The Republic, Plato summarizes: "And so after a stormy passage, we have reached the land. We are fairly agreed that the same three elements exist alike in the state and in the individual soul." (441 c, Cornford translation). The three elements of the individual soul are appetite, spirit, and reason, and on the island, they are embodied in Caliban, Ariel, and Prospero, respectively. As David William explains, "I find it difficult to think of [Ariel and Caliban] apart from Prospero, and believe that they only make full imaginative sense if apprehended as externalized aspects of Prospero--the one of his spiritual, the other of his sensual appentencies." Prospero, as reason, stage manages Ariel and Caliban in a play which decides not only his destiny, but the destinies of all who arrive on the island. In the words of Barbara Mowat, the action of the
play is made to seem a result of Prospero's mind. As the embodiment of reason, he alone appears to know what is happening. Unlike other "manipulating" characters in Shakespeare's plays, such as Rosalind, Hamlet, Richard III, Edmund, or Iago, Prospero seems larger than the action, larger than the audience. In plays where other manipulators appear, the spectator is placed in a position of superior awareness--audience as eavesdropper has a greater vantage. But in The Tempest, the vantage of the audience is at the mercy of Prospero:

... like Miranda, we must be told what is happening, and our innocent bewilderment is often much like hers. Prospero realizes that his hour has come to act, and he seems to know exactly what he intends to do; but we must simply wait and watch as his plot unfolds before us. Occasionally he lets us overhear his instructions to Ariel; more often, he tells Ariel "in his ear" what he must now perform, and we are as surprised as is Miranda when Ferdinand is led dazedly onstage, as startled as is Alonso when a banquet and Harpy appear. ... This manipulative function of Prospero (his ability to interrupt any situation at will, to bring the dramatis personae under his absolute power--to wake them, put them to sleep, paralyze their arms or brains, lead them about the island as he pleases, to create visions, storms at a thought) and, more important, his second function as author surrogate--that of holding in his own mind the time schedule of the action so that an event which comes suddenly upon us is, for him, "perform'd exact", as he commanded "to th' syllable"--prevents our building up any larger expectations and gives to The Tempest a strangely nondramatic quality.9

Audience as eavesdropper is, by the very structure of the
play, linked to the perspective of Prospero, the embodiment of reason in the play, and, for a time, of Providence as well. Unlike the judicious observer in *Hamlet*, we do not have to follow Hamlet's tortuous decisions through a maze of conflicting currents to a final submission to the directions of Providence operating in his life. At the beginning of *The Tempest*, "the hour's now come" (I, ii, 37), and, like Miranda, we watch with wonder as the comic resolution prepared beforehand in Prospero's mind unfolds. As Harriet Hawkins has noted, more than any other play, except perhaps *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we view the action from the perspective of a playwright--whether Prospero or Shakespeare--and like Shakespeare, Prospero if fascinated with the nature of dramatic illusion itself. It is no accident that in a play with such a "strangely nondramatic quality", the play-within-a-play is a masque. But, like the other plays-within-a-play in *Love's Labor's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Hamlet*, the masque in *The Tempest* holds a mirror up to nature exposing a guilty creature sitting at a play: in this case, however, it is Prospero, the playwright himself, who like the lords and ladies at the Show of the Nine Worthies in *Love's Labor's Lost*, nearly forgets the action of his own play here for the pleasure of being enraptured by his
own created illusion.

The idea that theatrical illusion and spectacle in *The Tempest* are potential dangers luring the spectator away from his proper focus on the exercise of virtue in this world is a theme in the play which I believe has been misunderstood by most critics. Barbara Mowat has noticed that the spectacles such as the banquet presented to Alonso and the rest of the court party "alter the quality of our awareness [and] make us conscious of the fictive nature of the entire play."\(^{11}\) The romances are different from the early plays in which the "distortions away from reality are consistent so that the microcosm created allows of a coherent reading." In the plays of the late 1590's and early 1600's, distortions are essentially eliminated. But in the late plays, "distortions force us to reexamine any reading which equates the plays with the real world. The representational moments in the Romances seem to us very 'real' indeed; then, suddenly, with the intrusions of presentational conventions, of references to the play world, or of spectacle, we are forced out of these 'real' worlds into theatrical worlds of artificial entrances and exits, fiction, or spectacular contrivance, and the plays become 'living drolleries'."\(^{12}\)

It is Sebastian, however, an altogether unreliable witness,
who finds the banquet presented to the court party, a "living drollery" (III, iii, 21), and Mowat's view leaves out, I believe, the ethical purpose of Prospero in marshalling "several strange Shapes" (III, iii, s.d.) to present a banquet later retrieved by Ariel disguised as a Harpy. As Frank Kermode explains, "Banquets represent the voluptuous attractions of sense which . . . the resolved soul must resist."13 As the embodiment of reason, Prospero is continually employed through the play in summoning Ariel to create his shows and in disciplining Caliban to keep from destroying them. The masque of Ceres is introduced for what it is, "some vanity of mine art" (IV, i, 41). And it is his enraptured state in the vanity of illusion that almost allows the conspiracy of Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo to succeed. As Herbert Coursens, Jr., notes, this negligence is almost a recapitulation of his original crime, being so "rapt in secret studies" (I, ii, 77) that he forgot his "state".14 The point is, however, that Prospero does not forget the conspiracy of Caliban entirely, and the old sin is not re-committed.

Harry Berger also believes that Prospero's "ingenuous pleasure" and delight in art "tends to make him sacrifice plot to spectacle and drama to theater"15—-not only in the masque of Ceres but throughout the whole play. Prospero
shares with Ariel a "histrionic and a rhetorical bent which he delights to indulge" (p. 256), but Berger believes this "self-delighting recreative impulse" continually "distracts him from his ethical purpose" (p. 257). In short, Prospero's art is not directed toward ethical ends at all: his stay on the island is "twelve years of magic for magic's sake" (p. 258). Rejecting the "sentimental interpretation which centers merely on the fact of Prospero's renunciation and return" (p. 276), Berger sees a Prospero who "displays a limited knowledge of human nature" (p. 275):

He combines typical motives of the magician and the actor: Like the first, he prefers the security of the one-way window relationship in which he may observe without being observed, and may work on others from a distance. Like the second his reticence to expose himself in spontaneous or unguarded dealings blends with a love of the limelight, a delight in shows and performances, and a desire to impress others. Thus he hides either behind a cloak of invisibility, or behind a role, a performance, a relationship which has been prepared beforehand. He is unguarded only when his attention is reflexively fixed on some aspect of his art (p. 275).

At the risk of sounding sentimental, I submit again that the basic action of The Tempest is comic: the reintegration of society through marriage, and that all of Prospero's actions aim toward the achievement of that goal through the exercise of Christian virtue. Prospero seems strained
and guarded because, as Joseph Summers puts it, he betrays
the "anxieties of a human being who is nervously attempting
a providential role for a few, decisive hours. . . . a good
deal of Prospero's temper is related directly to the special
circumstances of this comedy, in which the leading role is
given to a father instead of to the lovers."16 Rather than
displaying a limited knowledge of human nature, Prospero
knows human beings only too well. He understands their
susceptibility to shows and illusion and uses his hard-won
knowledge of the art of governing human passions and
fantasies to entice Ariel to create shows which will
teach others the same need for repressing, but not stifling
the rebellious Caliban within. As we shall see, his only
show which, in Berger's words, smacks of "convenient forget-
fulness and the sweet air of fantasy rearranging history,
fact, and life, to accord with one's wish" (p. 265) is the
masque, the play-within-the-play, which, as we have seen,
Prospero recognizes as an enactment of his "present fancies"
(IV, i, 122). Prospero is not self-deluded or acting the
part of a magician-voyeur indulging in spectacle: he is
redeeming a past error through the conscious exercise of
Christian virtue in putting on his shows. A "most
auspicious star" (I, ii, 182) has granted him a few hours
in which his enemies were "brought to this shore" (I, ii,
180), and his actions, if virtuous, can redeem a society once broken by his failure to govern properly. "Farewell, brother!" "We split, we split, we split" (I, ii, 62) were the last words of the passengers in the boat as she seemed to sink in the tempest of the first scene: Prospero has a few hours in which the split between man and brother, man and the state, man and himself, can be healed. Prospero's healing art is not self-indulgent magic tricks but dramatic illusion employed for ethical ends.

The complex uses to which Shakespeare puts dramatic illusion can be grasped from a close look at the opening scene. As Leo Marx makes clear, the contrast between this scene and the rest of the play is underscored by the absence of Prospero. This is the only time when we are unaware of the controlling power of his art. But as soon as the scene is over, we learn of his art—we learn, in fact, that what we thought was "real" was in fact "illusion."

As D. J. James explains, we are like Miranda in our wonder:

What Miranda believed she had seen was hallucination only: the vessel she had seen sink was in fact safe in harbour. The natural storm and the magical, which Miranda (and we in the first scene) thought we saw, and which Prospero in fact contrived, were quite different affairs; and it seems clear that this disparity, or contradiction, was part of Shakespeare's intention in the play.

Like the lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we wake from
a nightmare of fantasy and shipwreck to find a waking dream
of a higher reality than we thought we knew; and like the
audience of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, who has seen both
the lovers' fantasies and their embodiment in the fairies,
we in the audience of *The Tempest* awaken to the power of
the playwright in creating deliberate fantasy in the theater.
The illusion which Miranda sees is one remove from the
one we see, as we watch her continuing with her role in
the play. Prospero is directing the action but behind him
is Shakespeare, and audience as eavesdropper is treated to
a double vision of planes of perspective upon which dramatic
illusion can operate. The fictive nature of the spectacle
Prospero creates makes us aware, as Barbara Mowat has
explained, of the fictive nature of the play itself, forcing
the audience to a concrete three-dimensional perspective
of the play grounded in "this world".

What is more, the dramatic structure of *The Tempest*
sets this opening scene off from the rest of the play.
Critics have frequently noted how close Shakespeare comes
to observing the classical unities of time and space—how,
except for the storm scene, all the action takes place on
the island, and how, except for the storm scene, everything
takes place in four hours. Leo Marx notes how Shakespeare
isolates and thereby accentuates the force of the storm
It lends its name to the entire action. How much simpler the stagecraft would have been had the play begun with a scene on the beach after the wreck (the facts about the storm might easily have been conveyed by dialogue), but how much imaginative force would have been lost! To carry its full dramatic weight the storm must be dramatized. In that way Shakespeare projects an image of menacing nature, and of the turmoil that Prospero had survived, into dramatic time. The opening scene represents the furies, within and without the self, that civilized man must endure to gain a new life.  

In imaginatively projecting a present tempest backward and forward in time, Shakespeare, according to Ernest Gohn, is conceiving of the episodes of the play as "in a present which is a crucial nexus uniting the past to the future: the past is relevant only as it affects the present, the future only as it grows out of the present." The past is that which occurred twelve years ago in Milan, and the future is that which will take place after the characters leave the island. Shakespeare no sooner finishes his opening shipwreck scene than he begins to emphasize the crucial quality of the present, both to Miranda and to Ariel. Prospero's storm is merely the first phase of a larger sense of the moment which he "now" courts, a sense which includes everything in the play. As Gohn puts it:

Throughout we see events taking place in a present which is a turning point for most of the characters of the play. . . . in the long protasis of the first
act, "now" can have two different senses for Miranda and for Prospero. . . . To Prospero, "now" is something larger; it includes all the events of the play, which is nothing but a crisis. . . . In the first act Prospero had told Miranda that he must "now" court the influence of an auspicious star. As we witness Prospero manipulate events throughout the play, we realize--especially when his enemies are no more in his power at the end of the fourth act than they were in the opening shipwreck--that the courting includes all the events of the play. All the events as they relate to Prospero's project, take place "now." The audience, which shares Prospero's viewpoint, also perceives the crisis of the moment which includes the lesser crises of the play--all takes place in this larger "now." (pp. 124-125).

Barbara Mowat makes an argument that supports Gohn's view that Prospero's "now" includes the entire play. She argues that Prospero as narrator contributes to the non-dramatic quality of the play with his long expositions and narratives. To make the narrative experience tension-filled for the audience, Shakespeare employs a device mentioned by Aristotle in The Poetics: "to the narrator, just because he is a narrator, all events lie open and immediately accessible: they are all equally present at the time they are related. If in telling a story I jump back ten years, the time jumps with me; the event I am now narrating is just as much present to me and my auditors as the other one . . . was a moment ago."22 Prospero's long exposition to Miranda in Act I, scene ii to teach her who she is and
"of whence I am" (I, ii, 19) makes past events alive in the present moment. As James E. Robinson explains, "Prospero's exposition unfolds the life of one generation to another and the course of years passes by in minutes. And this is precisely the point about the play's dramatic time ... exposition of the past incorporated into the crisis of the present." Mowat notes that in later scenes, Prospero's narrative explanations and descriptions are more important than the actions they describe. His famous tirade on the fading of the masque of Ceres and his description of the awakening of the court party from their sleep of madness are tremendously powerful as poetry:

The charm dissolves apace;
And as the morning steals upon the night,
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
Their clearer reason.

(V, i, 64-68)

As Mowat describes them, these narrative commentaries make the accompanying stage actions seem merely illustrative gestures--ballet movements--to illustrate the poetry (p. 88). Gohn footnotes that his argument (and by implication, Mowat's) gives support to those critics who see in Prospero a figure of Providence. As we have seen in the introduction, Augustine introduced into Christian thought the idea that God's present is our eternity. What God perceives
in a simultaneous whole we perceive as a sequence of present moments:

... the present of things past is memory, the present of things present is sight, the present of things future is expectation. ... a long time is long only from the multitude of movements that pass away in succession, because they cannot co-exist: that in eternity nothing passes but all is present. ... all the past is thrust out by the future, and all the future follows upon the past, and past and future alike are wholly created and upheld in their passage by that which is always present.26

In The Tempest the events which take place "now" for Alonso, Ferdinand, Miranda and the others of the court party are all part of a larger whole predetermined by Prospero. This effect is further enhanced by the stage directions, remarkably complete in The Tempest, in which Prospero enters "behind, unseen" (III, i) or "on top (invisible)" (III, iii). When Prospero reveals his identity to the court party after Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio have been "all knit up" (III, iii, 89) in fits of distraction, he does not tell them, although they ask, how he came to be lord of the island:

For 'tis a chronicle of day by day,  
Not a relation for a breakfast, nor  
Befitting this first meeting.  

(V, i, 163-165)

As Gohn makes clear, the play that Shakespeare has usually written is a "chronicle of day by day" (I.163): a sequence of events in which one action sets off another in a causal
chain. But *The Tempest* is not such a play. With Prospero as a figure for Providence overseeing the pattern of events, the actions in the play operate vertically, not chronologically or causally, seeking interpretation from Prospero's higher understanding. In terms of Erich Auerbach's view of figural time discussed in the introduction, the horizontal plot line, as a causal chain of occurrences, is dissolved by Prospero's "art". The present action for the characters in the play seeks interpretation for the past and future from the omnipresent "now" of Prospero's reason. As Gohn summarizes, Shakespeare in *The Tempest* is not interested in the sequence of day by day but in the present moment which can redeem the mistakes of the past for a reintegration of society in the future:

> If this play is, like the other romances, about reconciliation, it is about reconciliation now, within the few hours which Prospero must seize. Unlike Leontes, Prospero does not need time to repent. Rather, he needs to grasp the moment in which he can offer mercy, can stay his fury, can affect the awakening of Alonso's conscience, can restore his daughter to her proper place among mankind. To tell this story, incorporating such themes, Shakespeare used the form most likely to create this sense of urgency of the moment. He wrote a unified play. (p. 125).

If at the end of *The Tempest*, Prospero is no longer an all-powerful magician controlling everyone's perspective, but a mere mortal dependent upon the applause of the audience
for a safe journey home, it is because his time is past: he has put into practice his knowledge that only the exercise of virtue can redeem the past, and now his play is over.

However, Prospero has divested himself of his magic robe once before. In scene ii of Act I, Prospero becomes a mere mortal dependent upon the sympathy of Miranda as he tells the story of how they came to the island. As Joseph Summers makes clear, Prospero has reason to be nervous: he made Lear's mistake of assuming that one can retain the title and power of a ruler while neglecting the responsibilities. The importance of the theme of governance is underscored in the first scene. The Boatswain orders Antonio and Alonso along with the others in the court party to go below because, "[y]ou mar our labor... you do assist the storm." (I, i, 13-14). Gonzalo tells him to be patient, and the Boatswain retorts: "Hence! What cares these roarers for the name of king?" (I, i, 16-17). Gonzalo again asks him to "remember whom thou hast aboard." (I, i, 19-20). The Boatswain again makes the point that a king has very little authority in a ship about to be dashed to pieces by a tempest. He replies to Gonzalo:

You are a councilor; if you can command these elements to silence and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more. Use your authority. If you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make yourself
ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap. Cheerly, good hearts! Out of our way, I say.

(I, i, 21-28)

The Boatswain, in overruling the king's councilor to do the job for which he was trained, is upholding the same principle of justice in the commonwealth that Socrates defends so brilliantly in Book IV of The Republic:

But when, I fancy, one who is by nature an artisan or some kind of money-maker tempted and incited by wealth or command or votes or bodily strength or some similar advantage tries to enter into the class of the soldiers or one of the soldiers into the class of counselors and guards, for which he is not fitted, and these interchange their tools and their honors or when the same man undertakes all these functions at once, then, I take it, you too believe that this kind of substitution and meddlesomeness is the ruin of the state.

By all means.
The interference with one another's business, then, of three existent classes, and the substitution of the one for the other, is the greatest injury to a state and would most rightly be designated as the thing which chiefly works it harm.

Precisely so.

And the thing that works the greatest harm to one's own state, will you not pronounce to be in-justice?

(434a10 - c5)²⁹

Although in Shakespeare's example a counselor tries to interfere with an artisan, the shipwreck scene still provides an analogy with the ruin of a state through unjust "meddlesomeness." But the principle of injustice is not merely a concern of the commonwealth. Injustice can also characterize the state of a man's soul when, as in Antonio's,
its proper function is clouded by passion. Antonio is perpetually in a state of rebellion against whatever frustrates his selfish desires at the moment, and his presence in the play is a continual display of insolent arrogance. He screams at the Boatswain:

Hang cur! Hang, you whoreson, insolent noise-maker! We are less afraid to be drowned than thou art.

(I, i, 44-46)

According to Socrates, justice in the individual soul is analogous to justice in the state when each of the three elements, appetite, spirit, and reason "does its own work in the matter of ruling and being ruled." (IV, 443b2 - 3):

It really was, it seems, Glaucon, which is why it helps, a sort of adumbration of justice, this principle that it is right for a cobbler by nature to cobble and occupy himself with nothing else, and the carpenter to practice carpentry, and similarly all others.

Clearly.

But the truth of the matter was, as it seems, that justice is indeed something of this kind, yet not in regard to the doing of one's own business externally, but with regard to that which is within and in the true sense concerns one's self and the things of one's self. It means that a man must not suffer the principles in his soul to do each the work of some other and interfere and meddle with one another, but that he should dispose well of what in the true sense of the word is properly his own, and having first attained to self-mastery and beautiful order within himself, and having harmonized these three principles, the notes or intervals of the three terms quite literally the lowest, the highest, and the mean, and all others there may be between them, and having linked and bound all three together and made of himself a unit, one man instead of many,
self-controlled and in unison, he should then and then only turn to practice if he find aught to do either in the getting of wealth or the tendance of the body or it may be in political action or private business—in all such doings believing and naming the just and honorable action to be that which preserves and helps to produce this condition of soul, and wisdom the science that presides over such conduct, and believing and naming the unjust action to be that which ever tends to overthrow this spiritual condition, and brutish ignorance to be the opinion that in turn presides over this.

(IV, 443c5 - 444a3)

I believe that it is no accident that the musical metaphor which Socrates uses to describe the state of justice in a well-ordered soul is echoed in *The Tempest* in the symbolic opposition between confused noises, especially storm sounds, and harmonious music. The key word, as Reuben A. Brower has explained, in the opening scene at least, is "noise." 30 The rest of the play, over which Prospero has obvious control, reveals the controlling harmony in his soul through its songs and musical accompaniment. As Brower explains, "[T]he musical metaphor, like the sea metaphor, has moved from outer to inner weather." 31 But Antonio, the usurper in society, has only rebellion and discord in his soul. As Lorenzo says in *The Merchant of Venice*:

The man hath no music in himself,
Nor is nor moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, strategems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus.
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.

(V, i, 82-89) 32
The music that Gonzalo hears on the island, waking him from sleep in time to protect Alonso from Antonio's plot to kill him, sounds like a "din to fright a monster's ear" (II, i, 318) to Antonio. The discordancy that Antonio hears, as opposed to the "humming" (II, i, 321) that Gonzalo hears, reflects the injustice in his soul, just as the music that Prospero creates reflects his interior harmony. Socrates explains injustice as a kind of civil war:

Must not this be a kind of civil war of these principles, their meddlesomeness and interference with one another's functions, and the revolt of one part against the whole of the soul that it may hold therein a rule which does not belong to it, since its nature is such that it benefits it to serve as a slave to the ruling principle [reason]? Something of this sort, I fancy, is what we shall say, and that the confusion of these principles and their straying from their proper course is injustice and licentiousness and cowardice and brutish ignorance and, in general, all turpitude.

(IV, 444b1 - b 9)

As Prospero tells Miranda, a man like Antonio destroys the harmony not only in his own soul, but in the commonwealth as well when he rules. As king, "having both the key/ Of officer and office", he is able to "set all hearts i' th' state/To what tune pleased his ear" (I, ii, 83-85). A man with no music in his soul cannot be trusted to rule, and it seems to me that a part of Prospero's aim in recovering his dukedom from Antonio is to prevent him from corrupting
others.

The next view that we get of the tempest in the first act is from Ariel, Prospero's "recreative spirit", as Harry Berger calls him. Ariel is a "figure of idyllic fancy" (p. 255) whose first speech reveals his obvious delight in histrionic performance, "doubled only by his pleasure in describing it" (p. 256):

I boarded the King's ship. Now on the beak,  
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,  
I flamed amazement. Sometime I'd divide  
And burn in many places; on the topmast,  
The yards, the borespirit would I flame distinctly,  
The meet and join. Jove's lightnings, the precursors  
O' th' dreadful thunderclaps, more monetary  
And sight-outrunning were not. The fire and cracks  
Of sulfurous roaring the most might Neptune  
Seem to besiege, and make his bold waves tremble;  
Yea, his dread trident shake.

(I, ii, 196-206)

As Berger explains, "the speech builds up to its final heroic period, changes from past tense to the more vivid present and pushes beyond descriptive report to a high-toned epic personification." (p. 256). Although Berger sees Ariel, like Prospero, as savoring his histrionic performances in pure egotistical delight, I prefer to think of him as Holofernes thinks of his delight in words in Love's Labor's Lost: "This is a gift that I have, simple, simple; a foolish extravagant spirit, full of forms, figures, shapes, objects, ideas, apprehensions, motions, revolutions. These
are begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished in the womb of pia mater, and delivered upon the mellowing of occasion. But the gift is good in whom it is acute, and I am thankful for it." (Iv, ii, 66-73). Prospero, as the embodiment of reason, directs his "foolish extravagant spirit" (1.67) for ethical purposes. In the storm scene, as C. J. Devereux has noted, the image of Ariel visiting the ship in the form of St. Elmo's fire is a Pentecostal image, an image which Shakespeare seems to have directly borrowed from William Strachey's True Repertory of the Wracke, 1610.34 Fire is the element of the Holy Ghost, and Prospero seems to want the tempest to affect the court party spiritually as well as physically:

My brave spirit!
Who was so firm, so constant, that this coil
Would not infect his reason?

(I, ii, 206-208)

In linking the sea with the passions, Prospero turns Ariel's performance into a form of spiritual purgation by fire:

Not a soul
But felt a fever of the mad and played
Some tricks of desperation. All but mariners
Plunged in the foaming brine and quit the vessel,
Then all afire with me.

(I, ii, 208-211)

When Prospero asks if the passengers are safe, Ariel replies with another Biblical echo:

Not a hair perished.
On their sustaining garments not a blemish,
But fresher than before; and as thou bad'st me,
In troops I have dispersed them 'bout the isle.
(I, ii, 217-220)

As Herbert Coursen, Jr., explains, in Acts 27 of the Bible,
Paul's ship, like Alonso's, is bound to Italy from Asia
Minor. In the words of the Geneva version, it is "tossed
with an exceeding tempest." An angel appears before Paul,
telling him that the ship's passengers "must be cast into
a certain Iland." Paul promises the passengers that "there
shall not an haire fall from the head of any of you." The
voyage ends as "some on boardes, and some on certaine
pieces of the shippe . . . came all safe to land."

Satisfied with Ariel's performance, Prospero engages
Ariel, like Miranda, in a narrative exposition to remind
him of his past. Ariel was confined within "a cloven pine"
(I, ii, 277) by the "foul witch Sycorax, who with age and
envy/Was grown into a hoop" (I, ii, 257-258) when Prospero
first arrived on the island. Ariel "wast a spirit too
delicate/To act her earthy and abhorred commands" (I, ii,
272-273), and he had remained painfully imprisoned there
even after she died, venting his groans "as fast as mill-
wheels strike" (I, ii, 281). As an emblem, Berger suggests,
the freeing of Ariel by Prospero implies that Prospero's
exile had the character of a liberation: "Freed from the
mortal coil and body politic of Milan, the Ariel within Prospero finds and releases its double in the outside world. Although this idea seems partly true, I disagree with Berger's further conclusion that Ariel's continuing desire for liberty from Prospero is "allegorically related to the central action of the play, Prospero's reinvolvement with human beings after twelve years of magic for magic's sake." (p. 258). Berger does not see Prospero as a figure for reason directing Ariel to present shows for the ethical end of the reintegration of society; rather, he sees Prospero as selfishly practising "magic for magic's sake", using the spirit of play within him for antisocial purposes, self-delighting pleasure merely. In Berger's reading the prospect of return to Milan jeopardizes the freedom of the inward Ariel for Prospero. This reading seems to me, however, to be untrue to the facts of the play. Ariel, after all, will be free only when Prospero returns to Milan. He is not free now to indulge his extravagant spirit in any way he pleases. In his song at the end of the play, Ariel looks forward to the freedom to live "under the blossom that hangs on the bough" (V, i, 94) "securely separated from the baser elements of man", as Berger puts it (p. 255), but for the duration of the play, Ariel must do as Prospero tells him. Prospero, in his narrative in the first Act,
reminds him of his past so that Ariel will perform in spite of the "toil" and "pains" (I, ii, 243) associated with putting on shows for unregenerate humans, such as Antonio, who prefers rebellion to reason.

A few moments later, we meet Caliban, the slave of Prospero, who is also seeking his liberation. He regards Prospero as a usurper who has stolen the island from his mother, Sycorax, the witch grown into a hoop with age and envy, who had first imprisoned Ariel. Caliban and his mother seem to me to be emblems of the passion, the appetitive self, in man, which can be potentially constrictive if not disciplined by reason. As Caliban himself recounts it, Prospero had at first catered to him:

When thou cam'st first
Thou strok'st me and made much of me; wouldst give me
Water with berries in't; and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee
And showed thee all the qualities o' th' isle,
The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile.
(I, ii, 332-338)

But Prospero feels that his love was unrewarded:

Thou most lying slave,
Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have used thee
(Filth as thou art) with humane care, and lodged thee
In mine own cell till thou didst seek to violate
the honor of my child.

(I, ii, 344-348)

I believe that the attitude of many modern critics toward Caliban is sentimental. Caliban is a born rebel; his single
desire is to people "[t]his isle with Calibans." (I, ii, 351). As we have seen over and over in Shakespeare's plays, the theme of lust is linked to the theme of usurpation. It is not only the kingdom of the island that Caliban desires, it is the person of Miranda. The logical end of his desire is moral and political anarchy, the overthrow in both the individual and the state of the rule of reason. As Robert Speaight reminds us:

... we must still see in [Caliban] the reflexion of man and society at the lowest stage of their evolution. It is worth nothing that Caliban is a bastard—the last of a long and varied line, stretching from Falconbridge to Edmund—and we could not find stronger proof of Shakespeare's loss of faith in the beneficience of the natural impulse. ... Prospero would gladly trust him as a servant and not as an enemy, but Caliban's chronically rebellious nature refuses the government of reason. 37

As Berger notes, his name means the bane of beauty. 38 Since his nature will take no print of reason, Miranda herself believes that he was "deservedly confined into this rock, who hast/Deserved more than a prison." (I, ii, 361-362). An astonishing number of critics betray their sentimental notions of reality in refusing to believe that Shakespeare could attribute such a protractedly harsh speech to such a sweet and innocent girl as Miranda. Miranda is not a simpleton: she is the image of a disciplined, not a stupid, innocence. In the words of Robert
Speaight, neither she nor Prospero "will lend . . . colour to Rousseauist fantasies of natural perfection." Critics like Harry Berger who find her "so obviously pure and good, so obviously [a] literary stereotype of youthful love and virtue" diminish her stature as a reasoning human being. Miranda taught Caliban to speak only to be threatened with rape. Caliban himself feels that his only profit from the entire experience is "I know how to curse." (I, ii, 364). As Joseph Summers notes, "a number of Caliban's speeches are the purest expression of mortal anger uncontaminated by other human motives. It is an anger at the farthest remove from the testiness of Prospero with Miranda, the Boatswain's anger with those who interfere with the ship, Prospero's anger at an Ariel who wishes to quit his labor, or the comic anger of Stephano and Trinculo." Caliban curses because he cannot reason. His very first speech to Prospero and Miranda is a curse:

As wicked dew as e'er my mother brushed
With raven's feather and unwholesome fen
Drop on you both! A southwest blow on ye
And blister you all o'er!

(I, ii, 321-324)

As Summers continues, Caliban's cursing is "much closer to the desperate anger turned against the self which Ariel describes in Prospero's masque of judgment on Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio" (p. 126):
I have made you mad;
And even with suchlike valor men hang and drown
Their proper selves.

(III, iii, 57-59)

When Harry Berger rhapsodizes, "Poor Caliban is a platonist's black dream: Prospero feels he has only to lay eyes on his dark and disproportioned shape to know what Evil truly Is, and where," I tend to agree with him—only for reasons which he would probably find perverse.

To be fair to poor Harry Berger, however, I must agree that Caliban is more than a black dream. As Berger notes, Caliban's baseness is "shot through with gleams of aspiration." (p. 259). His longings are modulated into a civilized form in Miranda's capacity for wonder and in Ferdinand's worshipful service. Caliban's childlike delight in the island is not unlike Gonzalo's, nor are his expressions of beauty unlike Prospero's (p. 260):

Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises, Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not. Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices That, if I then had waked after a long sleep, Will make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming, The clouds methought would open and show riches Ready to drop upon me, that, when I waked I cried to dream again.

(III, iii, 140-148)

As in Prospero's "cloud-capped towers" (IV, i, 152), Caliban's dream is an "insubstantial pageant faded" (IV, i, 155). Berger finds Caliban "childlike in his fears and
passions, ingenuous in the immediacy of his responses to nature and man, open in the expression of feeling" (p. 260). Compared with Antonio, Caliban "at his most evil and traitorous shows up as a mere puppy, a comic Vice" (p. 260). Nevertheless, Caliban cannot be excused away as "a mere puppy" from what he represents: the unthinking appetitive self in all human beings. As William Madsen puts it, "Shakespeare uses Caliban as a kind of litmus paper to determine the natures of the civilized Europeans who are undergoing their purgatorial testing on the island."43 Ferdinand as "patient log-man" (III, i, 67) endures his "wooden slavery" (III, i, 62) like Caliban because he shares the same nature; but his higher self—his reason and spiritual nature—directs his service to higher ends than rape and anarchy:

There be some sports are painful, and their labor Delight in them sets off; some kinds of baseness Are nobly undergone, and most poor matters Point to rich ends. This my mean task Would be as heavy to me as odious, but The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead And makes my labors pleasures.

(III, i, 1-7)

At the same time that Ferdinand is undergoing his preparation for the liberty and discipline of marriage, Caliban is discovering a new god in the drunken butler, Stephano: "That's a brave god and bears celestial liquor/I will kneel to him."
(II, ii, 122-123). As David William explains, Caliban's "Freedom, high day! High day, freedom! Freedom/high day, freedom!" (II, ii, 194-195) is "nothing if not the natural and exultant expression of the brute instinct glorying in its sudden discovery of independent vitality, when the social inhibitions laid upon it by authority have been released by alcohol." As Stephano incites him on, "O brave monster! Lead the way." (II, ii, 196), Caliban and Trinculo plot with him to take the island from Prospero by force:

Why, as I told thee, 'tis a custom with him
I' th' afternoon to sleep. There thou mayst brain him,
Having first seized his books, or with a log
Batter his skull, or paunch him with a stake,
Or cut his wezand with thy knife. Remember
First to possess his books; for without them
He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not
One spirit to command.

(III, ii, 91-98)

Although we in the audience know that Prospero studies in the afternoon rather than sleeps, it appears to Caliban, lacking spirit and reason, that Prospero's books give him magic powers for which he does not work. To seize the island for himself, all that Caliban perceives that one has to do is to burn his books, "knock a nail into his head" (III, ii, 65) and "most deeply to consider . . . the beauty of his daughter" (III, ii, 102-103). Stephano agrees, "Monster, I will kill this man. His daughter and I will
be King and Queen—save our Graces!—and Trinculo and thyself shall be viceroys." (III, ii, 110-112). The monster, the drunkard and the clown all share the same Calibanic element: the desire to uproot authority. As David William characterizes him, Stephano's "immediate reactions to all predicaments are selfish, greedy, and unimaginative. Of all Shakespeare's drunkards, he is the least acquainted with delight." Trinculo is not much better:

With the possible exception of Malvolio, Trinculo is the most neurotic of Shakespeare's comic characters. His stage-life is a progress from fear to fear, beginning with the weather. His mind is more sensitive than Stephano's, but its only introductions are to terror and misery. The Neapolitan court could receive no more conclusive attestation than when its jester and its butler are rejected by the sea. (p. 157).

Stephano and Trinculo are demagogues, contemptuous of all values which cannot be immediately attained, either by force or by alcohol. In the words of Robert Speaight:

Notice the conclusion of Stephano's song: "Thought is free" (III, ii, 128). Shakespeare puts this heresy in the mouth of a drunken domestic. . . . Almost every heresy which has ravaged the modern world, and in particular those fathered by the sentimental genius of Rousseau, were pulverized in The Tempest centuries before they were born. Stephano's idea of a "brave kingdom" (III, iii, 149) is one "where I shall have my music for nothing." (III, iii, 150).
Another rebellion, however, is brewing on the island—one far more dangerous than that in the comic subplot. Antonio, Prospero's brother and the usurper of his kingdom, is plotting with another brother, Sebastian, whose brother, Alonso, is King of Naples, to re-enact the original crime against Prospero. Analogous to the plot of Caliban and his confederates, Antonio's plot to kill Alonso is the present danger of an old error unredeemed. In Antonio and Sebastian, the Calibanic element is much more formidable than in the mindless debauchery of Stephano and Trinculo. As William Madsen explains in terms of Sonnet 94, "Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds." (1.14).47 Antonio, like Claudius in Hamlet, has usurped the natural ruler, reason, in his soul and replaced it with Caliban. The result is an unrepentent malice that shows through all of his actions. The word "sea-swallowed" (II, i, 255), appropriately put into his mouth, characterizes his spiritual condition: he has let the passions of the sea overcome his reason, so that he merely drifts from one rebellion to another in the course of his life, crashing from one "overtopping" (I, ii, 81) wave to another, "ten leagues beyond man's life" (II, i, 251), with no course to steer by. As Dean Ebner has noted, "throughout the play characters tend to experience the island in terms which serve
as an index to their moral worth."\textsuperscript{48} Antonio sees "tawny" (II, i, 56) ground and an opportunity for rebellion, while Gonzalo sees "lush and lusty" (II, i, 55) grass and an opportunity for such a utopian commonwealth as "t' excel the Golden Age." (II, i, 173). In both men the Calibanic element is misdirected and undisciplined by reason, although in Gonzalo, it is less malicious. Antonio's manipulation of Sebastian's more timid, but more imaginative reactions parallels Stephano's domination over Trinculo. The governance of the island, however, belongs to Prospero, who wrenched it from Caliban after he rebelled against Prospero's kindness. Prospero has every right to the island by virtue of the dominance of reason over passion in his soul---the rule of reason in his soul and on the island are analogous. As Robert Speaight explains, his rule is "very literally a victory of mind over matter."\textsuperscript{49} By giving the island a mythical location remote, yet accessible from the "real" world of Naples and Milan, Shakespeare is thus able to bring to bear contemporary political theory on the problem of the rule of reason in the individual soul and in the commonwealth. As Robert Langbaum explains:

He can assimilate the latest ideas about the New World to traditional ideas of the Golden Age and the Garden of Eden. He can remind us of Aeneas, who lost Troy that he might found Rome. Aeneas was driven by a storm to Carthage (specifically
associated here with Tunis), from whence he sailed to Italy. In fulfilling his destiny, he underwent wanderings and ordeals analogous to those of the court party in The Tempest, including a banquet involving harpies. It is worth mentioning, in connection with Gonzalo's enigmatic references to "widow Dido" and "widower Aeneas" that two of the Bermuda pamphlets compare Dido and Aeneas, as colonizers of new territories, to the colonists of the New World.50

As we have seen from the last chapter, the analogy of Aeneas and Hamlet as founders of new societies rested on the endurance of both men as virtuous in the fulfillment of their destinies. The outcome of Antonio's chronic rebellions in the "real world" of Milan and Naples will be decided in The Tempest, however, in the fictional "New World" of Prospero's island.

On the island, the most obvious reference to contemporary political theory is Gonzalo's long speech about his ideal commonwealth to the rest of the court party:

    I' th' commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things. For no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation; all men idle, all;
And women too, but innocent and pure;
No sovereignty. . . .
All things in common nature should produce
Without sweat or endeavor. Treason, felony,
Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine
Would I not have, but nature should bring forth,
Of it own kind, all poison, all abundance,
To feed my innocent people.
(II, i, 152-161, 164-169)

Gonzalo's commonwealth is the society envisaged by sentimental modern critics who embrace and protect poor Caliban from Prospero's lashings. Innocent men and women live in natural perfection off nature's "foison" (1.168). As Dean Ebner makes clear, this ancient and modern ideal is a direct borrowing from John Florio's 1603 translation of Montaigne's essay, "Of the Caniballes."^51 "It is a nation, would I answer Plato," Montaigne begins in his description of certain Brazilian tribes which Villegaignon had encountered in 1555:^52

... that hath no kind of traffike, no knowledge of letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of politike superioritie; no use of service of riches or of povertie; no contracts, no successions, no partitions, no occupation but idle; no respect of kindred, but common, no apparell but naturall, no manuring of lands, no use of wine, corne, or mettle. The very words that import lying, falsehood, treason, dissimulations, covetousnes, envie, detractioin, and pardon, were never heard amongst them. How dissonant would he finde his imaginarie commonwealth from this perfection?

 Hos natura modos primum dedit.
Nature at first uprise,
These manners did devise. ... (p. 165)

Montaigne feels sorry for Plato since he did not have the benefit of modern discoveries about the nature of man:

I am sorie Lycurgus and Plato had it not:
for me seemeth that what in those nations we see by experience, doth not only exceed all the
pictures wherewith licentious Poesie hath proudly
imbellished the golden age, and all her quaint
inventions to faine a happy condition of man, but
also the conception and desire of Philosophy.
They could not imagine a genuitie [sic] so pure
and simple, as we see it by experience; nor ever
believe our societie might be maintained with so
little art and humane combination. (p. 166)

As Ebner explains, Montaigne's "Of the Caniballes" became
the _locus classicus_ of cultural primitivism (p. 166). In
his championship of the noble savage, Montaigne manages to
excuse the practice of cannibalism among his innocent people.

As Ebner points out, the opinion of later voyagers to
the New World, such as Captain John Smith in the Virginia
colony, tended to confirm what Shakespeare reveals about
human nature in _The Tempest_. Smith describes at length
the "most craftie contrived and bloody treasons" of the
American Indians (p. 167). A return to primitive surround-
ings was not the answer to evil in civilized society.
Caliban is present in every society of men, and to the
extent that he dominates in their souls, no perfect common-
wealth can be realized. In the action of the play, treason
and rebellion are not stopped by the virgin surroundings
of the island, but by Prospero as the embodiment of reason.
In the words of Ebner, the play ends with the "essentially
Christian belief that evil in society comes from the evil
in man. Human evil in the form of rebellion is everywhere
and, if anything, aggravated by primitive conditions. At the end of the play the seas are calm and so is the moral and political discord we have been shown on both the serious and the comic levels" (p. 173). The progress made in the government of Naples and Milan has not come through Gonzalo's ideal view of natural man, which leaves out Caliban, but through the exercise of Prospero's reason, his virtue in spite of Caliban.

Just as Gonzalo's ideal commonwealth moves entirely on a natural level in blissful ignorance of Caliban's threat, Gonzalo reveals himself in the play as a man of natural piety and goodness but naively limited in power and vision. He gave food, clothes and books to aid Prospero in his exile, but at the same time, he was master of the design to purge him. Once on the island his well-intentioned naivete reveals itself in his inability to interpret the spiritual influences that he perceives. As William Madsen brilliantly points out, he does not know what to make of the fact that the garments are as "new-dyed than stained with salt water." (II, i, 66-67). As Madsen explains, it is of prime significance that these are wedding garments.\textsuperscript{53} Gonzalo exclaims:

\textbf{Methinks our garments are now as fresh as when we put them on first in Afric, at the marriage of the King's fair daughter Claribel to the}
King of Tunis.

(M, i, 71-74)

Madsen finds that the theme of spiritual rebirth is carried by the symbolic vehicle of the wedding garments. He recalls the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1-14 of the Bible in which the man who had not a wedding garment was cast into outer darkness. Further Biblical echoes come from Revelation, in which the undefiled garment is used several times to symbolize Christian virtue:

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.
Revelation 3:4

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.
Revelation 16:15

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.
And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.
Revelation 19:7-8

(p. 179)

The rebellious characters in The Tempest defile their garments. Antonio has usurped his from Prospero. When Antonio tries to incite Sebastian to murder, Sebastian reminds him, "I remember/You did supplant your brother Prospero." (M, i, 273-275). Antonio replies:

True.
And look how well my garments sit upon me,
Much feater than before.

(II, i, 275-277)

Stephano and Trinculo parody Antonio's sin in the comic subplot. Prospero hangs out his "trumpery" (IV, i, 186), his "glistening apparel" (IV, i, s.d.) as a "stale" (IV, i, 187) or decoy to divert their attention from murder. As Augustine's explanation of the aesthetics of sin makes clear, Stephano and Trinculo mistake the trappings of authority for authority itself, the image of the garments arousing the cupidity within their souls. Consequently, when Prospero and Ariel send dogs and hounds to hunt them down, their action is a figure for the ravages of cupidity into which Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban are plunged. As Madsen concludes, Stephano and Trinculo defile their garments when they fall into the "filthy mantled pool" (IV, i, 182): "Their drowning in the pool is an inverse parallel to the sea-change of Alonso and a grotesque parody of the theme of rebirth by water." (p. 179).

Not even Prospero, however, is immune to the appeal of "glistening" images. He sends Ariel to perform "another trick" (IV, i, 37): to put on the show he has promised to Ferdinand and Miranda:

Go bring the rabble
0' er whom I give thee pow'r, here to this place.
Incite them to quick motion; for I must
Bestow upon the eyes of this young couple
Some vanity of mine art. It is my promise,
And they expect it from me.  

(IV, i, 37-42)

As Robert Wilson explains, the masque which results is a "finely wrought reflection of idealized images." The masque pictures, in Harry Berger's words, "an idyllic nature, winterless, moving directly from harvest to spring." It begins when Iris calls Ceres away from a less than ideal (and very English) countryside "to come and sport" (IV, i, 74):

Ceres, most bounteous lady, thy rich leas
Of wheat, rye, barley, fetches, oats, and peas;
Thy turfy mountains, where live nibbling sheep,
And flat meads thatched with stover, them to keep;
Thy banks with pionèd and twillèd brims,
Which spongy April at thy hest betrims
To make cold nymphs chaste crowns; and thy broom groves,
Whose shadow the dismissèd bachelor loves,
Being lasslorn; they pole-clipt vineyard;
Where thou thyself dost air--the queen o' th' sky,
Whose wat'ry arch and messenger am I
Bids thee leave these... . . .

(Iv, i, 60-72)

Iris, as Wilson explains, is both messenger, as the female counterpart of Hermes, and rainbow, the gift of God which unites heaven and earth. She bids Ceres leave her practical landscape which supports chaste nymphs and lasslorn bachelors to celebrate a "contract of true love" (IV, i, 84) with a vision of married fertility. Ceres, however, is concerned about the potential threat of Venus
and her son, Cupid:

Since they did plot
The means that dusky Dis my daughter got,
Her and her blind boy's scanted company
I have forsworn.

(IV, i, 88-91)

Ceres will not participate in the masque if Venus and Cupid are present. Iris assures her that Venus is somewhere else and links her absence with the vows of chastity that Ferdinand has taken:

Here thought they to have done
Some wanton charm upon this man and maid,
Whose vows are, that no bed-right shall be paid
Till Hymen's torch be lighted. But in vain;
Mars's hot minion is returned again;
Her waspish-headed son has broke his arrows,
Swears he will shoot no more, but play with sparrows
And be a boy right out.

(IV, i, 94-101)

As Robert Grundin explains, the concord and bounty of Ceres is made dependent upon the absence of Venus or inordinate lust.58 The thematic connection between the ideal vision of the masque and Caliban's conspiracy which destroys it have never been fully appreciated. As Grudin explains it, the goddesses of the masque suggest the four elements of the universe: Iris, "wat'ry arch" (IV, i, 71) with "honey-drops" (1.79) and "refreshing show'rs" (1.79) represents water; Ceres with her "turfy mountains" (1.62), "meads" (1.63) and "banks" (1.64) is earth; and Juno, "queen o' th' sky" (1.70) is air. Fire, the element of Venus is missing.59
In Prospero's admonition to Ferdinand preceding the masque to "[b]e more abstemious" (IV, i, 53), lust is linked to fire:

Do not give dalliance
Too much rein; the strongest oaths are straw
To th' fire i' th' blood.  

(IV, i, 51-53)

Just as fire is missing in the masque, so is winter, the season when Proserpina, the daughter of Ceres, goes below to rule as the queen of "dusky Dis" (IV, i, 89). In the song of Ceres and Juno which follows, spring comes "at the farthest/In the very end of harvest" (IV, i, 114-115). The ideal state of nature as presented by the masque is a continuing round of spring and autumn in which the fires of summer (lust) and the chill of winter (death) can be averted. As Wilson explains, the dance of the nymphs and the reapers symbolizes "immortality expressed in pastoral terms". Ferdinand seems to grasp this ideal as he exclaims:

Let me live here ever!
So rare a wond'red father and a wise
Makes this place Paradise. 

(IV, i, 122-124)

But the dance of the nymphs and the reapers is broken by Prospero as he remembers the conspiracy of Caliban and his confederates against his life:

I had forgot that foul conspiracy
Of the beast Caliban and his confederates
Against my life. The minute of their plot
Is almost come. [To the Spirits] Well done!
Avoid! No more!

(IV, i, 139-143)

The connection between the absence of Venus in the masque
and the conspiracy of the "beast Caliban" (I.140) "unmasks"
the masque for what it is: an illusion of an ideal not yet
a reality in this world. The dancers leave the stage "to
a strange, hollow, and confused noise" (IV, i, s.d.), their
vision of concord and harmony gone. Whether or not an
approximation of the ideal envisaged for Ferdinand and
Miranda can be realized depends upon overcoming the beast
in human nature.61 Virtue exists in this world, not in
the masque, and Prospero has almost committed the sin of
the characters in one of Shakespeare's first plays—that
of the lords and ladies of Love's Labor's Lost, who spent
so much time and effort on the illusion of the play-within-
the-play that they destroyed the play in which they had a
part. Although that play ends by evaporating into the world
of the audience, Prospero saves his play by expanding its
horizons to include a vision of the transitoriness of this
world:

Our revels are now ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air; into thin air;
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great glove itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. Sir, I am vexed.
Bear with my weakness; my old brain is troubled.
Be not disturbed with my infirmity.
If you be pleased, retire into my cell
And there repose. A turn or two I'll walk
To still my beating mind.

(IV, i, 148-163)

Like the masque, the play in which the theater audience has
a part will one day dissolve, leaving not a trace behind.

As Ferdinand and Miranda retire to his cell, Prospero
takes a "turn or two" (1.162) to restore the clarity of
his mind from its attack by Caliban. He must continue the
action of the play to achieve the comic ending forfeited
by the lords and ladies of Love's Labor's Lost.

Robert Egan has noted, however, that Prospero brings
the audience into the play again one more time before its
ending. In the Epilogue he wants to place the spectators
in analogous circumstances with his own climactic decision
to pardon the rebels. In the last act he takes a cue from
Ariel and forgives them:

Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th' quick,
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part. The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance.

(V, i, 25-28)

As he had done after the masque, Prospero takes hold of
himself and chooses reason over the Caliban within. He releases the courtiers "confined together" (V, i, 7) in the "line grove" (V, i, 10). In the Epilogue, Prospero himself is "confined" (1.5), dependent upon the "rarer action" (V, i, 27) of others in the audience to release him, not by merely exercising polite applause, but by following the Golden Rule in continuing the play to its imaginary comic ending:

    I must be here confined by you,
    Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
    Since I have my dukedom got
    And pardoned the deceiver, dwell
    In this bare island by your spell;
    But release me from my bands
    With the help of your good hands.

(11.4-10)

The audience, not Prospero, is the magician now: the spell that it holds over him is the magic of the exercise of virtue:

    As you from crimes would pardoned be,
    Let your indulgence set me free.

(ii.19-20)

With his insistence on the Golden Rule as opposed to the Golden Age, Prospero proves that he lives in a world analogous to that of the audience: Caliban, "this thing of darkness I/Acknowledge mine" (V, i, 275-276) and in Milan "[e]very third thought shall be my grave" (V, i, 312). In Prospero's play, and by implication, in ours:

    We all were sea-swallowed, though some cast again,
And, by that destiny, to perform an act
Whereof what's past is prologue, what to come
In yours and my discharge.

(II, i, 255-258)
Footnotes


8. Ibid., pp. 80-81.

9. Ibid., pp. 81-82.

11 Mowat, p. 63.

12 Ibid.


19 Marx, p. 53.


21 Ibid., p. 118.

22 Gerald Else, as quoted by Mowat, p. 85.


24 Mowat, p. 88.

25 Gohn, Note 17, p. 125.

27Gohn, p. 125.

28Summers, p. 119.


31Ibid., p. 192.


33Berger, p. 255.


35Coursen, Note 32, p. 332.

36Berger, p. 258.

37Speaight, p. 35.

38Berger, p. 259.

39Speaight, p. 33.

40Berger, p. 275.
41 Summers, p. 126.

42 Berger, p. 261.


44 Ibid., p. 156.


46 Speaight, p. 48.


49 Speaight, p. 34.


51 Ebner, pp. 164-165.

52 Michel de Montaigne, "Of the Caniballes", quoted by Ebner, p. 165.

53 Madsen, p. 179.

54 Ibid., p. 178.


56 Berger, p. 271.
57 Wilson, p. 108.


59 Ibid., pp. 402-403.

60 Wilson, p. 108.

61 Ibid., p. 109.

Conclusion

In comparing the audience of a Shakespearean play to an eavesdropper, I am not proposing a mechanical model for the act of watching a play. As a metaphor for watching a play, eavesdropping does not imply that the audience is a manipulator of the action on stage or present to be manipulated by the playwright. Instead, I am suggesting that the audience's world is incorporated by the playwright into a comprehensive vision of experience. A Shakespearean play is an organic whole not only on paper but in performance. Shakespeare never fails to remind the audience of the play's essential artificiality and requires the imaginative participation of the spectator to make the play work through the act of critical apprehension. The nineteenth-century conception of theater, where the experience of play-watching is split into the world of the audience and the world of the play, as the spectator peers like a voyeur into a life-like two dimensional world designed to seduce him for a short while into its reality, simply does not apply.

In the four plays discussed in this study, Love's Labor's Lost, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Hamlet, and The
Tempest, the audience is given an image of itself as spectators of a play through the image of actors watching a play-within-the-play. In a line of regression begun in eavesdropping scenes, which are like miniature plays overheard and observed by a hidden audience, the play-watchers see themselves in successive planes of reality ending with the vision left to Elizabethans by medieval Christianity of earthly life as a pageant unfolding before an unseen God. Since the mind of God perceives in a simultaneous whole man that calls eternity, each plane in the line of regression from eavesdropper to God is linked by the presence of a perceiving, interpreting mind. The consciousness of man is potentially like the consciousness of God in a smaller dimension in that it may perceive in simultaneity.

The ethical framework for these planes of reality comes from the Christian-Platonic tradition. In the Christian-Platonic tradition, the individual and the society in which he lives are mutually interdependent. As Socrates illustrates in the Republic, the government of the individual soul is analogous to the government of the commonwealth--reason should control the elements of appetite and spirit in each. It seems to me that Shakespeare's focus shifts in the course of his development in these four plays from
an emphasis on the action of society to correct an individual to an emphasis on the need for the individual to achieve a correct ordering within his own soul before society can be saved.

In *Love's Labor's Lost*, for example, Berowne's display of his delight in language has no purpose other than self-gratification: he manipulates others for his own selfish purposes and must be corrected at the end of the play by jesting in a hospital in the real world of the audience. Because of the short-sighted self-involvement of its actors, the play does not end like a comedy with the promised renewal of society through marriage. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, on the other hand, the ordering of reason over passion implicit in the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta expands across the borders of the fictional world of the play since *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a play about a wedding written for a wedding. For Hamlet, however, the ordering of reason over passion in the soul and the common-wealth is accomplished during the course of the play, as he matures in his duel with Claudius. At the beginning of the play, Hamlet finds himself in the midst of a society being corrupted by the usurper, Claudius, and his attempts to oppose Claudius, to establish his guilt through the device of the play-within-the-play or to try to kill
him, as he thinks he is doing when he stabs Polonius through the arras, are his efforts to overcome despair. Only at the end of the play, after his "sea-change", does he re-establish the rule of reason within his soul and, by killing Claudius, within the commonwealth. This difficult process of ordering is accomplished at the beginning of the play, however, in *The Tempest*, when Prospero, as a mature, older man, is presented as the master of Caliban on the island, already the ruler of reason over passion. Prospero's society is saved by the providential bringing of his enemies to the shores of his island where he uses his delight in words not selfishly as had Berowne, but ethically as had Hamlet, to create plays which will restore the rule of reason to those who have wronged his society. The marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda not only will rid Milan and Naples of a tyrant, but in the fertility images of the Masque of Ceres it promises a renewal of society that is lacking in *Love's Labor's Lost*. The vision of a society broken and disordered by individual selfishness in *Love's Labor's Lost* is restored by the healing action of Prospero in *The Tempest*, as the rule of reason in the individual soul reintegrates society.